Community of One: Al-Ghazali's Ethical Theory Revisited

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ABSTRACT

It is more than eight hundred years since Al-Ghazali's death (1111 AD). Yet his writings are still controversial and a source of contention between those who loath what Al-Ghazali represented (Mohammed al-Jabiri), and those who are more sympathetic and positive towards his writings (for example Ormsby). Yet neither his critiques nor admirers have been able to offer a meaningful and systematic ethical theory based on al-Ghazali's writings. Using analytical and synthetic method of analysis or what is known as deconstruction and reconstruction in critical theory, we were able to identify two ethical frames in Al-Ghazali's writings. First, puritarian ethical model or what Al-Ghazali himself called community of one. This model is constructed around two notions, first, faith and certainty and the other is purification and experiencing God. The other ethical model, which was totally ignored by his critiques and underused and under developed by his admirers, is that of community of common believers' ethical model. This later model is very much society includes the following elements: wealth and public goods; avoiding harm and introducing compassion; burden of injustice. This demonstrates that, Al-Ghazali had a highly developed sense of what it meant for an individual to be ethical and moral, and also a notion of ethical and moral society in which injustice is the worst of all evil. By doing that we were also able to bridge what seemed to be contradictory ethical models in Al-Ghazali's writings.

Keywords: Al-Ghazali, Ethical Model, Justice; Community; Public Good, Deliberative Politics, Overlapping Consensus, Translating Ethics, Critical Theory, Religion and Politics, Arab-Islamic Thought.

INTRODUCTION

literature Review and Research Problem

My early Knowledge of al-Ghazali was through reading Mohammed al-Jabiri's works, which almost without exception made a reference to al-Ghazali. The negativity of al-Jabiri towards al-Ghazali was rather chilling. In retrospect, however, it was totally unjustifiable. Indeed, elements of al-Jabiri's ethical theory which he attempted by way of rereading the Quran (al-Jabiri, Fahm al-Qurn Vol.2 (Understanding the Quran), 2008: 398-418), were already more developed and more systematic in al-Ghazali's writings. In fact, al-Jabiri had simply ignored the most fundamental aspects of al-Ghazali's ethical theory. Indeed, reading al-Ghazali using the later's own works led me to question Whether I Was reading the same al-Ghazali, al-Jabiri was commenting on. Al-Jabiri simply equated al-Ghazali's

ethical frame to that we identified here as the puritarian ethical model, which later to be equated with a form of sufficism. This, however, led to a distorted and misleading view of al-Ghazali, compromising the integrity of al-Ghazali's works which al-Jabiri intended to review and revisit.

Hans Kung (Kung, 2007: 354-365) is certainly more sympathetic to al-Ghazali, but he also continued to perceive al-Ghazali merely through that puritarian model. Michael Cook (Cook, 2000: 605-646) examined al-Ghazali's view and stand towards the-Islamic principle of commanding right and forbidding wrong. This is a welcome departure from the view that al-Ghazli was a disconnected theologian from reality of society and power. However, Cook's analysis failed to place al-Ghazali's view of the principle of commanding right in any broad ethical frame. In other words, the principle of commanding right was seen as disconnected from al-Ghazali's ethical frame.

This is also true of Carole Hillenbrand (Hillenbrand, 1988: 81-99) treatment of al-Ghazali's view of political

authority. It remains true, however, that both Cook and Hillenbrand helped to shift focus away from the merely puritanical aspects of al-Ghazali's ethical theory. Eric Ormsby (Ormsby, 2008; 1994; 1990; 1991), who made a distinguished intellectual career writing on al-Ghazali confined himself to issues of methodology and philosophical issues including the idea of dream (Ormsby, 2007). However, in his introductory work on al-Ghazali (Ormsby, 2008), Ormsby never attempted to offer a comprehensive ethical theory of al-Ghazali.

Justification and Research Questions

The need to revisit al-Ghazali's ethical theory is, therefore, self-evident. The idea that al-Ghazali was one-dimensional theologian disconnected from reality of society and power was not true. The question then what are the elements of such an Islamic ethical theory based on al-Ghazali's writings? What does define Such ethical theory? In other words, What was the moral guiding principle behind al-Ghazali's writings?

Methodology and Structure

The most appropriate method in addressing these questions is that of analytical and synthetic method, known also in critical theory literature as that of deconstruction and reconstruction (Devetak, 2009: 191-192); (Ingram, 2004: 1-29). By using this method interpretation of intellectual, social, political and economic phenomena. Revisiting a certain phenomenon leads to identifying elements relevant to it by a process of deconstruction. It follows by reconstructing such elements into a new frame in which it offers new and perhaps different reading to such phenomenon. In our case, an ethical frame based on al-Ghazali's writings.

By applying such method we were able initially to draw a distinction between two distinct ethical models which appear to be contradictory. The first ethical model is that of puritarian ethical model, which al-Ghazali himself called community of one or ethical frame of dispersed individuals (Furad). Two elements were identified to be of direct relevance to such model namely, faith and certainty and that of purification and experiencing God (Section II). The other model is that of ethical frame associated with common believers. This is very much at the heart of al-Ghazali's social and-moral theory. Using Method of deconstruction the following elements were identified including: wealth and public goods (Section 111.1); avoiding harm and introducing

compassion (Section 111.2) and finally, evil of injustice (Section 111.3).

Hypothesis

We initially had to contend with this apparent contradiction between these two ethical models. Although, we accept that each ethical model has distinct characteristics and special zone of application, there is an overlapping common theme between the two. Al-Ghazali had a highly developed notion of ethical and moral individual and also of society. Both individuals as well as society had to avoid supporting injustice.

Faith and Certainty.

Certainty and absolute faith is the capital of religion (al-Ihya: vol.1 : 102). This very assertive statement by al-Ghazali captures not only his intellectual journey, but also the central concern of his vast intellectual project.

The fundamental question on al-Ghazali's mind had always been what did it mean to have a faith? Equally relevant was the defining feature of that faith and what would be the implications of that identification for the conduct and manner of individual believer? Al-Ghazali took the idea and notion of God very seriously indeed. His true model was that of community of one, the individual as a nation.

