

**RETHINKING THE BOOK OF TAHAFUT AL-FALASIFAH:  
Examining Al-Ghazali's Argumentative Criticism  
Against the Thinking of Philosophers**

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**Abstract**

*This study explains al-Ghazali's argumentative criticism in Tahafut al-Falasifah. It aims to analyze the intentions of al-Ghazali's argumentative refutation of other alleged rational thinkers considered by irfani epistemology as the cause of decline of Islam and to observe the method used by al-Ghazali in his argument. This study is a library research which is included in the qualitative research cluster. The result of study is that the intentions of al-Ghazali's argumentative criticism are to discuss the twenty errors of Muslim philosophers, namely al-Farabi and Ibn Sina in matters of metaphysical philosophy. The method used by al-Ghazali is also the same as Aristotle's criticism of Endoxus, that is attacking Muslim philosophers in terms of the arguments they built, even labelling them as heretics and infidels/apostates. This method is known as argumentum ad hominem because it attacks Muslim philosophers when it comes to argumentation. It is built on the dialectical method of speech or in other terms known as jawab wa su'al which always recalls an imaginary trial.*

**Keywords:** *Tahafut al-Falasifa, al-Ghazali, argumentative criticism*

**A. Introduction**

Al-Ghazali is a notorious Muslim thinker. Many studies have discussed al-Ghazali's thinking, such as Ahmad Atabik's research which attempts to assess al-Ghazali's work objectively, starting with the journey of his life and intellectual adventure in *al-Munqidz min al-Dlalal*. Atabik argues that in *al-Munqidz min al-Dlalal* al-Ghazali gives philosophical classifications including followers of atheism (*al-Dabriyun*), followers of naturalism (*al-Thabi'iyun*), and followers of divine philosophy

(*ilahiyyun*). Then alluding to Greek and Muslim philosophical thinking discussed in *Tabafut al-Falasifa*, there are at least 20 problems that render these philosophers heretics and infidels, including nature is *qadim*, God does not know things that are particular, and physical awakening and individual soul mortality.<sup>1</sup> This is in line with Muliati who also saw al-Ghazali's criticism in *Tabafut al-Falasifa* often as a reincarnation of Islamic world thought, even though the criticism was limited to metaphysics (*al-ilahiyat*) which was always generalized as a critique of overall philosophical studies. Muliati clarifies that the twenty problems consists of seventeen problems in the *bid'ah* category and three problems in the pagan category.<sup>2</sup>

Muhammad Nur in his research discusses al-Ghazali's thinking from the point of logic which includes: first, an objective description of the essence science, the classification of knowledge and the urgency of logic in the development of science. Second, it describes logic as a tool for obtaining valid knowledge. Third, it describes forms of thought in logical aspects such as deduction, induction, and analogy thinking. Fourth, it studies the critical and heuristic relevance of al-Ghazali's logic in the development of science, especially Islamic studies. The result of Nur's study is that Arabic logicians (*ahl-mantiq*) revive Aristotle's logic, but also go further. At least, the thoughts of al-Ghazali were to bring together Greek logic and Islamic religious studies.<sup>3</sup>

Sabirin in his research is more concerned with rational thinkers who view al-Ghazali as an anti-philosophy until now, resulting in the decline of Muslims who have removed the rational work of philosophy and Sufism's pendulum as the only solution. According to Sabirin, instead of building a more systematic-argumentative criticism, in principle from al-Ghazali's philosophical racial work, there is no contact because actually it is only interpretative of Islamic teachings.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmad Atabik, "Telaah Pemikiran Al-Ghazali Tentang Filsafat," *Fikrah* 2, no. 1 (2014): 19–40.

<sup>2</sup> Muliati, "Al-Ghazali Dan Kritikanya Terhadap Filosof," *Jurnal Aqidah* 2, no. 2 (2016): 77–86.

<sup>3</sup> Muhammad Nur, "Islam Dan Logika Menurut Pemikiran Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali," *Jurnal Al-Ulum* 11, no. 1 (2011): 47–62.

