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Ibn Hazm's Views on Islamic Ethics with Special Reference to *Kitab al-Akhlaq wa-al-Siyar*

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The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Ibn Hazm is one of the most profound thinkers the Muslim *ummah* ever produced. Despite his pre-eminence, he has been comparatively neglected in the mainstream scholarship. Ibn Hazm is a multi-talented scholar whose influence transcends knowledge boundaries. In fact, he is a renowned traditionist, historian of religion, theologian, philosopher, great theoretician of the Zahiri School and so forth. Further, he is claimed to have written four hundred volumes on various disciplines. This article provides a historical analysis of the life and times of Ibn Hazm. It discusses the biography, religio-intellectual milieus of al-Andalus during Ibn Hazm's lifetime, the salient aspects of Ibn Hazm's ideas and his views on ethics. Ibn Hazm's views on ethics reject the use of analogical reasoning as a source of religious truth and denial of inspiration (*Ilham)* as a legitimate means of the ethical knowledge. Ibn Hazm strongly believes in the autonomy of God as the sole source of value judgment, against the rationalist approach of the Mu'tazilah. This study primarily adopts the methods of textual analysis. As ideas do not develop in isolation from the larger contexts, the textual analysis method is aided by the method of historical research.

Keywords: Ibn Hazm; Islamic Spain; Islamic ethics; Muslim scholars.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi (994-1064) is one of the most profound thinkers, the Muslims ever produced. He is widely acclaimed as a "Muslim litterateur, historian, jurist and theologian of Islamic Spain, famed for his literary productivity, breadth of learning, and mastery of the Arabic language. One of the leading exponents of the Ẓāhirī (Literalist) school of jurisprudence, he produced some 400 works, covering jurisprudence, logic, history, ethics, comparative religion, and theology, and *The Ring of the Dove*, on the art of love" [1]. He may well be considered, in the words of Ibn Bashkuwal, "the most prolific writer in Islam after al-Tabari" [2]. He is also regarded to be a chief figure of the eleventh century and his *Ring of the Dove* to be "one of the few works in Arabic with an immediate and universal appeal" [3]. This article describes the life and times of Ibn Hazm with special emphasis on his views on Islamic ethics.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND METHODOLOGY

This study analyses the life and times of the prominent al-Andalus thinker, Ibn Hazm. Its main objectives are as follows:

a. To elucidate on the life, education and career of Ibn Hazm.
b. To examine the religio-intellectual milieus of al-Andalus during Ibn Hazm's lifetime.
c. To analyse the salient aspects of Ibn Hazm's ideas and his views on Islamic ethics.

To accomplish its objectives, this study primarily employs the methodology of textual analysis. The purpose of textual analysis is to describe the content, structure, and functions of the messages contained in texts. The major texts used in this study are Ibn Hazm's own writings: *Kitab Akhlaq wa al-Siyar* and *Tawq al-Hamamah*. As texts do not exist in vacuum, efforts are made to connect the texts with the historical contexts, which influenced the production of the texts.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a significant body of literature on the al-Andalus Muslim intellectual history in general and Ibn Hazm in particular. The literature under review is divided into three categories. First, studies on Ibn Hazm in general. Second, studies on Ibn Hazm's analysis of ethics. Third, studies on Islamic ethics. Despite Ibn Hazm's remarkable scholarly achievement, he had not received due scholarly attention he deserved. Asin Palacios, writing in the 1920s deplores the lack of attention on Ibn Hazm:

> He (Palacios) placed Ibn Hazm on the level of such philosophers of Muslim Spain as Ibn Bajjah, Ibn Gabirol, Ibn Rushd and Maimonides, and in addition considered Ibn Hazm a gifted theologian, jurist, poet, and literary man [4].

