

## **Prophethood and Administration in Imam Mohammad Ghazali's Political Thought**

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Research Article



### **Abstract**

The present study aimed at exploring the prophethood and administration in Imam Mohammad Ghazali's political thought. The research method was descriptive-analytical and the results showed that the foundation of Ghazali's political thought is priority of Sharia. The point worth noting is that the way Sharia is preferred in Ghazali's thought is *a posteriori*. Ghazali considers politics from the perspective of the human's material life. Finally, he turns to the reforming mission of politics and explains the correlation between politics and piety under the inner attitude and the concept of reformation in individual and social life. Ghazali discusses prophethood in various forms, but what manifests itself in his final thought is paying attention to one's heart, inner side and insight in prophethood. Paying attention to one's inner side is Ghazali's solution for reconciling religion and world. He also, like other Muslim thinkers, maintains that true felicity is the felicity in hereafter. He considers the way to achieve that important goal to be not imitating and repeating a practice in its outer form; rather, he searches for it inside one's heart, the heartfelt belief and inner purity. Ghazali must be considered as an inquirer who was seeking sincerity

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and divine proximity up to the end of his life. He considered this proximity in resorting to the Prophet as God's supreme creature. He compensates the Prophet's absence by resorting to mysticism, inner attitude and moral loyalty to the prophetic teachings. He maintains that the solution to society's problems is in the hands of the religious scholars and rulers who have made firm decision to reform the situation.

**Keywords**

political thought, Ghazali, prophethood, politics, the Prophet.

## Introduction

Hojjat al-Islam Zeyn al-Din Abu Hamed Mohammad bin Mohammad bin Mohammad bin Ahmad Ghazali Tusi (450-505 AH) was the jurist, theologian and philosopher and one of the great persons in Sufism and among the most prominent Iranian thinkers of 5<sup>th</sup> century. He must be recognized in the light of his unique efforts made in the world of knowledge and practice and in the sphere of belief, faith and thinking. Like most of the thinkers in the Islamic geography, Ghazali made his scientific efforts in the sphere of the strife between intellect (*'ql*) and transmission (*naql*).<sup>1</sup> Just as his answers to the question about the reason for the inability of intellect is historic and influential, his reading of revelation and the authority of the heart as the container of knowledge – in his *a posteriori* view – is also of great importance. The present article pursues Ghazali's approach to the politics in his final works, and attempts to explore his reading of politics under the consideration of human's inner side, his heart and his soul.

The necessity of paying heed to politics in Ghazali's thought must be sought in his life. His close ties with the world of politics and his widespread scientific ability had made him an informed individual and an evolved scholar (Ghazali, 1983). Ghazali was living in the era of crises. In those days, the influence of Greek philosophy had extended to the rivalry between the intellect and the transmission, leading to formation of a procedure wherein revelation raised to defend itself. The struggle between revelation and philosophy lasted for centuries and took a historical dimension. During the fourth century AH, that struggle was leading to the victory of the Greek philosophy. But with the establishment of the Islamic philosophy by Farabi – which led to the emergence of a Wisdom with the supremacy and priority of revelation

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1. *Naql* or transmission refers to the collection of hadiths and traditions transmitted from the Infallibles, especially the Prophet and Shiite Imams.

– the struggle between the intellect and revelation was revived and underwent a historical turn, furthering – in the course of time – in favor of the latter. The wave raised in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AH was the reflection of the thinkers' preoccupation for rethinking about the expediency of the faith and the country, reforming the society, reviving Sharia and purifying religion. Ghazali was the leader of the wave of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. He had a reading of religion, politics and ethics from an esoteric and inner perspective, and offered a knowledge-based system, as the system of piety and ruling closest to the prophetic system, in line with dominance of knowledge based on one's heart and inner side. We must consider Ghazali's effort as the onset of superiority of mysticism over intellectual thinking. Ghazali's unique experiences made a special collection available for the world of knowledge that seemed, sometimes, inconsistent and contradictory. The jurist Ghazali sometimes put on Sufi garments and migrated through an esoteric and exoteric journey from the world of politics to the inner isolation. Paying heed to the inner side must be considered as the weighting point of the change in Ghazali's attitude. After returning from his migration, Ghazali dealt with composing works wherein not only there was nothing of jurisprudence, but also he had turned to an inner, Sufist and esoteric attitude. Ghazali's turn to the 'heart' as the most precious possession of a man was not merely a personal discovery; rather, he attempted to lead the heart to the world of community and politics and look through the eyes of the heart into the uproar of the power. Ghazali started this important task by offering a definition of conjunction between politics and prophethood and describing the status of the 'heart' in prophethood and administration. As Khadiv Jam has written in the preface to *K̄miyāyi Sa'ādat*, the two book entitled *Iḥyā' al-Qulūb* and *K̄miyāyi Sa'ādat* – composed after Ghazali's new faith and fresh thought – contain his new attitudes towards existence, the human and cognition (Ghazali, 2001). The way Ghazali looks at the relationship

