

Polemics on Philosophy: A Comparison of The Thoughts of Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyyah

Nafiu Ahmed Arikewuyo

Centre of Islamic Heritage and Community Development, Nigeria

E-mail: abuamina20@gmail.com

Abstrak

Filsafat adalah salah satu persoalan mendasar yang telah mempolarisasi pandangan para sarjana Muslim. Di antara cendekiawan Muslim yang berkontribusi pada persoalan filsafat dan meninggalkan jejak yang tak terhapuskan pada pemikiran Muslim selanjutnya di seluruh dunia; Al-Ghazālī (w.1111C.E.) dan Ibn Taymiyyah (w.1328C.E.) merupakan pemikir yang sangat menonjol. Oleh karena itu, kajian ini berusaha untuk membandingkan pandangan kedua sarjana tentang Filsafat. Penelitian ini mengadopsi metode analitik. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa tidak ada kontroversi antara kedua sarjana dan bahkan di antara para teolog Muslim secara umum atas penolakan Filsafat versi Peripatetik dan Neo-Platonis yang diminati para Filsuf Muslim di era abad pertengahan; pendekatan yang diadopsi dalam menyangkal mereka tetap menjadi wilayah perdebatan antara kedua ulama. Terlepas dari kritiknya yang terkenal terhadap para Filsuf, Al-Ghazālī juga telah dituduh oleh beberapa teolog Muslim telah tercemari oleh beberapa ajaran filsafat, sementara Ibnu Taymiyyah, meskipun tidak seperti yang pertama, juga dituduh terpengaruh ajaran filsafat. Kontribusi utama dari penelitian ini adalah menyoroti kesamaan dan perbedaan antara dua sarjana vis-à-vis Filsafat.

Kata Kunci: Polemik; Filsafat; Perbandingan; Al-Ghazālī; Ibn Taymiyyah.

Abstract

Philosophy is one of the most pressing matters that have polarized the views of Muslim scholars. Among Muslim scholars who's contributed to the philosophical discourse and left an indelible mark on the thought of subsequent Muslims across the globe; Al-Ghazālī (d.1111C.E.) and Ibn Taymiyyah (d.1328C.E.) are very prominent. Hence, this work is an attempt to compare the views of the two scholars on Philosophy. The study adopts an analytical method. The findings of the study reveal that there is no controversy between the two scholars and even among the generality of Muslim theologians over the impropriety of Peripatetic and Neo-Platonic versions of Philosophy which were the areas of interest of the so-called Muslim Philosophers in the medieval era; the approach adopted in refuting them remains the area of contention between the two scholars. Despite

his reputable criticism of the Philosophers, Al-Ghazālī has also been accused by some Muslim theologians of being tainted with some philosophical heresies, while Ibn Taymiyyah, although not like that of the former, has also been alleged of some philosophical influences. The major contribution of the research is the highlight of similarities and dissimilarities between the two scholars vis-à-vis Philosophy.

Keyword: Polemics; Philosophy; Comparison; Al-Ghazālī; Ibn Taymiyyah.

Introduction

Philosophy is one of the most controversial discourses in Islamic scholarship. Among Muslim scholars who are at the vanguard of contributing to the polemics, Ibn Taymiyyah and Al-Ghazālī are very prominent. The prominence attained by the two scholars in this context is attributed to the unprecedented landmarks achieved in subjugating the Muslim Philosophers who gave priority to the ideologies of Plato and Aristotle of Greek above the provisions of the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah*. Against this backdrop, this study aims to compare the views of the two prominent scholars on Philosophy.

The previous literature has focused on the biography of the two scholars. Adh-Dhahabi (d.1348C.E.), As-Subqi (d.771A.H.), Ibn Abdul Hādi (d.1343C.E.) and Al-Bazzār's (d.1322CE) works constitute the primary sources on the biography of the two scholars¹ Qaraḍāwī collates the views of protagonists and antagonists of Al-Ghazālī². As-Sallābi³ focuses on the transformative missions of Al-Ghazālī in Islamic scholarship. Az-Zahrāni⁴ examines the position of Al-Ghazālī towards the Philosophers. Among those who specifically focused on Ibn Taymiyyah, the work of At-Tablawi⁵ is much more reputable. He explores the Sufi thoughts in the works of Ibn Taymiyyah. Likewise, Gambari⁶ investigates the position of the scholar towards Islamic Mysticism. Khan⁷ focuses on the political thought of Ibn Taymiyyah, while

¹ S Adh-Dhabi, *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalāi* (Beirut-London: Muassat ar-Risalah, 1993), 143; S. As-Subqi, *Tabaqāt Ash-Shāfi'iyyah Al-Kubrā* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Halabi, 1998); U.A. Bazzār, *Al-A'lām Al-'Alīyah Fi Manāqib Bn Taymiyyah* (Cairo: Al-Maktab al-Islami, 1988).

² Y Qaraḍāwī, *Al-Imam Al-Ghazālī Bayna Mādihihi Wa Nāqidihi* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 2004).

³ A Sallābi, *Al-Ghazālī Wa Juhuduhu Fit Tajdid Wal Iṣlah* (Cairo: Muassat Iqra, 2007).

⁴ M Az-Zahrani, "Mawqif al-Ghazali Minal Falāsifah" (University of Cairo, n.d.).

⁵ M. Tablawi, *At-Tasawwuf Fi at-Turāth Ibn Taymiyyah* (Cairo: University of Cairo, n.d.).

⁶ Y.D. Gambari, "A Study of Sufism in the Thought of Ibn Taymiyyah" (University of Ilorin, 2014).