Ibn Hazm has received the attention from modern scholarship since the nineteenth century. In 1881, a Dutch historian, Dozy, provides useful information about his life and works; however, a great deal of his discussion centres on Ibn Hazm's ethnic background [5]. The renowned Orientalist, Ignaz Goldziher writes on the Zahiri in 1883. This book provides an extensive discussion on the Zahiri School, its doctrine and the position of its representatives within the mainstream Islam [6]. Goldziher's work has become a standard reference in Western language, on the Zahiri School. It has been translated into English in 1971 and it has been in print ever since. In this book, Goldziher focuses on Ibn Hazm's contributions in the development of the Zahiri School. Duncan MacDonald provides a general survey of the mainstream Islamic thought and law. At the same time it discusses the contributions of Ibn Hazm's in juridico-theological aspects [7]. Arnaldez covers the areas of the nexus of language and theology, polemics, the conception of *jihad* and the place of reason in Ibn Hazm's methodology [8]. A.G. Chejne provides a good overview of Ibn Hazm's life and contributions to the intellectual history of al-Andalus. It contextualizes the historical contexts out of which Ibn Hazm emerged and thrived. Moreover, Chejne provides nuanced discussion of the various aspects of Ibn Hazm's ideas such as his theory of knowledge, religious doctrines, belles-letters, philosophy and so forth. In fact, Chejne's is the first major work in English, which discusses Ibn Hazm systematically [9]. More recently, Adang, C. Fierro, M and Sabine. S. (2013). *Ibn Hazm of Cordoba: The life and works of a controversial thinker*, an edited book, which discusses various aspects of Ibn Hazm's life: biography, works on legal theory, works on linguistics, works on theology, works on interreligious polemics and so forth. However, a collaborative book like this does not have a coherent theme [10].

The second category of literature deals with the works on Islamic ethics. One of the earliest

studies on this subject is by Asin Palacios. In fact, Palacios works cover various aspects of Ibn Hazm's ideas. One such work analyzes Ibn Hazm's treatise on Islamic ethics, *Akhlaq wa-al-Siyar*. He also translated it into Spanish, portraying Ibn Hazm as a moralist [11]. A.R. Nykl also analyzes Ibn Hazm's ethics in a short article "Ibn Hazm's treatise on ethics" Nykl has rightly stated that despite his prominence, "Ibn Hazm, has received somewhat unjust treatment at the hands of Spanish-Arab countrymen and of Arab scholars in general" [12]. Abu Layla (1990) *In pursuit of virtue* discusses the general framework of Ibn Hazm's ethics, followed by a philological analysis as well as the translation of Ibn Hazm's book on Islamic ethics, titled *Kitab al-Akhlaq wa-al-Siyar* [13].

Ibn Hazm's best-known work in the West is *Tawq al-hamamah* (Ring of the Dove) dealing with love and lover. Lois Giffen (2000) "Ibn Hazm and the Tawq al-Hamama" has contextualized the historical milieus of al-Andalus during Ibn Hazm's lifetime, which influenced the production of his ideas. She also discusses the reasons for the continuous appeal of this work to modern readers [14].

The contributions of modern scholarship on the general subject of Islamic ethics are also relevant. Majid Fakhry [15] and George F. Hourani [16] have discussed a typology of major ethical theories in Islam. Their contributions are significant in providing a better understanding of the various approaches in Islamic ethics and to situate Ibn Hazm's ethics in a general framework of Islamic ethics. Both scholars also devote one chapter to the ethics of Ibn Hazm. Hourani "Reason and revelation in Ibn Hazm's ethical thought" approaches the subject from the viewpoint of modern philosophical ethics, whose main concern is to analyse issues like the meaning of ethical concepts and the source of our knowledge of them. Likewise, Majid Fakhry's brief discussion on Ibn Hazm's ethics mainly deals with ethical concepts from the viewpoint of the modern philosophical ethics.

In brief, though there is a significant body of literature on Ibn Hazm, not all aspects of his thought and legacy have been adequately studied. One such issue is Ibn Hazm's work on Islamic ethics.