between prophetic mission and politics must be considered as the foundation of an innovative political thought whose taint can be pursued in all his *a posteriori* opinions.

Ghazali's special political thought that enters the esoteric dimension of religion into politics must be considered as the innovation of this study. Politics, if it is considered as related to piety, has been generally related to the appearance (outer aspect) and its laws. The inner side of religion is manifested in worships in the individual domain, and in morality in the collective domain. Ghazali must be considered as a genius who found the answer to the crisis of his world in the presence of the inner side of religion in the figure of politics. Studying the orders of politics has been pursued in various leanings in political thought. This important task can be considered as one of the important and current issues in the world of politics and thinking politically from the ancient Iran and Greece to the present time. Speaking of the relationship between politics and prophethood in the Islamic political thought is so serious that even the minor marginal discourses believing in separation between prophethood and politics and regarding politics as accident to prophetic mission deal with politics and prophets. Indeed, the present article does not claim to explore the orders of politics or the prophet's politics. Rather, it claims to offer an ideal politics centered on the interior layer of religion, crystalized in the late Ghazali's thought common in the community of Sufis.

Studying the relationship between jurisprudence and politics, or mysticism and politics or Sufism and politics, each calls for a separate opportunity and a new clamor, but these three can be found in Ghazali's thought and their relationship with politics can be explored. The present study explores this effort under Ghazali's inner-centered or esoteric attitude and tries to pursue the study of politics from the perspective of paying attention to the interior and the 'heart' in Ghazali's three lived spheres as the jurist (who was the great judge), the mystic and Sufi of

Tus city. The problem of this study is specifically how to deal with politics by using the unique component of interior thinking in the three distinct spheres of jurisprudence, mysticism, and Sufism, which was the thinking place for Ghazali.

### 1. Politics

In *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn, Mīzān al-'Amal* and *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk*, Ghazali has considered the human's social life inevitable (Ghazali, 1972, p. 50; and Ghazali, 1993, pp. 105-106). In his monumental and impressive work, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, he places politics on the top and proposes it as the main human's needs (Ghazali, 1987, vol. 1, p. 12). This is because without politics, people's life and their needs will not be organized, and the society will be afflicted with anarchy and chaos (Ghazali, 1987, vol. 1, pp. 12-13). While speaking of the necessity of collective life, he starts his discussion on politics from the conjunction of this world and hereafter and human's multi-dimensional nature (Ghazali, 1954, pp. 32-33). Ghazali considers human a material and spiritual being, and maintains that the human needs attention and guidance from an immaterial world (Ghazali, 2001, p. 9). In Ghazali's view, the spiritual dimension of human's existence enjoys a double importance and human's body is the only roadster that he must use to reach his destination and true felicity before God the Exalted, and covering the path of growth and transcendence is not possible without giving up the material pleasures and the low place of this world. For Ghazali, human's usage of worldly life is based on necessity, need and fulfilling his wants. The human has been inevitably imprisoned in this low material world and 'he is a stranger' here (Ghazali, 2001, p. 9). In proportion to this [worldly] life, the human enjoys moods and features as well as material faculties; and in facing these desires, he needs a guide because the material desires tend to increase and human unawareness and his too much dealing with these desires make him distant from the truth of his own existence, leading him to abjection and

degradation. The celestial guidance leads the human to felicity. For Ghazali, there is a direct relationship between felicity and knowledge. Knowledge is, in the first place, knowledge of oneself; and the higher knowledge, which is knowledge of the Exalted God's attributes is called felicity. Interestingly, acquiring cognition and knowledge of the Exalted God is not possible without acquiring knowledge of oneself (Ghazali, 2001, pp. 9-10).

