


THE SUPREMACY OF REVELATION OVER REASON: AL-GHAZALI'S CRITIQUE OF RATIONALIST PHILOSOPHY IN *TAHAFUT AL-FALASIFAH*



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Article History:

Submission: October 29, 2024

Revised: December 03, 2024

Accepted: December 26, 2024

Published: December 31, 2024

Keywords: Revelation; Reason;
Tahafut al-Falasifah; Islamic
Philosophy; Islamic Theology.

Kata Kunci: Wahyu; Akal;
Tahafut al-Falasifah; Filsafat
Islam; Teologi Islam.

Abstract

This study examines the implications of the supremacy of revelation over reason in the development of Islamic philosophical thought, with a specific focus on Al-Ghazali's *Tahafut al-Falasifah*. It seeks to address three key questions: (1) How does Al-Ghazali conceptualize the relationship between reason and revelation in the acquisition of knowledge? (2) What socio-cultural, political, and intellectual factors influenced Al-Ghazali's critique of rationalist philosophy and his prioritization of revelation? (3) What are the broader implications of his thought for the evolution of Islamic theology and philosophy after the publication of *Tahafut al-Falasifah*? Using a descriptive-analytical approach, this study explores Al-Ghazali's arguments within the context of broader Islamic philosophical debates, emphasizing his assertion of revelation as the ultimate epistemological authority. The findings indicate that Al-Ghazali viewed divine revelation as the most reliable and authoritative foundation for knowledge, challenging the dominance of Peripatetic Islamic philosophy, which heavily relied on Greek rationalist traditions. His critique was shaped by the socio-political milieu of his time, marked by the increasing popularity of rationalist philosophy and its perceived threat to Sunni orthodoxy. The study concludes that Al-Ghazali's prioritization of revelation resulted in a gradual decline in critical reasoning and fostered greater skepticism toward foreign ideas within Islamic intellectual traditions. These developments significantly shaped theological and philosophical trajectories in the post-*Tahafut* era, highlighting the enduring impact of Al-Ghazali's thought on Islamic intellectual history.

Abstrak

Kajian ini mengkaji implikasi supremasi wahyu atas akal dalam pengembangan pemikiran filsafat Islam, dengan fokus khusus pada Tahafut al-Falasifah karya Al-Ghazali. Kajian ini berupaya menjawab tiga pertanyaan kunci: (1) Bagaimana Al-Ghazali mengonseptualisasikan hubungan antara akal dan wahyu dalam perolehan ilmu pengetahuan? (2) Faktor sosial-budaya, politik, dan intelektual apa yang memengaruhi kritik Al-Ghazali terhadap filsafat rasionalis dan prioritasnya terhadap wahyu? (3) Apa implikasi yang lebih luas dari pemikirannya bagi evolusi teologi dan filsafat Islam setelah terbitnya Tahafut al-Falasifah? Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif-analitis, kajian ini mengeksplorasi argumen-argumen Al-Ghazali dalam konteks perdebatan filsafat Islam yang lebih luas, dengan menekankan pernyataannya tentang wahyu sebagai otoritas epistemologis tertinggi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Al-Ghazali memandang wahyu ilahi sebagai landasan pengetahuan yang paling dapat diandalkan dan berwibawa, menantang dominasi filsafat Islam Peripatetik, yang sangat bergantung pada tradisi rasionalis Yunani. Kritiknya dibentuk oleh lingkungan sosial-politik pada masanya, yang ditandai dengan meningkatnya popularitas filsafat rasionalis dan ancaman yang dirasakannya terhadap ortodoksi Sunni. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa prioritas Al-Ghazali terhadap wahyu mengakibatkan penurunan bertahap dalam penalaran kritis dan menumbuhkan skeptisisme yang lebih besar terhadap ide-ide asing dalam tradisi intelektual Islam. Perkembangan ini secara signifikan membentuk lintasan teologis dan filosofis di era pasca-Tahafut, yang menyoroti dampak abadi pemikiran Al-Ghazali pada sejarah intelektual Islam.