4. IBN HAZM'S BRIEF PROFILE

Ibn Hazm's full name is Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad ibn Saʿīd ibn Ḥazm b. Ghalib b. Salih b. Khalaf b. Ma'dan b. Sufyan b. Yazid al-Farisi. He was born on 7th November 994 and died on 15th August 1064. The family of Ibn Hazm came from Cordoba itself. However, the origins of this family are obscure. One source informed us that he was born into a notable Muslim family, which claimed descent from Persia and converted to Islam. Apart from that no further information is known about his ancestor [17]. This source of information claims that the first member of the family who immigrated to al-Andalus was his great grandfather, Khalaf and Ibn Hazm was at least the fourth generation Muslim in al-Andalus while his female ancestors and his mother may have been Spanish [18]. However, other sources argue that Ibn Hazm's family was of the Iberian stock from Seville and his great-grand father was the first to convert to Islam from Christianity [19]. Ibn Hazm's father, Abu Umar Abu Ahmad, a learned man, held a high position under al-Manṣūr (r. 978-1002), and his successor, al-Muẓaffar (r. 1002-1008), a father and son who effectively ruled in the name of the caliph Hishām II. As a son of a high-ranking official, Ibn Hazm received a distinguished education in various branches of knowledge from various great scholars of the time. Among them was al-Muhaddith, Ibn al-Jassur (d. 1010); historian Ibn al-Faradi (d. 1013); the Maliki jurist Ibn Dahhun (d. 1039); the philologist Ibn ʿAbd al-Warith (d. 10th century) and Ibn al-Kattani (d. 1029), who taught him logic, philosophy and natural sciences [20].

Ibn Hazm was active in politics: an ardent supporter of the Umayyad dynasty in Cordova and held the office of vizier at least twice under Abdul Rahman III and Abdul Rahman V, and possibly a third time under Hisham al-Mu'tadd [21]. His political activities also led him to imprisonment at least three times, banishment and flight [22]. Ibn Hazm himself went to war against the Berbers where he was captured by the Berbers but was later released. During the last 30 years of his life, he kept himself out of public life and devoted his time entirely to the pursuit of knowledge. Ibn Hazm was born in the golden age of al-Andalus, a period of economic prosperity, social stability and rich intellectual environments [23]. However, the period of economic prosperity did not last long. Thus, Ibn Hazm lived on to witness the political upheavals of the eleventh century: A chaotic period full of rivalries, which led to an abrupt collapse of the Umayyads at Cordova and the emergence of the party kingdoms. Ibn Hazm's own childhood was damaged by the destruction of his family's palace

in the curse of bloody battles between the Arabs and the Berbers.

Despite the political instability, intellectual life continued to grow dynamically and the culture of learning continued to prevail in al-Andalus. In brief, Ibn Hazm experienced and witnessed both the magnificence of al-Andalus in the tenth century and its break up in the early eleventh century. With the death of the Grand Vizier al-Muzaffar in 1008, the Umayyad dynasty in Cordoba became involved in a long and bloody civil war resulting in the emergence of a large number of petty states, which replaced the centralized political authority in Cordoba. As an ardent Umayyad, Ibn Ḥazm continued to boldly support Umayyad claimants to the office of caliph, for which he was frequently imprisoned. Following the great political instability, by 1031, Ibn Ḥazm withdrew himself from politics and instead began to focus on writing. According to one of his sons, "he produced some 80,000 pages of writing, comprising about 400 works. Less than 40 of these works are still extant" [24].

Initially, Ibn Hazm was a follower of the Maliki School of Islamic law, which was dominant in al-Andalus. Then he followed the Shafi'i *School*. Eventually, around 1027-29, he followed the Zahiri School and became its devoted advocate [25]. The primary reason for his change from one school to another was probably his disappointment with the existing *madhhab* (School), which did not satisfy his intellectual curiosity. Maliki appeared to him to base its legal decisions on assumptions that could not withstand logical reasoning. The substance of Ibn Hazm's Zahiri attitude is his conviction that a literal understanding of the Qur'an and the authentic traditions provides the sole guiding criterion for arriving at juridical-theological decisions [26]. Thus, based on demonstrative reasoning/ analytical deduction; Ibn Hazm rejected analogical deduction (*qiyas)*, which applied by many schools of laws to juridical and theological questions.

5. IBN HAZM AND THE RELIGIOUS-INTELLECTUAL MILIEUS OF AL-ANDALUS

To fully appreciate Ibn Hazm's ideas, a brief review of the religious and intellectual milieus of his time is relevant. It is against this background that Ibn Hazm's works and ideas gain particular relevance. Ibn Hazm was privileged to live when learning flourished in al-Andalus. This undoubtedly provided a conducive environment for his intellectual preparations. He studied under the great scholars of that time who were varied widely in characters, interests and specializations.