<sup>4</sup> Sabirin, "Kritik Nalar Al-Ghazali Dalam Sengkarut Filsafat Islam," *El-Ibham* 8, no. 1 (2015): 89–110.

The explanation above shows that al-Ghazali is a very intelligent person so that in the process of finding a belief and knowledge, al-Ghazali did not accept a knowledge for granted, but got through a very deep curiosity process. That is because knowledge will be obtained by doubt which raises questions that must be sought and answered. The previous explanation has provided an interesting picture of al-Ghazali's thinking, but this study further explains al-Ghazali's argumentative criticism. The aim is to look beyond the intentions contained in al-Ghazali's argumentative rebuttal on the allegations of other rational thinkers who according to *irfani* epistemology were the cause of the decline of Islam, but also the method used in argumentation. Therefore, the figure of al-Ghazali is well known as a great thinker of Islam with his humanitarian philosophy. Besides that, he was also an expert in various fields of religious science such as jurisprudence, *ushul fiqh*, *kalam*, *manthiq*, *Sufism*, *morals* and many more. But this greatness is not flawless, his involvement in various Islamic disciplines is seen by some historical observers as one of the factors causing the loss of rationalism. Often he is unjustly accused of being the culprit of the decline of Islam only because he attacked philosophers through his book *Tabafut al-Falasifah*. This has stimulated this research to discuss more on which side of the philosophers' thoughts attacked by al-Ghazali as well as what is the focus of his attack and argument.

## B. Memoirs of Al-Ghazali

The full name of Al-Ghazali is Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Thusi, with the first name Abu Hamid and has the title Zainuddin. He was born in Thus, one of the regions in Khurasan Iran in 450 H/1058 AD, thus he was of Persian descent.<sup>5</sup> His father died when he was small, so that in his childhood al-Ghazali lived in poverty under the guidance of a Sufi. In Thus Al-Ghazali studied several sciences before he went to Jurjan and Naisabur, where Imam Haramayn al-Juwaini served as Head of the Nizamiyah Madrasa. Under the care of

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<sup>5</sup> Zaky Mubarak, *Al-Akblaq 'ind Al-Ghazali* (Mesir: Dar al-Katib al-Araby al-Thaba'at al-Nasyr, 1968), 47.

al-Juwaini, al-Ghazali studied the science of *fiqh*, *ushul*, *mantiq*, and *kalam*, until death separated them when al-Juwaini died.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, since childhood, he studied the science of jurisprudence to Ahmad bin Ar-Radzikani who then moved to Jurjan to study with Abu Nashr al-Isma'ili. After that he returned to Thus. Then he went to Naisaburi to study science with Imam Haramain. His learning to Imam Haramain include several disciplines such as philosophy and Sufism,<sup>7</sup> when Imam Haramayn al-Juwaini served as Head of the Madrasah Nizamiyah. Under al-Juwaini's care, al-Ghazali also studied jurisprudence, *ushul*, *mantiq*, dan *kalam*.<sup>8</sup> Eventually, he was offered the position of a professor in the field of religious knowledge at Baghdad's Nizamiyah University. Up to this point, it seems that al-Ghazali would become a prominent academic for good. However, it turns out that his life moves to another direction.<sup>9</sup>

In the city of Baghdad, the name of al-Ghazali was increasingly popular with the *halaqah* (kelompok) of his recitation was expanding. In this city, he also started a polemic, especially with the Bathiniyah Isma'iliyah group and the philosophers. In this period he suffered from a spiritual crisis as a result of his scepticism (*al-syak*), which is known by Westerners as scepticism,<sup>10</sup> i.e. a crisis which doubts all *ma'rifah*, both empirical or rational. This spiritual crisis was mentioned by Van Ess on philosophical issues as follows:

Thumamah b. Ashras (died 213/828), Mu'tazilitic theologian at the court of al-Ma'mun, apparently once found such a person. In the presence of the caliph he was confronted by someone who believed that – as Ibn 'Abd Rabbih puts it in his *al-Iqd al-Farid* – “all things are mere phantasy and conjecture, that man grasps them only according to his own mind (that means: subjectively) and that there is no truth in (what we call) reality.”