INTRODUCTION

Generally, Islamic philosophy significantly emphasizes knowledge derived through reason and logic. However, Al-Ghazali's *Tahafut Al-Falasifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers) highlights that arguments grounded in revelation must be regarded as the primary source of knowledge and truth in philosophical discourse. This perspective has led to tensions between rationalist and religious approaches in the quest to understand reality. Ahmad Thaha, an Egyptian Islamic scholar, asserted that *Tahafut Al-Falasifah* slowed the development of philosophy and rational thought in the Islamic world. Instead, under Al-Ghazali's influence, Islamic thought evolved to become more inclined toward Sufism (Muhammad 2011; Ni'am 2020). This is evident in Al-Ghazali's arguments against the philosophers, where he asserts that knowledge acquired through reason has inherent limitations (Muliati 2016; Anon 2016).

In *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, Al-Ghazali emphasizes that while reason plays a significant role, there are truths that cannot be comprehended solely through logic (Al-Ghazali 1997; Asmaya 2018). He argues that revelation is a superior source of truth, capable of elucidating aspects beyond the grasp of reason alone, such as God's nature and the universe's creation (Al-Ghazali, 1997). Furthermore, Al-Ghazali critiques the philosophers' view of the eternity of the universe, asserting that only through revelation can we understand that the universe is a creation with both a beginning and an end (Aini, 2016). Thus, *Tahafut Al-Falasifah* not only critiques philosophical thought but also lays a foundation for a deeper understanding of the relationship between reason and revelation within the Islamic intellectual tradition.

Studies on *Tahafut Al-Falasifah* and Al-Ghazali's thoughts can be summarized in two aspects. First, studies on Al-Ghazali's critique of philosophical thought and the position of revelation in Islamic epistemology (Muliati 2016; Yazdani 2021; Asmaya 2018). As stated by Muliati, Al-Ghazali emphasizes that reason alone is insufficient to understand higher realities (Muliati 2016). Thus, revelation becomes the primary source for obtaining absolute truth. In this context, Al-Ghazali demonstrates that philosophy can generate knowledge but cannot fully explain spiritual and theological phenomena. Second, studies focusing on the impact of *Tahafut Al-Falasifah* on subsequent Islamic theological and philosophical thought: (Ni'am 2020; Misbachul 2019).

According to Ni'am, the impact of Al-Ghazali's work was to ignite debates between philosophers and theologians in the Islamic world, where theologians subsequently emphasized the importance of revelation in understanding the existence of God (Ni'am, 2020). Of the existing studies on *Tahafut Al-Falasifah*, none have thoroughly examined the philosophical and theological implications of the tension between rationalism and revelation that Muslims face in understanding contemporary reality.

This paper aims to complement and deepen the existing studies on Al-Ghazali's discourse and critique of philosophical thought in *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, which have yet to thoroughly explore the epistemological implications of revelation in the context of understanding truth. This research seeks to demonstrate that Al-Ghazali considered philosophical thought, which prioritizes reason as the primary source of knowledge, to be a limited approach that fails to explain higher spiritual realities. In line with this interpretation, three key questions will be explored: First, how does Al-Ghazali objectively interpret the relationship between reason and revelation in acquiring knowledge in *Tahafut al-Falasifah*? Second, what factors led to the development of Al-Ghazali's critical stance against philosophy and his emphasis on revelation? Third, what

are the implications of Al–Ghazali's thoughts on the development of Islamic theology and philosophy after *Tahafut al-Falasifah*?

The study of Al–Ghazali's thought in *Tahafut Al-Falasifah* is important because it explains the paradigm shift in understanding the relationship between reason and revelation, as well as the theological implications of this thought. Al–Ghazali's interpretation of this relationship unfolds in several stages, reflecting the evolution of his thinking. The factors influencing this interpretation include the philosophical traditions of his time and Al–Ghazali's personal experiences in seeking truth and understanding the existence of God. The objective interpretations that Al–Ghazali advocates place revelation as the primary principle in acquiring knowledge, emphasizing that reason, though important, must align with an understanding derived from revelation to achieve a more comprehensive truth. Thus, Al–Ghazali's thought not only rejects philosophy but also offers a new framework for understanding spiritual and theological realities within the context of Islam.