⁷ Q. Khan, *The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyyah* (New Delhi: Adam Publishers & Distributors, 2007).

Shāmiy⁸ and Ahmad⁹ comparatively analyze the scholarship of the two scholars. Arikewuyo¹⁰ examines the views of Ibn Taymiyyah over Al-Ghazālī.

The foregoing literature shows that a comparative study of the two scholars over their views on Philosophy is an area that is yet to attract academic interest. Although many researchers have compared their scholarships on a broader note, situating the comparison on Philosophy to the best of our knowledge remains the lacune the present study seeks to fill.

Results and Discussion

1. Short Biography of Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī

He is Muḥammad bn Muḥammad Aṭ-Ṭūsī popularly nicknamed as Abū Ḥāmid.¹¹ Born at Ṭus in 405 A.H. Ṭus was a small village under Khurāsān which currently falls under eastern Iran. Al-Ghazālī's father was a humble destitute with sowing as a profession. Although his father was not a scholar, his piety and kindness were attested to by his contemporaries.¹² His inclination to the gatherings of scholars endeared Islamic scholarship to him. Hence, he prayed to Allah to endow him with children that would choose scholarship as a career. It was the efficacy of his prayer that produced Abū Ḥāmid and his brother, Aḥmad, but his life was not spared to witness the outcome of his prayer. Unlike Al-Ghazālī's father, his mother witnessed the glittering star of her son. Al-Ghazālī received his basic Islamic education in his native town, Ṭus. Yūsuf An-Nassāj (d.428AH) was his first teacher. He later moved to Ar-Rāzakāni to learn about basic Islamic Jurisprudence. He also benefited from other scholars of the time. Among Al-Ghazālī's teachers and tutors; the greatest tutor who had a far-reaching influence on him was Imām Al-Haramayni Al-Juwaynī (d.1085CE). Al-Ghazālī traveled to Naysābur which was the main hub for Islamic scholarship after Baghdād purposely sought knowledge from Al-Juwaynī. Imam Al-Haramayni was the foremost Muslim scholar at that time. Being the Vice-Chancellor of An-Nizāmiyyah which was then the biggest Islamic institution throughout the Muslim world, Al-Juwaynī

⁸ M Abu Shamiy, *Al-Muqāranah Bayna Al-Ghazālī Wa Ibn Taymiyyah* (Cairo: Al-Maktab al-Islami, 2003).

⁹ A Ahmad, *Al-Tassawwuf Bayna Al-Ghazālī Wa Ibn Taymiyyah* (Libanon: Darul Fikr, 2003).

¹⁰ N.A Arikewuyo, "Al-Ghazālī in Selected Works of Ibn Taymiyyah" (University of Ilorin, 2015).

¹¹ Qodirov Davronbek Hoshimovich, "The Period in Which Ghazali Lived: The Socio-Political Situation and the Spiritual Environment," *International Journal on Integrated Education* 3, no. 9 (September 2020): 108–11, <https://doi.org/10.31149/ijie.v3i9.597>.

¹² Ahmed Nafiu Arikewuyo, "A Comparative Study of Al-Ghazali's and Ibn Taymiyyah's Views on Sufism," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 17 (2020): 15–24.

was able to showcase Abū Ḥāmid's gift through the academic engagement to which the former subjected the latter. It is noteworthy that Al-Juwaynī was instrumental to the reputation accorded to Al-Ghazālī via the latter's appointment as a lecturer in An-Nizāmiyyah. In those days, only the aged and old scholars were used to be teachers in An-Nizāmiyyah, but Al-Ghazālī took exception to this in the sense that he was appointed at only 34 years.

The ten years stay of Al-Ghazālī in An-Nizāmiyyah was marked with total engagement in academic research. Most of his publications on various disciplines were authored at this particular time. His dedicated research into Islamic Mysticism lured him to later subscribe to seclusive characters. Thus, he left the institution for Shām where he sought to practicalize Islamic Mysticism. The outcome of this sojourn for Al-Ghazālī was extreme asceticism and total seclusion from mundane engagements.¹ On his return, Al-Ghazālī personally retired from An-Nizāmiyyah to pursue his mission in his hometown, Ṭūs. People now trooped to learn from him in his private home. He also gave much time principally for mystic engagement in his home.

As time went on, having noticed his point of weakness, Al-Ghazālī decided to study *Ḥadith*. He began to peruse the two compilations of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim and enrolled in the academic gathering of the "*Muḥaddithūn*". Unfortunately, death grabbed him before he could reap the fruit of studying *Ḥadith*. Sallābī is of the view that 'had it been his life was spared to conclude his study, he would have surpassed the *Muḥaddithūn*'. He died in 505 AH, having exhausted 55 years in spreading the course of Islam.

Generally, Abū Ḥāmid is a great Muslim scholar, genius, and encyclopedic jurist of Islam. His scholarship is multifaceted. He is a philosopher, logician, theologian, Jurist, exegete, mystic, and linguistic. What endeared him to the students of Islamic students is his utilization of the power of knowledge to defend the dignity of Islam. His refutation of philosophers, who have arrogated to their intellects the superiority over textual provisions, is considered an unprecedented bombshell on philosophy.

Al-Ghazālī is a Muslim reformer. His reformative missions crossed across philosophy, mysticism, and theology. According to As-Sayyūṭī (1505CE), Al-Ghazālī being the reformer of the fifth century is indisputable. Al-Ghazālī authored many works spread across all disciplines in Islamic studies. Famous among them are *Iḥyāu 'Ulum ad- Dīn*, *Al-Basīt*, *Al-Wajīz*, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, and *al-Munqidh minad Ḍolāl* (See the works of As-Subqī,

Sallabi, Qaraḍāwī and adh-Dhahabī earlier reviewed for more information about Al-Ghazālī).