In Ghazali's view, what specifies the route of human's life and comes to help him in the throes of various desires is the revealed religious law or *Shar'* (Qaderi, 1991, p. 198). Meanwhile, the duty of politics is preserving the man in the route of attention to the relationship of the world and the hereafter. The politics and politician have the duty to reform the affairs, and what determines the framework of this reformation is the religious law (Qaderi, 1991, p. 198). Ghazali considered reformation as the duty of politics in various eras, but with the birth of 'interior' and 'heart' in his thought, reformation and – then – politics enjoyed an inner and esoteric dimension. The reformation in Ghazali's view was proposed in two inner and outer aspects. Dealing with the outer aspect without paying attention to inner aspect, or dealing with the inner aspect without paying attention to outer aspect, is rejected in Ghazali's view. He discusses the reformation and preserving the equilibrium between the inner and outer aspects in both individual and social forms. According to Ghazali's view, the religious law has specified the duties and latitudes of the rulers, and the human cannot change or improve it. In other words, the religious law specifies the ruler's general rights and responsibilities and, in this case, the power belongs – absolutely and perfectly – to God. It is given to the ruler to the extent that he enjoins and forbids according to the religious laws and 'the agents of the politics in Ghazali's political thought are completely overshadowed by religious law' (Qaderi, 1991, p. 198). In Ghazali's view, the central reform must be done in politics and

jurisprudence that are the place of manifestation of knowledge of transaction. In *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, he writes that reformation of the inner side means dealing with states of one's heart and, in the meantime, the knowledge of the states of the heart, since it leads to action, is considered a form of the knowledge.

In *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, in chapter *muhlakāt*, Ghazali writes – in describing the surprises of the heart – that for the inner reformation, we need reconciling knowledge of transaction and knowledge of intuition. “... because the heart is not from this world, the true discovery of the inner secret of the heart is a form of knowledge of intuition and here we have investigated the knowledge of transaction” (Ghazali, 1987, vol. 1, p. 220). The orders of politics in Ghazali's view returns – along with the term ‘interior’ and the phrase ‘politics of interior’ – to reformation of the interior. In *rub' munjiyāt*, which is a part of reformation of interior, he speaks in detail of the numerous attributes he considers for human being and, regrading each, he often reaches the conclusion of confirming official jurisprudential-religious laws. In the moralities he prescribes for the public in the Islamic society, Ghazali delineates the right way of one's life by considering the Sharia of Islam.<sup>1</sup> Considering this approach, we must consider the reforming politics as Ghazali's ideal politics. This politics has been proposed in the level of the prophet's politics, that of caliphs and kings, that of scholars and preachers (Ghazali, 2005, p. 174). This study investigates the sublime level of reforming politics under the prophetic administration.

The point is that reformation, in Ghazali's thought, is possible not only from the aperture of practicing the [religious] laws, but also through receiving inner cognition and knowledge. Ghazali regards

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1. Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn, Rub' Munjiyāt* including penitence, patience, thanksgiving, fear and hope, poverty and asceticism, verity and sincerity, self-examination and self-vigilance, reflection, trust in God, monotheism, affection and eagerness, remembering God and death and the states of hereafter.

acquiring a degree of cognition in proportion to ability of each of the members of society for [obtaining] religious truths and true knowledge. In the way to reformation, he has designed a kind of educational system whose foundation is knowledge of Sharia and religion and, in the higher level, of the Exalted God; and its ultimate goal is felicity in this world and the hereafter, and looking at divine beauty.

