
The Intellectual Greek Influence on the Political Islamic Thought: The Case of Al-Ghazālī*

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ABSTRACT

The rationale for this paper stems from a pressing need to record the Greek influence on the political thought of the renowned Medieval Muslim theologian, al-Ghazālī (Algazel). Here lies the focus of this paper, which seems to cross very few minds, if at all. It is thus hoped that the conclusions reached here will lead to further investigations of possible traces of Greek influence on medieval political philosophy in the wider Muslim world.

*Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī is one of the distinguished Muslim theologians in the Islamic world until now. His life and works, both religious and literary, show singular dedication to Islamic and philosophical subjects. His political treatise *al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Naṣīhat al-Mulūk wa-l-Wuzarā' wa-l-Wulāh*, however, points to the unmistakably strong presence of Persian and Greek influences. This political work is living proof that Greek sciences flourished in the Islamic east well into the eleventh century.*

*The Greek writers influenced clearly on the political thought of al-Ghazālī which is an obvious issue in his book *al-Tibr al-Masbūk*. His quotations from the Greek thinkers' writings referred to the remaining of the Greek sciences in the Medieval Islamic intellectual life.*

The Greek influence on the Medieval Islamic thought is a very wide subject. So, this paper will deal only with the Greek influence on the political thought of al-Ghazālī, which almost had a little attention from the recent scholars.

The status of Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī as a distinguished Muslim theologian in the Middle Ages is unquestionable. His life and work, both religious and literary, show singular dedication to Is-

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lamic and philosophical subjects. His political treatise *al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Naṣīhat al-Mulūk wa-l-Wuzarā' wa-l-Wulāh*, however, points to the unmistakably strong presence of Persian and Greek influences. This political work is living proof that Greek culture flourished in the Islamic east well into the eleventh century where works by Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle¹, Euclid, Galen, and others were common knowledge to Muslim scholars.

The influence of classical Greek authors on the thought of al-Ghazālī is a valuable issue. The majority of Muslim theologians derived their thought from the Islamic sciences, such as the holy Qur'ān, the Prophet's traditions, *fiqh* (canon law), *tafsīr* (theology and Quranic exegesis respectively), Arabic language, Arabic poetry, and others. On the other hand, the existence of Greek thought in the Islamic society during the Middle Ages is evidence of the civilizational exchange between Byzantium, the inheritor of the classical Greek heritage, and the Islamic world. Of course, it is a well-known fact to the historians, now as then, that Syrians and Byzantines served as cultural mediators between the Greek and Islamic worlds. Although al-Ghazālī's philosophical writings evince clear Greek influences, this paper will be confined to the examination of the influence of Greek wisdom on his political ideas (Muhammad 2007: 157).

The Abbasid period witnessed the flourishing of Greek thought in the Islamic world following the wide translation movement from Greek into Arabic². From the time of Caliph Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr to the time of al-Ma'mūn (136–218 A.H./754–833 A.D.) the translation movement peaked to unprecedented heights. According to M. Watt the translation movement in the Abbasid Caliphate was divided into three stages (Watt 1963: 26). The first one was from the time of the caliph Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr 136–158 A.H./754–775 A.D. to the death of Harūn al-Rashīd 193 A.H./809 A.D. The second stage was the golden period 198–300 A.H./813–912 A.D., especially the time of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn 198–218 A.H./813–833 A.D. The third stage was the period 300–350 A.H./912–961 A.D. (Abū Rayyān 1976a: 89, 93–98, 102).

Christian translators were encouraged to translate all kinds of books. So, there were many famous translators like Uḥanna al-Baṭrīq, 'Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa', Uḥanna ibn Masawīh (1st stage); Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (and others of his family), Qustā ibn

Lūqā, Thābit ibn Qurrah al-Ḥarrānī, ‘Abdul Masīh ibn Na‘īmah al-Ḥīmṣī (2nd stage); Abū Bishr Matta ibn Younus, Yahīa ibn ‘Udaī ibn Zakaryā al-Mantiqī, Abū ‘Alī ‘Isā ibn Ishāq ibn Zar‘ah (3rd stage), and others (Abū Rayyān 1976a: 90–104). These translators and their successors were keen on translating Greek, Syriac, and Coptic manuscripts³. Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq, for instance, who was of Arab descent (Watt 1963: 26), translated about seven books by Hippocrates and thirty-nine by Galen into Arabic. He also translated into Syriac ninety-five by Galen, not to mention many books by Plato, Aristotle and others. He was so interested in hunting Greek manuscripts that he once had to look for one book by Galen all over Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. Although his efforts produced only half of his pursuit, he was happy to translate it into Arabic under the title *Kitāb al-Burhān* (Muhammad 2007: 158; Montāṣer 1990: 79–80).