The society of al-Andalus was comprised of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. The Muslims were of the Arab descent, converted Berbers and the local (Spanish) converts [27]. The two other major faiths were represented by Christianity and Judaism. Further, the Umayyads of Cordova also faced the political and religious threat from the neighbouring powers in North Africa in the forms of the Zirid (972-1142) and Hammadidds (1015). Both emirates in North Africa, were affiliated with the Shiah (Fatimid dynasty) in Egypt [28]. The dominant juridical school in al-Andalus was Maliki. However, that did not stop Ibn Hazm from challenging the Maliki doctrines. Because of his polemics, Ibn Hazm often became the target of Maliki jurists' criticism. This motivated Ibn Hazm to spend three years in studying jurisprudence to make himself ready for the debate vis-à-vis the Maliki scholars.

Theologically, the majority of the Muslims in al-Andalus were the follower of 'Ash'ari (an Islamic theological group that accepted restricted reasoning in theology). Another theological sect, which enjoyed some following was Mu'tazilah (The theological sect, which interprets the speculative dogmatic of Islam in terms of reason). Convinced by the Zahiri, approach, Ibn Hazm also adopted this approach on theology and thus, he repudiated scholastic theology, which was based on the analogical method as futile and destructive. For Ibn Hazm, the speculation of the theologians, whether Mu'tazilah, 'Ash'ari, Jahmi, on other theological questions such as the essense of God or the nature of moral responsibility, was for him entirely vain [29]. Ibn Hazm asserts that the human being must resign himself to the impossibility of investigating such mysteries and, in particular, the mystery of God's essence. Ibn Hazm was in polemic with almost every theological sect of Islam. Among the Islamic theological sects against whom Ibn Hazm wrote polemics were Shi'ah and its various sub-sects, such as Zaydi, Khawarij, Jabariyah [30].

Al-Andalus was a place of mingling between the Muslims and those of Christian and Judaic faiths. This led to interactions and polemics between Ibn Hazm and Christian and Judaic thinkers. His contact with people of different faiths seemed to

have influenced his interest to study Christian and Judaic teachings. Ibn Hazm was involved in polemics with almost all religious groups in al-Andalus. Apart from the dominant schools, Ibn Hazm was also involved in polemics even against juridical-theological schools, which had less following in al-Andalus, such as the Hanbali, Hanafi in jurisprudence and Jahm and Khawarij in theology.

As a Zahiri, Ibn Hazm holds the view that God is the source of all knowledge, the source of right and wrong. He asserts that God has not only created human beings by a sheer act of divine will, but has also completely predetermined his actions. Since God has created both good and evil, which depend entirely on the determination of His will, human beings (His creatures) have been robbed of the ability to explore them through his own human capacity; he can only derive knowledge of them from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Any attempt at a rational justification of God's way, His prescriptions or prohibitions, should be abandoned as entirely futile [31].

Ibn Hazm reiterates the same position in his treatise on ethics when he writes:

> God is the Creator of mankind and the whole universe and thus He knows best what is good and what is evil for man. It is God alone who lays down the law about *halal* and *haram*, about what is true and false, what is right and wrong [32].

In cases, where there are no explanations in the texts he urges us not to indulge ourselves in discussing them. For example, while discussing the attributes of God, he affirms that it is not possible to attribute anything (to God) about which He does not inform us [33]. Here again Ibn Hazm affirms his conviction that in religious matters, truth is only what is explicitly stated either by God Himself, or by the Prophet in statement attributed to God, or what the consensus of the rightly-guided companions recognizes as true. Everything that goes beyond this is wrong [34]. Ibn Hazm does not totally reject the role of reason, but reason should only be a means to understand revelation and cannot be used as a means of discovering truth independently. In fact, reason still occupies an important place in Ibn Hazm's system of thought. He believes that the holy texts should be understood on the basis of Arabic grammar, lexicography and linguistic intuition. On the surface, Ibn Hazm's Zahiri thought seems to be simplistic, but it does involve an intense use of reason as well. This is so because a proper understanding of the texts requires a thorough mastery of language that will permit an analysis of the texts with respect to context, internal and terminal vocalizations, subject, object, adverbial clauses, pattern system and semantic value of words [35]. Goldziher summarizes Ibn Hazm's method of the textual interpretation as follows:

> Ibn Hazm's principle that the words used in the legal text must be interpreted strictly according to their *lexical defined meaning*. Whoever makes any change in the established sense of the words used in the language without a scriptural text or without the agreement of all legal authorities justifying this, has renounced the rules of sensible and humble men and has entered the company of those with whom one cannot speak [36].