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<sup>6</sup> Imam Al-Ghazali, *Kerancuan Filsafat (Tabafut Al-Falasifah)*, ed. Translated by Achmad Maimun (Yogyakarta: Forum, 2015), xxvii.

<sup>7</sup> Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum Ad-Din*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1995), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Kerancuan Filsafat (Tabafut Al-Falasifah)*, xxvii.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum Ad-Din*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Scepticism is better interpreted as sanctions, not doubt. The sanction is a mental attitude towards a truth/knowledge that cannot be trusted yet. A sanction, encourage humans to conduct further investigations. While in doubt, a mental attitude that does not dare to take action decisions. I. R Poedjawijatna, *Tabu Dan Pengetahuan* (Jakarta: Bina Aksara, 1983), 20.

Instead of answering, Thumamah, boxed his ears so that his face became green and blue, and remarked on his vain protestations: “Oh, perhaps I only anointed you with oil.”. this man was a skeptic, and Thumamah’s method was, as it seems, the usual way to deal with people like him.<sup>11</sup>

Al-Ghazali suffered pain for six months so that the doctor ran out of power to treat it. Trying to heal his illness, al-Ghazali left all positions he held, such as the chancellor and professor in Baghdad. He wandered to Damascus. At the Mosque *Jami’* in Damaskus, he isolated himself (*uzlab*) for worship, contemplation and Sufism which lasted for two years. Then in 490 H/1098 AD, he went to Palestine to pray beside the tomb of the Prophet Ibrahim a.s continued to Mecca and Medina to perform the pilgrimage and pilgrimage to the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad until he was released from the turmoil of the soul with the path of Sufism. After recovering from his spiritual illness, al-Ghazali returned to lead the Nizhamiyyah College in Baghdad at the insistence of Prime Minister Fakhr al-Mulk, son of Nizam al-Mulk. After the prime minister was killed, he returned to Thus, his birthplace, where he built a Madrasah *khan-kah* (a kind of practice of *suluk*) to teach Sufism. This effort was carried out until he died on 14 Jumadil 505 H/18 December 1111 AD. He exhaled his last breath at the age of 55 years. His body was interred to the east of the fort near Thabaran, next to the tomb of the famous poet Al-Firdausy.<sup>12</sup>

Below are some of the legacies of his scientific work which have the greatest influence on the thinking of Muslims, including : First, *Ihya’ Ulum al-Din*, contains a collection of the main points of religion and creed (*aqidah*), worship (*ibadah*), morals (*akhlak*) and rules of *suluk*. Second, *Al-Iqtishad fi al-’Itiqad*, contains science, nature and divinity. Third, *Maqasid al-Falasifat*, contains criticism of philosophers. Fourth, *Al-Munqiz min al-Dhalal*, explained in it a set of knowledge that coloured his era and various important streams. He studied it critically and explained its advantages and mistakes. Fifth, *Mizan al-’Amal* which contains explanations about morals.

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<sup>11</sup> Josef van Ess, “Skepticism in Islamic Religious Thought,” in *Kleine Schriften by Josef van Ess*, ed. Hinrich Biesterfeldt, Volume 1 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018), 174.

<sup>12</sup> Sirajuddin Zar, *Filsafat Islam, Filosof Dan Filsafatnya* (Jakarta: PT. Raja Graindo Persada, 2004), 157–58.