Stated positively and in a manner close to the idea of definition, al-Ghazali's notion of faith was an absolute and certain belief in God the-One, the provider, the Overseeing who hold in his power to reward and punish (al-Ihya, vol.1: 105-106), both in this world and the world after. Uncertainty is not a faith. Faith is where uncertainty ceases to exist (al Ihya, vol. 1: 33).

Al-Ghazali both in method and personal life certainly had experimented with different ways and possibilities for reaching a given religious certainty. It is true that al-Ghazali's famous title of Refutation of Philosophers and that of Iqtisad Fi al_Itiqad (Essentials of Faith) are different from say Revival of Religious Sciences (hence Ihya) both in method as well as literally style, they all have one element in common namely search for certainty. Indeed, one reason which al-Ghazali himself cited as a motive for writing his Refutaion was his conviction that philosophers had created uncertainty in the mind of believers whether in relation to the essentials of faith particularly related to God the creator and by creating doubt about relevance of rituals to Islamic faith. (al-Tahafut, 2010: 41, 51)

Al-Ghazali's tactic was to shift uncertainty to the philosopher's camp by demonstrating through reasoning the falsehood of their conclusions. Al-Ghazali had hoped that by doing that certainty of faith would have be restored.

Al-Ghazali was aware that casting doubt concerning some of the philosophers' conclusions may provide a breathing space for certainty of faith to emerge, by itself it could not have provided a definit answer about God's existence nor God's attributes. Indeed, al-Ghazali promised- in his refutation to deliver which he did by. writing Iqtisad Fi al-Itiqad. This later work had major aim in mind namely to show that God's existence and his attributes were demonstrable by reasoning. Reasoning was used to create certainty of faith. Al-Ghazali as we all know, was not himself convinced- that he had the final say on the issue of certainty of faith.

By looking at his later works including-most famously those of al-Ihy (Revival); Deliverance From Error (Munqedh) and that of Meshkat (Niche of light), it was evident that al-Ghazali's confidence in- pure reason to deliver certainty of faith was questionable:

Health and moderation returned to my mind and confidence in necessary reason turned out to be certain and secure.This was not product of demonstrable evidence nor structured argument, but rather as a result of light thrown into my chest by God the Highly Praised, that light is the key to all Knowledge. As for those who belief that enlightment can only be based on demonstrable evidence, they do narrow God's extended mercy.(Munqedh: 29).

As far as al-Ghazali was concerned his soul searching for certainty of faith was over. It would be, however, a mistake to conclude that reaching that point of certainty, al-Ghazali had abandoned rationality and his curiosity for knowledge was but evaporated. Both in his al-Ihya and that of Deliverance from Error, al-Ghazali had maintained that abandoning rationality was not an option. Logic al-Ghazali asserted was neutral tool it could neither prove nor disprove religion. (Munqedh: 40). It was away of looking at methods of evidence, criteria and conditions of proof and how they were constructed (Munqedh: 40). He then added there was nothing in such method to be reprimanded or denied (Munqedh: 40). Also when addressing issue of argumentation (Kalam), al-Ghazali in al-Ihya was very hesitant to pass judgment. Recognizing possible excess of argumentation, al-Ghazali never passed judgment condemning argument and

argumentation. He in fact reminded his readers that the Quran requested- the Prophet Mohammed to "Argue with them, but gently" (Nahl: 125). He agreed that the need For argumentation was not needed as later generations required. However al-Ghazali argued. that occasionally the need for argumentation could be called for to unveil ambiguity or to restore faith (Ihya: 1: 131-35).

There was more fundamental consideration for al-Ghazali's continued regard to reasoning namely, that his model of faith was essentially based on knowledge and contemplation, neither can be labeled as anti-reasoning. Not without a reason al-Ghazali called his major manual of faith Revival of Religious Sciences. Science al-Ghazali maintained what distinguished human beings from animals (al-Ihya: 1: 23). Fruit of science was the treatment of hearts and souls (Ihya: 1: 18). This science was Quranic based, which could only be obtained through knowledge. Al-Ghazali maintained that understanding the Quran was very much open to all-Knowledgeable Muslims. Indeed, al-Ghazali went as far as to argue that to consider certain interpretation of the Quran by distinguished Islamic scholars as the final judgment on the meaning of the Quran was-to prevent one from seeing and understanding. (Ihya: 1: 378). Al-Ghazali's individualistic model of faith was very much reasserted. If one takes the idea of independent path of salvation seriously, as al-Ghazali did, then the issue of tradition and-whether it could be challenged and revisited would remain a constant possibility: They were men and we are men" (Ihya: 1: 111).

Al-Ghazali was certainly not an explorer of an open-ended ideas or an open-ended process of contemplation with no clear objective in mind. Al-Ghazali's quest for certainty was overwhelming, without which he thought his life and others would have been wasted. The absolute truth he was-contemplating did not allow for the possibility of other truths, hence reason with its possible plurality of reasonable truths was not the way of certainty. For al-Ghazali to speak of other truths was very much false alarm.

In two very revealing passages this what al-Ghazali had to say: …. Trust in material evidence was undermined by reasoning and rationalization, without which my trust in material evidence would have remained solid though in error; what have remained solid though in error; what guarantee that there was no other world beyond reason which also could undermine- trust in reason, and being beyond our rational faculties would not

make it impossible… (Munqedh: 28). This led al-Ghazali to conclude that although- God could be recognized by reason, the idea of God was not. Faith based on the idea of God could only be revealed. That revelation was what the idea of prophethood ws about (Ihya: 1: 127). Hence al-Ghazali had to argue that morality and ethics had one source and one source only namely the- revealed truth in the Quran. (Mustasfa, 2008: 75). Reason as David Hume later on had to argue was not the source of ethics (Hume, 1985: 507). Al-Ghazali therefore was concerned not about any God, but a particular and specific God. He was- concerned not about any moral and ethical model, but about specific moral order. Neither of which rightly can be deduced from reason alone: Not every secret can be revealed, not every truth can be exposed and displayed, but heart of the free is the grave of secrets… (Mishkat: 3).

For a man who took the idea of oneness of God too seriously, the possibility of plurality of Gods and truths which reason might lead to was so unsettling and disturbing to al-Ghazali's vey soul to accept. Indeed, one can argue that al-Ghazali's fierce criticism of philosophy in al-Ghazali's Refutation was partly motivated by the fear of developing an ethical order independent of God any God. For a man who even at his lowest moment of spiritual crisis never contemplated to cross. His journey from beginning to the end was to discover God.