Ibn Hazm expressed his opinion about the function of reason in his scheme of knowledge as follows:

> The intellect does not make anything forbidden or obligatory; it is one of the accidents found in the soul; it is impossible for accidents to decide on things or legislate. Therefore the intellect is only the knowledge of things as they are with respect to their qualities and quantities, no more, no less [37].

Thus, according to Ibn Hazm intellect or reason does not decide ethical judgment because it is already legislated in the holy texts. The role of reason is limited to understanding the religious rules.

As for the question of knowledge, Ibn Hazm upholds the view that reason has a crucial role in distinguishing true knowledge from mere opinions or assumptions, since true knowledge should be ascertained by a logical proof. In taking this view, he refutes those who claim that knowledge emanates from inspiration, history and imitation. He asserts that none of these means can lead to a sound knowledge. Inspiration cannot be ascertained by a logical proof or be accepted as a miracle; it is mere pretension which anyone could claim. Imitation, which is the belief in something on the basis of someone's judgment, is equally faulty because one might imitate a person who is wrong. Knowledge transmitted through history should

also be thoroughly examined to ascertain the truth [38].

While acknowledging the limited role of reason, Ibn Hazm fiercely attacked the validity of the rationalist ethical approach as adopted by the Mu'tazilah, clearly indicating the limits of human reason as follows:

> The intellect only distinguishes between the qualities of existing things, and informs him who seeks its guidance …But whoever claims that the intellect makes lawful or forbids or that intellect provides obliging causes for the existence of all acts-laws or others-manifested by God the exalted Creator in this world, is in the same condition as he who denies the need for the intellect altogether [39].

As regard predestination, Ibn Hazm disagrees with the Jabariah, which affirms that human beings have no freedom of will. On the contrary, he argues that a human being is endowed with an ability (to determine his action), an ability comes not from a creature but from a Creator. Though God gives the power of determination, the human being is responsible and justly burdened (*taklif*) with obligations to obey commands and prohibitions, so long as prior to that action he has sound mind (*al-sahih al-jawarih*) [40].

Ibn Hazm opposes certain uses of reason by most of schools of law to deduce legal judgments from texts of scripture. One of these forms of deduction is known as *qiyas*. He argues that the divine laws as contained in the holy texts embody clear commandments about obligatory and prohibited things. Whatever God does not command us to do, or does not forbid us from doing it, it is considered permissible (*mubah*). Since everything is clear in the holy text, Ibn Hazm insists that there is no relevance of an analogical reasoning to deduce religious rules from the text [41]. Ibn Hazm argues that God has clearly stated in the Qur'an as follows:

> God brought you out of your mother's wombs devoid of all knowledge, and gave you ears and eyes and hearts, so that you may give thanks (Qur'an 16:78).
>
> Thus have We sent forth to you an apostle of your own who will recite to you Our revelations and purify you of sin, who will instruct you in the Book and in wisdom and teach you of which you have no knowledge (Qur'an 2:151).

Ibn Hazm argues that these verses indicate that God through the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. sent the Qur'an to humanity, which contains everything necessary for the perfection of religion and proper guidance. Ibn Hazm argues that the above verses also affirm that there is no knowledge in religion, except what God teaches us through the Qur'an and his messengers. Hence, Ibn Hazm rejects *qiyas* as a source of knowledge since it does not come from God [42].

Ibn Hazm's intellectual accomplishments cover an impressive array of disciplines, jurisprudence, logic, history, ethics, comparative religion, theology, linguistics, Qur'an, hadith and the psychology of love [43]. According to Abu Laylah:

> Ibn Hazm left to us, to the Muslim world and to the whole world of scholarship, a camel-load of books, amounting to an estimated four hundred volumes, a total of about eighty thousand pages. This is despite the fact that he was plagued by various illnesses, was actively engaged in politics, suffered threat of imprisonment, exile and separation from his family, nor did he live to a great old age. He was just over seventy when he died. Nearly all his books were written in his own hand [44].