## 2. The Prophet

In *al-Iqtisād fil-I'tiqād*, in a section entitled “al-Da‘wa al-Sābi‘a: Bi‘that al-Anbiyā”, Ghazali considers prophetic mission of the prophets as permissible. Elsewhere, he explains the necessity of the existence of the prophets and Sharia along with intellect. He presents those explanations in facing with Barāhima who regard no need for prophets in the presence of intellect (Ghazali, 1993, pp. 215-221). In *Kimiyāyi Sa‘ādat*, in its first quarter entitled *rub‘ ‘ibādāt*, in the principle of “on acquiring the Sunnite’s belief”, and in the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter in the first quarter entitled “the truth of prophethood and authority”, and in *Iḥyā‘ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, in the section “Bayān al-‘Ilm bi-Af‘āl Allah Ta‘ālā” in “al-Da‘wa al-Sābi‘a-Bi‘that al-Anbiyā” in the 9<sup>th</sup> principle (Aṣl al-Tāsi‘), and also in “al-Quṭb al-Rābi‘- fil-Nubuwwa wal-Imāma wal-Ma‘ād wal-Takfīr”, and also in “al-Bāb al-Awwal-fī Ithbāt Nubuwwat Nabiiyinā Muhammad (PBUH)”, Ghazali has presented invaluable materials about prophethood. In his later work, including *al-Iqtisād fil-I'tiqād* – which is more recent than his other theological works – he has stated some sentences about divine words, revelation and its nature in the continuation of the discussions on ‘the prophets’ prophetic mission’ (*bi‘that al-anbiyā*). He does not consider the divine words as voices and speeches, and believes that the divine words are made up of meanings: “... it is meaning on its own” (Ghazali, 1993, p. 220).

In Ghazali’s view, the Prophet achieves knowledge with the strength of the ‘heart’. While believing in human’s need for a guide from the

world of meanings, he restates the necessity of the existence of the prophets and places the inner messenger (i.e. the intellect) at the service of the divine messenger (Ghazali, 2001, p. 10). In his view, prophethood is the ultimate point of the human's perfection and the prophet is a man who has achieved that rank on the basis of his own knowledge and existential perfection. Indeed, Ghazali – despite all his differences and disagreements – covers the path of other philosophers and attempts to link the prophetic knowledge with the politic action. He also regards the prophets as strong men in their existential capacity and enjoying the inner purity in receiving [divine] revelation. Even one may say that the prophet, in Ghazali's view, is an ideal man whose lineage must be searched for – while considering all disagreements he had with philosophers (Ghazali, 2000) – in the philosophy of Farabi and Avicenna.

Prophethood in Ghazali's thought is the highest order of human's existence. In his view, what distinguishes a prophet from others is his inner side, his interior or his heart, which is ready for accepting knowledge: "prophethood is one of the noble degrees of the human's heart." For him, there is a direct link between prophethood and the heart. The truth of heart in Ghazali's thought is of great importance (Ghazali, 2001, p. 10). According to Ghazali's approach, the 'heart' is the very spiritual and immaterial dimension of the human's existence. But that dimension of the human's existence is an isolated truth separated from the material world. He considers the heart (*dil*, *rūḥ* or spirit) as belonging to the world of intuitions. Meanwhile, knowing the Exalted God is the obligation of the heart, and the human's heart is of the genus of angels and "its main source is the Exalted God" (Ghazali, 2001, p. 11).

In *Kāmiyāyi Sa'ādāt*, Ghazali explains how the four certain faculties are related to one another in human's soul. These four faculties are as follows: the heart, the intellect, the anger and the lust. He has assimilated the human's body to a city and each of the faculties and body organs to an element of that city. The heart is the king of the city

and the intellect is its vizier. With the management of the intellect and its getting the control of other faculties, the human covers the path of felicity. The faculty of anger is assimilated to sheriff and the lust is assimilated to the tax agent. Ghazali believes we must watch these faculties not to dominate over the intellect; rather, the intellect must guide these faculties with its policy and management (Ghazali, 2001, pp. 14-15). Ghazali maintains that body is the servant of the intellect, and the intellect is the servant of the heart (Ghazali, 2001, pp. 14-15). He considers for the heart a position higher than that of the intellect. For him, the ultimate felicity is “looking at the Exalted God’s Beauty”, and this felicity is the achievement of the heart; and the reason for creation of the heart is achieving the status of looking at the Exalted God’s Beauty (Ghazali, 2001, pp. 14-15). Among the features of the heart, for Ghazali, is seizure of the heart. Anyone’s heart either affects his body or has the power to conquer his body. Regarding the prophets, Ghazali believes that the ‘heart’ in them affects the other souls in addition to affecting their own souls; and this effect is in case when it is to the benefit of the individuals and there is no corruption in it (Ghazali, 2001, p. 27).