According to this active translation movement in the Abbasid caliphate one supposes that the Greek sciences were flourished in all the Islamic world. But the translation movement was concentrated in Baghdad, especially when the caliph al-Ma‘mūn built the public library of Baghdad (*Bayt al-Ḥikmah*=house of wisdom), which was both a library and a centre for the copying and translating of books. By 850 A.D./236 A.H. a fair number of Greek medical texts and several of the works of Aristotle and other Greek philosophers were available in Arabic (Watt 1963: 26). The Arabs knew most of the Greek philosophers and were influenced by their philosophical opinions especially Plato⁴ and Aristotle⁵. They gave especial attention to these two Greek philosophers. They regarded Plato the wisest philosopher among the Greek philosophers because of his philosophical theories about God, spirit, creation, etc. But they gave more attention to Aristotle and translated a lot of his works into Arabic. As they admired the spiritual trends of Plato they admired the intellectual trends of Aristotle. They also tried to gather and harmonize between the philosophical theories of these two philosophers. Al-Fārābī (257–339 A.H./870–950 A.D.) was the first one who did that in his book *al-Jam‘u Bayna Ra’iā al-Ḥakīmayn*⁶ (=the gathering between the opinions of the two wise men, *i.e.* Plato and Aristotle) (Abū Rayyān 1976a: 107–108). Al-Fārābī made a mistake when he thought that their philosophical theories could be one, because there were many differences be-

tween the two philosophers, where Plato was interested in idealism but Aristotle was interested in realism (Al-Fārābī 1968: 40–42).

Among the Muslim philosophers who were influenced by the Greek philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle, there were al-Fārābī and his pupil Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna 370–428 A.H./980–1037 A.D.). The first one was regarded the second teacher of humanity after Aristotle, the first teacher (*Ibid.*: 39). Al-Fārābī wrote a lot of the philosophical works⁷, most of which were explanations and comments on Plato, Aristotle and Galen's works (Abū Rayyān 1976a: 245). Besides the theories of al-Fārābī about the pure philosophical issues, such as the divine issues, God, self, morals which he regarded a branch of the politics, etc. he contributed in the political thought where he spoke about the Utopia and non-Utopia and he also spoke about the nature of the ruler of the Utopia⁸. Concerning the latter issue al-Fārābī was influenced by the book of Republic of Plato⁹.

Al-Fārābī presents clear Islamic conception of the Neo-Platonic emanation. According to his concept the universe is hierarchical in the sense that at its summit is the most perfect being, the being that most truly is, and that from this being proceed less perfect beings and from these a lower grade of being until the lowest of all is reached. In the same way al-Fārābī regards the city or civilized community a hierarchical organization. At the summit is the head or leader. Then come the leaders of second rank, then those of the third, until the lowest rank is reached consisting of those who follow others but do not themselves lead any others. The supreme leader is he who leads or commands or controls others, but is not himself led or command or controlled by others. Although there are some reserves about this conception of the state of al-Fārābī, he had a long list of the qualities required by the supreme leader (Watt 1963: 38–39).

As for Ibn Sīnā, he worked out a philosophical system on similar lines to al-Fārābī, to whose books he acknowledged his indebtedness (Watt 1963: 43). But, Ibn Sīnā surpassed his teacher al-Fārābī though he used almost the same philosophical works of Plato and Aristotle. But the advantage of Ibn Sīnā was that the works of al-Fārābī opened widely the road of philosophy before his successors of the Muslim philosophers including Ibn Sīnā. So, Ibn Sīnā was influenced also by the Greek philosophers, especially Pla-

to, Aristotle, and Plotin. He paid attention to Sufism¹⁰ where he became a Sufi like his teacher, al-Fārābī¹¹. He spoke about the self, pleasure or happiness under Sufism, miracles of Sufi men, austerity, and others¹².

Thus, there were two separate educational systems in the Islamic Caliphate, the old Greek one and the new Islamic one. Baghdad was the first town among the Islamic towns in which the Greek sciences were interacted with the Islamic ideas (Watt 1963: 33).

If we excepted al-Kindī (185–256 A.H./801–870 A.D.), the founder of the Islamic philosophy, known as ‘the philosopher of the Arabs’ (Watt 1963: 29), followed by the real founders of it, al-Fārābī and his pupil Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī (450–505 A.H./1058–1111 A.D.) was the third one who contributed strongly in the development of Islamic philosophy¹³. Then, this study reaches its main theme, al-Ghazālī, who left many important works about philosophy, political thought and faith¹⁴.

According to the majority of the scholars who studied the life of al-Ghazālī, he is known as a distinguished Muslim theologian and a unique intellectual in the Middle Ages. M. Watt said about him: ‘He was pioneering, constantly exploring the applicability of fresh ideas to a variety of subjects. To use a metaphor of his own, his thought is a vast ocean in which all but the most skilled navigators are liable to lose their way’ (Watt 1960: 121). He also said: ‘Al-Ghazali has been acclaimed as the greatest Muslim after Muhammad, and is certainly one of the greatest. His outlook, too, is closer than that of many Muslims to the outlook of modern Europe and America, so that he is more easily comprehensible to us’ (Watt 1963: VII). D. MacDonald said: ‘Al-Ghazzali becomes part of a stream of tendency, and shows his greatness in that, with the same views and starting-point as those around him, he has transcended all the other doctors of Islam and graven his name ineffaceably in the record of the toils and triumphs of the human mind’ (MacDonald 1899: 115).

Born in the town of Tūs¹⁵, Khorasān, in the year 450 A.H./1058 A.D., Abū Hāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad aṭ-Ṭūsī came from a wool-making family (hence the al-Ghazālī surname)¹⁶. On his deathbed, his father assigned the young lad and his brother Aḥmad to the care of a trusted Sufi friend to educate and bring them up. The friend was faithful, and taught them and

cared for them till the money was all gone (MacDonald 1899: 75). When the money left for their education and upbringing ran out, this friend decided to dispatch his charges to a school or college (*madrasah*). There the young al-Ghazālī proved a brilliant student (Al-Subkī 1413: 102).