This study employs a qualitative approach with a literature review, where the researcher is required to gather data in the form of quality documents relevant to the research topic (Hennink et al., 2011). To obtain secondary data related to Al–Ghazali's thought in *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, the researcher collects data by exploring literature, articles, and academic works that discuss Al–Ghazali's critique of philosophical thought and the epistemological implications of revelation within the context of Islam. These sources are accessed through academic databases, libraries, and relevant digital media. The researcher aims to understand Al–Ghazali's experiences and views on revelation and reason, as well as how his thoughts have shaped theological and philosophical understandings among Muslim intellectuals.

In this study, the researcher selects sources based on specific criteria. First, sources that are active in the theological and philosophical discourse within Islam and have a reputable standing among academics. The second criterion is the diversity of the intellectual backgrounds of the thinkers being examined, such as scholars, philosophers, and intellectuals, who provide varying perspectives on Al–Ghazali's thought. Third, sources that are connected to other figures in the Islamic intellectual tradition, both those who support and those who oppose Al–Ghazali's views, offer a broader contextual understanding.

This study begins with a literature review to provide an overview of the research subject, followed by the identification of relevant sources after analyzing existing literature. Data collection is carried out by recording key information, analyzing Al–Ghazali's arguments, and identifying key themes in his thought. The researcher employs data analysis steps such as data reduction, data visualization, and data verification to organize the collected information. The interpretation of data analysis and meaning is unraveled through philosophical analysis of the literature to achieve an objective understanding of Al–Ghazali's thought and its impact on the discourse of epistemology in Islamic theology and philosophy.

ISLAMIC EPISTEMOLOGY AND INTELLECTUAL TRADITIONS

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that investigates how we come to know something and build knowledge. It involves a deep analysis of how knowledge is formed, including the sources, tools, methods, and validation processes for determining truth. In its process, epistemology examines the relationship between the subject (the knower) and the object of knowledge, as well as how that knowledge can be justified (Boon & Van

Baalen, 2019). In other words, epistemology focuses on the nature of knowledge and how humans, as subjects, understand reality (Harapah, 2020). This understanding is crucial because it leads to valid knowledge, which is not only measured by reason but also by other principles such as revelation in the context of religion (Gonzalez Rey, 2019).

In Islamic thought, particularly within the framework of evolving intellectual traditions, two main aspects of knowledge that need to be understood can be seen through the context of discovery and the context of justification, as proposed by Thomas Kuhn in his theory of scientific revolutions (Kuhn, 2012). In the context of discovery, revelation (*wahyu*) and reason (*akal*) play different roles, yet they complement each other (Tamrin, 2019). Revelation (*wahyu*) is considered the source of absolute truth, leading to a higher understanding of God, the universe, and the afterlife, while reason (*akal*) functions as a tool for interpreting that revelation (Gozali, 2017). The context of justification requires that knowledge acquired through reason (*akal*) be tested for its alignment with revelation (*wahyu*), which serves as the measure of a higher truth (Rahman et al., 2018). Epistemology in Islam emphasizes that reason (*akal*) is an important tool for assessing the truth of the interpretation of revelation (*wahy*), while revelation itself serves as the primary guide for the data that will later be analyzed by reason to discern the ultimate truth. (Wahid, 2020). Thus, revelation (*wahyu*) and reason (*akal*) are not seen as two separate entities, but rather as complementary, working in harmony to attain valid knowledge.

BIOGRAPHY OF AL-GHAZALI

Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Ghazali (450–505 H/1058–1111 M) was born in Thus, a city in Khurasan, which was part of Persia at that time (Mas'udi, 2013). After the death of his father, al-Ghazali and his brother were placed under the care of a family friend who took them to religious schools. During this time, al-Ghazali exhibited exceptional talent in learning, especially in the field of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence). This aptitude led him to study in Nishapur under the guidance of Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni, one of the most renowned scholars of the time (Ismail & Uyuni, 2019).

