AL-GHAZZĀLĪ AND HIS REFUTATION OF PHILOSOPHY

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Abstrak

Makalah ini membincangkan satu isu yang cukup kontroversi dalam Sejarah Falsafah Islam iaitu kritikan al-Ghazzālī terhadap beberapa isu falsafah, khususnya pandangan ahli falsafah mengenai keqidaman alam, kejahilan Allah SWT mengenai al-juz'iyyāt, dan kebangkitan semula manusia secara berjasad pada hari akhirat. Al-Ghazzālī menerusi kitabnya Tahāfut al-Falāsifah mengkritik al-Fārābī dan Ibn Sīnā yang mendokongi gagasan-gagasan idea Falsafah dalam tiga isu besar tersebut. Artikel ini juga menyentuh mengenai implikasi serangan al-Ghazzālī terhadap ahli Falsafah dalam isu-isu kontroversi tersebut yang ternyata memberi kesan yang cukup signifikan terhadap perkembangan Falsafah di dunia Islam, sehinggalah munculnya Ibn Rushd di Andalus yang bangun menjawab hujah-hujah al-Ghazzālī secara ilmiah menerusi kitabnya Tahāfut al-Tahāfut. Artikel ini merumuskan bahawa polemik yang berlangsung di antara al-Ghazzālī dan Ibn Rushd adalah berasaskan pemanfaatan ruang ijtihad di kalangan ulama yang sememangnya wujud dalam tradisi ilmu Islam.

INTRODUCTION

Al-Imām al-Ghazzālī has been called "the proof of Islam" *(Ḥujjat al-Islām)* and his ideas have been greatly influential in the Islamic intellectual heritage ranging from philosophy, sufism, theology to morality. He also has an interesting intellectual journey that formed his religious outlook and attitudes. He lived under the immense pressure of the political and social turmoils that influenced him to face the challenges especially with regard to the problems of *'aqīdah* of the

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ummah. As a great scholar, al-Ghazzālī took up this challenge through studying all the existing problems trying to find the solutions for them in accordance with the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*.

In this paper I attempt to discuss the most controversial issue that of al-Ghazzālī's refutation of philosophy, i.e., *takfīr al-falsafah* knowing that the philosophy itself is something to do with the role of intellect that was fully appreciated in Islam. His accusations and attacks on philosophy, as he indeed repudiated al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā of being immensely influenced by Greek ideas, had stirred various responses among later philosophers and scholars especially in the Muslim world.[1] Fortunately, philosophy is said to come back when an Andalusian scholar, Ibn Rushd, produced his works against al-Ghazzālī's ideas. Thus, the role of Ibn Rushd becomes very important as far as the philosophy in the Muslim world is concerned.

I. Al-Ghazzālī's Life and Works

Abū Ḥamīd ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ghazzālī was born in Tus of eastern Iran in 450H/1058M. His family was engaged in wool merchandise as the word *"Ghazzālī"* means "one spins and sells wool".[2] It was his father's desire to educate both him and his brother Ahmad to be religious scholars *('ulama')*. So they were sent by their guardian then - after their father's death - to study at the mosque in their village. He began studying the basic sciences of Islam such as *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *tawḥīd* (the unity of Allah), *al-uṣūl* (the roots) *manṭiq* (logic) and *kalām* (reasoning theology). His teacher was the famous theologian al-Imām al-Ḥaramayn, Abū al-Ma'āli 'Abd al-Mālik al-Juwaynī under whom he studied from 470H/1077M until he died in 478H/1085M.

In 484H/1094M, after completing his education as he became a leading scholar then, al-Ghazzālī was made a professor at the Nizamiyyah Madrasa in Baghdad, that was currently the greatest learning institution of *Sunni* Islam. A professorship at the school was zealously a sought position among his contemporary scholars. Al-Ghazzālī, however continued to study assiduously all

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1 Even philosophy being attacked but it "in the East has since his day numbered its teachers and students by hundreds and by thousands". See De Boer, T.J. (1965), *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, London: Luzac & Co. Ltd., p. 169.

2 The name is Ghazzālī or Ghazālī, whether attributed to the name of a village or the woman' named Ghazzālī. But his name is mainly related to wool selling, so al-Ghazzālī instead of al-Ghazālī. See: Watt., W. Montgomery (1985), *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, Edinburgh: The University Press, p. 86.

the sciences and schools of thought offered there. He felt he got knowledge significantly made him to claim of understanding all the problems arised in scholarly arena. Consequently, he began to reject the sciences one by one rationally and religiously, until he finally found that the only "right way" to the truth and the reality *(al-ḥaqīqah)* was "sufism", in which he remained as a Sufi until he died in 505H/1111M.

His intellectual developments can be understood through three stages of his life.[3]

(l) The stage of gathering and pursuing knowledge *(al-jam' wa al-taḥṣīl)*. In his book, *al-Munqidh*, al-Ghazzālī explained his attitude towards seeking knowledge and how he investigated every problem related to his *ummah* in order to distinguish between true and false, between tradition and innovation. He said, "I have poked into every dark, made an assault on every problem. I have plunged into every abyss.[4] They were *Bāṭiniyyah*, *Ẓāhiriyyah*, philosophers, theologians, Sufis, worshippers and *Zindīq*.[5] He was truly engaged in the process of furthering his studies through a deep immersion in the teachings of these groups enabling him to gather information he needed. He always declared that he would not leave any group until he really understood its ideas completely. In fact, the group's activities during his time were mainly influenced by the Greek ideas which later greatly affected Muslims' thinking.[6] Thus, he studied them to the extent that he really understood and was able to make judgement on them accordingly.

(2) The stage of scepticism *(al-shakk)*

This stage offers al-Ghazzālī to evaluate critically all information he had in order to eliminate the doubts confusing his mind in the pursuit of certainty *(al-yaqīn)*. Under this mindful pressure while being in a state of doubt, he began to be more critical in towards knowledge he had. His famous statement in this stage

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3 'Abd al-Mu'ṭī Bayūmī (1974), *al-Falsafah al-Islāmiyyah fī al-Mashriq wa al-Maghrib*, v. 2, Cairo: Dār al-Ṭibā'ah al-Muḥammadiyyah, p. 10.