After this stage of his study al-Ghazālī departed to Jurjān (Gurgān)¹⁷ to further study there on the hands of al-Imām Abī al-Qāsim Ismā'il ibn Mus'ad al-Jurjānī. After the end of this stage he returned to Ṭūs. He departed to Nishāpūr¹⁸ to study more the science of *al-Kalām*. He accompanied there al-Imām Abū al-Ma'ālī al-Ḥuwaynī. He was outstanding there in theology, philosophy, debates, logic, and other sciences. He had the ability to respond to the debaters and the scholars the science of *al-Kalām* (Al-Ṣerafīnī 1414: 77; Al-Subkī 1413: 103–106; Muhammad 2007: 159).

After the death of his teacher al-Imām Abū al-Ma'ālī al-Ḥuwaynī al-Ghazālī left Nishāpūr and went to al-Mu'askar to meet Nizām al-Mulk, the Seljuk minister. Then, he became one of the members of the camp-court of Nizām al-Mulk and he was distinguished there too (MacDonald 1899: 78). He debated *al-mutakallimūn*, or rational theologians, and the *Imāms* and refuted their opinions. Therefore, Nizām al-Mulk who admired him, appointed him as a teacher in al-Nizāmiyah school (*al-Madrasah al-Nizāmiyah*) of Baghdad in 484 A.H./1091 A.D.¹⁹

In Baghdad al-Ghazālī became a famous scholar and philosopher. He spent most of his time in teaching, reading and writing. He wrote there his work *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* (*The aims of the philosophers*) (Al-Ghazālī 1987: 16). This time of his life was the flourishing time of his thought. Suddenly, in 488 A.H./1095 A.D. he left his teaching in al-Nizāmiyah school of Baghdad and wore simple clothes and lived as an ascetic. In the same year he traveled to Syria and Jerusalem (Ibn al-Athīr VIII 1415: 506–507; MacDonald 1899: 92–93). During this period he wrote his famous book *Ihyā' 'lūm al-Dīn* in Damascus²⁰. In the next year 489 A.H./1096 A.D. he went on pilgrimage at Makkah²¹. He returned to Syria and stayed in Damascus for ten years (Al-Ṣerafīnī 1414: 77; Al-Dhahabī 1413: 334). He spent most of his time there at the Umayyad mosque, in the *zawyah* (educational place or corner) of al-Shaykh Nassr al-Maqdisī, who was a Sufi (Al-Subkī 1413: 104). This means that this period was a turning point in his life especially

when al-Shaykh Nassr al-Maqdisī committed him to the care of his *zawyah* at the mosque after his death. This *zawyah* became known as al-Ghazāliyah. The story says that when al-Shaykh Nassr al-Maqdisī was dying the people asked him: Who will succeed you in your *zawyah* at the Umayyad mosque? He said to them: When you have buried me go back to the mosque and you will find there a Persian person (Al-Subkī 1413: 104). But al-Ghazālī did not stay there for a long time. He departed to Alexandria, Egypt. He stayed in Egypt for some time to visit the tombs of the pious people and the Egyptian mosques. He also spent his time there in worship and austerity. He planned to go to Morocco to visit Sultan Yousuf ibn Tāshfīn²². But when the news of his death in 500 A.H./1106 A.D. reached him in Alexandria he canceled his idea (Ibn Khallikān 1968: 125; MacDonald 1899: 80–82, 99–100).

After his spiritual journey to Egypt al-Ghazālī went back to Baghdad. But he left Baghdad and went to Nishāpūr to teach there in its al-Nizāmiyah school. After a short time of his staying in Nishāpūr he went to his birth place, Ṭūs. He had a school there beside his house for *al-fuqahā'* (Al-Serafīnī 1414: 77). He also established a *khanqāh* (hostel or convent) (Al-Dhahabī 1413: 325; Al-Ṣafadī 2000: 211) where some young disciples joined him in leading a communal Sufī life²³. He lived there until his death in 505 A.H./1111 A.D.²⁴ When he died he was fifty-five years old (Al-Ḥanbalī 1406: 10). It is probable that the time from the first visit of al-Ghazālī to Baghdad until his second visit to it completely made him a Sufī (Muhammad 2007: 161)²⁵.

Al-Ghazālī wrote a great volume of works about theology, logic, philosophy, Sufism, jurisprudence, literature and political thought²⁶. Some of his famous works are: *Iḥyā' 'lūm al-Dīn* (Al-Ghazālī n.d.), *Maqāṣed al-Falāsifah* (Al-Ghazālī 1936), *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (Al-Ghazālī 1927), *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Naṣīhat al-Mulūk wa-l-Wuzarā' wa-l-Wulāh*, *Faḍā'ih al-Bāṭinyah* (Al-Ghazālī n.d.), *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl* (Al-Ghazālī 1973), *Mezān al-'Amal* (Al-Ghazālī 1964), *Mishkāt al-Anwār* (Al-Ghazālī 1934), *al-Mustaṣfā fī 'ilm al-Uṣūl*.

Al-Ghazālī addressed his book *al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Naṣīhat al-Mulūk*, which is a political work speaking of the Medieval political Islamic thought, to Sultan Muḥammad ibn Mulksah (d. 511 A.H./1117 A.D.) (Al-Ghazālī 1987: 92). This book deals with

many political topics such as chapter one which speaks about the political authority and its importance, the conditions of the just ruler, the right morals and behavior of the ruler with his people, and the qualities of the just Sultan. Al-Ghazālī also speaks in chapter two about the ministers and the conditions of the ministers' choosing and their duties. The third is about the Sultan's scribes, *i.e.* his secretaries, their qualities, morals, and how to choose them. The fourth chapter is about the kings and their determinations. Chapters five and six speak about wisdom and the wise men. The seventh chapter of this book speaks of the woman (Muhammad 2007: 161).