Al-Ghazali's knowledge and mastery of inductive reasoning can not be overstated. Al-Ghazali internalized constructing logical argument. In fact, all his books which are usually cited as representation to al-Ghazali's suffi orientation, were actually characterized by detailed and rich inductive reasoning. This include and just to mention the most famous, Ihya; Meshkat; Munqedh. This might sound a paradox. How comes that a man who established that religious truth was not product of reason, maintained such affinity with reasoning. Part of the answer lies in al-Ghazali's notion of-premise. Al-Ghazali accepted that premise of a given argument needed no proof. Hence the idea of God based on Quranic notion was given as-premise. What al-Ghazali did in al-Ihya was to explore the implications of the idea of God (given) for the notion of faith (purification). Relation between theme and subthemes was maintained through inductive reasoning. Similarlily, al-Ghazali's letter of Meshkat, whose notion of sufficism was synonymous, was also structured in similar pattern. God was given as a premise, what he tried to show was how to experience God,

process of demonstrating how was literally inductive reasoning.

But al-Ghazali did not confine himself to use premise as morally neutral term. To the contrary al-Ghazali used his premise as to indicate not only moral attitude, but also as the only ultimate truth. The possibility of building counter argument based on different premises were therefore not available. Thus al-Ghazali's path of salvation through "non-reason", was, in fact, denying the possibility of establishing another truth. As far a al-Ghazali was concerned there could never be another truth. Having established that his premises were not only functional but rather moral premises and the only truth. This allowed al-Ghazali to free himself to inductive reasoning which he utilized in almost all his works and not only those related to jurisprudence.

Purification and Experiencing God

Having established his absolute faith in the idea of God, the Merciful; the Giver of certainty; the All-Hearing, All-Seeing; the Living, the existing; the light that gives right guidance; He who shows the right way and He how has existence, who inherits all (Kung: 88-89), al-Ghazali devoted most of his time and intellectual effort to develop and practice his model of individual salvation. This model has four major characterstics including what al-Ghazali called science of interactions (muamala), revelation (mukashfa), dichotomy of life and after life, and that such model can be followed and-adhered to by very few dispersed and separate individuals (Furada), what al-Ghazali used to call community of one. In life as well as after life the very idea of faith is to live in the shadow of God, and spirituality is a form of experiencing God.

Al-Ghazali defined the focus of his major work al-Ihya to be that of 'science of interaction' (Ilm al-muamala) (Ihya: 1: 31) as away of contrast to that of 'Science of revelation' (Ilm al-mukashafa) (Ihya: 1: 31). However, the contrast between interaction and revelation is not as clear cut as it sounds. Al-Ihya is full of many passages which fall into the realm of revelation i.e experiencing and living almost literally in the-shadow of God. For example the section on "Explaining Wonders of the Heart" (al-Ihya: 3: 3-59) is a clear case in explaining such difficulty. In fact, the most distinguished scholar on al-Ghazali had to add the adjective of "mystical" to interactions, thus blurring such distinction between revelation and interaction (Ormsby: 103). The main

reason behind such difficulty was the way al-Ghazali used the notion of interaction itself. Al-Ghazali used the idea of interaction mainly to mean a process of purification or 'heart cleansing' of all acts and thoughts which might stain believer's heart. That stain was product of desires and temptation associated with and as a result of love of this world. Hence al-Ihya can be seen as a manual structured in almost step-by-step approach as to how to purify one's heart. The ideal devotee is that of who almost totally disassociated oneself from life and worldy issues except those required For maintaining life as a breathing experience. The devotee becomes totally absorbed in certain spiritual experience and becoming part of God's light:

They (ordinary individuals) have forgotten that the true perfection which demanded to be close to and similar to God and his angels, were science and freedom. As to science (we meant) what we mentioned about Knowing God the highly praised, but as for freedom (salvation) it is to free one self from chain of desires, anxiety of the world and attempting to control it by coercion. And that is by following the angles path who are not provoked by desire and are not tempted to anger. Thus getting rid of temptation and anger is a perfection, which is a quality of angles "(Ihya: 3: 349).

In that sense human being ceases to be a human only in name so to join angels as part of the high order of the world. This state of mind or say, spirituality blurred clearly the distinction between process of purification (i.e interaction) and that of revelation in which the later is an expression of a given spiritual state.

Adding to this difficulty that al-Ghazali also used his notion of revelation not only as a state of spirituality and contemplation but also as a process of purification, which distorted the possibility of drawing a clear distinction between interaction and revelation [al – Ihya :1:38-40].

If our intellectual concern is confined to identify and analyse both the process of purification and the state of exalted spirituality as such, then elaborating on the distinction between interaction and revelation becomes of minor importance. However, if we were to revisit al-Ghazali's ethical theory as a whole such a distinction becomes extremely important.

Al-Ghazali's notion of interaction entails plurality of possible ethical orders, where as the notion of revelation entails only one. In fact, the notion of interaction becomes the key or the major building bloc in developing-a meaningful ethical theory based on al-

Ghazali's intellectual contribution. It is true that al-Ghazali never attempted to do that explicitly, but his notion of interaction can provide such opening as I will explore fully in the second part of this paper. In other words, to try to develop a meaningful ethical theory based on al-Ghazali's thought one has to take the distinction between interaction and revelation seriously.

Al-Ghazali's sufficism is very much associated with his "salvation model".A model in which no clear distinction can be drawn between-interaction and that of revelation.In fact, one could argue, that al-Ghazali deliberately in reference to such spiritual journey associated with this very personalized and "individualistic" model blurred the line between interaction and revelation. The key component of such model is that of contempt for the world, 'Love of the world is the source of all vices', asserted al-Ghazali[Ihya:3:83]. In many ways al-Ghazali identified purification as simply anti-worldy concerns. True spiritual traveler has not only to abandon temptation and desire [Ihya:1:39], but also has to be totally and completely devoted to a spiritual experience of contemplation [Ihya:1:362-390], recitation of the Quran [Ihya:1:390-435], prayers [Ihya:1:199-281], self-watchfulness; examination of conscience [Ihya:5:115-161] and remembrance of death [Ihya:5:191-317]. Such demanding strife would make the choice of life of solitude almost inevitable [Ihya:2:293].