4 Al-Ghazālī (1982), *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*, trans. Watt, W. Montgomery, *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*, Chicago: Kazi Publications, p. 20.

5 Al-Ghazzālī (1969), *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*, ed. Farid Jabre, Beirut: al-Lajnah al-Lubnāniyyah, p. 10.

6 Politically speaking, the time in which al-Ghazzālī lived and labored was a time of agitation and turmoil, witnessing the growing Ash'arism "the scholastic philosophy" which was supported by the Seljuqs, who stood against the Mu'tazilites especially on many issues of the "created and uncreated" of the Qur'an *(khalq al-Qur'ān)*.

(*yanẓur*); who does not observe, does not understand *(yubṣir);* and who does not understand, remains in blindness and misguidance".[7]

So, this philosopher was in doubt for everything that lead him to study critically. This what he means by "doubt" which was nothing than motivating him to further his studies. Perhaps if someone does not doubt something he just accepted without thinking. Hence ignorance and blind imitation were not accepted understanding that Islam is always calling to think and view all the creatures as signs of Allah's creation of the world.

(3) The stage of the certainty *(al-yaqīn)*

Al-Ghazzālī claimed to have reached the climax of his studies, he found the ultimate truth through the path namely Sufism. His last book, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (*The Reviving of the Religious Sciences*)[8] is the product of this stage.

There are two levels of certainty experienced by al-Ghazzālī at this stage. First, he still had a little doubt about the knowledge that could guide him to the truth, although his certainty began to work. In the second level of certainty, he had an absolute certainty, after completing his revision of the knowledge he had.

In fact, Al-Ghazzālī's venture into studying philosophy began in this stage as his book *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah (Incoherence of the Philosophers)* was written explaining his attitude towards philosophy.[9] This was made after being fully

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7 Cf. Mahmoud Hamdy Zakzouk (1989), *On the Role of Islam in the Development of Philosophical Thought*, Cairo: Dār al-Manṣūr, pp. 42-43. This statement is said to be influencing the famous father of modern philosophers, Descartes who actually repeats the same statement. See also Hamdullah Marazi (1987), "Some Reflection on Descartes Method and Source of Knowledge, with Special Reference to al-Ghazzālī's Approach to Philosophy", *Islam and the Modern Age*, New Delhi, Nov., p. 248.

8 Chronologically speaking this book concerns morality, Sufism and religious teachings. It was written by him after he completed writing his books, *"Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah"* and *"Tahafut al-Falāsifah"*. Therefore his true attitude is to be found in this last book *(Iḥyā').* See Na'īm wa Ḥijāzī (n.d.), *fi al-Falsafah al-Islāmiyyah wa Ṣilatuha bi al-Falsafah al-Yūnāniyyah*, Cairo: Dār al-Ṭibā'ah al-Muḥammadiyyah, p. 303. Na'īm and Ḥijāzī mentioned that al-Ghazzālī's *"Iḥyā'"* was authored after finishing writing *Maqāṣid* and *Tahāfut.*

9 Ali Mahdi Khan argues that al-Ghazzālī waged a lifelong war against philosophy is to rescue the orthodox faith championed by theologians who became powerful after the death of Ibn Sīnā (428) as they received supports from the ruling government. His book, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* was set to refute his *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* which was an epitome of the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā. See Khan, Ali Mahdi (1973), *The Elements of Islamic Philosophy*, Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, pp. 79-80.

confident in Sufism alone as the way leading to the truth.[10] The attacks of al-Ghazzālī on philosophy were severe as far as *takfīr al-falāsifah* (accusing philosophers of being unbelievers) was concerned.[11]

2. The Schools of Philosophy and Their Related Sciences

Al-Ghazzālī makes several points regarding philosophy and its related areas.

(a) The schools of philosophers

In *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl,* al-Ghazzālī divides philosophers into three main groups: the Materialists (*al-Dahriyyīn*) who "...deny the Creator and Disposer of the world, omniscient and omnipotent". They are the *Zanādiqah* or irreligious people.[12] Al-Ghazzālī seems to deal with this group of the philosophers briefly. Secondly, there are Naturalists *(al-Ṭabī'iyyīn)* who "...engaged in manifold researches into the world of nature and marvels of animals and plants.[13] Like the first, this group also was not greatly dealt with by al-Ghazzālī perhaps due to the fact that they had no influence on the community. Third are the Theists *(al-ilāhiyyīn)* who, "...are the more modern philosophers including Socrates, his pupil Plato, and the latter's pupil Aristotle.[14] Al-Ghazzālī only argued in depth with this group of philosophers asserting that matters regarding God should not be discussed intellectually in the ways of philosophical trends. For him, human intellect is very limited and much more inclined to fall into error than correctness.

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10 He then resigned from the Nizamiyyah's professorship, leaving behind the post *(al-manṣib),* rank *(al-jāh)* and property *(al-māl).* Al-Ghazzālī had distributed his wealth to the poor and needy and then fled Baghdad to Damascus in a state of longing for God's blessing to guide him to the right way. See Bayūmī, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

11 This dispute had busied many scholars through time, whether supporting or rejecting. Ibn Taymiyyah, for example, rejected any of philosophical arguments about God but ironically he disagreed with al-Ghazzālī's attitude which also used the same weapon of philosophers. Ibn Khaldūn was in favour of al-Ghazzālī as far as his book, *"al-Muqaddimah"*, is concerned. The former also addressed the same form of refutation with a term of *"Ibṭāl al-Falsafah wa Fasād Muntaḥaliha"* (*The Refutation of Philosophy. The Corruption of its Students*). See Ibn Khaldun (1989), *al-Muqaddimah*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, N.J.: Princeton University Press, pp. 398-405.

12 Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Munqidh...*, trans. Watt., pp. 30-31.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 88.