From the above information, it can be seen that al-Ghazali in his life has taken various paths and researched various schools of thought, started as an Islamic jurist, turned into a Muslim theologian, then as a Muslim philosopher, and ended as a Sufi.<sup>13</sup> Certainly in his lifetime, the development of Theology, Philosophy and Bathiniyah was very rapid, then al-Ghazali felt compelled to study such things. According to him the philosophy that developed was not in line with theology, this doubt eventually led the tension between Islamic philosophers, the peak point was when al-Ghazali published *Tahafut al-Falasifah*.<sup>14</sup>

### C. Al-Ghazali's Disclaimer of the Philosophers' Thoughts

An important note in the Islamic tradition that needs to be affirmed is the foundation of Islamic philosophical thinking norms sourced and inspired by the *Qur'an* and the Hadith. Seyyed Hossein Nasr explained:

If seen, however, from its own perspective and in the light of the whole of the Islamic philosophical tradition which has had a twelve-century-long continuous history and is still alive today, it becomes abundantly clear that Islamic philosophy, like everything else Islamic, is deeply rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith. Islamic philosophy is Islamic not only by virtue of the fact that it was cultivated in the Islamic world and by Muslims but because it derives its principles, inspiration and many of the question with which it has been concerned from the sources of Islamic revelation despite the claims of its opponents to the contrary.<sup>15</sup>

This explanation is not as described previously that the thoughts or ideas of al-Ghazali are seen by some historical observers as one of the factors causing the loss of rationalism which in turn will be an important factor for the decline of the Islamic world. This conclusion was obtained from his several steps, i.e. first, his efforts in maintaining his kalam affiliation (*asy'ariyah*) as the official ideology of the Abbasid rulers, at least it added to the Muslim's hatred of the Mu'tazilites so that the rational

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<sup>13</sup> Zar, 159.

<sup>14</sup> M. Miska Amien, "Kerangka Epistemologi Al-Ghazali," *Jurnal Filsafat* 1, no. 1 (1993): 11–19.

<sup>15</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Qur'an and Hadith as Source and Inspiration of Islamic Philosophy," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Seyyed Hosein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London, New York: Routledge, 2008), 68.

spirit contained in the theological stream was naturally abandoned by Muslims. Second, the magnum opus in the field of philosophy in his work *Tabafut al-Falasisfat* nature is often understood by some observers as the cause of the loss of rationalism in the Islamic world so that slowly but surely Islam gradually experiences a setback. Third, the birth of al-Ghazali's sensational work in the field of Sufism, namely *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* which has become a close friend of Muslims in carrying out romantic practices with God through empowerment feeling (*dẓauq*), not reason.<sup>16</sup> This is the starting point for nominalism on al-Ghazali's argumentative criticism.

In this discussion, the research discusses al-Ghazali as a philosopher with his attacks on other philosophers. Other philosophers here refer to Aristotle, Plato and two other Muslim philosophers namely Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. Al-Ghazali considered that both were responsible for accepting and spreading philosophical thought from Greece (Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato) in the Islamic world. He poured his spicy criticism in his famous book *Tabafut al-Falasisfab* (The Incoherence of the Philosopher).<sup>17</sup> The goal of this work does not only lie on the identification of contradictions obtained from the principles of religious (Islamic) or theological and philosophical principles, but it is beyond that. Al-Ghazali carried out critical philosophy. What he did is a denial of ancient philosophers by showing discrepancies and contradictions in some matters relating to metaphysics.<sup>18</sup>

According to al-Ghazali, the philosophy of Aristotle which was copied and disseminated by Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina was divided into three groups: First, the philosophy that does not need to be denied, meaning that it is acceptable. Second, the philosophy that must be seen *bid'ab* (heterodox). Third, his philosophy must be seen as infidels.

The grouping of philosophies above can be seen from the division of philosophy proposed by al-Ghazali. Philosophy according to al-Ghazali is divided

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<sup>16</sup> Yusuf Qardhawi, *Al-Ghazali Antara Pro Dan Kontra*, ed. Translated by Abrori and Hasan (Surabaya: Pustaka Progresif, 1996), 90.

<sup>17</sup> Nadim Al-Jisr, *Qishbat Al-Iman* (Beirut: Dar al-Andalus, 1963), 70.