Ghazali believes that the prophethood is the result of the existence of a strong heart in human’s soul. In chapter thirteen of *Kāmiyāyi Sa’ādāt*, entitled “the heart’s nobility due to its power”, he writes: “the power of the heart is different for different individuals, and the strong heart in the path of benevolence, with the ability to manipulate material and spiritual affairs, is among the characteristics of those who enjoy miracles and extraordinary powers. They are the prophets and the saints. The miracles and extraordinary actions are among the features of human’s heart, for the heart is of the genus of the angels and has the power to manipulate the affairs of the universe” (Ghazali, 2001, pp. 26-27). What is discoverable from the metaphysical world for all people in sleep is discoverable for the prophets in wakefulness. Due to the purity of the prophets’ hearts, they need no teacher and master, and they have

the ability to acquire whatever people have of knowledge and cognition, which they need to learn through education. This knowledge [of the prophets] is infused and inspired knowledge that strong and purified hearts have the ability to acquire (Ghazali, 2001, pp. 27-28). Ghazali continues by enumerating three features as the distinctive features of the prophets and ordinary people:

1. The prophets have the ability to discover in wakefulness whatever the people find out in sleep.
2. Their hearts have the ability to affect other affairs and the souls other than their own.
3. They enjoy all knowledge or most of sciences without learning and education.

Enjoying these three features are among the prophets' characteristics, but there are differences among them in the fame of enjoying these attributes. The Prophet of Islam enjoyed all the three characteristics in a complete form and in the best way. Ghazali also examines the methods of acquiring knowledge:

1. Sleep.
2. Sagacity and astuteness (right acumen)
3. Great intelligence and acute mind (right consciousness) (Ghazali, 2001, p. 28).

Considering the public unawareness of the prophets' perfections and characteristics, it is possible that the prophets have characteristics other than those three, which are unknown for people and to Ghazali himself, for knowing the prophets is not possible except for the prophets themselves. It is possible that the Exalted God has created perceptions that the human will obtain after achieving the degree of prophethood, and it is impossible for individual other than the prophets to have those perceptions and, accordingly, enjoying the related knowledge (Ghazali, 2001, pp. 28-29). Ghazali considers 'miracles' among the prophets' abilities to exert influence in the universe and regards it as a sign of rightness of

their claim to prophethood, demanded by people (Ghazali, 1987, vol. 1, p. 113).

In his view, the humans require the prophets (Ghazali, 1987, vol. 1, p. 113). In chapter 14 of *Kāmiyāyi Sa'ādāt*, entitled “the truth of prophethood and authority”, Ghazali explains the dimensions of prophethood. According to his view, only the divine command and revelation received by the prophet can establish order and, just as the intellect cannot afford knowing the Exalted God, it cannot establish order and organize the social affairs (Ghazali, 1993, pp. 91-93).

In “*La Politique de Ghazali*”, Henry Laoust writes that the prophet’s mission is to propagate God’s message and, in addition to the propagative aspect of the prophethood – which is the messengering mission of the prophet – the prophet is the ‘owner of the ruling position’. Thus, he has the obligation to establish the Islamic society, called the ‘nation’ (*ummah*), centered around the message he receives from God in the form of ‘revelation’, and make divine message embody in the form of social organization, taking over directly the leadership of this social system formed on the basis of revelation and prophethood. No doubt, to achieve this goal, political power or, in Ghazali’s wording, ‘*showkat*’ (literally ‘authority’) must be in the hands of the prophet. By receiving the revelation, the prophet gets the social responsibility and “the religion and the spiritual and material powers have intermingled inseparably from the early stages of revelation” (Laoust, 1970, pp. 294-295).

Preserving the revelational system in the prophetic society is the basic principle in Ghazali’s political thought. He considers the presence of revelation and divine Sharia as the starting point for organizing the human’s life and saving him from anarchy as well as specifying the path of reformation and the ultimate felicity. The prophet has an inner mission and such a mission is extended to the arena of the politics and society. In Ghazali’s final interpretation, the prophet has achieved the zenith of perfection. Putting emphasis on the ‘heart’ in Ghazali’s thought must be considered as the weighting point in the turning of his

religious attitude towards a Sufist attitude, on whose light he displays a more tolerant world and society. And unlike his previous approaches, he specifies the humans' value on the basis of purity of their heart and their inner side as well as access to heartfelt felicity. Here, he considers the highest degree for the prophet. Knowing Ghazali's new attitude is impossible if we disregard his attention to the link between the prophet and esotericism. In Ghazali's final thought, not only does the prophet find an inner state, but also he takes over an inner mission, a mission that is extended to the arena of administration and civilization, and he displays a utopia based on the purified hearts and inner sides. Considering the inner side as opposed to the outer side creates, for Ghazali, a city all members of which step towards God and felicity with heartfelt belief.