In Nishapur, al-Ghazali gained a profound understanding of fiqh and became recognized as a skilled jurist. He mastered the methods of debate and rhetoric, gradually gaining recognition as a prominent thinker among the fuqaha (Islamic jurists). Al-Ghazali was later appointed as a professor at the Nizamiyyah of Baghdad, one of the most prestigious universities of his time, where he taught Islamic law and philosophy (Muhammad, 2011). Nevertheless, he experienced a spiritual crisis that shook his faith in theology (*kalam*) and philosophy, which, according to him, were unable to provide the spiritual peace he sought (Amien, 1993).

His intellectual development underwent a shift when he felt dissatisfied with merely engaging in logic and Islamic jurisprudence, and began seeking truth through a Sufi approach. In his book *al-Munqidh min al-Dhalal*, al-Ghazali stated that only through the Sufi way, that is, the practice of Sufism, did he find true spiritual enlightenment (Hanim, 2014). His experience in the world of Sufism led al-Ghazali to write *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, a monumental work that combines Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) with Sufi teachings. This book became a primary reference for studying Islam and a holistic approach to morality, emphasizing not just religious knowledge but also the cultivation of inner spirituality and ethical conduct in everyday life (Ismail & Uyuni, 2019).

After several years of spiritual wandering, al-Ghazali returned to Nishapur. However, he ultimately chose to spend the rest of his life in seclusion and simplicity in his hometown

of Tus, where he passed away in 1111 CE. His decision to live a life of isolation reflects his deep commitment to spirituality and his desire for personal peace, away from the distractions of public life (505 H) (Kurniawan et al., 2019). The legacy of al – Ghazali, which harmonizes fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and tasawuf (Sufism), makes him one of the most influential Muslim intellectuals. His ability to integrate Islamic law with spiritual practices has shaped Islamic thought for centuries. His works, particularly *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, and *al-Munqidh min al-Dhalal*, continue to be foundational references in the study of Islamic theology, philosophy, and spirituality, influencing scholars and practitioners of various Islamic disciplines to this day (Misbachul, 2019).

REVELATION AND REASON IN AL-GHAZALI'S THOUGHT

In Al – Ghazali's view, revelation and reason are two sources of knowledge that cannot be separated, but they have their hierarchy in their roles. Revelation is placed as the highest authority, providing absolute moral and spiritual guidance for Muslims, functioning as the light that illuminates the path to truth (Al – Ghazali, 1997). Reason, on the other hand, serves as a tool to interpret and understand revelation, so its function is not to rival revelation but to complement and clarify its meaning. However, Al – Ghazali emphasizes that reason has limitations, especially in understanding the essence of God and metaphysical dimensions, which can only be reached through divine guidance. Therefore, absolute truth is believed to be attainable only through revelation, which, for Al – Ghazali, is divine and beyond the reach of ordinary human reason (Al – Ghazali, 1964).

The tension between revelation and reason reflects the clash between the rationalist thought of Greek philosophy and the foundational teachings of Islam that shaped the religious mindset of the time. Al – Ghazali firmly criticizes the rationalism of the philosophers, whom he believes disregard the limitations of reason in understanding divine realities, particularly in matters of theology and the afterlife (Ghazali, 2001). The inability of reason to attain the highest truth without the guidance of revelation strengthens his view that revelation must be the primary guide. This idea ultimately became the foundation for the development of Islamic theology (*Ilm al-kalam*), which regards revelation as the guiding principle in understanding religious issues. This conflict also paved the way for the formation of an Islamic philosophical methodology that acknowledges the position of revelation as the primary source of knowledge, thus placing knowledge within the framework of religion rather than being solely subject to rationality (Bagir, 2018).