2. Short Biography of Ibn Taymiyyah

He is Aḥmad bn 'Abdil Ḥalīm bn'Abdis-Salām bn Taymiyyah. He was born in 661AH/1260C.E. at Hirran of Syria into a famous family of scholars and theologians. He was however only seven years when Hirran was attacked by the Mongols and had to run away to Damascus along with his parents. The origin of Ibn Taymiyyah's clan according to Khan is traceable to the Kurds. The Kurds were sturdy and brave people who possessed great moral integrity and sharpness. Ibn Taymiyyah came from a scholarly family. His father Shihābud-Dīn was a noted teacher of *Ḥadith* and a renowned preacher in the Central Mosque of the city. His uncle Fakhr ad-Dīn too was a reputed scholar and writer. In the same direction, his grandfather was also a great scholar of Jurisprudence.

From childhood, Ibn Taymiyyah dedicated the whole Qur'ān to memory. He received basic and rudiment knowledge of Islam from his father and uncle. He had just completed his study when his father died in 682 A.H. A year later, he was appointed to the chair of *Hadith* which his father occupied in several leading *Madāris* in Damascus. He soon began to teach and preach in the central (Umayyad) Mosque and attracted increasingly large audiences. Though Ibn Taymiyyah was educated in the Hanbali school of thought, he later reached a level of scholarship beyond the confines of that school. He was fully versed in the opinions of the four schools which helped lead him to the conclusion that blind adherence to one school would bring a Muslim into conflict with the letter and spirit of Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. Similarly, he had acquired a deep understanding of philosophical and mystic terminologies. In particular, he focused on the works of Ibn Sīna (d.1037 C.E.) and Ibn al-'Arabī (d.1240 C.E.) as the epitome of philosophical and mystic deviation in Islam.

Because of the blunt corruptions and deviations that had surrounded the pristine teachings of Islam which were all due to the intellectual products of theologians, Ṣūfīs, philosophers, and jurists, Ibn Taymiyyah launched striking attacks on his contemporaries. The central theme of Ibn Taymiyyah's transformation agenda was the revival of the spirit of the age of Prophet Muhammad and his companions when Islam was pure and not contaminated by strange ideas and heretic beliefs. In the course of pursuing this noble mission, Ibn Taymiyyah went against most of the venerated scholars of Islam. He showed special interest and concern for the Muslim philosophical

speculations. Due to the strong negative influence of philosophers in corrupting the thoughts of the then Muslims, he launched a very striking blow on Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Al-Kindi (d.873C.E.), Ibn Rushd (d.1198CE), Ar-Rāzī (d.925C.E.), Ibn al-'Arabī and Al-Ghazālī. His arguments against each of these personalities portrayed him as a reformer who with every courage and zeal was set to defend the sanctity and sacredness of pristine Islam against all theological and philosophical barriers. Ibn Taymiyyah was subjected to the persecution of the leading scholars of that time who conspired with the government against him. Thus, he was a victim of imprisonment on several occasions. His troubles with the government began when he went with a delegation of '*Ulamāu* to admonish the Khan of the Mongols in Iran to stop his attacks on Muslims. It is reported that none of the '*Ulamāu* dared to say a word before Khan except Ibn Taymiyyah. When he was ultimately banned from having any book, paper, and pen during the later stage of his final confinement, Ibn Taymiyyah devoted all his time to worshipping and reciting the Qur'ān. He died in prison on the 22nd of Dhul Qa'dah, 728 A.H. According to Al-Bazzār, who was an eye witness of his funeral, Damascus which is the place of death of Ibn Taymiyyah witnessed an unprecedented crowd.

On a general note, Ibn Taymiyyah is an embodiment of various qualities. He is a great scholar of high repute. His scholarship pervades all aspects of disciplines, namely: Jurisprudence, Theology, Linguistics, Exegesis, *Ḥadith*, History, Mathematics, Logics, Mysticism, Philosophy, and Law. In the same vein, he was known to have dedicated most of his time to worshipping and ritual activities. His asceticism is very conspicuous. Another quality that made Ibn Taymiyyah conspicuous in history is his courage and braveness in pursuing his mission. The combination of all these qualities in a single personality is rare in history. Ibn Taymiyyah had many publications to his credit, among them, are *Iqtidāu as-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*; *Al-Jawāb aṣ-Ṣoḥiḥ Liman Baddala ad-Dīn al-Masīḥ*; *Ar-Raddu 'ala al-Manṭiqiyyīn* and *Majmu'at al-Fatāwā* (See the works of Ibn Abdil-Hādi, Bazzār, Adh-Dhahabi, and Khān earlier reviewed for more information about Ibn Taymiyyah).

3. Scholastic Polemics on Philosophy

Philosophy is a Greek word coined from Philo originally meant selflessness, but Pythagoras turned it to mean love; and sophia which means wisdom. Hence, Philosophy indicates a love of wisdom. In the past, the word referred to the study of the basic principles, viewing knowledge as something

based on rationality, the goal of which was the search for truth¹³. According to Johnstone philosophy can be described as rational examination,¹⁴ free from any restrictions and authority imposed on it from outside, and with the ability to go all the way based on logic, propagating his view regardless of the difference between these (philosophical) views and what is customarily known, religious beliefs and the dictates of tradition, without being confronted or resisted or punished by any authority. This last definition attests to the fact that Philosophy is against religion and does not show a sense of bowing to religious dictates. It could be, however, argued that such a definition goes for Neo-Platonist and Peripatetic Philosophy.