<sup>18</sup> M. V. Dougherty, "Ghazali and Metaphorical Predication in the Third Discussion of the Tahafut Al-Falasisfa," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82, no. 3 (2008): 394.

into six fields, namely mathematics, logic, physics, politics, ethics, and metaphysics (divinity). In addition to the field of divinity, by al-Ghazali, these sciences can be accepted because they do not conflict with Islamic law. As for the divinity, as contained in the book *Tabafut al-Falasifah*, Al-Ghazali views philosophers as heretics and infidels/apostates. The errors of these philosophers in the area of divinity were classified into 20 problems, namely:<sup>19</sup>

1. إبطال مذهبهم في أزلية العالم (Cancelling their opinion that nature is azali),
2. إبطال مذهبهم في أبدية العالم (Cancelling their opinion that nature is eternal),
3. بيان تلبيسهم في قولهم: إن الله صانع العالم، وإن العالم صنعه (Explaining their doubts that God is the Creator of the universe and indeed this universe was created by Him),
4. في تعجزهم عن إثبات الصانع (Explaining their weaknesses in proving the Almighty Creator),
5. في تعجزهم عن إقامة الدليل على استحالة إلهين (Explaining their weaknesses in establishing the proposition that there are no two Gods),
6. في إبطال مذهبهم في نف الصفات (Cancelling their opinion that God has no nature),
7. في إبطال قولهم: إن ذات الأول لا تنقسم بالجنس والفصل (Cancelling their opinion that Allah is not divided into *al-jins* and *al-fasbl* (differentia)),
8. في إبطال قولهم: إن الأول موجود بسيط بلا ماهية (Cancelling their opinion that God has the substance *basith* (simple) and does not have *mahiyah* (essence)),
9. في تعجزهم عن بيان أن الأول ليس بجسم (Explaining the weakness of their opinion that God does not have a partnership),

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<sup>19</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Tabafut Al-Falasifa*, ed. Tahkik Sulaiman Dunya (Kairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1962), 86–87.



10. (Explaining their statement about *al-dahr* which means eternal in the sense that it does not begin and does not end),
11. (Explaining the weakness of their opinion that God knows other than Him),
12. (Explaining the weakness of their opinions in proving that Allah only knows His *dzāt*),
13. (Cancelling their opinion that Allah does not know *juẓ'īyyat*),
14. (Explain their opinion that planets are animals that move according to His will),
15. (Cancelling what they said about the purpose of moving the planets),
16. (Cancelling their opinion that the planets know *juẓ'īyyat*),
17. (Cancelling the opinion of those who say that something can't happen outside natural law),
18. (Explaining their opinion that the human spirit is *janbar* (substance) which stands alone does not have a body),
19. (Explaining the opinions of those who state the impossibility of the mortal (disappear) of the human soul),

في إبطال إنكارهم لبعث الأجساد ، مع التلذذ والتألم في الجنة والنار ، بالذات والآلام الجسمانية.<sup>20</sup>

(Cancelling their opinion that states that the body will not be resurrected and that will receive pleasure in heaven and pain in hell the only spirit).

There are three important thing that represent the twenty problems above which, according to al-Ghazali, make philosophers become infidels, namely:<sup>20</sup>

1. Nature and all the substance of *qadim*

In general, Muslim philosophers argue that nature is *qadim*, meaning that the form of nature coincides with the form of God. The genuineness of God from nature is only in terms of the *dzat* (*taqaddum zaty*) and not in terms of age (*taqaddum zaman*), such as the primacy of cause and effect from the Sun. If it is assumed that the God of *Qadim* already exists, whereas nature does not yet exist and is a mere possibility, and after that, it will be created, then what is the reason that nature is created now not before?

Al-Ghazali answered the arguments of Muslim philosophers above that according to him there was no obstacle whatsoever for Allah to create nature since azali with His *iradah* which was sent at the time He created it. Meanwhile, the absence of nature before because He did not want it yet. *Iradah*, according to al-Ghazali, is a trait for Allah that functions to distinguish (choose) something from the similar, if not its function, of course, for God, it is sufficient with the nature of *qudrat*. While the presupposition of philosophers when God precedes nature in terms of time, not in terms of matter, this means that there is an age before nature is created which is not limited to the end, this is paradoxical. This was also denied by al-Ghazali, according to him indeed the form of God exists before nature and time. And then, age was created. Before the age of created, there was no age. First, there is God, then there is nature because God created it. So, in the first state, we imagine only God, and in the