TAHAFUT AL – FALASIFAH

The *Tahafut Al-Falasifah* by Al – Ghazali consists of approximately 300 pages, covering 20 main issues regarding the errors of Muslim philosophers in fundamental matters. These issues can be categorized into three main topics: theological and divine issues, cosmological issues, and metaphysical and soul – related issues (Al – Ghazali, 1997). In the field of theology, Al – Ghazali criticizes the philosophical views on the relationship between God and the universe, the attributes of God, and God's knowledge, which he considers to be limited only to universal matters (Aini, 2016). In the field of cosmology, Al – Ghazali questions the philosophers' concept of the eternity of the universe, causality, and the creation of time, which they view as part of the natural order of the universe that has no beginning. Meanwhile, in the discussion of metaphysics and the soul, Al – Ghazali's critique targets the philosophers' views on the soul, physical

resurrection, and the afterlife, which he considers to be deviations from the core teachings of religion (Al – Ghazali, 1997).

Al – Ghazali emphasizes three core issues that he considers to involve heresy: the belief in the eternal nature of the universe, which was created *ex nihilo* (from nothing); the view that God only knows universal things and not particular events; and the rejection of bodily resurrection after death (Al – Ghazali, 1981). Through his critique, he sought to demonstrate that philosophy, especially when relying on speculative logic, is incapable of grasping profound spiritual truths, which, according to him, can only be understood through revelation and the approach of *kalam* (Islamic theology) (Imam al – Ghazali, 1989). In the sociopolitical context of his time, philosophy was highly revered in the Islamic world, while *kalam* (Islamic theology) was beginning to be overshadowed. Al – Ghazali's critique of philosophy was not only intellectual but also social demonstrating how mere rational logic was insufficient to address spiritual and theological issues in Islam (Nasr, 2006b).

THE MEANING OF THE SUPREMACY OF REVELATION OVER REASON IN *TAHAFUT AL-FALASIFAH*

In his various opinions, Al – Ghazali viewed the mind's limitations as an obstacle to grasping the ultimate reality. Revelation, in this context, seeks to address and provide the necessary complement to the shortcomings of the intellect (Al – Ghazali, 1997). Revelation, originating from the Divine Word (*kalam Allah*), contains transcendent spiritual dimensions that cannot be reached by reason as an epistemological tool to grasp such realities (Al – Ghazali 1981; Al – Ghazali 1997). This stands in contrast to the weaknesses identified through the various arguments of the earlier Peripatetic philosophers, among whom the most famous are al – Farabi and Ibn Sina (Al – Ghazali, 1997). In *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, Al – Ghazali directly criticizes Al – Farabi and Ibn Sina on three major issues that he considers serious errors in their philosophy. First, Al – Ghazali opposes their view on the eternity of the universe (*Qidam al-'Alam*), where they argue that the universe has no temporal beginning and has always existed alongside God. Al – Ghazali condemns this idea as contrary to Islamic doctrine, which believes in the creation of the universe *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). He argues that their reasoning is based on logical speculation without the foundation of revelation or adequate evidence. In his view, the eternity of the universe diminishes the majesty of God as the all – powerful Creator (Al – Ghazali, 1997).

In this context, revelation becomes the reference for objectively assessing the truth of philosophical and theological issues. Al – Ghazali argues that Ibn Sina and Al – Farabi have deviated from Islamic principles because their use of reason exceeds the authority of revelation as the primary source of Islamic teachings and tradition (Al – Ghazali, 1997). In the case of the creation of the universe, Al – Ghazali argues that the eternity of the universe would imply that the world does not require God as its Creator, as the world has existed alongside Him from the beginning. This would negate God's role as the absolute source of existence. He describes this as the result of the overvaluation of speculative reason, which ultimately leads to a contradiction of logical principles themselves (Al – Ghazali, 1997).

Furthermore, according to Al – Ghazali, the idea that the universe is eternal also diminishes God's power, as it suggests that God did not have the free will to create the universe at a specific point in time. This principle highlights that God's power, as outlined in the revelation, is absolute and should not be limited by speculative philosophical ideas.