Muslims first got contact with Philosophy during the era of the Abbasid Dynasty that thrived in the 8th century C.E.¹⁵ During that time, the two most famous philosophical schools of thought were the Neo-Platonist and Peripatetic schools of philosophy. The former is the school of the famous Philosopher, Plato, while the latter belongs to Aristotle of Greek. Al-Kindi (d.873C.E.), the first Philosopher of the Arabs, followed a broadly Neo-Platonic approach, and the second Philosopher of the Arabs, Al-Fārābī (d.950C.E.) advocated for Peripatetic School of Philosophy. Arising from this assertion, there was nothing like Islamic Philosophy in the first place; rather it was Neo-Platonist and Peripatetic Philosophies that constituted *Falsafah* in those days. Hence, virtually all the Muslim Theologians and Jurists kicked against that Philosophy. It should be noted that Al-Kindi, Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, and Ibn Rushd, were advocates for the worldview developed by Plato and Aristotle. Hence, they were titled 'Muslim Philosophers' not because there existed an Islamic Philosophy, but because they were Muslims who adopted foreign Philosophy¹⁶. Instances abound where these Muslim Philosophers supported their Greek masters against the clear teachings of Islam vis-à-vis some issues. Al-Fārābī for example agreed with Aristotle in viewing a Philosopher as being of a higher status than a Prophet¹⁷.

Al-Fārābī is also seen to have accepted Aristotle's view that the world is *Qadīm* (eternal), which seems to be in contradiction with the provisions in

¹³ A Mahmud, *Ta'rikh Al-Falsafat Fi Al-Islam* (Beirut-London: Darul Fikr, 2006), 238.

¹⁴ Henry W. Johnstone, "Rationality and Rhetoric in Philosophy," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 4 (December 1973): 381–89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335637309383188>.

¹⁵ Arshad Islam, "The Contribution of Muslims to Science during the Middle Abbasid Period (750-945)," *Revelation and Science* 1, no. 01 (2011).

¹⁶ Qaraḍāwī, *Al-Imam Al-Ghazālī Bayna Mādhihi Wa Nāqidihi*.

¹⁷ Abu Shamiy, *Al-Muqāranah Bayna Al-Ghazālī Wa Ibn Taymiyyah*.

the Qur'ān that God created the world out of nothing¹⁸. Ibn Taymiyyah accused Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) that virtually all his write-ups are greatly influenced by Greek Philosophy. Ibn Khaldūn (d.1406C.E.) said the following about the Philosophers:

And its detriment (philosophy) is abundant in religion. Thus, it is necessary to expose its secrets and unveil (the misconception) of its adherents. This is due (to the fact) that a group (of people) among the intelligentsia of mankind deemed that all the essence and attitudes of creatures, physical or metaphysical, can be discovered via contemplation and sensual deductions. They also held that doctrinal beliefs can be appropriated by (exclusively) human sense and not by revelation. According to them all the aforementioned fall within the jurisdiction of the intellect. And these (people) are referred to as Philosophers¹⁹.

In the same direction, Ibn al-Jawzi (d.1200C.E.) castigates the Muslim Philosophers with the following words:

Indeed, Satan has misled some faithful of our religion. He, thus, penetrated them through the door of (their) excess geniusness and intelligence; and convinced them that the right way is to follow the philosophers, because they are wise whose deeds and statements (clearly) attest to geniusness and intelligence of apex and perfect (caliber), as (it was) in case of wisdom (reported) from Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Julius. These (sets of people) were credited with engineering, logic, and natural sciences and were (able) to discover via their geniusness hidden things. Though, they failed in their theological discussions and (consequently) led them to differ (among themselves) in a matter of theology. They however did not differ in matters of physical and engineering courses²⁰.

It can be deduced from the statements of Ibn al-Jawzi that the philosophers are accurate in their observations of natural and physical sciences, but their problem lies with theology. This conforms with Al-Ghazālī's division of Philosophy into six including Geometry, Mathematics, Logics, Theology, and Natural, Moral, and Political Sciences, and his conclusion that their blunder is apparent in the

¹⁸ Abu Shamiy.

¹⁹ Abdul Rahman Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, ed. Usman Jidi (beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1998), 561.

²⁰ A Ibn al-Jawzi, *Talbis Iblis* (Cairo: Dar Ibn al-Haytham, 2004), 47.

theological issues²¹. It is thus obvious that writers usually concentrate on the achievements of Muslim Philosophers in natural and physical sciences, and ignore the negative sides of distorting theological faces of Islam.

Another scholar that rebuked the Muslim Philosophers was Abū Hāmid Al-Ghazālī who submitted that,

It should be noted that (our) intent in (publishing this work) is to orientate those who have good belief in the Philosophers, and deemed that their paths are devoid of contradiction, by explaining their many inconsistencies. Thus, I did not intend to engage with them (Philosophers) except (with the intention) of a prosecutor and condemner, not as appellant and affirmer. I will, thus (try to) refute all that they (Philosophers) believe in²².

It should be asserted that before the foregoing pronouncements, Al-Ghazālī had attained the apex position in the Peripatetic Philosophy. However, many writers have agreed that he is also a Philosopher despite his seeming condemnation of the Philosophers. It is noteworthy that none among the theologians' and scholars' condemnation of Philosophers has an immense and long-term influence on Philosophy like that of Al-Ghazālī. This is the main reason why a very great authority in the Peripatetic Philosophy in the person of Ibn Rushd (d.876 C.E.) made a rejoinder against him. The rejoinder is aimed at defending the tainted image of Philosophy. The effort of Ibn Rushd to revive Philosophy was futile due to the harsh condemnations of the theologians coupled with the historic and unprecedented humiliation to which Al-Ghazālī subjected Philosophy. After the death of Ibn Rushd, Philosophy in the peripatetic style went out of fashion in the Arab world, although the transmission of that philosophy into Western Europe started at this time and had an important influence upon the direction in which medieval and renaissance Europe was to take.

