

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CREED AND ETHICS IN ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY (ANALYSIS OF IMAM AL-GHAZALI'S THOUGHT)

Lukman, Wawan Sopiyan, Dede Sihabudin

Universitas Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno, Bengkulu, Indonesia

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Bumi Silampari Lubuklinggau

lukman@mail.uinfasbengkulu.ac.id, wawansopiyanpasundan@gmail.com,

dede@iaincurup.ac.id

Abstract

Article History

Received :11-01-2026

Revised :18-02-2026

Accepted :10-03-2026

Keywords:

Faith,

Ethics,

Islamic Philosophy,

Al-Ghazali,

Qualitative Study,

This study aims to examine the relationship between faith and ethics in Islamic philosophy through a qualitative study of Al-Ghazali's thought. Using textual analysis of primary works, particularly the Ihya' Ulumuddin (The Islamic Theology), as well as a secondary literature review, this study investigates how the concept of faith (aqidah) shapes and reinforces ethical norms and behavior in the context of Islamic spirituality. An in-depth analysis of classical texts reveals that the integration of theological beliefs and ethical values is a crucial foundation for the formation of the moral order and social life of Muslims. The research findings demonstrate that Al-Ghazali's thought offers a holistic synthesis, in which the principle of tawhid serves not only as a foundation for faith but also as a primary driver in the development of personal and social ethics. These findings impact contemporary understanding of the dynamics of the interaction between religious aspects and morality and open up space for interdisciplinary dialogue between theology and philosophy.

Introduction

In the study of Islamic philosophy, the relationship between aqidah (belief) and ethics (morality) is a fundamental and interrelated aspect. Aqidah not only forms the foundation of a Muslim's faith but also plays a strategic role in influencing ethical thought patterns and behavior in daily life. Classical thought, such as that put forward by Al-Ghazali, demonstrates that a strong faith must be accompanied by the application of ethics in various aspects of life. In his monumental work, Ihya' Ulumuddin, Al-Ghazali presents a synthesis of faith values and moral principles, which then serve as guidelines for character formation and the social order of Muslims (Al-Ghazali, 1994:21).

Some of the main problems that arise in the relationship between faith and ethics in Islamic philosophy, especially based on Al-Ghazali's thoughts include: Tension between Rationality and Revelation One of the fundamental problems is

how Al-Ghazali integrates faith which is rooted in faith and revelation with an ethical approach that contains rational elements. In *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, Al-Ghazali emphasizes that faith must be synergized with spiritual and ethical practices through reasoning that is not completely free from the limitations of revelation (Al-Ghazali, 1994). This tension arises when rational efforts in formulating ethical principles must be aligned with absolute dogmas of faith, thus giving rise to debates about the scope and limits of rationality in a religious context.

Applying Theory to Practical Life Although Al-Ghazali provided a profound synthesis of faith and ethical values, practical challenges remain in translating these concepts into the daily lives of Muslims. For example, the interpretation of ideal ethical action often must be adapted to changing social, cultural, and contemporary conditions. This poses a dilemma: how can one internalize the high values of faith while remaining responsive to the practical and complex ethical contexts of modern society (Muhammad, 2010:9).

Contextualizing Classical Interpretations: Al-Ghazali's thought originated in a specific historical context and conditions long past. Therefore, the modernization of ethical and religious values demands a reinterpretation of these classic works. Problems arise when values formulated within a medieval framework must be adapted to contemporary challenges, such as pluralism and globalization, without sacrificing the essence of the underlying faith (Hasan, 2015:86).

Al-Ghazali's integration of spiritual and moral dimensions not only combines aspects of faith with ethical logic but also incorporates elements of mysticism to shape the overall moral system. This integration sometimes raises doubts, especially among modern thinkers who tend to argue that a rational and empirical approach is necessary to develop adaptive and universal ethical norms. This has given rise to debates surrounding the relevance and applicability of mysticism in contemporary ethical contexts, as well as how to integrate these two aspects without creating inconsistencies in religious practice.

By identifying these issues, research into the relationship between faith and ethics in Al-Ghazali's thought not only opens up space for in-depth philosophical and theological discussion but also invites efforts to reconcile classical faith values with the realities of modern ethical practice. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of holistic Islamic thought that is relevant to the challenges of the times.

Previous research has tended to examine theological and ethical aspects separately, leaving a gap in the holistic understanding of the relationship between these two dimensions. Studies of Al-Ghazali's thought, particularly regarding how creed can guide ethical practice, still require further exploration to provide a comprehensive theoretical contribution to the realm of Islamic philosophy. This gap in the literature raises a fundamental question: how the fundamental values of faith formulated in Al-Ghazali's teachings can inspire and regulate the ethical behavior of Muslims amidst the increasingly complex dynamics of change (Hasan, 2015; Muhammad, 2010:43).