Thus, Al – Ghazaliviews the weakness of reason as an epistemological limitation, incapable of grasping metaphysical phenomena without the information provided by revelation. In this sense, revelation serves as the standard for confirming the truth of reason, particularly in metaphysical issues such as the temporality of the universe and the eternity of God (Hanim, 2014).

In another case, Al – Ghazalicriticizes Ibn Sina and Al – Farabi, for example, regarding the concept of bodily resurrection in the afterlife. Al – Ghazalimentions that they rejected the concept of bodily resurrection taught in Islam, as both philosophers emphasized the immortality of the soul instead. According to Al – Ghazali, such an understanding undermines the belief in the afterlife as described in the Qur'an, which affirms the resurrection of the body along with the soul (Aini, 2016). He also challenges their concept of the relationship between God and the world through the active intellects (*al-'uqūl al-fa'alah*), which he views as reducing God's role to merely the first cause (*al-Allah al-ula*), thereby removing God's direct involvement in the affairs of the world (Mas'udi, 2013). In this case, Al – Ghazali views that the core issues in philosophical matters should be weighed and determined by the power of God as outlined in the Qur'an. Therefore, it can be said that the interpretation of the *Qur'an* plays a vital role in defining the true meaning of revelation within the context of philosophical problems in the history of the development of Islamic philosophical thought (Al – Ghazali, 1997).

SOCIO-POLITICAL AND INTELLECTUAL FACTORS SUPREMACY OF REVELATION OVER REASON

Al – Ghazali, as one of the most influential thinkers in the Islamic tradition, held several important positions that supported his influence. These positions played a significant role in reinforcing the dominance of revelation over reason in his various thoughts. In the religious and political world during the *Seljuk* Dynasty, his roles and status provided him with the platform to advocate for the centrality of divine revelation in guiding Islamic understanding, particularly in areas concerning theology, law, and ethics (Hidayatullah, 2006). One of his main roles was as *Qadī al-Qudat* (Chief Judge) in Nishapur, a highly significant intellectual and religious center of his time. In this position, Al – Ghazaliheld great authority over matters of Sharia law and religious administration, allowing him to play a key role in shaping the understanding and application of Islamic teachings. His influence in this capacity furthered his ability to emphasize the primacy of revelation over reason, particularly in the areas of Islamic jurisprudence and theology (Ni'am, 2020).

This undoubtedly led Al – Ghazalito carefully consider every step and shift in his thinking, as he sought to respond to and align with the needs of the community during his time, a responsibility he carried as a key religious and intellectual figure. His role in guiding the spiritual and legal practices of the people made him especially sensitive to the changing intellectual and social landscape, ensuring his ideas addressed the concerns and challenges faced by the Muslim community (Henry Corbin, 1993).

This position also highlights that Al – Ghazali's influence extended beyond religious matters, as he played a crucial role in maintaining social and political stability among the Muslim community. His central role was, therefore, to ensure peace by addressing the intellectual conflicts that were causing unrest among the people. In a time when the community sought guidance, Al – Ghazali, as a prominent scholar, provided a framework for reconciling revelation and reason two key epistemological sources within Islamic

tradition thus helping to restore harmony and provide a clear path for intellectual and spiritual guidance (Kholmuminov & Juraev, 2020).

In addition, Al-Ghazali served as a teacher at the *Nizamiyah Madrasa* in Baghdad, one of the most prominent educational institutions in the Islamic world at the time. The *Madrasa*, founded by Nizam al-Mulk, provided him with a platform to influence the intellectual development of Islam. Through this position, he was able to shape the minds of future scholars and impart his profound understanding of both religious and philosophical issues, further solidifying his role as a key figure in the intellectual landscape of the Islamic world (Hilal, 2012). Al-Ghazali played a central role in shaping the mainstream discourse of his time. His words and statements had a profound impact on Islamic thought and the discourse that was evolving during that period, giving him a significant position within these discussions. At the *Nizamiyah Madrasa*, Al-Ghazali taught various disciplines, including theology, philosophy, and Islamic law, while advocating for the Ash'ari theological school, which emphasized the primacy of revelation as the ultimate source of truth, above reason. Through this academic position, Al-Ghazali was able to build close relationships with scholars and political leaders, further strengthening his authority in theology and Islamic law. This network provided him with opportunities to deepen and broaden his knowledge, while also influencing important policy decisions within the government of the time (Kurniawan et al., 2019).