Although al-Ghazālī wrote many philosophical works such as *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* and *Tahāfut al-Falāsifat* (The inconsistency of the philosophers) which show how al-Ghazālī was influenced by the Greek philosophers, it is notable that he cited many quotations from classical Greek writers, especially Aristotle and Socrates in his book *al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, too. In this book he clearly used the Greek philosophers and physicians' writings. It is probable that he studied the works of the Greek philosophers during his stay in Baghdad through their translated books or through the philosophical writings of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna)²⁷, who studied many classical Greek works, as M. Watt hypothesized²⁸. Al-Ghazālī influenced deeply by the Greek thought and especially by the Neo-Platonism²⁹, and this influence is to be seen throughout his mystical writings (Smith 1983: 105ff.). This hypothesis may be supported by the fact that he strongly debated the Muslim philosophers and refuted their disagreed theories at this stage of his life. His two works *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* and *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* indicate that he dedicated his efforts to study the philosophy well to confront the allegations of the Muslim theologians which disagreed with al-Ghazālī's opinions. One must expect that al-Ghazālī had to deal only with the Greek philosophical ideas in his mystical and philosophical works, where his books *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* and *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* referred clearly to his influence by the Greek philosophers³⁰. But the Greek influence on the political thought of al-Ghazālī is clear in *al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, which did not receive enough interest from the scholars such as his philosophical writings. Maybe the political and advisory impression of this book made the scholars pay little attention to it. When 'Abdul Raḥmān Badawī wrote his study about the Greek sources of al-Ghazālī he

was interested only in the Greek influence on the philosophical theories of al-Ghazālī, such as the eternity of the world, self scolding, the theory of light, and austerity (Badawī 1967: 189–206). He did not care about the Greek influence on the political thought of al-Ghazālī.

It is known that al-Ghazālī studied the Quranic and Islamic sciences. But his quotations of the Greek writers mean that he studied many Greek sciences too, which were considered pagan writings. It seems that al-Ghazālī did not deal with these writings as pagan but he studied them as human heritage, and he used many Greek ideas and wise sayings. He depended on Aristotle, whom he considered the final master of the Greek school (MacDonald 1899: 84), as a wise man speaking of wisdom. Al-Ghazālī described him the wise man (*al-Hakīm*) (Al-Ghazālī 1987: 227). He attributed some wise sayings to him without saying from which sources he quoted them. So, it will not be easy to conclude from which works of Aristotle and other Greek writers he took his quotations.

In chapter one of his book *al-Tibr al-Masbūk* al-Ghazālī spoke about justice and policy and he mentioned as an example the Persian kings and their policy. Aristotle is mentioned for the first time in this chapter. Al-Ghazālī said:

Aristotle the wise was asked: Is it possible for someone to say that he is a king not Allah? Aristotle answered: The man who has these qualities, even if they were little, the science, justice, generosity, meekness, mercy and the matters related with it (because the kings were kings by the Divine Shadow), self-purity, increasing of wisdom and science, and sublimity of origin will be a king (Al-Ghazālī 1987: 22).

Al-Ghazālī considered the ruler as the ‘Divine Shadow’ (*az-Zell al-Ilāhī*), *i.e.* the ruler who was chosen by God. He showed that the ideal ruler was he who had the complete qualities which he mentioned and he who was responsible for his kingdom and its institutions, his people, and his employees. This ruler in the mind of al-Ghazālī was the cause of the existing of his kingdom and his reaching the authority was by worthiness, power, and superiority (*Ibid.*: 22). So, he explained the meaning of the ‘Divine Shadow’ saying that it appears in sixteen things: Wisdom, science, sharpness of intelligence, realizing of the things and the complete picture,

brilliance, knighthood, courage, intrepidity, waiting, the good morals, supporting the weak people, love of people, showing leadership, endurance, the good opinion and making the matters well, increasing the reading of the news and the biographies of the kings, examining the conditions of the state and the works which the kings depended on (Al-Ghazālī 1987: 227).

Thus, Al-Ghazālī made the kings in the second rank after the Prophets. God had chosen his Prophets to convey his messages to the people and He had chosen the kings to apply the justice among the people. He explained his political theory in the beginning of chapter one of his book *al-Tibr al-Masbūk* where he said: ‘(O my son) know that Allah had chosen two teams from Adam's sons, the prophets and the kings. He sent the Prophet to show his worship to the people and guide them to its right way. He had chosen the kings to protect the people not to trespass one against the other. He gave them the authority and related the affairs of the people with his wisdom and He gave them the honorable dignity by His ability’ (*Ibid.*: 171–172). Because the ruler was the shadow of Allah in the world, the people had to obey him, according to the order of Allah in the Qur’ān, where He said: (Sūrat al-Nisā’, 4/59.)

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِن تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِن كُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا ﴾

Translation: [O you who believe! obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those in authority from among you; then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Apostle, if you believe in Allah and the last day; this is better and very good in the end]³¹.