It was likely in the 19th century that the concept of "Islamic Philosophy" evolved in the Muslim world so that it would substitute the Peripatetic Philosophy. Muslim writers have differed in the actual definition of Islamic Philosophy. According to Seyyed²³, Islamic Philosophy is the systematic investigation of problems connected with life, the universe, ethics,

²¹ M Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustasfā* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 2002), 51.

²² Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustasfā*.

²³ N Seyyed, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006).

society, and so on as conducted in the Muslim world. Oliver²⁴ argues that the best way of specifying the nature of Islamic Philosophy is to say that it is the tradition of philosophy that crosses out of Islamic culture, with the latter term understood in its widest sense. It can be inferred from the foregoing definitions that Islamic Philosophy evolved as a reaction to the faulted Greek Philosophy which dominated the thought of the early Muslim Philosophers. Arising from this, it is worthy of observation that it is a conventional blunder to focus and concentrate on Muslim Philosophers like Ibn Sinā, al-Farabi, Ar-Razi, and Ibn Rushd in the discipline of new evolving Islamic Philosophy. This assertion is based on the fact that the aforementioned personalities only claimed to have been professing both Neo-Platonic or Peripatetic Philosophy of Greek origin, and not Islamic Philosophy whose concept never existed then. Qaraḍāwī²⁵ is, therefore, seen to be accurate when he observed that,

The Philosophy of Farābi or Avicenna and Ikhwān as Saffa (The brother of Safa) is never an Islamic Philosophy as been claimed by its advocates and disguisers. Indeed, the sources (of that Philosophy) are (never) from Islam. Then why should it be ascribed to Islam, (or (why should Islam) be held responsible for its (blunders)? All that connects it with Islam is that it was only a product of some Muslim faithful and it evolved on the land (of Islam), and (was) documented with its language.

However, the components of Islamic Philosophy, according to its proponents, are the religion of Islam itself and Greek Philosophy which the early Muslims inherited as a result of conquests, along with pre-Islamic Indian and Persian Philosophy²⁶. Among the proponents of Islamic Philosophy in the 19th century, Muhammad Abduh (d.1905C.E.) and Jamal din al-Afghānī(d.1897 C.E.) are very prominent. They both sought to find rational principles which would establish a form of thought which is both distinctively Islamic and also appropriate for life in modern scientific societies, a debate that is continuing within Islamic Philosophy today. Muhammad Iqbal (d.1938C.E.), a prominent scholar from India, provided a rather eclectic mixture of Islamic and European Philosophy. It is very worthy of note that the terminology of Islamic Philosophy did not emerge as a branch of knowledge that is taught in the curriculum of Islamic studies until it was introduced by Shaykh Mustapha ‘Abdur-Raziq, the *Shaykh of Al-Azhar* as a

²⁴ L Oliver, *An Introduction to Classical Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

²⁵ Qaraḍāwī, *Al-Imam Al-Ghazālī Bayna Mādihīhi Wa Nāqidihi*.

²⁶ Seyyed, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present*.

reaction to western attacks on Islam based on the idea that Islam has no Philosophy. However, the attempt of integrating Islamic Philosophy into the courses and disciplines in Islam was strongly resisted by *Salafi* scholars who held that the provisions of *Qur'ān and Sunnah* are sufficient for Muslims in exclusion of Philosophy. Thus, signifying the recurrence of history whereby Philosophy in the early time was resisted by Muslim Theologians and Jurists. According to Sharif²⁷, the *Qur'ān* is a book essentially religious, not philosophical, but it deals with all those problems that religion and Philosophy have in common. Both have to say something about problems related to the significance of such expressions as God, the world, the individual soul, and the interrelation of these; good and evil, free will, and life after death. The attempt of Sharif and some other writers to term the Islamic modality of addressing problems, or in another expression, the Islamic worldview, as Philosophy of Islam, has been resisted by Oliver²⁸ who insists that the Islamic worldview should not be referred to as Philosophy as predominantly an unoriginal and a transmitted form of thought. This has often been the form of interpretation favored by Western commentators. However, Muslim Philosophers have relied upon defending their trend on many provisions of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* that stress the importance of '*Aql* (reason), *Tafakkur* (contemplation), and *Tadabbur* (pondering). Some of the verses of the *Qur'an* that support Philosophy include, but are not limited to Q2:44,73,76, 242; Q3:65, 118; Q6:32, 151; Q7:169 and Q10:16. The Prophet was also reported to have said: "contemplate over the creature of Allah, but do not dabble into the essence of Allah."²⁹

4. Similarities in The Views of The Two Scholars on Philosophy

Going through the works of both Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyyah, it is obvious that they both agreed that there are areas in which the Philosophers commit sacrilege and disbelief. For instance, Al-Ghazālī³⁰ asserts that Muslim Philosophers committed infidelity and disbelief in three ideological issues which have been visited with unanimity by a Muslim scholar. The three ideological discourses where some Philosophers commit disbelief, according to Al-Ghazālī, are the eternity of the world (*Azaliyyat al-ʿālam*); physical/spiritual punishment in the grave, and negation of the attributes of God. Although, it is indisputable that Muslim Philosophers are a victim of the

²⁷ M.M Sharif, *A History of Muslim Philosophy* (New Delhi: Adam Publishers and Distributors, 2012).