It is even questionable whether pursuing a life of absolute purification can be compatible with maintaining life, even if the later was reduced to the bare minimum of mere breathing experience in which faithful could stay alive to worship God only [Ihya:2:123]. This led al-Ghazali to consider and rather accept that true seekers could almost totally disengage from worldy activities including earning a living. Logically this also led al-Ghazali that seekers could sustain their lives relying on share of almsgiving [Ihya:1:294] and charity of others [Ihya:2:81-82].

Al-Ghazali was very much aware that path of salvation was difficult, long and full of obstacles [Ihya:1:174]. For the heart to be totally and only absorbed in the presence of God [Ihya:1:173] is an extreme form of strife [Ihya:1:112]. Path of light, therefore, has never been the pursuit of the many, whose inclination ad nature would always choose the easy way and to decline the rough ride [Ihya:1:110-111].

This road was that of the few even the handful

[Ihya:2:131;137;265] and [Ihya:1:110-111;378], In fact, al-Ghazali argued that if his austere spiritual model were to be adopted by the many that would destroy life not only for the vast majority of people, but also would make life unsustainable for the few and chosen:

Life was sustained by lack of awareness and discipline. If people were rational and high-spirited they would have no desire in life. But if they did, life would be ruined, and when ruined the austeer would also have been ruined as well" [Ihya:3:180].

Al-Ghazali's ethical model of essentially "a community of one" (Ihya: 1: 387) was not intended to be a general ethical frame relevant to society at large. A model in which the adjective of light could only apply to the idea of God in which the seeker would strife to immerse in, was not the business of society but the pursuit of the handful and the few (Mishkat: 11). Failing to recognize that led to reduce al-Ghazali's ethical theory to that of the austere and disconnected from life (Jabiri, Turath, 1991: 161-175).

This is not the fault of al-Ghazali critiques, but of al-Ghazali himself as well. Al-Ghazali never attempted to develop a parallel-ethical frame to that of his austere type. In fact, al-Ghazali occasionally gave the impression that he never bothered to do so simply because it was not worth it! However, elements of such broader ethical frame can be identified in al-Ghazali rich writings. My purpose is first to identify such elements and then second to construct an ethical frame relevant to a broader notion of community than that of the community of one.

111. Community of the common Believers:

Al-Ghazali used his notion of "interaction: muamala) in two distinct meanings. At one level his notion of interaction is not distinguishable from his idea of 'illumination: mukashafa'. And this is not restricted to a state of purification but also can only be followed by the very few (furada). However, al-Ghazali more often than not and particularly in al-Ihya and that of Mizan al-Amal (The Right Measure) used the notion of interaction to reflect human interactions and to put forward an ethical frame relevant to 'ordinary' or "common" Muslim believer. The contrast between the two ethical frames cannot be underestimated. In fact, one can think of parallel universe. Here human fallibility is a acknowledged if not endorsed and the pursuit of absolute form of purification is rather discouraged. Pursing illumination by ordinary faithful would ruin the life not only of ordinary believers, but also that of the few who

are dedicated to purse the path of enlightment to the full. The key explanation offered by al-Ghazali was that of maintaining life without which path of salvation for the few would cease to exist. His notion of the world takes a different character to that of loathing and downgrading of the world evident n al-Ghazali's model of pure-salvation (Section II). In very revealing passage al-Ghazali drew this distinction:

Absolute piety is to restrict the use of lawful (goods) to the bare minimum and to avoid life excess totally and completely. And this is the road to the world after. But now we are talking about jurisprudence which is of relevance to the common interest. Religeous decrees (Fatwa) are calculated to reflect interest. Road of faith (section II) could only be pursued by separate individuals (Furada), and if all creatures (i.e human beings) were to pursue that path, order would collapse and the world would be ruined. (….) So those who pursue worldly concerns were so directed so road of salvation would be secured to those of faith leading to claim of the world after. For the safety of those with faith (pursuing salvation) that the vast majority (of individuals) pursue a different road and occupy themselves with worldly concerns. And this is God's eternal judgment. (Ihya: 2: 137).

Maintaining life, a from of economic cycle, is ensured by inbuilt form of division of labour in the economic cycle of life. Such division was grown out of meeting basic human needs including food, shelter and clothes (Ihya: 3: 277-78). Meeting basic human needs led to the emergence of three groups: First, farmers, shipards and professionals. The other is "soldiers and swordmen" for purpose of protection (al-Ihya: 3: 279) and the third group who are "in between" such as labourers and tax collectors (Ihya: 3: 279-80) and "so are worldy concerns, every door leading to another almost endlessly" (Ihya: 3: 280).

In his economic analysis al-Ghazali came very close to argue that political authority itself, as social-economic grouping, was product of form of division of labour needed-to ensure the smooth operation of the economic system itself, although with a tendcy to abuse it as well. In a sharp and a pen-point observation al-Ghazali remarked that whenever there was a human settlement no matter how small or tiny, it would be characterized by dispute and disagreement (al-Ihya: 3: 279) and then he went on to argue:

So inhabitants of a country when dealing to meet their basic needs, conflict and disagreement ensued, and if they were left to themselves, infighting, would be certain

leading to their ruin. And this applies to farmers and shipards attending to lands and water falling short to meet their needs, inevitably leading to conflict. This led by necessity to the emergence of other professions including 'profession of soldiery' to protect the country by sword and to fend off robbers. And so is the profession of rulership, conflict resolution, and the need for jurisprudence, which is the law needed to control human beings in order to minimize disputes… (Ihya: 3: 279-280).

Excess is amoral vice when it comes to individual conduct seeking salvation (section II), yet when al-Ghazali approached quality of excess in reference to 'maintaining life', he acknowledged, as division of labour, the positive and essential contribution of such quality to a functioning- economic order. In fact, al-Ghazali emphasized that without excess leading to a a surplus in production economic cycle would come to a halt. In that sense, al-Ghazali seemed to draw a clear distinction between moral qualities of individual, and for that matter a tiny minority of them, and that of requirement of maintaining economic order without which life would come to a halt. It is difficult to escape a certain irony namely that the most desirable moral qualities are not those needed to maintain life:

If people were to reduce their concern to the bare minimum (watering their thirst), spending their time in idleness, two deaths would spread among them bringing business and industries into a halt, and the whole world would be in ruin. The ruin of life is a ruin to the-life-after considering that life is a farm to the day after. The main purpose of rules related to authority, judiciary and policies, in fact most judiciary rules, is the preservation of worldy interest, so purpose of religion can-be achieved (Ihya: 2: 135).