He remembered the people that they has to like the kings because Allah He who chose them by His will, where He said: (Sūrat Āl-‘Imrān, 3/26)

﴿ قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكِ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَن تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّن تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَن تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَن تَشَاءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴾

Translation: [Say: O Allah, Master of the Kingdom! Thou givest the kingdom to whomsoever Thou pleasest and takest away the kingdom from whomsoever Thou pleasest, and Thou exaltest whom Thou pleasest and abasest whom Thou pleasest in Thine hand is the good; surely, Thou hast power over all things]³².

Thus, al-Ghazālī explained his theory of kingship and its characteristics. Afterwards, he turned to speak in detail about the justice and its importance for the king. He said that Alexander the Great asked Aristotle: ‘What is better for the kings: courage or justice?’ He said: ‘If the Sultan did justice he will not need the courage’ (Al-Ghazālī 1987: 228).

Al-Ghazālī confirmed the characteristic of justice. But this time he cited Socrates who said, as al-Ghazālī narrated, the world is composed of justice. If the injustice came, the world will neither be stable nor steady. Al-Ghazālī referred to the importance of justice when he quoted a story about Alexander the Great. The story said that Alexander one day walked riding in a parade when one of his majors said to him: ‘God gave you a great kingdom. So, take many women to increase your children by whom you will be remembered’. Alexander said: ‘The remembering of the men is not by many children but it is by the good behavior and justice’ (*Ibid.*: 228). Al-Ghazālī cited Alexander again to speak once more about justice. He narrated that Alexander removed one of his employees from his job and put him in a low job. This employee came to Alexander who asked him: ‘What about your new work?’ He said to Alexander: ‘Men aren’t honored by the works but the works are honored by the men. This is by the good behavior, *i.e.* good administration and spreading of the justice and avoiding the wasting’ (*Ibid.*: 229–230). Alexander added that the best king among the kings is that who replaces the bad deed by the good deed. And the evil king is that who replaces the good deed by the bad deed (*Ibid.*: 25).

Al-Ghazālī confirmed again the quality of justice and narrated this story about Alexander the Great. He said that one day Alexander sat down on his seat and a thief was brought to him and stood up before him. Then, Alexander ordered to crucify the thief who said to him ‘O the king! I stole, but I had no craving to steal, and my heart didn’t push me to do it. Alexander said: No problem to crucify you, and your heart didn’t request or need it’ (*Ibid.*: 249).

According to three streams, the Holy Qur’ān, the Prophet Muḥammad, and the biographies of the Persian kings al-Ghazālī stressed the quality of justice. Allah said in the Qur’ān: (Sūrat al-Nisā’, 4/58)

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا﴾\

Translation: [Surely Allah commands you to make over trusts to their owners and that when you judge between people you judge with justice; surely Allah admonishes you with what is excellent; surely Allah is Seeing, Hearing]³³.

Al-Ghazālī indicated the Prophet's traditions and used many stories and sayings of the Persian kings to stress the quality of justice (Al-Ghazālī 1987: 173ff.). He considered that the justice was the basis of kingship. He said: If the Sultan was just the world will be thrived and if he was unjust the world will be devastated (Al-Ghazālī 1987: 173–174).

Al-Ghazālī confirmed the required characteristics which have to be in the ruler, either a king or a Sultan. It is probable that he addressed this advice to his Sultan Muḥammad ibn Mulkshah with equivocation or he expressed what he supposed in a Muslim Sultan. So, he quoted many stories from the Ancient Greek history and philosophy, the Persian history, and the Islamic history. The Persian culture is clear in the book of *al-Tibr al-Masbūk* which was normal for a Persian Muslim like al-Ghazālī. He quoted clearly many sayings from the sayings of the Persian kings. On the other hand, Al-Ghazālī, as a Persian writer, was not the first one who wrote about the Islamic political thought or about the ideal ruler, ministers, scribes, etc. Qabūs b. Iskandar b. Zayār (366–403 A.H./976–1012 A.D.) who wrote his book *Qabus Namah*, spoke about some of these issues. The latter one also quoted many pieces of advice and stories from the Greek history, especially from the sayings of Alexander the Great (Ibn Zayār 1994: 229–438). Niẓām al-Mulk al-Tūsī (408–485 A.H./1017–1092 A.D.) also spoke about the justice and the emissaries of the king (Niẓām al-Mulk 1407: 48–50, 133–137).

Though the Greek sciences were a foreign factor in the formation of al-Ghazālī's thought he returned to Aristotle in another place of chapter one of his book *al-Tibr al-Masbūk*. He narrated that Aristotle said: 'The good king among the kings is he who has a deep sight like the eagle and his persons are like the eagles not like the cadavers' (Al-Ghazālī 1987: 255).

Al-Ghazālī spoke about another characteristic which must be in the Sultan, *i.e.* wisdom (*al-'aql*). He quoted some wise speeches from Plato and Socrates. Al-Ghazālī mentioned that Plato said: 'The evidence of the victorious Sultan on his enemies is that he

must be strong-willed and keep the silence, think well about his opinion and deed by his wisdom. He must be wise in his kingdom, noble and sweet in the hearts of his people, observe all of his deeds, and an expert at the deeds of his ex-kings'. Al-Ghazālī repeated the same meaning but this time through Socrates whom he called the wise. Socrates said that the evidence of the king whose rule is continuous is that the faith and wisdom are living in his heart, to be loved in the hearts of his people and the wise men. And he has to seek the science to learn from the scholars, and his generosity has to be much, and his house has to be great to receive the nobles and to bring the men of letters in it, and to send the bad people far from his kingdom (Al-Ghazālī 1987: 246–248).