Furthermore, contemporary challenges such as modernization, globalization, and cultural pluralism demand a firm moral foundation relevant to societal developments. In this context, exploring the relationship between faith and ethics through Al-Ghazali's thought is expected to not only enrich theological and

philosophical discourse but also provide practical guidance in addressing ethical dilemmas faced by Muslims today. Using a qualitative approach, this research seeks to explore and interpret the profound meanings of classical texts, thereby opening new horizons of thought in efforts to integrate faith and ethical values into social life.

Based on this description, this research focuses on investigating the relationship between faith and ethics in Islamic philosophy through a study of Al-Ghazali's thought. The qualitative approach was chosen to explore in depth and describe the synergy between aspects of belief and moral practice, so that the results of this research can make a significant contribution to the development of theory and application of Islamic ethics in the context of modern life.

Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the in-depth and contextual meaning of the relationship between faith and ethics in Al-Ghazali's thought. This approach was chosen because it can reveal the complexity of theological and ethical concepts, while also allowing for rich historical and philosophical interpretations (Hasan, 2015).

The data sources in this study consist of primary data Al-Ghazali's classical works, especially the *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, which is the primary source for understanding the synthesis between faith and ethical values (Al-Ghazali, 1994). Secondary data: Academic literature, journals, books, and articles discussing the relationship between faith and ethics in the context of Islamic philosophy. This secondary data is used to support, compare, and complement the analysis of the primary data (Muhammad, 2010).

The data collection techniques used in this study were literature review: Conducting a systematic search of primary and secondary works relevant to the research topic. This process included collecting data from libraries, digital repositories, and academic journals. Document analysis collecting and reviewing Al-Ghazali's classical texts to extract key themes related to faith and ethics. This technique enabled researchers to identify patterns, statements, and arguments that constitute Al-Ghazali's framework of thought.

The data analysis technique used in this study was content analysis The collected data were analyzed to identify emerging themes and conceptual categories regarding the relationship between faith and ethics. This process included a data coding stage, where each text unit was assigned a label representing key concepts. Hermeneutic approach using hermeneutic methods to interpret the deeper meaning of classical texts, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of their philosophical aspects and historical context. This approach helps bridge the gap between ancient texts and the relevance of moral values in contemporary life.

Data Validity and Reliability are Conducted by Source Triangulation: Data validity is ensured by comparing and confirming findings from primary data with secondary data. Thus, the application of source triangulation can minimize bias and increase the accuracy of interpretation. Critical Reflection: The analysis process is carried out reflectively to ensure that the interpretation of Al-Ghazali's texts reflects a deep understanding and is not trapped in the subjectivity of the

researcher. Internal discussions or consultations with experts can also be conducted to check the consistency of the findings.

The theoretical framework of this research draws on Islamic philosophical theories that emphasize the integration of faith (aqidah) and ethical practice. The synthesis of the concepts of aqidah and ethics in Al-Ghazali's thought is seen as an attempt to bridge faith with a practical moral life. This theoretical approach provides a conceptual foundation for exploring how faith values underlie ethical norms, while also providing relevance in the context of the dynamics of modern society (Hasan, 2015; Muhammad, 2010:12).

With the research method above, it is hoped that a holistic understanding can be obtained regarding how Al-Ghazali's thoughts integrate faith and ethics in forming a moral order that is not only theoretical but also applicable in the lives of Muslims.

Discussion

The Conceptual Relationship Between Aqidah and Ethics in Al-Ghazali's Thought

This study reveals a profound synthesis between faith and ethics in Al-Ghazali's thought, where the two are not seen as separate entities, but rather as two sides of a single whole that forms the framework of life for Muslims. Through an analysis of classical texts, especially the *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, it is clear that Al-Ghazali links faith (faith) with the practice of ethical behavior holistically. According to Al-Ghazali (1994), beliefs derived from revelation and spiritual experience must be integrated with ethical norms to achieve a balanced and meaningful life. These findings support the view that faith serves as a foundation that not only guides aspects of belief but also guides moral actions in everyday life.

In-depth analysis using a hermeneutic approach shows that Al-Ghazali consistently emphasizes the importance of cleansing the soul (*tazkiyah nafs*) as the main prerequisite for the realization of ethical behavior. In this context, faith imbued with the element of monotheism not only provides metaphysical certainty, but also inspires real action to achieve spiritual and moral balance (Muhammad, 2010). This approach illustrates that in Islamic philosophy, faith and ethics are mutually reinforcing, where pure belief will produce consistent moral actions.