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<sup>20</sup> Al-Ghazali, 307–8.

second state, we imagine there are two essences namely God and nature, and we don't need to imagine the third essence, that is, age. Times exist after nature because time is a measure of time that occurs in nature.<sup>21</sup> It can be simply understood that al-Ghazali's rebuttal of the earlier version of the Muslim philosopher uses causality, so in this case, the existence of the times is due to nature. If there is no nature, then there cannot be age, - whereas Allah Swt has the nature of the *qadim* certainly not related to the age. It is because the times are created after the existence of nature.

2. Allah does not know the *juḥū'yyat* (details) that occur in nature

Muslim philosophers, according to al-Ghazali, argue that Allah only knows His essence and does not know anything other than Him (*juḥū'yyat*). Ibn Sina said that Allah knows everything by His knowledge *kulli*. The reason for Muslim philosophers, Allah does not know the *juḥū'yyat*, that nature is always changing, if God knows the details of these changes, it will bring changes in His substance, such as changes in the object of science, which will bring changes to those who have knowledge (increase or decrease). This is impossible with God.<sup>22</sup>

Al-Ghazali's answer to the above arguments is that the opinion of those philosophers is a fatal mistake. Changes in the object of science do not bring changes to science because science is *idbafah* (something related to the matter). If science changes do not bring changes to substances, meaning that the conditions of people who have knowledge do not change. Likewise Allah's knowledge, He knows everything with His one knowledge since the beginning and does not change even though the nature known to Him changes. A more easily understood explanation is that al-Ghazali denied the Muslim philosophers about the change in the object of knowledge being the cause of the change in knowledge, so that Allah may not know *juḥū'yyat*. Al-Ghazali's

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<sup>21</sup> Al-Ghazali, 110–11.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Ghazali, 213.

refutation is that the cause and effect came from the others, while Allah's knowledge is derived from Him.

### 3. Physical awakening does not exist

According to Muslim philosophers, what will be resurrected in the afterlife is the spiritual, while the body will be destroyed. So the one who will feel happiness or pain is the spiritual. Although there is a picture of religion in the form of material in the afterlife, such as heaven and hell, they are only symbols (allegories) to facilitate the understanding of ordinary people. Even though in the hereafter it is too holy from what is described by ordinary people. They also argue that it is impossible to restore spiritual to the original body. According to them, when someone's life has ended, the body is destroyed. Re-creation means a new creation that is not the same as the previous creation.<sup>23</sup>

Al-Ghazali in refuting the opinion of Muslim philosophers relies more on the textual al-Qur'an. According to him, there is no reason to refuse happiness or physical and spiritual misery together. Allah says (meaning) "no one knows what is hidden for them (all kinds of favours) which make eye contact". Likewise, His words: "I provide for my righteous servants, what is not seen by the eye, not heard by the ear, and is not scratched by the human heart". It is God's perfect promises. Meanwhile, the body resurrection has been explicitly affirmed by *syara'* (religion), with the meaning that the soul is returned to the body, either the original body or another body. Allah Almighty created everything, it is not difficult to make the body from a speck of sperm into various organs of the body, such as bones, flesh, skin, nerves, muscles, fat, etc. From this result, he has a different tongue, eyes, teeth, and feelings between each human being. It is easier for God to return spiritual to the body in the hereafter than the first creation.<sup>24</sup>

This explanation can be understood simply on the issue of the resurrection

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<sup>23</sup> Al-Ghazali, 284.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Ghazali, 290.

of man in the Muslim philosopher's version that it is only the spirit which will be resurrected, while the body cannot return because it is already destroyed. According to Al-Ghazali's criticism it is easier to return something than to create it and if it is easy for Allah to create human beings, then it is also easy for Him to restore a destroyed body.