(b) Philosophical Sciences

Al-Ghazzālī did not condemn the philosophical sciences entirely that attributed to the Greek philosophers. He only rejected the science of metaphysics that discuss God *(ulūhiyyāt).* The sciences like logic *(manṭiqiyyāt),* mathematics *(riyaḍiyyāt),* politics *(siyāsiyyāt),* morality *(akhlāqiyyat)* and nature *(ṭabī'iyyāt)* are not related directly to religion. Thus, nothing to worry religiously about them even some of the sciences such as politics and morality are originally derived from the Divine Scripture *(al-kutub al-samāwiyyah).*[15]

Notwithstanding, some observation should be made in order to make sure that the accuracy of their calculations will not necessarily mean that their arguments about God should be accepted.[16] However, al-Ghazzālī remarked that refuting something was not just because of its coming from the philosophers. The truth should be accepted whenever it comes from. In this regard, he pointed out a statement that was said by 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (may God be pleased with him), "Do not know the truth by the men, but know the truth, and then you will know who are truthful".[17] Generally, al-Ghazzālī reminds that accepting their sciences was not nessecarily to accept all their arguments especially about God as stated above. This is to say that the philosophers are not always right and some of his ideas are not accepted because of contradicting the Islamic teachings not because of it is philosophical or coming from philosophers.

3. Al-Ghazzālī's Attacks on Philosophy

Al-Ghazzālī claimed that he was the first to attack philosophy as he never saw any Muslim scholar so far had even given so serious attention on philosophy as he did.[18] He seems to doubt about the effectiveness of the methodologies used by his predecessors to deal against philosophers' arguments.[19] Instead, he claimed to be the first to do, so perhaps had succeeded in approach. Also the others might not have refuted them with *takfīr* or even authoring a special book focusing on the issue. In fact, several scholars before him had worked in arguing the philosophers. Al-Imām al-Juwaynī (d. 1085), his long-time teacher, al-Imām Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Khayyāt, and Ibn Ḥazm (994-1064), all of whom had played a significant role in arguing against philosophical ideas. Al-Juwaynī, for instance,

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15 Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Munqidh...*, ed. Jabre, pp. 20-25.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

17 Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Munqidh...*, trans. Watt., pp. 39-40.

18 Al-Ghazzālī, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

19 *Ibid.*

dismissed the ideas of those philosophers who argue that there is "no beginning for created things". Al-Khayyāt criticized Ibn al-Ruwandī (d. 850 or 900)[20] about the concept of divine knowledge, arguing that the knowledge of God is immortal, and does not change accordingly to the change of the known as held by Ibn al-Ruwandī. Ibn Ḥazm also argued against philosophers on the issue of the created world *(ḥudūth al-'ālam).*[21] Their works possibly paved the way for al-Ghazzālī in his attacks.[22]

According to Bayūmī, the Egyptian professor of Islamic philosophy of al-Azhar, al-Ghazzālī differed from his predecessors in two things: Firstly, he devoted all his attention, in a certain period of his life, to respond to them; secondly, he criticized their ideas intensely, including all their conclusions.[23] Apparently what al-Ghazzālī did, is to deal with philosophical issues not theological as his predecessors did. Even theological arguments being part of philosophy but the issues were in diference. The issue of *"khalq al-Qur'an"* (created Qur'an) for instance, is considered a theological issue and not a philosophical.[24]

Al-Ghazzālī's critics on philosophy were much organized compared to others before him. This is supported by De Boer who says that Al-Ghazzālī directed his attacks from general points of view after thorough-going study, against the entire system of philosophy which built up on a Greek foundation as no such attempt been made before.[25]

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20 He was alleged to be the member of the sect of Barahima, which claimed that there was no need for revelation, because a man can use reason to know the message of the prophet. Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 932) also was said to have the same idea. See Binyamin Abrahamov, "Ibn Taymiyya on the Agreement of the Reason with Tradition", *The Muslim World*, Vol. LXXXII, No. 3-4, Jul.-Oct., 1992, p. 256 .

21 Bayūmī, *op.cit.* pp. 17-18.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

24 Bayūmī implies that the theology *(kalām)* is not philosophy due to their differences in the sources of argument. The theology source is only Islamic faith and Islamic circumstances *(ẓurūf Islāmiyyah)* such as the issues related with *al-imāmah* (the leading position), *murtakib al-kabīrah* (the great sinner) and so on. The sources of philosophy are both Greek philosophy and Islamic faith *(al-'aqīdah al-Islāmiyyah)* in the sense that the philosophers will determine the issues in the light of Greek ideas. If they find them contradictory to Islamic principles they will reconcile them on the grounds that Islam is the religion of intellect. See Bayūmī, *op.cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 49-50.

25 De Boer (1965), T.J., *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, p. 154.

Unlike his predecessors, some doubts arouse about his severe attacks on philosophers. Sulaymān Dunya of Egypt, sees that, his attack in *"Tahāfut"*, had something to do with his personal interest to pursue popularity to become widely-known, to ascend preeminent rank among the scholars of his day.[26] This can be inferred from his statement that he was "not sincere" when he went to teach and the inclination for choosing that work, was to seek higher position and make himself well-known scholar.[27] This can be read from his statement, "I called for it with my speech and my work, that was my purpose *(qaṣdī)* and that was my intention *(niyyati)*."[28]

Al-Ghazzālī earned everything what he sought for, getting a position of professor at Nizamiyyah Madrasa as he willed. The position that was competitively pursued by scholars of his time. After he being in stability in his life, he began to reevaluate his knowledge and tried to correct his life *(muḥāsabah al-nafs)*[29] including his intention. Later, after having this self-criticism, he removed desire to be well-known *(shuhrah)* and as well to enjoy worldly happiness.[30]

During this period, he inspected all his knowledge, bit by bit, beginning with theology *('Ilm al-Kalām)*, and followed by philosophy and its methodology. He did this as a means to reach certainty *(al-yaqīn)*, the truth and reality *(al-'aqīdah wa al-ḥaqīqah)* which he was doubtful before. For this reason also, he attacked philosophy as a dangerous element to Muslim faith. Moreover, he argued that all philosophers become "infidels" due to using their own intellects absolutely in rationalizing religion to the extent that was contradictory to *Shar'*. This probably can be found in a statement of al-Fārābī, "The faculty of intellect offers certainty (*al-yaqīn*) while the *Shar'* offers satisfaction *(iqtinā')*".[31] Although this statement can be interpreted in many ways, but it seems that al-Fārābī's idea is in favour of placing the intellect over the religion.