Al-Ghazali went on to argue that merely meeting basic individual needs and avoiding surplus would lead to undermining basic Islamic pillars or would make it obsolete including pilgrimage which would require certain financial surplus, almsgiving and all those financial disbursement related as away of expressive repentance on-certain unlawful act, such as not fasting in Ramadan or providing financial donation to support an army for example. (al-Ihya: 2: 136). The very idea of giving a central Islamic ethical virtue as-al-Ghazali himself emphasized (Ihya: 3: book no. 7) would also loose its rationale.

It is however, a mistake to conclude that al-Ghazali when addressing requirements of maintaining economic

cycle, had abandoned moral judgment on economic activities. Far from it, despite al-Ghazali's occasional "Functional" or "utilitarian" remarks, he remained essentially moralist and deeply ethical. It is true that average Muslim may not aspire to be a puritarian, but it is equally unthinkable for any economic order deserving- the Islamic adjective in which morality and ethical-parameters are absent. In the following section I will make al-Ghazali's ethical frame more explicit. Reconstructing this frame is very much based on three books as part of al-Ghazali al-Ihya namely Gain and earning a livelihood, (Ihya: 2: book 3); Lawful and unlawful things (Ihya 2: book 4) and finally, commanding Right and Forbidding wrong (Ihya: 2: book 9).

There are three major parameters defining al-Ghazali's ethical theory namely, an ambivalent stand on issue of accumulation of wealth; a sense of compassion based on avoiding harm to others; and finally evil of injustice.

Wealth and public goods.

Al-Ghazali's 'hostility' towards wealth as a worldy concern is well established (section II). However, and as emphasized repeatedly by al-Ghazali himself and as demonstrated in this paper, al-Ghazali drew a clear distinction between individual preferences which actually and even from utilitarian perspective do vary, as well as what we might call 'system requirement' which can be translated into maintaining life or requirements of an Islamic society Despite certain characteristics of an Islamic society when it comes to system survivability and requirements of maintaining any human settlement and that of Islamic settlement an overlapping is very much evident in al-Ghazali's thinking. Elaborating on the notion of interest and drawing a distinction between two different usages of the term al-Ghazali stated:

(one usage of the term) is acquiring benefit and preventing harm, and we don't use it in that sense, since acquiring benefit and fending off harm is the purpose of all human beings (Khalq), and it is in the interest of human beings to pursue such purposes. But we use interest to mean conservation of purpose and intention of Sharia. Sharia has five purposes (including): maintaining religious faith of believers; protection of (Muslim) lives; conserving their sanity and mental well being; ensuring propagation and protecting their wealth. Every act which assists in protecting and conserving these intentions is an interest, and every act which hinders or prevents fulfilling

such intentions is harm and preventing it is an interest. These five intentions and their conservation are those of necessities, and by (doing so) is the most important interest of all. (Mustasfa: 275)

Protecting wealth was mentioned as one of those purposes or intentions of sharia which deserved attention. Al-Ghazali devoted three chapters of al-Ihya to issues related to generating wealth and public interest including earning a livelihood; lawful and-unlawful acts as well as commanding right and forbidding wrong. In Mizan al Amal (The Right Measurement), Al-Ghazali placed issues related to public interest as a form of worship (Mizan: 120). In al Mustasfa and as the quotation above indicate, al-Ghazali devoted part of this work to issue of interest (Mustasfa: 274-284). Relationship between political authority and notion of interest was highlighted in al-Ghazali's al Iqtisad Fi al-itiqad (127-132)(Essentials to Faith).

When approaching al-Ghazali's view of wealth and by extension that of public interest, it is important to place that in a context. Failing to do that-would give an impression of inconsistency and even contradiction. In the context of al-Ghazali "puritarian model" (Section II), wealth is perceived as worldy pursuit not appropriate to those seeking salvation. However, placed in the context of requirement of life wealth is approached differently but not un ethically. Generating wealth is necessary for life and thus cannot be-condemned as being unethical or a moral. It is, however, subjected to ethical principles (i.e lawful and unlawful).

Generating wealth is a matter of individual responsibility and that of society at large, but interestingly not that of political authority. Political authority is presented mainly as tax collector and / or appropriating surplus in production or more accurately that of generating wealth. Considering that gernerating wealth is an individual responsibility and not that of authority, it is directly and explicitly subjected to ethical principles (Ihya: 2: 78). Generating wealth which implies exceeding individual needs to that of surplus, therefore maintaing the operation of economic order through-constant circulation of wealth. This can be achieved by barter and exchange but also through charity and giving (Ihya: 2:81; 106;111). Al-Ghazali seemed to draw a distinction between generating wealth leading for an economic system to operate and sustain itself which is morally and ethically-justifiable, and that of accumulation of wealth which al-Ghazali condemned (Ihya: 2: 81).

Therefore, al-Ghazali's ethical principles related to generating wealth were presented as consistent with requirement of maintaining life as such.

Al-Ghazali's essentially austere notion of life also allowed him to put forward ethical principles which otherwise would sound very restrictive. For example, al-Ghazali discouraged trade in food staff because trade" is about making profit, which is an extra to one essential need, whereas food staff is essential to life in which no profit should be made" (Ihya: 2: 94). He also-adviced parents not to encourage their children to take up a profession of smith because "it decorates the world with gold and silver" (al-Ihya: 2: 94). In other words, it encourage leisure and indulgence and love of life. For an individual engaged in generating wealth necessary for maintaining life, acting ethically was both possible and advieceble:

For those who pursue life as a way to the life-after, the marketplace, the mosque and the household have only one rule namely-seeking salvation by being mindful of God (Ihya: 2: 109)

Those who are engaged in worldy concerns, generating wealth and contributing to maintaining life, are not the same individuals who are puritan and seeking salvation through total and complete dedication to God and to the experience of being with God (Section II), but nevertheless are ethical and moral individuals. They are more likely to be larger in number to those in (section II). However, whether they constitute minority or majority in-society is not clear. However, being minority-or majority in society does not alter the principles of the ethical order al-Ghazali advocated. In other-words, being a minority or majority would not threaten notion of maintaining life. Al-Ghazali was certainly aware that maintaining life as such was almost self-generating, the question for him was to argue that maintaining life was also possible while individuals acting morally and ethically.

