
Al-Ghazâlî

on Justice and Social Justice

Sabri ORMAN



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Sabri Orman

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Abstract: As is suggested by its title the main purpose of this study is a presentation, analysis and evaluation of al-Ghazâlî's ideas on justice and social justice. However, in the meantime we shall have an opportunity to shed some light on an aspect of his intellectual legacy that has remained almost unnoticed: prioritization of what is social, or giving priority to what is social in human behaviour, and in its religious, legal and moral evaluation. This can very briefly be summarised as considering *transitive virtues* more valuable or praiseworthy than the *intransitive* ones, and considering *transitive vices* more vicious or blameworthy than the *intransitive* ones. We shall try also to put two of al-Ghazâlî's significant approaches to religion, law and ethics in the perspective of social justice, or *vice versa*. One of these is his remarkable but not duly and properly appreciated approach to *fardh' kifâya*. The other is his well-known approach to *Maqâsid al-Sharî'a* and *Masâlih*. What is important about them here is that they are going to be treated as references for an idea of social responsibility or collective obligation/duty.

Keywords: Al-Ghazâlî, Justice, Social Justice, Priority of what is Social, Transitive Virtues, Intransitive Virtues, Transitive Vices, Intransitive Vices, *Fardh Kifâya*, *Maqâsid al-Sharî'a*, *Masâlih*, Social Responsibility, Collective Obligation, *Zakât*.

Introduction

Abû Hâmid al-Ghazâlî (450-505 A.H. / 1058-1111 A.C.) lived more than nine centuries ago. However, he is still with us as is evidenced by the frequent publication of his works both in their original and translated versions. In this study, we shall try to make an introduction to his thoughts on *justice* in general and *social justice* in particular.

1 We are aware that this is not an exact transliteration of the corresponding term in Arabic. However, we expect this and other similar cases of shortcomings that are to be seen throughout this text can be tolerated under the constraints of a study that stands at the intersection of Islamic and social studies—in the sense that transliteration is a must for the readers of the former while it is a burden for those of the latter.