### **3. Esotericism, mission and administration**

Ghazali considers esotericism (i.e. inner-centrism) as the solution for reconciliation between this world and the hereafter, and prescribes an informed procedure for refraining from attachment to this world, being aware of death, and paying attention to resurrection and the hereafter. Like other thinkers, he also considers felicity as the [human's] ultimate goal and tries to design a plan for achieving it. For Ghazali, felicity is linked with the heart. The main felicity and misery belong to the heart, and the heart is the very soul on whom the difference between the live and dead creatures depends, not on the body. The 'heart' is the very truth of the spirit (Laoust, 1970, p. 12).

Knowledge of the heart and its existence is an intuitive knowledge, and by finding out and accepting the existence of the heart and its features, the knowledge of the hereafter and the [human's] survival without his body is also acquired. Thus, the man becomes aware of the existence of the hereafter and continuation of his life there, getting belief in felicity and misery in the hereafter. The felicity of the special

persons (i.e. the prophets and the saints) is achieving the observation of the Exalted God's Beauty, and the felicity for the ordinary people is the paradise (Ghazali, 2001, p. 10). The faith is, for Ghazali, the only everlasting reality in the universe that does not die with death. He insists on the idea that the root of the faith is the heart and actions are the fruits of the faith: "The root of those beliefs is the heart, and the root of those actions is the body" (Ghazali, 1972, p. 28). Ghazali maintains that the human's truth is his heart and other dimensions of human's existence are servants to his heart. For Ghazali, the truth of the heart does not belong to the material world; rather, the heart has descended to a 'passage' in this world (Ghazali, 2001, p. 59). Freedom from the body and its needs, which preoccupies human's mind in various forms, is the main concern for Ghazali, influencing much his ontology, anthropology and epistemology. In such an attitude, the pious man has the ability to receive the true knowledge and achieve the court of the Exalted God, and the man belongs to the celestial world despite living in this world. In Ghazali's view, 'the soul is the main [element] of the human' (Ghazali, 2001, p. 61). Ghazali finds the human alien in this world and writes in describing this fact: "The human's spirit is stranger and his spirit is from paradise, and his task is to befriend with the high heaven, and his hometown is that world called paradise" (Ghazali, 2001, p. 22).

For Ghazali, anyone who believes in the principality of human's soul and heart speaks rightly. In describing the position of knowing the heart, Ghazali speaks with much negligence and declares that anyone – even a Christian or a philosopher – who has achieved the knowledge of human's essence believes so. And even if an infidel person says something right, it does not make it wrong, for the rightness of a statement or a thought must not be sought in the one who says something, but in what he says (Ghazali, 2001, pp. 22-23). This is because "The right saying is not invalidated by the fact that it is said by a false-saying person" (Ghazali, 2001, p. 21). The Sufi Ghazali's negligence can be pursued

also in his ideas about *samā'* (= mystic dance). Ghazali, who had turned towards Sufist purity, considered mystic dance necessary for those who listen with the ear of the heart. In answering a question about the legal judgment on mystic dance, he explains why mystic dance is necessary (Poor-Javadi, 2002, p. 4). He considers Sufist life sincere and the closest form of life to dispassionateness, and tries to help it spread out. In a stage of the last years of his life, Abu Hamed Ghazali detaches from the Sunnite imams in line with distancing himself from his former practice and approach, and even goes so far as to cast doubts on accepting the opinions of the Prophet's Companions and considers the Successors of the Companions [ordinary] men just like others. Such thoughts must be considered as revolutions in the Sunnite attitudes, brought about by the great jurist Ghazali's Sufist method for the Muslim world. "A group came to Tus, while he was sitting in Sufi lodge. They asked him, 'what is your denomination?' he replied, 'in intelligible matters, I follow the denomination of argumentation and what the rational reasoning demands. But in religious matters, I follow the denomination of the Quran, and I imitate none of the imams; neither Shāfi'ī has a line for me, nor Abu Ḥanīfah'" (Ghazali, 1954, p. 12).