Overall, the positions held by Al-Ghazali reinforced his stature as a highly influential figure in the religious and intellectual spheres of Islam. In the socio-political context, he leveraged his authority to maintain unity within the Muslim community by emphasizing that revelation was the primary source of knowledge, superior to reason (Soleh, 2014). This is reflected in his famous work, *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, where Al-Ghazali criticizes the philosophers who prioritize rationality as the determinant of truth, while simultaneously strengthening the position of traditional Islamic theology in the face of the intellectual challenges that emerged during the *Seljuk* Dynasty (Muliati, 2016).

SOCIO-POLITICAL AND INTELLECTUAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE SUPREMACY OF REVELATION OVER REASON

One of the significant implications of the supremacy of revelation over reason advocated by al-Ghazali, particularly in his work *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, is the strengthening of the authority of scholars at various levels. This strengthening extends to their influence within state governance as well as among religious groups or *Sunni* Islamic movements (Jamhari, 2015). Furthermore, Al-Ghazali demonstrated that philosophy, in certain aspects, contradicts the fundamental principles of *Sunni* Islam, particularly concerning the eternity of the universe, God's knowledge of particulars, and bodily resurrection. This perspective strengthened the role of *Sunni* scholars as guardians of Islamic orthodoxy while encouraging the restriction of philosophical influence in Islamic education (Rohmana, 2021). This orthodoxy is reflected in *Sunni* politics, which tends to be textual and restricts the use of reason, particularly in interpreting revelation and deriving Islamic law from its scriptural sources. This limitation arises from the belief that reason plays a very constrained role in uncovering meanings and understanding the text of the *Qur'an* (Dahan, 1991).

Islamic philosophy among *Sunnis* tends to be viewed as retreating from intellectual freedom, strongly influenced by Al-Ghazali's ideas about the incoherence of earlier Islamic philosophers. Islamic Peripateticism, which fundamentally pioneered the discourse

of philosophy in the Islamic world, faced severe opposition among *Sunnis*. Politically marginalized, it was even labeled heretical and an innovation (*bid'ah*), deemed unworthy of a Muslim's adherence (Ni'am, 2020). Although Al-Ghazali may not have intended to prohibit the study of philosophy among Muslims, he believed that philosophy could be pursued by those who met certain conditions, such as mastery of theological works, jurisprudence, and logic (*mantiq*). However, in practice, *Sunni* Muslims tended to forbid it. This stance limited progress in Islamic reform within *Sunni* circles and led to new ideas often being viewed with suspicion (M. Fathin Shafly Marzuki, Raina Wildan, 2023).

Nonetheless, Al-Ghazali's critiques contributed significantly to the dialectical development of theology. They shaped a distinct form of Islamic philosophy that fully upheld the role of revelation as the primary principle or argument in addressing philosophical issues (Ghazali, 2001). In the context of justification, Al-Ghazali's thought does not hold a place as a philosophical idea, as it relies on the argument of divine power as the basis of judgment, placing the principle of *badīhiyat 'aqlī* secondary to that divine power. However, this mode of thinking has re-inspired Islamic philosophical studies to remain focused on theological issues as their foundational reference, while also establishing a distinctive characteristic of Islamic philosophy (Asmaya, 2018).

The debate over the definition of Islamic philosophy has been ongoing for a long time, and to this day, it remains a topic of discussion without a clear consensus. It is not uncommon for the term "Islamic philosophy" to be replaced by other terms such as "Muslim Philosophy," "Arab Philosophy," "Arabic Philosophy," or "Philosophy in the Islamic World" (Nasution, 2014). However, the criticism put forward by Al-Ghazali indirectly emphasizes an important point: the term "Islamic philosophy" remains relevant and should be preserved. This emphasis is based on the unique characteristics of Islamic philosophy, which not only draws from the ideas of Muslim philosophers but also references the *Qur'an* as a foundation for inspiration, discourse context, paradigms, and even methodology in its development (Mukhlis, 2018). Thus, the use of the term "Islamic philosophy" highlights its uniqueness as a synthesis between philosophical tradition and divine revelation, distinguishing it from other alternative terms.

