

LOGIC IN AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S THEORY OF CERTITUDE

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Although certitude might be considered by many to be very personal, and because of that, too subjective, one needs more than just gallantry to make an outright denial of its importance in life. Perhaps it is precisely because of its being *objectively* subjective that one cannot do without it. Indeed, nobody can be a total sceptic, at least when dealing with some urgent practical problems in this temporal existence. Hence, to live a normal life, one cannot help being a realist in the sense of having certitude concerning the truth of some matters—however small they might be. Nevertheless, man is a complex personality, possessing a number of abilities and faculties which, at times, are at odds with each other. One of these inherent faculties is reason-intellect (*al-'aql*). In fact, not many have dared dispute the intimate presence of this distinctively human faculty. Having accepted these two facts, namely, the importance of certitude and the presence of reason, one can go even further to inquire whether a person can be sure of something which his reason considers entirely impossible. Or, to put it differently, is it conceivable that we have certitude concerning a matter which is totally rejected by our reason? This question, for us, is by no means artificial. Rather, it provides the necessary framework for our present discussion.

It is not hard to see why al-Ghazālī, as a scholar who was very much interested in the problem of knowledge and faith, was so involved in the problem⁹ of certitude. Since logic is the property of reason, concerns the correct laws of thought, and is highly regarded by al-Ghazālī, he could not but give as well an account of its status in his overall solution to that problem. In the present paper, we will concern ourselves with surveying what al-Ghazālī's answer is and how he

provides such a solution. But before that, and since certitude, truth and knowledge are only different aspects of a single item, it is very relevant to see how he perceives truth-reality (*al-ḥaqq*).¹

Certitude in Relation to Truth and Knowledge

Truth is one of the Divine Names. This, in turn, is very closely related to al-Ghazālī's understanding of Existence. In this regard, he claims,

...everything of which one is aware may be absolutely false (*bāṭil muṭlaqan*), absolutely real (*ḥaqq muṭlaqan*), or real in one respect and false in another (*ḥaqq min wajh bāṭil min wajh*). Whatever is impossible in itself (*al-mumtani' bi dhātihī*) is absolutely false, while that which is necessary in itself (*al-wājib bi dhātihī*) is absolutely real, and whatever is possible in itself and necessary by another (*al-mumkin bi dhātihī al-wājib bi ghayrihī*) is real in one respect and false in another. For this last has no existence in itself and so is false, yet acquires existence from the side of what is other than it, so it is...in that respect...real...²

¹ When referring to the word *al-ḥaqq*, we have to combine these two English words, 'truth' and 'reality', for in Arabic such a word connotes both meanings. For further analysis of this term, and how it is related to *taṣdīq*, see Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islām and the Philosophy of Science* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1989), 17-25; and his *A Commentary on the Hujjat al-Siddiq of Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī* (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Culture, 1986), 128-129, 149-153, 183, 187, and 234.

² Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā fī Sharḥ Ma'ānī Asmā' Allāh al-Husnā* (Limassol: al-Jaffan and al-Jabi, 1987), hereafter cited as *Maqṣad*, 126-127. Full English annotated trans. by David B.