The jurist of the 5<sup>th</sup> century – with freedom in his thought, belief and path – attempts to waken the hidden capacity of the society. With his concern for reforming the society, he – in his final effort – looks at his effort from the aperture of piety and detachment from the world and the Sufist character, making it superior to religious conduct based on traditional jurisprudence. He introduces himself free from official denominations and faithful to the teachings of the Prophet of Islam: "We accept by heart what we have gotten from the Prophet. Of what we have received from the Companions, we took some and left others. As for what we have received from the Successors, they are men and we are also men" (Ghazali, 1987, vol. 1, p. 24).

In his inner and doctrinal journey, he goes further; and in his *a*

*posteriori* thoughts, he has permitted a change in the Principles of Religion as well, changing ‘monotheism’ from a verbal idea into a heartfelt one. In his Farsi writings, Ghazali declares that the true monotheism is only paying attention to the Exalted God’s essence, for “one’s monotheism makes him out of the reach of the world and even out of the reach of the hereafter, just as in this world and before his efforts and view and perception, neither his soul remains nor whatever exists in the world; neither the world nor the hereafter. Nothing remains except the Exalted God, and he forgets himself, and he forgets everything except God; he becomes absent from everything and everything becomes absent for him; and neither he remains nor the world. That’s all” (Ghazali, 1954, p. 18).

Ghazali considers achieving this stage of monotheism as ‘annihilation in monotheism’ (*fanā fil-towḥīd*), an order wherein the individual is annihilated from everything, and even ‘his annihilation is annihilated from annihilation’ (Ghazali, 1954, p. 18). Such a state is, for Ghazali, the perfection of monotheism, since “the perfection of monotheism is that nothing exists except One” (Ghazali, 1954, p. 20). In his letters, Ghazali considers the good life a way of living in which the human prepares himself for meeting God and lives in a way as if the king comes to visit him and everything is ready for a meeting. Ghazali uses this simile for describing the nature of beautiful and informed living in God’s view (Ghazali, 1954, p. 111). We must consider rightness and sincerity as Ghazali’s inner request that urged him to start his famous journey and led to the birth of final Ghazali, who was unique in freedom and rightness. He considers the Sufis’ method the only method that is the same in claim and in practice, regarding other method invidious and spited. The sameness of the practice and meaning of the knowledge for Sufis is among the most important points that can be found about the unity of knowledge and practice. This is because, for Sufis, the knowledge is austerity for eliminating bad features and cutting off the

commitments (Ghazali, 1995, p. 41). Even the prophet achieves proximity to God on the condition that he enjoys purity, rightness and piety. Asceticism and not attaching to this transient world are the conditions for achieving that position. The prophet, in the first place, has achieved the position of prophethood and friendship to the Exalted God in his own inner side, and the outbreak and manifestation of that event is its final stage. The prophets and the saints achieved discovery of truths of affairs through asceticism, not through teaching. Ghazali's point in explaining the prophets' wish and will is also interesting, for he believes that the prophets have turned to God by all means (Ghazali, 1995, p. 45). In fact, the social and political display of prophethood, apart from its inner aspect, is useless in Ghazali's view, because he has regarded purity of the souls of the society as the solution to [the problems of] his society (Ghazali, 1998, p. 6). While paying attention to morality and purification of the soul, the faith, and the inner attitude as the solutions to the crises of his time, Ghazali placed the idea of reformation in the top of his practical attitude. For him, politics was on top of the human's needs (Ghazali, 1987, vol. 1, p. 12). Politics and [prophetic] mission come together in the prophet and the prophet finds the first place among the custodians of politics in Ghazali's thought. This is because religion and politics cannot be imagined as separate entities, and reconciliation between them serves, for Ghazali, as the reconciliation of this world and the celestial world, which he looks at from the aperture of the heart, and refers it to the human's inner side. The Prophet who enjoys the highest virtues is the leader of the society towards goodness: a doctrinal and political leadership. Ghazali who believes in superiority of inner side over the outer side prefers the continuation of the Prophet's method, while preserving his loyalty to inner side. He classifies the political and scientific successors of the Prophet under the inner and outer groups. He considers the outer group legitimate just in the absence of the inner group and if necessity calls for. The heartfelt faith in the Prophet's