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26 Al-Ghazzālī (n.d), *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, ed. Sulaymān Dunya, Cairo: Dār al-Ma'arif, p. 66. See also Bayūmī, *op.cit.* p. 20.

27 Al-Ghazzālī, *Munqidh...*, ed. Jabre, p. 36.

28 *Ibid.*, See also 'Abd al-Rāziq, Abū Bakr, *Ma'a al-Ghazzālī fi Munqidhihi min al-Ḍalāl*, Cairo: Dār al-Qawmiyyah, p. 71.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 24. This was confessed by al-Ghazzālī himself. It was said that self criticism *(muḥāsabah al-nafs)* was obligated by the philosophers.

30 Bayūmī, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

31 Cf. al-Sāfī, Muḥy al-Dīn Aḥmad (1978), *Qaḍiyyah al-Tawfīq Bayn al-Dīn wa al-Falsafah*, Cairo: Maktabah al-Azhār, p. 5.

What is obvious that al-Ghazzālī launched his extreme attack on philosophers by using adhominem, such as accusing them as unbelievers, labelling them "foolish" *(al-aghbiyā')* and their arguments as "causing thinkers to laugh" *(maḍāḥik al-'uqalā').*[32] This kind of attack encourages Ibn Rushd to do the same to al-Ghazzālī by calling him as an ignorant evil *(sharr jāhil).*[33] This style of argument, in our view seems to be inappropriate Islamically, even from the intellectual tradition.

4. Three Problems of Philosophy Rejected by al-Ghazzālī

Al-Ghazzālī attacked the philosophers on twenty particulars, seventeen of which he said should be categorized as *bid'ah* (heresy)[34] and the three others should be judged as *"kufr"* (unbelieving). Those philosophers who hold them (three problems) become infidels because they disbelieve in the Prophetic information. Thus, all their views on the matter are inappropriate to Islam. This is the chief error that the philosophers have committed.[35] The others need not to be either affirmed or rejected because they are irrelevant to Islam. These are human sciences such as mathematics, politics, and so on as stated.

The three problems are subject to disbelieving as follow,[36]

(i) eternity of the world *(qidam al-'ālam)*

(ii) the denial of God's knowledge of the particulars *(juz'iyyāt)*

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32 Al-Ghazzālī, *Tahāfut...*, pp. 38-39.

33 Cf. Marḥaba, 'Abd al-Raḥmān (1989), *Min al-Falsafah al-Yūnāniyyah ilā al-Falsafah al-Islāmiyyah*, Beirut: Manshurat 'Awdah, p. 729.

34 Some of these are the everlasting of the world *(abadiyyah al-'ālam),* the God creates the world and the world creates God, denying the attributes *(al-ṣifāt),* denying God knowing Himself, the impossibilty of the miracles to occur *(al-mu'jizāt)* and so on. See al-Ghazzālī, *op.cit.*, p. 46.

35 Al-Ghazzālī, *Tahāfut...*, ed. Dunya, pp. 308-309.

36 'Abd al-Halim Maḥmūd, however, views that it is naturally happened that thinkers who live during the period of no Sacred Scripture *(kitāb muqaddas)* must use their minds to know something and argue in order to know its causes and reasons *(al-'ilal wa al-asbāb).* Then they create their own schools on these matters. When the Sacred Scripture was revealed, there was no way, naturally speaking, to invent the ideas regarding the transcendental world *('ālam al-ghayb).* It is because human thought always inclines to error and to make an error about God's essence is very dangerous thing; thus the submission to the holy texts is a good principle for the wise thinker. See 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (1982), *al-Tafkīr al-Falsafī fi al-Islām*, Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnāni, p. 463.

(iii) resurrection of the body *(al-ma'ād al-jismānī)*

Al-Ghazzālī said that the idea of the immortality of the world is attributed entirely to the philosophers. They argued that it is impossible for the world *(al-'ālam)* to be created, not from immortality *(al-qadīm),* because such a process will affect something related to *al-qadīm* (God) while any change in *al-Qadīm* is impossible.[37] The philosopher's analysis is based on analogy: since every change means weakness or decrease, *(kullu taghayyur nāqis)* it is definitely impossible for God to change. The philosophers can not imagine that the world was not, and then was.[38] For them that the world and God must have the same attribute whether the both are created *(ḥadīth)* or uncreated *(qadīm)* while the former is impossible, therefore, the answer is, both are immortal or uncreated *(al-qadīm).*[39]

In reply, al-Ghazzālī argued that the world's coming out from *al-qadīm* is nothing wrong, and it does not necessarily affect any change in *al-Qadīm,* because *al-Qadīm* has His immortal will which He can create the world at any time He wants. Thus, it is nothing wrong in saying that the world was created by His immortal will. As to their saying that it is unthinkable that something existed in the pre-eternity *(al-zamān qabl al-zamān),* al-Ghazzālī said that this kind of statement must not attract our attention either.[40] He, indeed, said that the time and the world are created *(ḥudūth al-zamān wa al-'ālam)* in the sense that there was God and the world was not, then the world was *(kān Allāh wa lā al-'ālam, thumma kān Allah wa al-'ālam).*[41]

Concerning the knowledge of God, al-Ghazzālī accused the philosophers of saying that God does not know about changing particulars *(al-juz'iyyāt al-mutaghayyirah)* because God's knowledge is not dependent on time. God knows entirely *(kullī).*[42] Therefore, the knowledge of God does not differ either previously, presently and in the future. Based on this analogy, the philosophers maintain that the knowledge of God is consistent and does not change either. For them (philosophers), change can not be attributed to God, for it can undermine the holiness of God. Their argument is based on the nature of both knowledge and the known *(al-ma'lūm).* When the known changes, knowledge will

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37 Al-Ghazzālī, *Tahāfut...,* pp. 49-50.