By the end of chapter one of his book *al-Tibr al-Masbūk* al-Ghazālī advised the Sultan to choose the good and honest emissaries. He cited a story of Alexander to confirm his advice. The story says: One day Alexander sent an emissary to the Persian king, Dara. When the emissary came back and gave the reply of the Persian king to Alexander, he suspected one word of the words of the letter and repeated it to the emissary. The latter said: 'O Majesty, I heard this word as it is, with my ears'. Then, Alexander ordered to write this word as he heard it and sent another message to Dara, by another emissary. When the emissary of Alexander reached Persia, Dara read the message of Alexander and requested a knife and removed that word from the message. Dara returned the message of Alexander to him with his response in which he advised him to choose well the honest emissaries, who could speak and behave honestly on behalf of the king. Dara told Alexander that the word was not of his words. So, he removed it from the message. Dara wished to cut the tongue of the dishonest emissary of Alexander. When the second emissary of Alexander came back to Alexander, the latter read the response of Dara and knew the truth. Then, Alexander brought the dishonest emissary and said to him: 'Glory to God! Do you think that I sent you (to Dara) to repair your affairs and spoil our affairs?' Finally he ordered to cut his tongue from its root (*Ibid.*: 262–264).

Thus, al-Ghazālī showed the main qualities and characteristics which have to be in the king or the Sultan and stressed the justice and the good behavior. He depended on Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, and Alexander the Great to confirm his political opinions. Maybe

when al-Ghazālī spoke about the justice, bravery, generosity, as qualities of the ruler he read about the virtues of morals which were written by Aristotle (Abū Rayyān 1976b: 218–219). Also we have to keep in mind that al-Fārābī, who was one of the philosophical sources of al-Ghazālī, spoke about the righteous presidency of his Utopia (Al-Fārābī 1968: 125ff.). He recorded twelve characteristics to the president of the Utopia, completeness of organs, good understanding, good memorization, good intelligence, good expression, liking of science, moderation of food, drink, and sexual intercourse, liking of truth, self-esteem, liking of justice, strength of determination, and austerity of money and life's adornments (Al-Hāshim 1960: 151–152). Thus, according to these characteristics the combined political ideas between al-Ghazālī and al-Fārābī are obvious.

It is probable that al-Ghazālī read the work of Ibn Qutaybah al-Daynoūrī (d. 276 A.H./889 A.D.), *Wūn al-Akhhbār*, in which the author spoke about some essential characteristics of the president. Al-Daynoūrī, who was born in Baghdad in 213 A.H./828 A.D. and lived there, was from a Persian descent (Al-Daynoūrī 1963: 16–18, 42) and wrote about forty four books (*Ibid.*: 23–42). The characteristics which he mentioned were: justice, bravery, generosity, truth, and contentment (*Ibid.*: 1–14). According to four basics, desire, liking, faith, and awe, he advised the people to obey their Sultan (*Ibid.*: 7).

It seems that al-Ghazālī also agreed with his previous Muslim authors who spoke about the conditions of the caliphate and the characteristics of the caliph such as al-Māwardī (see Al-Māwardī 1978: 6ff.) or al-Bughdādī, (see Al-Bughdādī 2005: 270–271) but he added more characteristics.

Thus, according to the Greek narrations and items of advice by al-Ghazālī we can record the qualities and characteristics of the ideal ruler of al-Ghazālī as follows: The good morals, justice, wisdom, science, increasing of wisdom and science, sublimity of origin, self-purity, courage, knighthood, generosity, meekness, mercy, supporting the weak people, love of people, endurance, intrepidity, waiting, deep sight, sharpness of intelligence, realizing of the things and the complete picture, brilliance, showing leadership, the good opinion and making the matters well, increasing the reading of the news and the biographies of the kings, examining

the conditions of the state and the works which the kings depended on. According to the view of al-Ghazālī, *i.e.* by these characteristics, the ideal ruler will be the ‘Divine Shadow’.

To advise his Sultan al-Ghazālī spoke about another issue, the wisdom and the wise men who advised their Sultan, in the fifth chapter of *al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, as an independent subject. He cited the Greek writers, such as Aristotle, Socrates, Galen and Hippocrates, several times. So, this chapter is classified the second of the Greek quotations after the first chapter. He gave many examples to declare the importance of wisdom for the Sultan.

He cited Socrates who called him the wise, too. The wise Socrates said: ‘Five things by which the human harms himself: the deception of the friends, keeping away from the scholars, self-contempt, endurance of the silly people, and the following of desire’. But Hippocrates said: ‘Five things the human cannot become full of them: an eye from seeing, female from male, an ear from listening, fire from firewood, and scholar from science’ (Al-Ghazālī 1987: 325).

Al-Ghazālī presented two wise sayings here quoted from Galen and Aristotle. Galen said: ‘Seven things bring forgetting: the rough speech, cupping on the neck's vertebra, urination in the stagnant water, eating the acids, looking to a dead face, the long sleeping, and the long looking to the ruined places’. Galen also said in his book about the drugs: ‘Forgetting happens from seven things: the phlegm, the high laugh, eating the salty foods, eating the fat meat, much sexual intercourse, staying up at night with tiredness, and all the cold foods and refreshments, because their eating is harmful and brings forgetting’ (*Ibid.*: 326–327).