²⁸ Oliver, *An Introduction to Classical Islamic Philosophy*.

²⁹ N Al-Albaani, *Silsilat Al-Ahaadith as-Saheehah*, ed. 2 (Cairo: Maktabat Furqan, 2011), 3/56.

³⁰ Sallābi, *Al-Ghazālī Wa Juhuduhu Fit Tajdid Wal Iṣlah*.

last two among the three accusations of Al-Ghazālī; subsequent writers have raised the issue of the veracity of the first accusation (an eternity of the world) vis-à-vis the Muslim Philosophers. Abu Raydah³¹ argues that contrary to the accusation of Al-Ghazālī, the Muslim Philosopher Al-Kindi, unequivocally declared that the world is not eternal. Also, Farābi stressed the same point to the extent of refuting those who ascribed that claim to Aristotles. Al-Hawwari also asserts that contrary to Al-Ghazālī's accusation of the Muslim Philosophers, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) was never guilty of the three aforementioned discourses. He only presented those issues with the terminologies and contextual frameworks of the Philosophers, which are different from *the Ash'ari* methodology, to which Al-Ghazālī belonged with a conclusion that conforms with the unanimity of Muslim scholars on those discourses. Al-Ghazālī may be defended against the doubt raised by the subsequent writers, by contextualizing his accusations to the Greek Philosophers whose trend was followed by some Muslims.

In the same direction, Ibn Taymiyyah outrightly declared some of the doctrines of Muslim Philosophers as an act of disbelief and sheer confrontation with the teachings of Islam. While using Farābi as an epitome for disbelieving Muslim Philosophers, Ibn Taymiyyah³² concludes that the major factor responsible for their religious blunder is non-existence of basic faith in their hearts. He said: "...This is how Fārābi alleged that a Philosopher is more perfect than a Prophet, and other sorts of heresy, and disbelief that justify attributing them to (heretic sects) like *Ismailiyyah*, *Nasiriyyah*, *Qarāmitah*, and *Bātiniyyah*. The major factor for (this manifestation) is non-existence of (religious) basic in their hearts."

Another area where the two scholars agreed on the issue of Philosophy and Philosophers is that they subscribe to the fact that Philosophy, in its widest and clear connotation, is an act of strongly relying on the wits, intellect, and thought of humans in giving answers to natural posers, at the expense of divine provisions. While asserting the reason for publishing a destructive work against Muslim Philosophers, Al-Ghazālī³³ remarked, "For, I have seen a group (of people) deeming that they are superior to (their) peers and mates with extreme intelligence and brilliance.

³¹ M Abu Raydah, *Ta'rikh Al-Falsafat Fi Al-Islam* (Beirut: Darul Fikr, 2006).

³² A Bn Taymiyyah, *Majmu'atul Fatāwā* (Cairo: Darul Hadith, 2006).

³³ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustasfā*.

They rejected the position of Islam in the acts of worship and despised the monuments of religion.”

In the same vein, while creating the demarcation between the prophetic methodology and philosophical pattern in religious discourse, Ibn Taymiyyah³⁴ observes that the destination of the Philosophers and their adherents is to argue mainly with what they see; and they don't know anything beyond that. It is also apparent from the works of Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyyah that the Philosophy professed by the famous Muslim Philosophers like Fārābi, Ibn Sīnā and Al-Kindi, is purely Greek origin, and specifically, Peripatetic in nature. The duo never recognized "Islamic Philosophy" which was childbirth of Greek Philosophy. Hence, Al-Ghazālī observes that some Muslims have been carried away by the exaggerated reports about the intellectual power of personalities such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristo; and thus, paved the way for buying to their ideology which is purely anti-Islamic teachings. Ibn Taymiyyah also followed suit when he declared the Muslim Philosophers as hypocrites who gave priority to their Greek masters above the teachings of *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah*.

5. Dis-Similarities in the Views of the Two Scholars on Philosophy

Despite the aforementioned similar trends of the two scholars, the differences and dissimilarities in their views cannot be far-fetched. The method used by Al-Ghazālī in refuting the Philosophers constitutes a major feature that differentiates him from Ibn Taymiyyah. Going through the ‘*Tahāfut*’ of Al-Ghazālī, it is appropriate to conclude that he subscribes to the principle of "who kills by the sword should be killed by the sword" as he used philosophical weapons, instruments, and patterns to destroy and condemn Philosophy. Because the work is directed at the core Philosophers, philosophical vocabularies that are not conceivable and understandable to laymen, dominate the patterns of the work. Hence, the work is characterized by extreme philosophical polemics; classifications within classifications, non-quotation of Qur'ānic and Sunnatic texts and philosophical terminologies. The justification for that method lies in the fact that other available means have proven futile in refuting the Philosophers who strictly adhere to their wits and whims and never believed in the infallibility of the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah*. The fruit of that method is the heat felt by the Philosophers on the global scene and the preparation for its final ouster from Muslim world. In a sharp

³⁴ Bn Taymiyyah, *Majmu'atul Fatāwā*.

contrast, Ibn Taymiyyah, majorly relies on the methodology of *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah* in refuting the Philosophers, though with little mixture of philosophical arguments. He will usually quote the blunders of the Philosophers and bring forth the provisions of *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah* that negate them. It is also obvious from his works that he knew much about the principles of Philosophers, but it is not likely to the rank of Al-Ghazālī who had attained the apex position among the Philosophers of his time.