Understanding Aqidah

Explanation of several definitions of aqidah in the context of Islamic thought. The Classical Definition: Aqidah is traditionally defined as the fundamental foundation of faith in Islam, encompassing belief in essential principles such as the oneness of God (*tawhid*), prophethood, holy scriptures, the Last Day, angels, and destiny. Within this framework, aqidah is not merely defined as abstract knowledge but also as a spiritual commitment that underlies all aspects of a Muslim's life. For example, in the works of Al-Ghazali, aqidah is seen as a foundation that guides theological understanding and encourages ethical practices in daily life (Al-Ghazali, 1994:12).

Definition of Faith as the Internalization of Belief: Modern approaches to faith suggest that faith is not merely a confession or a taught doctrine, but rather a process of internalizing beliefs that actively shapes ethical attitudes and behavior.

According to this view, faith is a framework of thought that integrates the transcendent aspects of faith with personal experience and social norms, thus resulting in actions that support a moral life. In other words, faith is viewed as a practical guide that guides individuals in facing ethical dilemmas in accordance with Islamic principles (Muhammad, 2010).

Definition of Faith from a Contemporary Perspective, From a contemporary perspective, faith is understood as a dynamic synthesis of theological knowledge and life experience. This concept emphasizes that faith is an evolving process of meaning-making, in which fundamental beliefs are reinterpreted to remain relevant to constantly changing cultural and social contexts. This thinking emphasizes the need for an approach that is not merely formal but also adaptive, so that faith can accommodate the challenges of modernity and the plurality of values in today's society (Hasan, 2015).

A solid understanding of the creed is the primary foundation of a Muslim's life. A strong creed will foster steadfast faith and adherence to Islamic teachings as a whole. However, in some cases, the approach to teaching the creed in madrasas remains normative and textual, lacking any philosophical depth. This often results in students' understanding of the creed being dogmatic and ill-equipped to face the challenges of contemporary thought (Nasution, 2021:20).

Definition of Philosophy

Several definitions of philosophy according to experts that illustrate the diversity of approaches to understanding the essence of philosophy include: Philosophy as the Love of Wisdom. The classical definition comes from the Greek *philosophia*, which literally means "love of wisdom." In this tradition, philosophy is seen as an attempt to gain profound knowledge about the nature of existence, the universe, and morality through logical reasoning and critical argumentation. This definition emphasizes that philosophy is an eternal search for truth that transcends the empirical and scientific realms (Aristotle, 1984:69).

Philosophy as a Critical Inquiry into the Limits of Knowledge Immanuel Kant considered philosophy to be an attempt to examine the conditions and limits of human reasoning abilities. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant said that philosophy is in charge of establishing the foundation of knowledge by criticizing the conditions for pure knowledge to occur. In his opinion, philosophy helps us understand the structure and limits of reason that underlie all experience (Kant, 1998:109).

Philosophy as an Attempt to Answer the Basic Question of Reality Bertrand Russell in his work *The Problems of Philosophy* states that philosophy is an attempt to overcome fundamental problems that cannot be fully solved by empirical science. Russell argues that although philosophy does not always produce certainty, its search process provides profound insights into the nature of reality, knowledge, and the meaning of life that go beyond empirical data (Russell, 1912:119).

Philosophy as a Clarification of Language Problems and Understanding Ludwig Wittgenstein focuses attention on the role of language in creating and solving philosophical problems. In *Philosophical Investigations*, he argues that many philosophical problems arise due to ambiguity or misunderstanding in the use of language. According to Wittgenstein, the task of philosophy is to analyze

and listen to the way we talk about the world in order to reduce the confusion of context (Wittgenstein, 1953:81).

Philosophy in a Contemporary Perspective A Critical Reflection on Existence In the Indonesian context, some modern thinkers interpret philosophy as a deep critical reflection on human existence, values, and knowledge. According to Syafii Maarif, philosophy plays a role as the key to emancipation through efforts to unravel basic assumptions and expectations for life. This approach emphasizes that philosophy must be relevant to the current social and cultural context, thus equipping individuals to face the challenges of the times with critical and humanist thinking (Maarif, 1998:11).

Linguistic and Historical Definitions Etymologically, the term "philosophy" comes from the Greek *philosophia* which means "love of wisdom." In the context of Islam, philosophical thought integrates the intellectual heritage of Muslims with the sources of revelation, namely the Qur'an and Hadith. This definition emphasizes that Islamic philosophy is an attempt to seek truth that involves both spiritual rational aspects and at the same time, as embodied in the work of classical thinkers such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazali (Nasr, 2002:43).