Al-Ghazali played a significant role in asserting that Islamic philosophy is a philosophy that has never been detached from the context of theological discourse (theology-centered philosophy). Through his work, *Tahafut Al-Falasifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), Al-Ghazali strongly criticized philosophical views that he believed contradicted the fundamental principles of the Islamic creed, particularly regarding the concepts of divinity, the eternity of the universe, and God's knowledge of particulars (Al-Ghazali, 1997). By placing theology at the center of philosophical reflection, Al-Ghazali narrowed the scope of secular philosophy and emphasized that philosophy in Islam must always be rooted in revelation and the Islamic worldview (Nasr, Seyyed, 2013). This stance shaped the direction of Islamic philosophy's development and reinforced its identity as a discipline distinct from Greek or other secular philosophical traditions. According to Al-Ghazali, philosophical thought must serve divine purposes, and thus should not merely be a value-free rational activity (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 2002).

However, Al-Ghazali's position sparked debates among scholars. His supporters, such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Razī and Imam al-Juwaynī, praised Al-Ghazali's approach of integrating philosophy into the framework of Islamic theology, thereby limiting the potentially misleading implications of philosophy. They argued that this approach kept Islamic philosophy within the boundaries of *sharī'ah* and prevented deviations. On the other hand, critics like Ibn Rushd (Averroes) condemned Al-Ghazali, arguing that he

stifled intellectual freedom and hindered the development of rationality within the Islamic tradition (Mahmud, 2019). In *Tahafut Al-Falasifah* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence), Ibn Rushd asserts that philosophy does not conflict with religion and can even serve as a tool for a deeper understanding of revelation. Ibn Rushd argues that Al-Ghazali interpreted philosophy narrowly and restricted the space for dialogue between revelation and reason (Mas'udi 2013; Nasr 2006a).

CONCLUSION

The objective interpretation of the supremacy of revelation over reason in *Tahafut Al-Falasifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers) demonstrates that revelation is the most ideal source for understanding the knowledge of reality. Reason, on the other hand, is considered merely a tool to interpret revelation and reality itself, which is highly limited and often prone to logical errors when relied upon solely (the reason). Moreover, reason is seen as incapable of fully addressing the philosophical issues that are central to Islamic theological debates. The socio-cultural factors behind the interpretation of the supremacy of revelation over reason are grounded in the various achievements and roles Al-Ghazali held during his time as a *qaḍī* and as a respected figure across various levels of society, from the common people to the academic circles, especially within *Sunni* Islam.

Additionally, Al-Ghazali became a leading figure in Ash'arite theology, which flourished during that period and sought to be the victor in theological debates in the history of Islamic thought. The implications of his critique supporting the supremacy of revelation over reason included the strengthening of the authority of the *ulama* at various levels, from state governance to religious groups or movements within *Sunni* Islam. Furthermore, he showed that philosophy, in certain aspects, contradicts the fundamental principles of *Sunni* Islam, particularly in the issues of the eternity of the universe, God's knowledge of particulars, and the resurrection of the body.

This reinforced the role of the *Sunni ulama* as protectors of Islamic orthodoxy and promoted the limitation of the influence of philosophy in Islamic education. In addition to these aspects, Al-Ghazali's critique also made an important contribution to the dialectic development of theological thought and shaped the nature of Islamic philosophy among *Sunni* thinkers, especially those who continued to uphold the full role of revelation as the primary principle or argument in addressing philosophical issues, thereby ensuring that Islamic philosophy remained grounded in its original meaning of wisdom sourced from the *Qur'an* as its authentic identity.

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