The second wise saying here is from Aristotle who was asked: ‘How is the trusted friend? And how is the compassionate companion?’ He said: ‘The noble friend is the compassionate and the old companion is the merciful, and the arrangement of the wise men is better’ (*Ibid.*: 326).

Besides Socrates, Hippocrates, Galen and Aristotle al-Ghazālī mentioned in this chapter a story about Alexander the Great, too. He said that Alexander was asked: ‘Why did you dignify your teacher more than your father? He answered: Because my father is the cause of my evanescent life, and my teacher is the cause of my permanent life. If the matters were done by God's will, the en-

deavor is forbidden and leaving it is a thankful thing. He also said if the time didn't follow you, follow it according to its will. The human is a slave of the time and the time is the enemy of the human. And every breath of the human's breathing takes him far from life and approximates him the death' (Al-Ghazālī 1987: 322–323).

As for the rest of the Greek quotations on which al-Ghazālī depended, there are three paragraphs that are attributed to Euclid, Galen and Aristotle, besides some stories about Alexander the Great. Al-Ghazālī dealt with every Greek writer separately. When he spoke about the policy of the ministers and their behavior in chapter two, he cited Aristotle. He told his Sultan about the bad results of the war and advised him not to wage a war. He told him that the worst minister is he who persuades his king to wage a war although he can make peace. As for this issue, Aristotle said the following: 'Every thing that was made without war or violence to the others is better than the thing which was done by the war, by you' (*Ibid.*: 278).

In chapter three, al-Ghazālī spoke of the scribes of the Sultan and their behaviors. He cited the Greek physician Galen whom he called the wise Galen. Al-Ghazālī spoke of the importance of the scribes and the characteristics which must exist in them. Galen here said that the pen is the physician of the speech. Alexander the Great also said: 'the world is under two things: the pen and the sword, and the sword is under the pen' (*Ibid.*: 284). Al-Ghazālī means that the Sultan has to prefer the diplomacy more than the war, and he has to write his message to the others perfectly, especially if he will send them to other kings. He thought that by the sweet or good word the Sultan can do every thing not by the war. So, he stressed the importance of the pen, the languages, and the scribes (*Ibid.*: 283–290).

Because of the works of the Muslim scholars and non-Muslim scholars were available in Baghdad it is probable that al-Ghazālī read them and benefited from al-Daynoūrī who wrote a chapter about the scribes (Al-Daynoūrī 1963: 42–51).

Al-Ghazālī spoke of the honor of the wisdom and the wise men in chapter six of *al-Tibr al-Masbūk*. Al-Ghazālī cited Euclid when he said that one day a person asked Euclid: 'will you repose or destroy your spirit?' Euclid answered: 'I'll be reposed when I bring out the malevolence from your heart' (Al-Ghazālī 1987: 354).

Thus, these quotations from the classical Greek writings proved that the Greek thought played a vital role in the composition of the political thought of al-Ghazālī.

CONCLUSION

Although al-Ghazālī is one of the famous Islamic theologians in the Middle Ages and he was a Sufī he did not hesitate to study the classical Greek sciences and used them to refute the philosophical theories of the other Islamic theologians. The intellectual advantages of al-Ghazālī referred to his assimilation to the foreign cultures which in the end contributed to the formation of his thought. This evidence proves that al-Ghazālī was not like any theologian of his time.

Al-Ghazālī proves that the Greek sciences were used among the Muslim writers to support their views too and the Greek culture played a brilliant role in the formation of his political thought. It is clear when al-Ghazālī cited not only the Greek philosophers but also when he used the works of the Greek physicians, mathematicians, and historians to support his writings.

The wide cultural background of al-Ghazālī made him one of the famous theologians in the Islamic world until now and helped him to write bravely many works of philosophy, of the Islamic faith and of the political thought. But, unfortunately, he didn't document his Greek quotations and he was content with the mention of their Greek authors. So, he made it difficult to know from which Greek writings he quoted them.

Finally, the Syriac translators played the first role in reaching the Greek classical sciences to the Medieval Islamic world. On the other hand, the diplomatic relations between Byzantium and the Islamic Caliphate, either the Umayyad or Abbasid, took part in reaching the Greek sciences to the Medieval Islamic world, too. Besides these factors, the encouragement of the Muslim caliphs for the translation in Baghdad and their generosity with the scholars, the writers, the poets, the historians, the theologians, and others gave a strong push in the Islamic world to conceptualize and study well the philosophical and intellectual Greek works and developed their sciences.

NOTES

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¹ \ Some of the translated works of Aristotle transferred from the East to Andalusia where Ibn Rushd (Averroes), the famous Muslim philosopher, studied them carefully. Some of his studies are Ibn Rushd 1980, 1981, 1987.

² \ For example see Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq 1986; Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq 1987; Ibn al-Haytham 1971; Ibn Bagah 1976.

³ As for the translation of the Greek sciences into Arabic during the Abbasid period see Watt 1963: 25ff.

⁴ Some of his books which translated into Arabic are Aflāṭōn 1977a: 117–148; Aflāṭōn 1977b: 149–193; Aflāṭōn 1977c: 194–239.

⁵ Some of his works which translated into Arabic are: Ariṣṭo 1984; Aristotle 1993; Badawī 1978: 1–116; Madkour 1934a; Ariṣṭōṭālīs 1977: 67–177. The latter book was attributed by the Arabs wrongly to Aristotle. But its real author is Plotin.