38 *Ibid.,* pp. 65-66.

39 *Ibid.,* p. 65.

40 *Ibid.,* p. 66.

41 *Ibid.,* p. 66.

42 *Ibid.,* p. 166.

consequently change, and the change in the knowledge will cause the knower (God) to change, too, that is entirely impossible for God to change. *(Al-'Ilm tābi' li al-ma'lūm yataghayyar al-'ilm bi taghayyur al-ma'lūm, idha taghayyar al-'ilm faqad taghayyara al-'ālim la maḥālah, wa al-taghayyur 'alā Allāh muḥāl).*[43] Therefore, it is not appropriate for God to know this kind of changing of the known that lead him to receive a change too (in His changing knowledge).

In response to this analogy, al-Ghazzālī simply argued that whatever interpretations they give about this, their opinions absolutely contradict what is basically known from the religion *(ma'ulima min al-dīn bi al-ḍarūrah):* that God knows every thing, as stated clearly in the Qur'an. That God knows even a very small thing *(mithqāl al-zarrah).* Nothing is to be veiled from God's sight.[44]

The third key problem is about the resurrection of the body during the Day of Judgement. Al-Ghazzālī argued that the philosopher's view is that since only the intellect *('aql)* is the tool of the philosopher for understanding, the "resurrection" is for the body in the sense that the reward and punishment are to be felt only by the soul *(al-rūḥ)* and not the body at all.[45] Even al-Ghazzālī agreed with the philosophers regarding the immortality and the substance of the soul *(khulūd al- nafs wa baqā'uha)* and also about soul enjoyment and soul suffering, but everything about this information is derived from the *Shar'*, not the intellect. Al-Ghazzālī said that the philosophers had rejected the idea of the heaven and hell, and that was absolutely unacceptable and definitely contradicted the basic teaching of Islam.[46]

Among the philosophers, however, including al-Rāzī, viewed the intellect and the *Shar'* both affirm the immortality of the soul *(khulūd al-nafs).* In this case, according to al-Rāzī there was no difference between al-Ghazzālī and Ibn Sīnā in this issue, because the latter viewed that the mortal body was impossible to return exactly as it is, but rather as alike (similar body). Al-Ghazzālī also viewed that what is resurrected is not the previous body, but a body that is just alike.[47] Therefore, it is no dispute between them on this. Apparently, the dispute between al-Ghazzālī and Ibn Sīnā, however, refers to their different points of view

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43 *Ibid.*, p. 165.

44 Qur'ān, 34:3, "...who knows unseen, from whom is not hidden the least little atom in the heavens or on earth ..."

45 Al-Ghazzālī, *op.cit.*, p. 241.

46 *Ibid.*

47 See Abū Sa'ādah, Ḥusayn (1989), *al-Nafs wa Khulūduhā 'ind Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, Cairo, p. 294.

regarding the source of knowledge despite the result is the same. Al-Ghazzālī knows it (soul immortality) through the *Shar'* and Ibn Sīnā knows it through the intellect. The latter actually said clearly that the bodily resurrection is absolutely right but we know it from the *Sharī'ah* and from the Prophet peace be upon him. No other sources can be able to prove it.[48]

However, some doubts arise about al-Ghazzālī's understanding in this matter as remarked by Bayūmī, that al-Ghazzālī is not seemingly very objective in his commentary on the philosopher's ideas, especially in regard to two problems : the knowledge of God about particulars (*juz'iyyāt*) and the resurrection of the body (*al-ma'ād al-jismānī*).[49] Ibn Sīnā, whom al-Ghazzālī criticized, never said that he rejected the knowledge of God with the particulars that throw him into the possibility of being an unbeliever.[50]

In general we find that al-Ghazzālī criticized the philosophers because of their arguments based totally on intellect, while he insisted that not everything in religious teachings can be perceived by men's intellect which is limited. For him, the *Shar'* must stand side by side with the intellect. Regarding the relation between both *Shar'* and the intellect, al-Ghazzālī said, "the intellect is the foundation on which the building of religion *(Shar')* is constructed, and it is impossible to imagine a building *(al-binā')* without foundation *(al-asās),* and a foundation without a building is without use".[51] Thus, the relation between the two *(al-asās wa al-binā')* is so close that they can not be separated. To reject the role of the intellect in religion is a sign of ignorance. The separation between both is totally rejected in Islam.[52]

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48 Ibn Sīnā (1949), *Risālah al-Adhawiyyah fi Amr al-Ma'ād*, ed. Sulaymān Dunya, Cairo: al-Fikri al-'Arabi, pp. 11 & 13. Dunya argues that if we accept al-Ghazzālī's statement, it means that Ibn Sīnā was uncertain that sometimes he rejected the idea of bodily resurrection and sometime he agreed with it. Nevertheless, al-Ghazzālī refuted to accept this because he argued that the philosophers seem to convince that all the statements of the *Shar'* about the matter are addressed to the common people who lack of philosophy.

49 Bayūmī, *op.cit*, p. 48.

50 *Ibid.*

51 Al-Ghazzālī (1981), *Ma'ārij al-Quds fi Madārij Ma'rifat al-Nafs*, n.p.: Dār al-Fikr al-Jadīdah.

52 As far as the Qur'an is concerned, its call for using the intellect are understood as the calls to philosophizing in Islam. Therefore, the Qur'an by its nature and the way it implies, calls for the philosophy. See Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsa (1982), *al-Qur'ān wa al-Falsafah*, Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, p. 64.