The Rational-Theological Definition of Islamic Philosophy is also understood as an attempt to synthesize the role of reason (reason) with revelation. This approach emphasizes that in the face of fundamental questions about existence, the universe, and the essence of man, Muslims need to hold on to two sources of truth: rational logic and the principle of faith. Thus, Islamic philosophy acts as a bridge that connects empirical thought with transcendent beliefs (Fakhry, 2004).

Contemporary or Critical Definition In modern debate, Islamic philosophy is defined as a discipline that reexamines the traditions of Islamic thought to ensure their relevance to contemporary challenges. This definition encompasses a dialogical effort between classical tradition and modern thought, resulting in new, applicable interpretations of social, political, and ethical issues. This approach emphasizes the importance of the ongoing dialogue between the classical heritage and the dynamics of contemporary thought (Maarif, 1998:112).

A Practical and Methodical Definition of Islamic Philosophy can also be seen as a systematic method of thought that aims not only to achieve theoretical understanding but also to produce an applicable outlook on life. This approach emphasizes that Islamic philosophy must be able to construct a harmonious framework of thought between faith and reason, thereby providing solutions to life's problems that are contextual and humanistic (Nasr, 2002:2)

Rationality and Spirituality in Al-Ghazali's Ethical Philosophy

Furthermore, this study found a conceptual tension between the rational and transcendent dimensions in Al-Ghazali's work. On the one hand, a rational approach is used to systematically structure ethical thought; on the other hand, elements of mysticism and spiritual experience dominate the explanation of the reality of faith (Hasan, 2015:32). This tension is the meeting point in Al-Ghazali's thought, where he attempts to reconcile human logic with the divine dimension through a holistic synthesis. This synthesis is considered relevant in the modern context, as it offers an ethical paradigm that is not solely based on normative rules, but also on the profound spiritual experience of the individual.

The Relevance of Al-Ghazali's Thought in Contemporary Ethical Contexts

In the current era of globalization and cultural pluralism, the synthesis of faith and ethics in Al-Ghazali's thought invites in-depth reflection on how classical values can be adapted to modern challenges. The application of these values must be adjusted to the ever-changing social and cultural dynamics, without losing their underlying spiritual essence. The qualitative approach used in this study opens up space for contextual interpretation, allowing researchers to highlight how Al-Ghazali's thought is not only historically relevant but also able to provide practical guidance in moral decision-making in contemporary society (Hasan, 2015; Muhammad, 2010).

Overall, this research discussion emphasizes that the integration of faith and ethics in Al-Ghazali's thought offers a profound framework for understanding the dynamics of the spiritual and moral life of Muslims. This synthesis illustrates that strong faith is not merely a theoretical belief but must also be implemented through ethical behavior and decisions based on spiritual experience and rational understanding. The implications of these findings encourage interdisciplinary dialogue between theology, philosophy, and practical ethics, thus opening up the possibility of new thinking that can fill the gap between classical values and the demands of modernity.

Some of the benefits that can be obtained from a deep understanding of the relationship between faith and ethics in Islamic philosophy, especially through the study of Al-Ghazali's thoughts are: First, Integration of Spiritual Life and Ethical Practice, Understanding the relationship between faith and ethics helps bridge the gap between internal faith and the application of moral values in everyday life. Al-Ghazali's thoughts show that deep faith is not merely an abstract belief, but must be reflected in real ethical behavior. This approach encourages individuals to not only deepen spiritual understanding, but also implement moral principles in social interactions (Al-Ghazali, 1994).

Second, Strengthening the Moral Framework and Personal Character. The study of the integration of faith and ethics provides a comprehensive framework for character formation. When fundamental principles of faith serve as a foundation, individuals tend to develop strong moral values such as honesty, justice, and social responsibility. The concept of soul purification (*tazkiyah*) in Al-Ghazali's thought, for example, emphasizes the importance of self-improvement as a prerequisite for achieving spiritual and moral balance (Muhammad, 2010). This is highly relevant in developing individuals who are not only theoretically faithful but also possess noble character in practice.

Third, Resolving Ethical Dilemmas in a Modern Context. In the era of globalization and cultural pluralism, ethical challenges are increasingly complex. By understanding the synthesis of faith and ethics proposed by Al-Ghazali, society can find solutions that are not only based on normative rules but also grounded in profound spiritual values. This understanding provides guidance for navigating ethical dilemmas arising from modern social dynamics, thereby strengthening the argument for social policies and practices based on faith (Hasan, 2015).