Another discourse that forms a contention between the two scholars on Philosophy is logic (*Mantiq*). It is known that logic is a branch of Philosophy. According to Al-Ghazālī³⁵, studying logic is a communal obligation (*farḍu kifāyah*) and indispensable for the true knowledge of Islam. This statement has instigated scholars like Ibn as-Solah (d.1245 C.E.), Ibn al-Jawzi, and Ibn Taymiyyah. According to Ibn as-Solah, the companions and the early Muslims never knew logic; and they were the channels through which Islamic education reached us³⁶. While refuting the assertion of Al-Ghazālī on logic, Ibn Taymiyyah³⁷ held that such a statement is not only reprehensible but is also capable of exposing religion to various corruptions. In some of his write-ups, Ibn Taymiyyah regards logic as not too beneficial for the dull; and dispensable for the brilliant. According to him, those who held that logic is necessary for the *Ummah*, are ignoramus who have missed the proper way.

The dis-similarity also appears in the extent to which each of the two scholars was influenced by the Greek Philosophy. Although Al-Ghazālī is very reputable to have destroyed the facet of Greek Philosophy via his '*Tahāfut*', it is apparent as affirmed by various writers that he is influenced and corrupted by some philosophical traces. According to Qaradāwī³⁸, despite his attack on Philosophers, Al-Ghazālī also is a Philosopher, but in different and independent guise. Riwan, a Western Philosopher opines that Arabian Philosophy has not produced a great scholar of Philosophy like Abu Hāmid³⁹. Ibn al-Arabi (d.1240), a famous student of Al-Ghazālī, acknowledged this assertion when he observed that, their Shaykh swallowed the Philosophers, but he wanted to vomit them and could not. The traces of philosophical viruses in Al-Ghazālī could be seen in two instances. The first is seen in his

³⁵ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustasfā*.

³⁶ Qaradāwī, *Al-Imam Al-Ghazālī Bayna Mādihihi Wa Nāqidihi*.

³⁷ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmu'atul Fatāwā*.

³⁸ Qaradāwī, *Al-Imam Al-Ghazālī Bayna Mādihihi Wa Nāqidihi*.

³⁹ Qaradāwī.

"*Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*" which has been condemned by Ibn Taymiyyah who observes that the book of *Tafsir* is replete with various philosophical deductions and speculations⁴⁰. A casual perusal of '*Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*' of Al-Ghazālī reveals that the book is quite different from the conventional books of *Tafsir* (exegesis) in the sense that the author heavily relied on philosophical terminologies and pattern of speculative classifications. For instance, he describes the *Qur'ān* as a big ocean that contains six aquatic resources, namely: white musk, brown musk, red sulfur, white sulphur, lute, and a chemical known as *Taryaq al-Akbar*⁴¹. He further classified the aforementioned resources and chemicals into basic and complementary resources. While describing the knowledge derivable from the *Qur'ān*, Al-Ghazālī classified knowledge of the *Qur'ān* into Golden, which is the ultimate, and oystarious, which is less important. He, however, held that the knowledge of exegesis belongs to the latter, and gave preference to the esoteric explanation of *Qur'ān*.

Another instance whereby a philosophical trace is attached to Al-Ghazālī is manifest in his contribution to the discourse on physical resurrection after death. While giving an account of the various schools of thought on this issue, Al-Ghazālī made mention of a school that subscribes to total denial of physical pleasures after death. Despite the fact that this school has been declared heretic by all Muslim scholars, inclusive of Al-Ghazālī in *Tahāfut*, he still attributed this view to Sufis and Muslim Philosophers without trace of castigation⁴². This attitude of Al-Ghazālī in this issue is hitherto raising dust on his personality among Muslim scholars. Although, Qaraḍāwī has averted the suspicion from Al-Ghazālī, holding that such insinuation cannot hold water in the face of other unequivocal statements of his on this issue. Be it as it may, it is very worthy of note that Al-Ghazālī, being a master of Philosophy, is to some extent, influenced by the Philosophy. Ibn Taymiyyah has also been accused by few scholars of Philosophical influences, but not strongly like that of Al-Ghazālī. Some have criticized him over his view on the eternity of hell for unbelievers and described his view as mere philosophical speculation other than relying on the *Qur'an*⁴³. Shahab also termed his theological polemics as highly influenced by philosophical interpretations (283). Also, Alosi argues that despite Ibn Taymiyyah's

⁴⁰ Bn Taymiyyah, *Majmu'at al-Fatāwā*.

⁴¹ Abdul Ghani Maghribi, *Al-Fikr Al-Ijtima'i 'Inda Ibn Khaldun* (aljazair: Diwan al-Mathbu'at al-Jami'iyyah, 1988), 37.

⁴² Qaraḍāwī, *Al-Imam Al-Ghazālī Bayna Mādihīhi Wa Nāqidihi*.

⁴³ A Shahab, *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 283.

attempt to return to the Qur'an and views of *Salaf*, his method is fundamentally philosophical⁴⁴.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is apparent that the famous Muslim Philosophers were professionals in the Neo-Platonic and Peripatetic Greek version of Philosophy. It is indisputable that such version of philosophy is not totally in tandem with Islam. Although, Muslim Philosophers excelled and prospered in natural and physical sciences which made their names be written in gold; Muslim writers and thinkers should not be carried away by this superficial achievement in the face of the Greek contaminated ideologies that they used to pollute the fundamental teachings of Islam.