Therefore, what al-Ghazzālī did, is in line with the Islamic teachings on the grounds that each idea, except those coming from the Prophet, is subjected to either acceptance or rejection. The great philosophers like al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā are also human beings who probably make mistakes and errors in their arguments. When they were shocked by the ideas of Aristotle, they - as the Muslim philosophers who love both Islam (*sharī'ah*) and philosophy *(ḥikmah)* - tried to reconcile them with their religion in order to demonstrate that Islam is the religion of intellect *(dīn al-'aql).*

As creative Muslim philosophers, they both tried to do so based on their understanding of Islam itself. Probably they are sincere in doing so but unfortunately they went beyond what is allowable religiously: as God says in the Qur'ān, ".....of knowledge is little communicated to you". (Qur'ān: 17:85).

Academically, we should study the ideas of Ibn Rushd who came to defend the philosophers against al-Ghazzālī's attacks. In his books, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* and *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, Ibn Rushd affirmed the incoherence of al-Ghazzālī's book of *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah.* This polemic has been a significant argument between the two eminent scholars which has greatly influenced the later philosopical discussions.

5. Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā in al-Ghazzālī's View

Al-Ghazzālī recognized in his book *"Tahāfut al-Falāsifah"* that al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā are the best commentators on Aristotle's philosophy as they both were able to understand and transmit it properly. What others had done, instead, seems to be much corrupted *(taḥrīf)* and deviated *(tabdīl),* from the authentic philosophical ideas of Aristotle. Therefore, al-Ghazzālī attacked philosophy referring to the interpretations provided by both philosophers. He was confident in their understanding, in the sense that what they transmitted was true and perfect, because they both really understood Aristotle's philosophy and no one else had their excellent understanding.[53]

Generally speaking, al-Ghazzālī recognized them as the representative of the Greek philosophers in Islamic philosophy, as he mentioned their names in his, *"al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl"* and *"Tahāfut al-Falsafah wa al-Falāsifah".* According to Majid Fakhri, Ibn Sīnā did not blindly follow all the Aristotelian doctrines. Thus, he disagrees with the idea that branding Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī

[53] Al-Ghazzālī, *Tahāfut...*, ed. Dunya, pp. 74 & 76.

as neo-Platonists. He considered this as misinterpretation of his philosophy.[54] Fakhri further viewed that al-Ghazzālī was influenced by the Ash'arite school of theology, which stood against the contemporary Mu'tazilites. Unfortunately, in his view, Ibn Rushd continued the same misinterpretation when counterattacking al-Ghazzālī's arguments against al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā.[55]

6. Implications of al-Ghazzālī's Attacks

Critical views in academic works are very useful and always play a constructive role in the development of thought and Islamically, there is nothing to worry about the variety of views that are the consequences of freedom. Al-Ghazzālī's attack on the philosophers and their ideas, however, has invited ongoing debate and arguments among the Muslim scholars even became popular among the masses' perception of philosophy itself.

The question I am exploring is about the circumstances that made a scholar having an idea especially controversy one. Perhaps the question of methodology of al-Ghazzālī himself that drew attentions of some scholars whether to support or to oppose. A great deal of the scholars such as Ibn Rushd (1126-1198), al-Rāzī (1149-1209),[56] Ibn Taymiyyah (1262-1327),[57] Abū Barakāt al-Baghdādī (547 or 548/1152) and Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406) paid attention on al-Ghazzālī.

According to Bayūmī, al-Ghazzālī's critics on philosophy might have contributed in terms of providing his successors with a method to follow in doing the same critical works against the philosophers. Abū Barakāt al-Baghdādī[58] for

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54 Cf. Parviz Morewedge (1972), "A Major Contribution to the History of Islamic Philosophy", (a review article), *The Muslim World*, Vol. LXII, No. I., p. 155 .

55 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

56 Al-Rāzī was considered the thinker of the 12nd century standing on the same level of al-Ghazzālī in studying philosophy and theology *(al-Kalām)*. See Majid Fakhri (1974), *Tārīkh al-Falsafah al-Islāmiyyah*, trans. Kamal al-Yazdi, Beirut: Dār al-Muttahidah li al-Nashr, p. 437.

57 Like al-Rāzī, Ibn Taymiyyah was recognized as an eminent scholar especially in his criticism of philosophy. See, Fakhri, *op.cit.*, pp. 441 & 437. In making a comparison between al-Ghazzālī and Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad Rashād Sālim sees that unlike Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Ghazzālī in his works seems not to completely free himself from philosophal elements. See Sālim (n.d.), *Muqāranah bayn al-Ghazzālī wa Ibn Taymiyyah*, n.p: Silsilah Zād al-Musāfirīn wa Tanbīh al-Ghāfilīn, p. 29.

58 He was originally a Jew of Baghdad and converted to Islam. He was famous as a medical doctor *(al-ṭabīb)*. Ibn Taymiyyah in his book, *"al-Radd 'alā al-Manṭiqiyyīn"*, praises him for his works against Aristotle and Peripetics *(mashā'iyyin)*, saying that he was closer to the *Sunnah* in comparison even to

instance, used al-Ghazzālī's methodology in criticizing Ibn Sīnā and other. In fact, the development of Islamic thought after the period of al-Ghazzālī is much to do with criticizing the past rather than demonstrating one's excellent intellect, or creativity or putting forth new ideas.[59]

Bayūmī further explains that the situation also stimulated jurists *(fuqahā')* and theologians to criticize philosophical ideas, especially on account of their lack of outstanding philosophers as well as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā at that time. This probably makes the philosophical activities no longer active, strong, and developed as it was in the era of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā.[60] In this era philosophy failed to succeed in attaining for itself a commanding position, or retaining the consideration which it once enjoyed.[61]

This situation created more trouble when the 'Abassid Caliphate of the Abbasid near the end of it's reign-in order to serve political interests - began to discourage the writing of philosophical works, backing the people in their rejection of philosophy. The ensuing environment did not help the philosophers to develop. Therefore, the philosophical arguments were forced to be done in concealment under the rubric of theology *(kalām)*. Works of philosophy became mixed with works of theology as a result. (During this time, theology was not considered as part of philosophy, and theology became an independent discipline).