The relationship between generating wealth, thus maintaining life, and that of political authority was product of both utilitarian and ethical considerations. Al-Ghazali considered those in power similar to other groups such as the army, judges, witnesses in courts and those seeking salvation to be financed from the public purse. The main function of such-authority is to ensure 'domestic' peace and protect the Islamic community. Economically speaking those in power were not considered to be productive forces as such and therefore

their contribution to generating wealth is at best indirect (smooth operation of the economic system). Political authority was also entitled to identify and carry out public goods and services. The distributive function of political authority was confined to allocate public funds or endowment according to rules and regulations of sharia (i.e lawful and unlawful). As such political authority was not entitled morally or legally to-confiscate surplus of wealth generated by acts-of individuals for purpose of redistribution. Acts of confiscation and redistribution were both unlawful and also unjust. Al-Ghazali seemed to-argue that 'economic system' as such could ensure-its survivability as well as redistribution of its wealth-by acts of individuals (charity and exchange as-well as division of labour) rather than by the function of political authority.

Al-Ghazali, however, was keenly aware that his notion or narrative of political authority was far removed from reality of political authority both in his time and with rare exception from Islamic long historical experience. Political authority as such-was presented as arbitrary and abusive. It was-difficult For al-Ghazali to defend from moral or ethical stand. Political authority was so intrusive and abusive and totally unrestrained by considerations of what was lawful and unlawful that some as al-Ghazali admitted questioned whether any economic act could be called-lawful. Taking literally and seriously that-would have led to a form of economic absenteeism, endangering in the process individual livelihood as well as that of life itself. Al-Ghazali had to-respond. His argument was two folds: first, those in power and who were associated with them such as soldiers were neither the majority in society nor their wealth was the largest. Al-Ghazali then concluded as such lawful acts were larger and greater than those unlawful acts committed by those in power-and their associates. Second, recognizing that if-economic withdrawal were to become general and-widespread economic life would come to a halt endangering society at large including those seeking salvation. Al-Ghazali response had all qualities of the irony, he contended that even if unlawful acts were over whelming, this should not call for total-absenteeism but rather we should restart again starting from scratch as if nothing had happened-before. Life should continue!

When it comes to generating wealth and maintaining-life, al-Ghazali was far from being dogmatic. He remained essentially ethical and moral. By ranking acts according to their ethical purity from the most pure to the

mere acceptable allowing for system of life to survive. Individual ethical integrity-can be maintained, but the system as a whole had to continue operating. This allowed al-Ghazali to introduce an element of forgiveness (starting anew) to his ethical frame as well as flexibility in applying ethical principles.

Avoiding Harm: Introducing Compassion.

Al-Ghazali's definition of injustice is "causing harm or injury to others" (al-Ihya: 2: 95). Justice therefore, is refraining from causing harm to other Muslim (al-Ihya: 2: 95). Degree of harm varies according whether its impact is confined to single individual, or what Al-Ghazali called private harm(Ihya: 2:96), or more general which al-Ghazali coind as public or general harm such as monopoly (Ihya: 2:93). Confiscating land is an example of private harm and injury to other (al-Ihya: 2: 120). But al-Ghazali went beyond a legalistic definition of injustice to more ethical and moral concern of injury and also compassion. In this section, I take up this later-notion. Issues related to injustice are treated separately.

Al-Ghazali introduced notion of compassion and that of conscious concern of the plight and need of those less fortunate in society as defining morality of economic-exchange and not merely whether it was lawful-and unlawful even just or unjust (Ihya: 2: 111). Duty al-Ghazali contended was a matter of justice and avoiding injustice, but charity and compassion are matter of generosity and voluntary acts (Ihya: 2: 101). Harming or injuring the poor and orphan "is greater evil than injuring the strong and devious. Degree of harm varies with the state of those suffering injury" (Ihya:2:120).

In fact, al-Ghazali designed certain ethical principles of particular relevance to the poor and needy. Although al-Ghazali rejected for Muslim to be cheated by others entering economic exchange, he called for Muslim to be tolerant and eventually to accept being 'cheated' by the poor and needy as a manifestation of compassion and charity (Ihya: 2: 103). Al-Ghazali even recommended for forgiving debt and writing off indebtedness of others who were unable to payback-(al-Ihya: 2: 105). In case a dispute erupted between-creditor and indeptor, al-Ghazali adviced to tilt in favour of those in dept rather than creditor. The reason given to justify that attitude al-Ghazali stated that "creditor offers loan because they possess more than what they need and of being rich those who borrow do that because of need" (Ihya: 2: 105). And so al-Ghazali argued that help should be given more to

the buyer rather than the seller (Ihya: 2: 105).

Al-Ghazali called the principle of commanding right and forbidding wrong as "the greatest pillar" in Islam (Ihya: 2: 377). Indeed, the very rationale of the principle rests with the idea of preventing public harm (Ihya: 2: 283). Yet, one of the occasions in which al-Ghazali called for the-suspension of the principle if carrying out the principle would harm others not directly engaged in the act of "commanding or forbidding". In fact, al-Ghazali considered that by carrying out the principle of commanding right while harm could inflict others by doing so (i.e family members; relatives, associates; neighbours) was a violation to their rights and thus unlawful act. (al-Ihya: 2: 393). Despite the centrality of the principle of commanding right and forbidding wrong to al-Ghazali's ethical frame, he was more concerned with those who could be caught in the 'the cross fire' as a result of carrying out the principle. This reflected al-Ghazali's deep concern for potential victims (Ihya: 2: 398), and certainly innocents.

Al-Ghazali's concern for innocents and potential victims was strongly felt. In responding to an inquiry about the permissibility of using physical-harm (i.e. hitting) against a suspect of theft to ensure the return of stolen good, this what al-Ghazali had to say:

This was the view of Malik (famous jurist), God's mercy be upon him, but we do not endorse it not as a rejection to the notion of interest, but because it contradicts another interest namely that of the accused who could prove to be innocent. Avoiding hitting a guilty person is more bearable than injuring an innocent man. If this would make it harder to regain stolen wealth, that would remain more acceptable than opening the door for torturing an innocent man(Mustafa: 278).