It is worthy of note that the Abbasid era is considered on a conventional note as the golden era of Islamic history due to the movements of translating foreign literatures into Arabic and being the starting point for connecting the Muslims to various disciplines, it is very pertinent to consider the other side of the coin. The era is notorious with exposing Muslims to foreign thought and ideologies that are antithetical to their religion. The spread and practice of fortune telling, sorcery, astrology and Greek Philosophy among the Muslims are all products of that era. Hence, we submit that the golden era of Islamic history should be the time when Islam has not been tainted by foreign ideologies, and which was the time declared by the custodian of Islam, Prophet Muhammad, as the best generation. The concept of "Islamic philosophy" gained momentum in the 19th century as reaction to Western/Greek Philosophy. Such concept might have existed before then, but advocacy for it reached its apex at that time. Hence, it is submitted that focusing on the ancient "Muslim Philosophers" who were to a large extent influenced by Greek Philosophy in the new evolving subject, is not only inaccurate; it is also a display of academic hypocrisy. The views of Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyyah in Philosophy are similar in declaring some philosophical ideologies as act of disbelief and sacrilege. They also both agreed that Philosophers gave priority to their wits and whims over divine provisions and also both subscribed to the fact that the so-called Muslim Philosophers are influenced by Aristotle and Plato. Despite the agreement in the aforementioned areas, the method used by each of them in refuting

⁴⁴ M. Husam, *The Problem of Creation in Islamic Thought: Qur'an, Hadith, Commentaries and Kalam* (Baghdad: National Printing and Publishing Co, 1968), 3.

Philosophers is different. Furthermore, Al-Ghazālī differs from Ibn Taymiyyah in the sense that the former is also accused of philosophical traces, while Ibn Taymiyyah, though is also a victim of that accusation, not that of the former.

References

- Abu Raydah, M. *Ta'rikh Al-Falsafat Fi Al-Islam*. Beirut: Darul Fikr, 2006.
- Abu Shamiy, M. *Al-Muqāranah Bayna Al-Ghazālī Wa Ibn Taymiyyah*. Cairo: Al-Maktab al-Islami, 2003.
- Adh-Dhabi, S. *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalāi*. Beirut-London: Muassat ar-Risalah, 1993.
- Ahmad, A. *Al-Tassawwuf Bayna Al-Ghazālī Wa Ibn Taymiyyah*. Libanon: Darul Fikr, 2003.
- Al-Albaani, N. *Silsilat Al-Ahaadith as-Saheehah*. Edited by 2. Cairo: Maktabat Furqan, 2011.
- Al-Ghazālī, M. *Al-Mustasfā*. Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 2002.
- Arikewuyo, Ahmed Nafiu. "A Comparative Study of Al-Ghazali's and Ibn Taymiyyah's Views on Sufism." *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 17 (2020): 15–24.
- Arikewuyo, N.A. "Al-Ghazālī in Selected Works of Ibn Taymiyyah." University of Ilorin, 2015.
- As-Subqi, S. *Tabaqāt Ash-Shāfi'iyyah Al-Kubrā*. Cairo: Matba'at al-Halabi, 1998.
- Az-Zahrani, M. "Mawqiful Ghazali Minal Falāsifah." University of Cairo, n.d.
- Bazzār, U.A. *Al-A'alām Al-'Aliyyah Fi Manāqib Bn Taymiyyah*. Cairo: Al-Maktab al-Islami, 1988.
- Bn Taymiyyah, A. *Majmu'atul Fatāwā*. Cairo: Darul Hadith, 2006.
- Gambari, Y.D. "A Study of Sufism in the Thought of Ibn Taymiyyah." University of Ilorin, 2014.
- Husam, M. *The Problem of Creation in Islamic Thought: Qur'an, Hadith, Commentaries and Kalam*. Baghdad: National Printing and Publishing Co, 1968.
- Ibn al-Jawzi, A. *Talbis Iblis*. Cairo: Dar Ibn al-Haytham, 2004.

- Ibn Khaldun, Abdul Rahman. *Muqaddimah*. Edited by Usman Jidi. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1998.
- Islam, Arshad. "The Contribution of Muslims to Science during the Middle Abbasid Period (750-945)." *Revelation and Science* 1, no. 01 (2011).
- Johnstone, Henry W. "Rationality and Rhetoric in Philosophy." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 4 (December 1973): 381–89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335637309383188>.
- Khan, Q. *The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyyah*. New Delhi: Adam Publishers & Distributors, 2007.
- Maghribi, Abdul Ghani. *Al-Fikr Al-Ijtima'i 'Inda Ibn Khaldun*. aljazair: Diwan al-Mathbu'at al-Jami'iyyah, 1988.
- Mahmud, A. *Ta'rikh Al-Falsafat Fi Al-Islam*. Beirut-London: Darul Fikr, 2006.
- Oliver, L. *An Introduction to Classical Islamic Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Qaraḍāwī, Y. *Al-Imam Al-Ghazālī Bayna Mādihihi Wa Nāqidihi*. Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 2004.
- Qodirov Davronbek Hoshimovich. "The Period in Which Ghazali Lived: The Socio-Political Situation and the Spiritual Environment." *International Journal on Integrated Education* 3, no. 9 (September 2020): 108–11. <https://doi.org/10.31149/ijie.v3i9.597>.
- Sallābi, A. *Al-Ghazālī Wa Juhuduhu Fit Tajdid Wal Iṣlah*. Cairo: Muassat Iqra, 2007.
- Seyyed, N. *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2006.
- Shahab, A. *Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Sharif, M.M. *A History of Muslim Philosophy*. New Delhi: Adam Publishers and Distributors, 2012.
- Tablawi, M. *At-Tasawwuf Fi at-Turāth Ibn Taymiyyah*. Cairo: University of Cairo, n.d.