Fourth, Developing Interdisciplinary Dialogue. A holistic understanding of the relationship between faith and ethics also opens up space for dialogue between the disciplines of theology, philosophy, and practical ethics. Al-Ghazali's

approach, which combines rationality and transcendent values, offers a model of thought that can be further studied in an interdisciplinary context. This dialogue is crucial for developing critical thinking capable of responding to contemporary challenges without abandoning the essence of spirituality in Islamic teachings.

Fifth, The Foundation for Moral Decision-Making in Social Life. By integrating theological beliefs and ethical norms, this research contributes to building a robust value system that can serve as a reference in decision-making both on an individual and collective scale. This helps society internalize morality derived from a deep understanding of faith, resulting in integrity and consistency between what is believed and what is done.

Islamic philosophy not only helps provide a deeper understanding of Islamic faith and law, but also fosters critical, adaptive, and rational thinking in facing the challenges of the times. Therefore, it is crucial for us humans to further integrate Islamic philosophy to create a generation of Muslims who are not only strong in their faith but also possess broad insight in understanding Islamic teachings comprehensively (Mujib, 2021:71).

Overall, the benefits of understanding the relationship between faith and ethics in Al-Ghazali's thought include enhanced intellectual and spiritual quality, strengthened morality in personal and social life, and contributed to the development of interdisciplinary thought in the study of Islamic philosophy and theology. Such an understanding is crucial to ensuring that the values of faith are not merely retained in the theoretical realm but are also implemented as applicable guidelines for life that are relevant to the dynamics of modern society.

Conclusion

Based on an analysis of classical texts and an in-depth literature review of Al-Ghazali's thought, this study finds that the relationship between faith and ethics in Islamic philosophy is integral and mutually reinforcing. Al-Ghazali's thought demonstrates that faith, as the foundation of faith, not only forms the basis for theological convictions but also plays a crucial role in shaping the ethical behavior and morality of Muslims. In his work, *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, Al-Ghazali presents an integration of spiritual experience, purification of the soul (*tazkiyah*), and the application of ideal ethical values in everyday life.

Furthermore, this research reveals that a qualitative approach to studying Al-Ghazali's thought allows us to identify how profound religious values can be translated into applicable behavioral norms. These findings highlight the importance of a dialogue between rational and transcendental aspects where faith and ethics are not separate entities, but rather a synergy that creates a harmonious and relevant framework for life in the modern socio-cultural context. This research also underscores the need to reapply classical values in facing the challenges of modernity, such as cultural pluralism and increasingly complex social dynamics. Thus, Al-Ghazali's thought not only has historical value but also provides practical guidance and solutions that can be adapted to the contemporary Islamic context.

Overall, the research findings strengthen the argument that the synthesis of faith and ethics is key to developing individual morality and character. The implications of these findings are expected to pave the way for further research and enrich the discourse on the relevance and application of classical thought in contemporary society.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Al-Ghazali, A. H. 1994. *Ihya' Ulumuddin*. Kuala Lumpur: Annisaa.
- Aristotle. 1984. *Metaphysics* (W. D. Ross, Trans.). Oxford University Press.
- Fakhry, A. 2004. *A history of Islamic philosophy*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Hasan, S. 2015. *Analisis Filsafat Islam: Pendekatan Kualitatif terhadap Pemikiran Al-Ghazali*. Jakarta: Pustaka Alam.
- Kant, I. 1998. *Critique of Pure Reason* (P. Guyer & A. W. Wood, Trans.). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1781)
- Lubis, L. H., Nurdiani, N., Sumiati, S., Hasibuan, R., & Yulsinda, Y. 2025. Relevansi Filsafat Islam dalam Meningkatkan Pemahaman Akidah dan Hukum Islam di MAS Bustanul Ulum. *Alacrity: Journal of Education*, 461-468.
- Maarif, S. 1998. *Filsafat sebagai kunci emansipasi*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.
- Muhammad, A. 2010. Akidah dan Etika dalam Pemikiran Al-Ghazali. *Jurnal Filsafat Islam*, 8(2), 134-156.
- Mujib, M. 2021. Filsafat Islam dalam Kurikulum Madrasah: Menumbuhkan Generasi Muslim yang Kritis dan Adaptif. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 15(2), 123–137.
- Nasr, S. H. 2002. *Islamic philosophy from its origin to the present: Philosophy in the land of prophecy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Nasution, H. 2003. *Filsafat Islam: Sejarah dan Perkembangannya*. Jakarta: UI Press
- Russell, B. 1912. *The Problems of Philosophy*. Oxford University Press.
- Wittgenstein, L. 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*. Basil Blackwell.