teachings is the best state for the individual members of the city that Ghazali delineates and considers his favorite city a city whose members are people of piety and purity of the soul (Ghazali, 1866, p. 195). This city is the extension of the prophetic teaching, the teaching that has found its way from faith into the heart and from politics into the inner side. In the continuation of the Prophet's method, Ghazali prefers the scholars who deal with the hereafter to the jurists who deal with the reformation of appearance and act according to the laws of politics (Qaderi, 2000, p. 185). In *Iḥyā' al-Qulūb*, he enumerates 12 features for the hereafter scholars (Ghazali, 1987, vol. 1, pp. 144-148). These scholars refrain from visiting rulers and issuing fatwas (Ghazali, 1987, vol. 1, pp. 15, 158). The important point Ghazali mentions in describing the righteous scholars is their trust in [their] insight and avoiding imitation. Ghazali does not permit imitation even of the Prophet's Companions (Ghazali, 1987, vol. 1, p. 181). He prefers receiving [the truths] through purity of the heart to other ways of cognition, awareness and knowledge. After the ruling of 'the hereafter scholars' over the inner sides of the people, Ghazali entrusts ruling over the inner sides of the people to the preachers (Ghazali, 1987, vol. 1, p. 187).

Finally, we must consider the reformer prophet, in Ghazali's thought, a qualified ruler who has brought the highest gift from God for people by receiving words made up of meanings (Ghazali, 1987, vol. 1, p. 220). This is the gift that his followers accept by heart and continue it with their lifestyle. The carrier of the prophetic knowledge is the heart and this knowledge remains in the humans' hearts. And the right politics is the one that deals with reforming the souls. Indeed, for Ghazali, the simultaneity of politics and [prophetic] mission occurs in the prophet's heart, which must be seen in the event of unity of knowledge and faith along with the decree of reformation. This is an inner event that puts on the outer garment with political action and falls on the figure of the city. The prophet, in the first place, receives, declares and enforces the celestial message; and this – in turn – becomes practical in three levels

of awareness, mission and politics. These three actions are gathered in the prophet and the best state after the prophet can be the presence of a person whose character is comprehensive of these three levels. Otherwise, without reception of revelation, the knowledge and decree will have their own custodians.

### **Conclusion**

The political thought is not merely an abstract affair far from objective realities. The era when Ghazali lived was a turbulent and vibrant era in the history of the Iranian thought. The present article investigates in a foundational way Ghazali's political thought, and deals with the foundation of good politics in his view. In the Islamic world, the struggle between intellect and transmission has generally led to the victory of transmission, though in differing degrees. Meanwhile, the foundation of Ghazali's political thought is the priority of Sharia. The point worth noting is the way Sharia is preferred in Ghazali's final thought, the way that made a Sufi from a jurist. This article has investigated this issue in one introduction and sections on politics, prophet and esotericism, [prophetic] mission and administration. Ghazali looks at politics from the aperture of human's material life. Finally, he turns to the reforming mission of politics and explains the correlation between politics and piety under the inner attitude and the concept of reformation in the individual and social life. Ghazali discusses prophethood in various ways, but what is prominent in his final thought is paying attention to heart, the inner side and insight in the prophethood. The prophethood is creation of a new society based on a new doctrine coming down to the prophet's heart, the doctrine that includes politics as well. Paying attention to the inner side is Ghazali's solution for reconciliation between religion and the world. This solution is supported by sincerity and leads the human to felicity and happiness. Ghazali, like other Muslim thinkers, maintains that the true felicity is

the felicity in the hereafter. Ghazali searches for the way to achieve this important goal not through imitation and repetition of the acting according to appearances, but in the heart, heartfelt belief and the inner purity. Ghazali must be considered as an inquirer who was seeking, up to the end of his life, sincerity and divine proximity. He considered this proximity in resorting to the prophet as God's supreme creature. Ghazali compensates the absence of the prophet by resorting to mysticism and inner attitude as well as moral loyalty to the prophetic teachings, and considers the solution to the problems of the society to be in the hands of hereafter scholars and worldly rulers who have decided to reform the society.

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