It seems that many growing scholars tried to follow al-Ghazzālī by studying his logic, and using it and philosophical arguments as well,[62] but in a very careful manner e.g., hidden under the name of the theology. Obviously it is difficult to distinguish between philosophy and theology in their works.[63] The most famous works of this sort are: *Muḥaṣṣal Afkār al-Mutaqaddimīn wa al-Muta'akhkhirīn* by al-Fakhr al-Rāzī,[64] *Abkār al-Afkār* by al-Ḥamīd, *al-Mawāqif*

Ibn Sīnā, who lived among the theologians opposing the attributes, and Ibn Rushd who lived among the *al-kalabiyyah*. Cf. Huwaydī (1979), *Dirāsāt fi 'Ilm al-Kalām wa al-Falsafah al-Islāmiyyah*, Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfah, p. 245.

59 Bayūmī, *op.cit.*, p. 49

60 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

61 De Boer, *op.cit.*, p. 169.

62 De Boer views that theological movement in Islam was strongly influenced by philosophy. See De Boer, *ibid.*, p. 154.

63 Muṣṭafa 'Abd al-Rāziq (1944), *Tamhīd li Tārīkh al-Falsafah al-Islāmiyyah*, Cairo: Lajnah al-Ta'līf wa al-Tarjamah wa al-Nashr, p. 294.

64 According to Muṣṭafa 'Abd al-Rāziq, Al-Ghazzālī and al-Rāzī were the first who wrote about the theology *(al-Kalām)* after the logic *(al-Manṭiq)* became an independent discipline of philosophy. They represented the latter Ash'arite theologians *(al-mutakallimīn al-mutaakhkhirīn)*. See 'Abd al-Rāziq, *op.cit.*

by 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 1355) and *al-Maqāṣid* by Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 1390).[65]

The approaches as such were taken and the topics of theology also changed. The practice of beginning with discussing logic in most philosophical books changed to begin with the topics of religious faith or *'aqidah.* The discussion of the substance of God and His attributes *(Dhāt Allāh wa Ṣifātihi)* also changed to the discussion of the topics of being *(al-mawjūd),* or the known *(al-ma'lūm),* which were relevant in proving the truth of religious faith *(ithbāt al-'aqā'īd al-dīniyyah).*[66] Despite such changes, the philosophical methods are hardly annihilated. Historically speaking, the arguments of these theologians are still considered a rich philosophical legacy recognized world-wide.

7. Counterattack of Ibn Rushd Against al-Ghazzālī

Ibn Rushd (1126-1198) declared the incoherence of al-Ghazzālī's book *"Tahāfut al-Falāsifah"* in defending al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā from the attacks of al-Ghazzālī. In his view, their ideas do nothing to contradict Islamic teachings, Islam actually offered full freedom for scholars to understand the verses of the Qur'an and do interpretation of them. What was done by al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, scholarly speaking, is a kind of *al-ta'wīl* (allegorical interpretation)[67] that is permitted by the religion, as God says, "... But no one knows true meanings except Allah And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge." (Qur'ān: 3:7). It should be mentioned that Ibn Rushd's point of views that it is a religious obligation to use intellectual syllogism or both intellectual and *Shar' (al-qiyās al-'aqlī wa al-shar'ī al-ma'ānī).*[68]

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65 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

66 *Ibid.*

67 See Ibn Rushd (1986), *Kitāb Faṣl al-Maqāl wa Taqrīr ma bayna al-Sharī'ah wa al-Ḥikmah min al-Ittiṣāl*, ed. Albr Nas Nādir, Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, pp. 38-39. Some verses in the Qur'an have an apparent meaning *(ẓāhir)* and an inner meaning *(bāṭin).* The early Muslim scholars *('ulamā' al-salaf)* such as the Hanbalites had avoided from interpreting these verses in order not to confuse the common people. They therefore, rejected the *ta'wīl.* See Sharif, M.M (1963), *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Vol. 1, Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, p. 546. *Ta'wīl* means transmitting the words from their original meanings into the metaphorical meanings that do not deviate from what are their customary Arabic meanings as they use metaphorically. See also Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, ed. Muṣṭafa 'Abd al-Jawwād 'Imrān (1968), *Falsafah Ibn Rushd*, Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Maḥmūdiyyah al-Tijāriyyah, p. 16.

68 Ibn Rushd, *Fasl...*, ed. 'Imran, p. 9.

The scholars who are firmly grounded (*al-rāsikhīn*) in knowledge are those who have an excellent understanding, including philosophers who are depicted as the "people of the affirmed *ta'wīl*" *(ahl al-ta'wīl al-yaqīn)*. They are categorized by Ibn Rushd as the people of the proof *(al-burhāniyyīn)* who deserve the wisdom *(al-ḥikmah)*.[69]

Ibn Rushd argued the issues raised by al-Ghazzālī in his mentioned book. Firstly he discussed the issue of the eternity of the world *(qidam al-'ālam)*, arguing that the philosophers are not wrong in their understandings. This is a matter of the religious right *(ḥaqq shar'ī)* they deserve.[70] Despite their insistence on the eternity of the world, they do not mean that the world was created by itself; apparently, the creator of the world is also God (Allah).[71]

In regard with the philosophers' view of knowledge of God, Ibn Rushd simply argued that whatever they said about, they did not mean that something was veiled from the knowledge of God. The philosophers only wanted to show a vast difference between the way God knows in comparison to the way we get our knowledge.[72] This is not to argue that they denied the knowledge of God about everything that happen, in the past, present and in the future.

The bodily resurrection was secondly defended by Ibn Rushd. For him, the philosophers do say that God will return the soul to a similar body *(ila al-mithl)* not to the same previous body *('ayn al-badan)* which has been in dwelt by the soul during its worldy life.[73] A thing can only return as an image of that body which has perished, not as a being identical with the body itself which has perished.[74] Rationally speaking, it is impossible to the perished body to return exactly as it is. This rationality probably refers to the philosopher who held that only the souls are survived and all the bodies are worthless.[75] In this contact, Ibn Sīnā assumed that the resurrection of the body can be known just through the

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69 *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

70 Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl...*, ed. Nadir, p. 21.