After knowing which side of philosophy was attacked by al-Ghazali, we can conclude that the accusation above has no strong basis. This can be described by Georges Tamer, that:

Abu Hamid, in this *Tabafut al-falasifa*, charged the philosophers with apostasy in relation to three propositions and declared them heretics in relation to 17 others, employing "arguments which created doubts and accusations which caused confusion. He led, thus, many people astray from both philosophy and religion. Consequently, he said in his book known as *Jawahir al-Qur'an* that that what he stated in the *Tabafut* are [merely] dialectical statements and that the truth is but included in *al-Madnun bi-hi 'ala ghayrt ablihi*.<sup>25</sup>

The explanation seems to reinforce that the intentions contained in al-Ghazali's argumentative refutation uses the answer and question method (*jawab wa su'al*), more clearly this method always recalls an imaginary trial and every argumentative note is recorded and refutes with final and satisfying apodictic certainty.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, al-Ghazali does not only deny heresy but he also denies philosophers' arguments towards disbelief, the method used by al-Ghazali seems flexible, easy to adjust because it follows the philosophical rules of argumentation but in a critical manner.

Therefore al-Ghazali did not attack the entire philosophical building, but only a metaphysical part of it. Furthermore, what he was attacking was not the object of his study but rather the structural error of the philosophers' arguments.<sup>27</sup> It is more

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<sup>25</sup> George Tamer, "Revelation, Sciences and Symbolism Al-Ghazali's *Jawahir Al-Qur'an*," in *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of Al-Ghazali: Paper Collected on His 900th*, ed. Georges Tamer (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015), 71.

<sup>26</sup> Josef van Ess, "The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology," in *Kleine Schriften by Josef van Ess*, ed. Hinrich Biesterfeldt, 1st ed. (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018), 240–41.

<sup>27</sup> Jamaluddin Muhammad, "Pergulatan Intelektual Imam Ghazali Saturday," BuntetPesantren.org, 2008.

precisely described by George Giacaman and King Bahlul in his introduction that it, “constitutes the most systematic and thorough attack on Neo-Platolism by a Muslim thinker, and has had a considerable influence on the course of philosophical activity in Islam”.<sup>28</sup> For this reason, in examining the work of *Tahafut al-Falasifa* at the philosophical level, it seems to delegitimize the claims of epistemological superiority recognized by philosophers. The aim of al-Ghazali in this work is to prove further that not all the doctrines of the classical philosophers have reached demonstrative as claimed by his followers so that the goals of al-Ghazali appear as destructive as he dismantled the philosophers' buildings, -therefore al-Ghazali's work is methodological and dialectical.<sup>29</sup>

It should also be noted that al-Ghazali focused his attacks on metaphysical philosophical thought, a doctrine that studies the Godhead. This philosophy is a doctrine that aims to replace the position of religion and remove it from the circle of power.<sup>30</sup> As explained earlier related to the twenty philosophers' errors regarding metaphysical problems or teachings which talk about God in his work of *Tahafut al-Falasifa*, Ghazali focused more on refuting neo-platonic Muslim philosophers such as al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. The work has a religious basis which is intended to show that the philosopher is contrary to Islamic principles. To be more systematic, the strategy is to defeat the philosopher with his own game to show that the conclusion is not systematic and out of place as their assumptions are problematic in argumentation built. Of course, it is in this case that al-Ghazali gives a critically clear and sharp statement of the many theses and arguments built by the Muslim philosopher who deviated dogmatically and philosophically.<sup>31</sup>

Al-Ghazali was not only drifted in mere metaphysical arguments but also base his criticism on experiences and traditions such as religious practices. This is an

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<sup>28</sup> George Giacaman and Raja Bahlul, “Ghazali on Miracles and Necessary Connection,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 9, no. 1 (2000): 39.

<sup>29</sup> Qurrotul Aini, “Dissenting the Tahafut Al-Falasifah as the Critism of Ghazali Against the Muslim's Philosophy,” *Farabi* 13, no. 1 (2016): 14.

<sup>30</sup> Qardhawi, *Al-Ghazali Antara Pro Dan Kontra*, 61.