⁶ \ Cairo 1907.

⁷ As for al-Fārābī and his works see Madkour 1934b; Al-Hāshim 1960; 'Aṭwa 1978; Ḥanafī 1983; Wāḥid 1984; Al-Zāḥrī and Sidō 1995: 104–118.

⁸ \ See Al-Fārābī 1959; Al-Fārābī 1996. See also Abū Rayyān 1976a: 272–279.

⁹ As for the Utopia between al-Fārābī and Plato see Abū Rayyān 1976a: 279–284. See also Watt 1963: 34–35.

¹⁰ He dedicated a big chapter of his important book *Kitāb al-Isharāt wa-l-Tanbīhāt* to speak in detail about Sufism. See Madkour 1976: 50–53.

¹¹ Al-Fārābī made Sufism one of his philosophical trends. The Sufism of al-Fārābī depended on the intellectual basics besides the spiritual basics, too. The Sufism of al-Fārābī also related to the astronomical and metaphysical theories. See Madkour 1976: 39–40.

¹² \ See Abū Rayyān 1976a: 285–351. Some of the works of Ibn Sīnā are published in Badawī 1977b: 117–249.

¹³ As for the chain of the Muslim philosophers and its development see Watt 1963: 29–32.

¹⁴ As for the life of al-Ghazālī see these studies MacDonald 1899: 71–132; Smith 1983; Watt 1963: 19–24; Laoust 1970; Frank 1994; Abū Rayyān 1976a: 353–397; Duniyā 1967: 18–120.

¹⁵ It is situated near the modern Mashhad in north-east Iran (Watt 1963: 20).

¹⁶ Al-Subkī 1413: 102. Al-Dhahabī, Al-Ṣafadī and Watt said that '...al-Ghazālī or Ghazālīte, possibly meaning the man from Ghazāla, an other wise unknown village in the region of Tūs' (Al-Dhahabī 1413: 343; Al-Ṣafadī 2000: 213; Watt 1963: 20). I think that it is not right because the father of al-Ghazālī was a

woolmaker. The labor of his father is known in Persian as *al-Ghazzāl*, such as *al-Khabbāz*, i.e. the bakery (Al-Dhahabī 1413: 343; Al-Ḥanbalī 1406: 11). Therefore, his title *al-Ghazzālī* is derived from the name of the labor of his father's family. On the other hand, the birth place of al-Ghazālī was al-Ṭabarān not Ghazāla (Ibn Khallikān 1968: 218).

¹⁷ Jurjān is a Persian province which had many cities such as Jurjān, Abskun, Dahistān, and Astarabāz. The city of Jurjān is the capital of the province which was a very big city. There two cities on this river of Jurjān. The eastern one was Jurjān and the western one was Bakrābāz. For more details see Al-Idrīsī 1989: 688; Al-Maqdisī 1980: 242.

¹⁸ Nishāpūr was one of the four important cities in the Persian province of Khorasān. It was called also the small Damascus. Because it was full of gardens, fields, farms, fruits, cheap and good meats, and its water. It occupied an important place in the trade of silk. For more details see Al-Maqdisī 1980: 233–234; Ibn Baṭūṭah 1405: 432–433; Al-Ḥamawī: 167–168.

¹⁹ Al-Subkī 1413: 103; Ibn Kathīr: 127; Al-Ṣafadī 2000: 211. Cf. also MacDonald 1899: 79.

²⁰ Ibn al-Athīr VIII 1415: 507; Ibn Khaldūn 1984: 321; Al-Ḥanbalī 1406: 383.

²¹ Ibn al-Athīr VIII 1415: 507; Al-Ṣafadī 2000: 211. Cf. also MacDonald 1899: 93.

²² Yousuf ibn Tāshfīn was the ruler of Morocco in 1070 A.D. In 1086 A.D. he crossed the sea to Andalusia to help the Muslims there. He shared in the battle of az-Zalāqah in 1086 A.D. In 1106 A.D. he died in Morocco. See Al-Fāsī 1972: 140–143.

²³ The Encyclopedia of Religion, sv. *Ghazali, Abu Hamid Al-*.

²⁴ Al-Subkī 1413: 106; Ibn al-Athīr IX 1415: 146. Cf. also Al-Ghazālī 1987: 17.

²⁵ About the Sufism of al-Ghazālī see Abū Rayyān 1976a: 369–374; Madkour 1976: 62–68.

²⁶ About these works see Wensinck 1940; Smith 1983: 67ff.; Watt 1952: 24–45; Watt 1960: 124–131; Badawī 1977a.

²⁷ Ibn Sīnā was one of al-Ghazālī sources for the study of philosophy. About this issue see Smith 1983: 113f.

²⁸ The Encyclopedia of Religion, sv. *Ghazali, Abu Hamid Al-*. As for the progress of philosophy in the Islamic world from the beginning to the time of al-Ghazālī see Watt 1963: 34–57.

²⁹ As for the Neo-Platonism among the Arab intellectuals see Badawī 1977b.

³⁰ About the Greek philosophical influence on al-Ghazālī see Badawī 1967: 191–205.

³¹ \ <http://www.mekkaoui.net/MaktabaIslamya/Quraneg/004.htm>

³² \ <http://www.mekkaoui.net/MaktabaIslamya/Quraneg/003.htm>

³³ \ <http://www.mekkaoui.net/MaktabaIslamya/Quraneg/004.htm>

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