71 *Ibid.*

72 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

73 Ibn Rushd (1971), *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, ed. Sulaymān Dunya, Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, pp. 871-872.

74 Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, trans. Simon Van Den Bergh, Vol. I, London: The University Press, 1954, p. 362.

75 Fazlur Rahman (1979), *Islam*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 119. See also al-Fārābī, Abū Naṣr (1346H), *al-Ta'liqat*, Hydrabad: Dā'irah al-Ma'ārif al-Uthmāniyyah, p. 14.

Shar' only, not intellect, because to him the matter is beyond rationality.[76] He says that the idea cannot be accepted by the reason and we just accept it only through the *Shar'*. This statement does not mean that he refuted the idea of the bodily resurrection which clearly said by God in the Qur'an. Therefore, Ibn Rushd argued that there is nothing wrong with Ibn Sīnā's ideas on this issue even if he (Ibn Sīnā) said that the resurrection involve the soul alone.

Generally, when talking about the attitude of Ibn Rushd in this case, he is seemingly convinced that the verses of the Qur'an are sometime addressed to the common people in order to make them understand easily through empirical approaches (This idea was strongly rejected by al-Ghazzālī). For him, the common people *(khiṭābiyyūn) are not designed by nature to understand those messages which are difficult to the*m: the messages go beyond their ability. Because of that, he argued that the ambiguous verses of the Qur'an should not be addressed to them openly,[77] in order to keep them away from the possibilities of misunderstanding the certain verses of the Qur'an.

Ta'wīl should be kept back as esoteric knowledge, far from being declared to the masses.[78] They run a higher risk at losing their faith then the learned.[79] The idea of bodily resurrection as literally described by God in the Qur'an, actually tends to serve the purpose of warning them for the sake of obeying God's commandments (*al-awāmir*) and avoiding the forbidden *(al-nawāhi).* This is made to attract those who can merely understand something literally rather than metaphorically, as the philosophers or the scholars do.

By speaking of physical punishment, the common people can understand what is needful very well. That is the point of view on which the philosophers base their arguments. So their understandings do not cause them to lose faith in Islam as a religion of freedom that has as the same purpose as philosophy to seek the truth and the reality *(al-ḥaqq wa al-ḥaqīqah).*[80] Therefore, al-Ghazzālī has no right to condemn those philosophers who actually practise the *ta'wīl.*[81]

Ibn Rushd seems to be very concerned about the issue of *"takfīr al-falāsifah"* and he rejected this idea by arguing that the philosophers such as al-

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76 Ibn Sīnā, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

77 *Ibid.*

78 Sharf, M.M, *op.cit.*, p. 546.

79 Josep Puig Montada, "Ibn Rushd Versus al-Ghazzālī: Reconsideration of a Polemic", *The Muslim World*, LXXXII, No. 1-2, Jan-Apr. 1992, p. 116.

80 *Ibid.* p. 28.

81 Sharif, *op.cit.*, p. 546

Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā have right to interpret the verses of the Qur'an. Their discussions are regarding the subdivisional *(furū')* matters but not the fundamentals *(al-uṣūl)* of the religion. As far as *ijtihād* is concerned two rewards are given for the correct judgements and one reward for incorrect judgements. Since they are obligated to exercise *al-ta'wīl* which probably involve controversial ideas and whatever they conclude they should not be accused as unbelievers.[82]

CONCLUSION

The practicality of al-Ghazzālī in his understanding of philosophy should be followed by the Muslims. He takes up the challenges when he perceives the pervading of foreign culture and ideas into Muslim communities at that time. The philosophical ideas that originated basically from foreign community are critically faced by al-Ghazzālī. He declares his stand on philosophical issues after fully understanding all their ideas. Finally, he rejects the use of intellect alone in terms of studying problems related to God because he feels the intellect is very limited and is unable to sink in this deep ocean of the Divine Mystery *('ālam al-ulūhiyyah).*

However, he is very positive in exploring the Greek sciences on the grounds that Islam encourages the Muslims to learn all the knowledge because all the knowledge is from God and whoever finds it deserves it. Therefore, he does not blindly attack all the sciences of Greek in the sense that some of them are human sciences that have no relevance to the religion in terms of affirmation or rejection. He accepts the knowledge whenever comes from.

Even his *Tahāfut* was later on rejected completely by Ibn Rushd's *Tahāfut*, but both *Tahāfut*s (incoherences) are considered as a rich intellectual debate within the world view of the Islamic tradition[83] and both actually "picture the ideas which were in play on the stage of Islamic civilization during the fifth and sixth/ eleventh and twelfth centuries".[84]

As an outstanding scholar, I think, Ibn Rushd has right to reject all al-Ghazzālī's accusations especially with arguments that based on the Qur'an and *al-Sunnah.* We have to see this kind of polemics between the Muslim

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82 Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl.*, ed. Nadir, p. 22.

83 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "On the Teaching of Philosophy in the Muslim World", *Hamdard Islamicus*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Summer 1981, p. 56.

84 Sharif, M.M., *op.cit.*, p. 556.

philosophers as *al-ijtihād* which the qualified scholars deserve it. Thus, the polemic tends to be a natural activity that simultaneously represent the real tradition of intellectual development in Islam. It is a secret of God who creates the people in different levels of wisdom and creativity.

I think the attitude of al-Ghazzālī and Ibn Rushd should be the attitude of the Muslim scholars all the time. Religiously speaking, al-Ghazzālī and Ibn Rushd are much concerned about the Islamic teachings and they both argued the issues in the light of the Qur'an and *al-Sunnah*. The way that the Muslim scholars always deal with the theological and philosophical arguments along the history.[85]

All in all, Muslims should thoroughly understand the ideas, so that they will be able to marshall arguments in order to counter them on the grounds of the Islamic teachings. This will be more useful in in the present time. Ignorance can do nothing, and the ways al-Ghazzālī and Ibn Rushd face the challenges in their lives should be greatly appreciated.

[85] Musa, *op.cit.*, p. 64.

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