<sup>31</sup> Ali Hasan, “Al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) on Creation and Divine Attributes,” in *Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities*, ed. Jeanine Diller and Asa Kasher (New York, London: Springer, 2013), 142–43.

important note that the knowledge that has been learned is protected from damage due to the absence of teleological concepts and can still be understood to date.<sup>32</sup> Leor Halevi looked at al-Ghazali as “a *skeptical theologian with a dialogic imagination...*”<sup>33</sup> but the arguments that are built besides being critical are also logical and empirical. In this case, al-Ghazali affirms that there is no causal agency in natural matters and all-natural events are the direct creation of Allah.<sup>34</sup> Researchers here see the work of *Tabafut al-Falasifa* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers) was built not only to attack the arguments of philosophers but also as a triumph of *argumentum ad hominem*<sup>35</sup> because of its nature attacking Muslim philosophers namely al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. This is in line with Mariola Sulkowska when discussing Aristotle's arguments with Eudoxus as follows;

One of the arguments used by Eudoxus in an attempt to show that pleasure is the chief good and that “any good thing – e.g., just or temperate conduct – is made more desirable by the addition of pleasure”. Aristotle, however, claimed that an argument of exactly the same type can be constructed to show that the chief good is not pleasure. For, as Plato had already argued, “the pleasant life is more desirable with wisdom than without”, so wisdom would seem to be the chief good... on this assumption, Aristotle’s criticism is devastating... There can be no question that Aristotle’s criticism of Eudoxus’ argument is relevant to what it attacks... Indeed, the very force of Aristotle’s criticism is just the result of the way in which that criticism makes use of the point of Eudoxus’ argument... It is, in fact, an *argumentum ad hominem*, since it attacks Eudoxus in terms of his own principles.<sup>36</sup>

The explanation above indicates that the method used by al-Ghazali in philosophical criticisms in *Tabafut al-Falasifa* nominally has the same method with the criticism of Aristotle against Eudoxus. This shows that al-Ghazali attacked

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<sup>32</sup> Ms. Zora Hesova, “Scheler and Ghazali: Explorations of the Finality of Knowledge Between East and West,” *Journal of Islamic and Civilization* 1, no. 2 (2011): 95.

<sup>33</sup> Leor Halevi, “The Theologian’s Doubts: Natural Philosophy and the Skeptical Games of Ghazali,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63, no. 1 (2002): 20.

<sup>34</sup> Michael E. Marmura, “Ghazali and Demonstrative Science,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 2, no. 2 (1965): 183.

<sup>35</sup> *Argumentum ad hominem* in question is to attack things that are problematic on philosophical arguments that have been built.

<sup>36</sup> Sulkowska Mariola, “‘*argumentum Ad Hominem*’ and New Methods of Philosophical Polemics,” in *Rationality Today: Challenges, Problems, Changes*, ed. A. Kiepas and A. Noras (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2003), 19–20.

Muslim philosophers in terms of the arguments they built, even labelling heretics and infidels. The problem of the mistakes of Muslim philosophers in discussing metaphysics by al-Ghazali is that there are twenty errors and the arguments built are "the dialectic method of speech";<sup>37</sup> so this method can be said to be rooted in the Greek-Roman tradition.

#### **D. Conclusion**

Even though al-Ghazali criticized many philosophers' thoughts, it does not mean that al-Ghazali left the role of reason in using the proposition. Al-Ghazali in the matter of reason has the opinion that reason is the principle of *naql*. Without prophetic and shari'ah, reason will not be established. Reason and *naql* are both *nur* from Allah, therefore between reason and *naql* there is no contradiction. Both reinforce and justify each other. Furthermore, al-Ghazali's argument is the evident from the mapping of twenty Muslim philosophers' problems in metaphysical philosophical thought.

The *jawab wa su'al* method used by al-Ghazali follows the philosophical but critical rules of argumentation, especially attacking problematic philosophers such as al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, so this method is called the victory of *argumentum ad hominem*. This is nominally rooted in the Greek-Roman tradition because there is a similarity of methods with Aristotle's criticism of Eudoxus, therefore the argument built is dialectical of speech.

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<sup>37</sup> Ess, "The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology," 240.



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