This later citation demonstrates how seriously al-Ghazali took the issue of avoiding harm and a compassion for victims and innocents in society. It was not up to those seeking salvation to hurt others and violate their rights. One central right was their unwillingness to get involved.

Evil of Injustice

Al-Ghazali's preoccupation with issue of injustice is very much self-evident. Indeed, four titles within al-Ihya address issues of direct relevance to injustice-namely the nature of knowledge (al-Ihya: 1:1); gain and earning a livelihood (al-Ihya: 2: 3); lawful and unlawful things (al-Ihya: 2:4) and finally commanding right and forbidding

wrong (al-Ihya: 2: 9). Interestingly, the most famous contemporary Arab critique of al-Ghazali, namely Mohammed al-Jabiri simply ignored totally that aspect of al-Ghazali's writing and contribution (al-Jabiri, Turath wa Hadatha, 1991: 161-175); (al-Jabiri, Takween al-Aql al-Arabi, 1984: 267-68; 275-290); (al-Jabiri, al-Aql al-AkhLaqi al–Arabi, 2001: 583-592); (al-Jabiri, Bunyat-al-Aql al-Arabi, 1986: 436-45).

According to Al-Ghazali all moral judgments and by extension ethical principles are based on sharia (Mustasf: 75) This general principle also-applies to the idea of justice-injustice. However, al-Ghazali used the notion too broadly that one cannot fail to notice its humanistic tone. At the heart of Al-Ghazali's idea of injustice, as stated earlier (111.2) is "causing harm or injury to others" (Ihya: 2: 95). In other words, injustice is a violation of others' rights. The most obvious violation of right is that unlawful confiscation of private property being land or wealth (Ihya: 2: 162): (Ihya: 2: 211-12); (Ihya: 2: 132) That violation of private possession al-Ghazali called as "pure" and absolute unlawful (Ihya: 2: 124). Indeed, he went as far to-argue that using a land confiscated unjustly and turned into a road was unlawful (Ihy: 2: 190). One al-Ghazali contended could be charitable even forgiving with his own rights, he had no right to be forgiving with others right (Ihya: 2: 398). Indeed, being charitable even kind to unjust person is an insult to the victim" (Ihya: 2: 209).

Another form of injustice implying violation of right is the imposition of unlawful taxation such as-Kharaj, (i.e land tax) on Muslims, and the arbitrary use-of jizya (i.e poll tax)(ayubi, 1995: 57-58) in the amount collected, communities and individuals who were subjected to it and-also the unlawful manner it was gathered, were all violation of rights (Ihya: 2: 169, 175); (Ayubi, 1995: 58).

The plight of what practically were slave labour and those were severely underpaid were highlighted by al-Ghazali as manifestation of cruelty, injustice, unlawfulness and thus direct violation of their rights. Two activities were singled out repeatedly by al-Ghazali to illustrate his point, namely, mining and that of restoration and rehabilitation of land by those in power or their associates (Ihya: 2: 169); (Ihya: 2: 133 and 135). Indeed, al-Ghazali extended this notion of injustice to public goods provided for by unjust manner such as unpaid labourer or underpaid ones. These goods include requirement of the defense of the community such as constructing walls for defence or building castels (Ihya: 2: 110-11), other public works included were digging of

canals for purpose of irrigation as well as leveling the ground for construction of roads (Ihya: 2: 169).

The most cruel form of injustice is that of arbitrary power. These are not al-Ghazali's words but the sentiment and the illustration are definitely-his. All elements of what constitute unjust arbitrary rule were identified by al-Ghazali and needless to say were openly condemned. These include failing to prevent injustice; failing to redress wrong doing and unjust acts; maldistribution of public funds (Ihya: 2: 182); (Ihya: 2: 287); (Ihya: 2: 388-89); (Ihya: : 431). Other defining features of an arbitrary rule are cruelty, torture, spreading fear and arbitrary killing even murder (Ihya: 2: 425) and (Ihya: 2: 436) In short, arbitrary rule leads to and characterized by a denial of justice (Ihya: 2: 431).

This brings us to al-Ghazali's notion of moral response to unjust rule and issue of injustice as true embodiment to evil. Individuals should strive to deny injustice any moral or/and material support. Offering any moral or material support to injustice carried a risk of crossing the line of being by stander and not involved, which for al-Ghazali qualified for moral choice, into being partner to injustice. Al-Ghazali's main idea of personal integrity evolves around denying support or endorsement to injustice and unjust acts.

Al-Ghazali narrated a dialogue between a man, who was involved in constructing a fortress for the defence of Islamic community, but which happened to be located in an area administered by unjust ruler, and a jurist asking the later for advice. The jurist as al-Ghazali cited offered this caution:

Do not be of assistance no matter how small to those (who are unjust), the least which might cross your heart was to hope for their survival so your wages were paid, as if hoping for longlife to those who disobey God. (Ihya: 2: 110-11).

To make the point of refraining from supporting injustice al-Ghazali cited another revealing a anecdote about a man asked by soldiers for direction, which led him to pretend being dumb "because he feared that they were heading to commit unjust act, and by giving them direction would be partner to such an act (Ihya: 2: 188).

So seriously al-Ghazali took the notion of denying support to injustice, that he advocated what is vey close to the idea of civil-disobedience. "It was prohibited to trade in markets constructed by unlawful capital. And if people were to find another market, it would be-recommended to move into the other market. Failing to

do so would offer (those unjust) means of support…"(Ihya: 2: 187).

This is the reason which led al-Ghazali to save his severest criticism and even contempt to what he called "jurists of the world", for the single but fundamental reason of being supporters of injustice.

Al-Ghazali understood moral integrity to mean fundamentally telling the truth (Ihya: 2:424-25). Applying this principle to qualities such as hypocrisy, deception and flattery, which al-Ghazali assumed were un-avoidable characteristics of "jurists of the world" brought into focus the contrast between world of morality and the lack of it. (Ihya: 2: 173-174), (Ihya: 1: 97), By themselves despite their compromised qualities may remain harmless extention of vanity, but when used to support injustice they turned to be the worst of evil. In an extraordinary passage al-Ghazali summed up the relationship between 'jurists of the world' and political authority:

Just being with unjust ruler, (religious scholar) could relieve him from the heavy burden of loneliness, thus making it far much easier for rulers who violate every right and indulge in wrong doing, to act unjustly. They (rulers) use you (religious scholar) as a tool to commit their unjust acts; bridge to cross over to their evil work and a ladder to climb to their errors. They use you (also) to create uncertainty and doubt in the mind of other religious scholars and to influence hearts of the ignorants… (Ihya: 2: 178).

No one was immune to be part of injustice or a silent partner to an act of injustice including judges and preachers warned al-Ghazali. (Ihya: 3: 399). Morality and integrity was to refuse to be partner to evil act of injustice. This was al-Ghazali's main ethical principle.

CONCLUSION

Al-Ghazali was, no doubt, deeply skeptical if not pessimistic about possibility of general political and moral reform. His choice of solitude and that of withdrawing from society was partly influenced by a sense of helplessness about the possibility of things might change to the better. Indeed, al-Ghazali's most active ethical principle namely that of commanding right and forbidding wrong was clouded with a sense of despair:

Every one who tried to carry out the principle of commanding right ended up usually regretting it. It was as if trying to support unstable wall fearing to fall down. It ended up falling on him (who carry the principle),

which led him to wish if he had left it as it was. Yes if there were others who offered a hand holding the wall from falling till it was fixed that would be fine. But today we don not find those supporters. Abandon them and escape by yourself! (Ihya: 2: 286-87).

so disheartening al-Ghazali felt about the prospect of change for the better, that he ended up his principle of commanding right with an appeal to God for help!" it is from God we seek support under all circumstances" (Ihya: 2: 437). One reason al-Ghazali gave in support of choosing solitude was "decadent of the world and injustice of rulers" (al-Ihya: 2: 292). Citing Hadith with approval al-Ghazali recalled the question which was put forward to the Prophet Mohammed concerning the possibility of suspending the principle of commanding right and forbidding wrong. Here what the Prophet had to say:

If those good among you become dishonest, those evil among you commit ugly acts openly, ruling becomes in the hand of those with little worth, and jurisprudence turns to be the business of the lowest of the low!" (Cited in Ihya: 1: 67).

Al-Ghazali was also genuinely concerned and fearful of discord and anarchy if political authority were to be challenged systematically and collectively (Iqtisad Fi-al-itiqad: 127-32); (Ihya:2:420-21); (al-Ihya: 2: 175-6). One can also detect that fear for personal safety was not totally off the mark (Ihya: 2: 393).

It is also difficult to escape a certain irony in al-Ghazali's approach and method to economic system compared to that of political authority. Al-Ghazali's approach to economic order (111.1) was very much

system based as well as acts of individuals (i.e exchange and division of labour). However, his approach to political authority was extremely personalized both at the level of those in power (i.e ruler) and those of society as separate and dis connected individuals (Ihya: 3: 398). This created an inbuilt limitation on al-Ghazali's idea of political reform. Indeed, if al-Ghazali opted for his method applied to economic and economic system to that of addressing political authority, he would have opened different notion of possibility about reform and could have also ended more optimistic about chances of reform. The fact remains, however, that he did not.

Despite that al-Ghazali had a highly developed sense of what it meant for an individual to be ethical and moral. Al-Ghazali had also a keen notion of moral and ethical society. Asociety pursing self-sustainability but without indulgence; a keen sense of compassion and avoiding harm to others. And finally, a society in which injustice is the worst of all evil.

If such hypothesis is accepted the implication for placing al-Ghazali's ethical theory in the context of contemporary philosophical debate becomes a real possibility. Two names stand out in this context namely John Rawls' notion of 'overlapping consensus' (Rawls, 1997: 801) in which a meaningful dialogue between religiously based ethical ideas and that derived from secular references could be possible. The other is that of Jurgen Habermas' idea of deliberative politics (Habermas, 2002: 107-125) in which religious ethical ideas could be communicated to skeptical secularists and vice-versa. However, such assertion is stated only in the context of opening new possibilities for further research.

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الفرد الأمة : إعادة تقييم نظرية الغزالي الأخلاقية

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ملخص

لقد مضى على وفاة الإمام الغزالي ما يزيد عن ثمانمائة عام (توفي في عام 1111). ومع ذلك فإن كتاباته ما زالت تثير الجدل بين أولئك الذين انتقدوه بشدة (محمد عابد الجابري مثلاً) وبين الذين يكنون له تعاطفاً ونظرة أكثر إيجابية (اريك او رمزبي مثلاً). مع ذلك لم يتمكن منتقديه ومؤيديه من إعطاء صورة متكاملة ومتماسكة منطقية لنظرية أخلاقية إسلامية قائمة على كتابات الغزالي. باستخدام المنهج التحليلي والتركيبي أو ما يطلق عيه التفكيك وإعادة البناء في النظرية الناقدة، تم تحديد نموذجين أخلاقيين في كتابات الإمام الغزالي. الأول: النموذج الأخلاقي الفردي الذي وصفه الإمام الغزالي نفسه بالفرد الأمة. يحّدد هذا النموذج عنصرين أساسيين أساسيين الأول: الإيمان المطلق بالله والثاني التطهر والتجرد في معرفة الله. وهناك النموذج الآخر، والذي تم تجاهله من قبل ناقديه ولم يتم تطويره بشكلٍ كافٍ من المعجبين به، وهو النموذج الأخلاقي للجماعة والأفراد المؤمنين العاديين. يقوم هذا النموذج على مرجعية مجتمعية واضحة ويتكون من العناصر التالية: الثروة والمصالح العامة؛ تجنب الأذى والتعامل برحمة والثالث عبء الظلم. هذا يوضح أن الإمام الغزالي كان يتمتع بحسٍ أخلاقي عالٍ ليس للفرد فقط وإنما للمجتمع ككل، حيث اعتبر القيمة المركزية هو غياب الظلم وتحقيق مفهوم معين للعدالة. من خلال ذلك تمكن الغزالي من إيجاد رابط مشترك بين نموذجه الأخلاقي الفردي وذلك المرتبط بالمجتمع.

الكلمات الدالة: الإمام الغزالي، نموذج أخلاقي، عدالة، مجتمع وجماعة، المصالح العامة، سياسة المداولات، التلاقي والإجماع، ترجمة الأخلاق، النظرية النقدية، السياسة والدين، الفكر العربي الإسلامي.