However, one area, which has not received fuller attention, is Ibn Hazm's work on Islamic ethics, which is the focus of the next section of this paper.

6. IBN HAZM'S WORKS ON ISLAMIC ETHICS

Given Ibn Hazm's wide array of expertise in various disciplines, not all of his works have been proportionately studied. Among the topics, which have received considerable attention are his interreligious polemics, contribution to theology and law, theory of language and psychology of love. However, comparatively, Ibn Hazm's work on Islamic ethics has not attracted enough scholarly attention. A.R. Nykl has studied Ibn Hazm's MS titled *Al-Akhlaq was-siyar: Mudawat al-Nufus.* This work is probably similar to a work published in Cairo in 1908, edited by Ahmad 'Umar al-Mahmasani, *Al-Akhlaq wa-al-siyar fi mudawat al-nufus* though there are some differences in the texts and omissions of some pages. This title has been translated and well-

commented by the Spanish scholar Miguel Asian Palacios [45]. Thus, this section will highlight the main features of Ibn Hazm's views on Islamic ethics.

Ibn Hazm's specific work on Islamic ethics is mainly covered in *Al-Akhlaq wa-al-Siyar.* Ibn Hazm himself refers to this work as book not essay [46]. There is no specific date for its writing given in this book. Ibn Hazm's purpose in writing this book is to "bring benefit to others rather than to reap any reward for himself …His wish is to help his fellows to correct their corrupt morality and to heal the sickness of their souls" [47].. In Abu Laylah's view, the book was probably

> written towards the end of his(Ibn Hazm's) life, and gathers together the accumulated wisdom of this eventful life…In this book, Ibn Hazm also describes the decay and corruption of contemporary morality, and offers remedy based on psychology and ethics…also describes "the sickness of souls and the sad state of morality" and offer remedies …Ibn Hazm''s book *On Morality* is a call for reform, and correction, both in the individual and in society as a whole [48].

The title of Ibn Hazm's work *al-Akhlaq wa-al-Siyar* shows that its subject is practical morality instead of philosophical discourse on Islamic ethics. Thus, the author devotes his focus on virtues and vices. Since the main focus is to provide a guide for practical morality, Ibn Hazm in this book does not define morality "because his aim was not to write an academic treatise on morality but rather to give the fruits of his long experience and years of observation, conversation and reading" [49].

The structure and arrangement of this book are done by Ibn Hazm himself. It does not follow the standard format of any of the collectors of moral sayings before him. Ibn Hazm also does not classify the content according to academic criteria. According to Abu Laylah "He had no intention of providing an academic discussion and analysis of the nature of morality …His intention was to share with others his own experience and ideas, the moral principles which he had developed, and to encourage others to profit from them. [50]"

The book comprises twelve sections, as follows:

1. The treatment to be given to souls, and the reform of vicious characters.
2. The mind and repose.
3. Knowledge.
4. Morals and behavior.
5. Friends, close friends and the exchange of advice.
6. The different kinds of love.
7. The different kinds of physical beauty.
8. Practical morality.
9. The treatment of corrupt characters.
10. Curious particularities of the characteristics of the soul.
11. A man's desire to know, what you should tell him and not tell him, and how to be praised and renowned.
12. The way to attend study sessions.

The major sources Ibn Hazm used in writing this book was the Qur'an, Sunnah, the literature of the Muslim ascetics (Zuhhad), Greek philosophers, Persian sources and the Old and New Testaments [51]. Apart from references to the Qur'an and Sunnah, Ibn Hazm also cites the famous Muslim wise-men (hukama') such as 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and Hassan al-Basri. At the same time, Ibn Hazm is broadminded in recognizing that morality is to be derived not only from Islam but also from other religions, Prophets or wise men, regardless of their religions. Thus, in this book, Ibn Hazm also borrows from Greek philosophy in defining philosophical terms such as courage and justice. On some occasions, Ibn Hazm quotes moral sayings from the Bible. For example, he cites Prophet Isa's saying: "A prophet is not without honour save in his own country" [52]. To fully benefit from this book, it may be useful to capture some of the main maxims and ethical codes as presented by Ibn Hazm.

Ibn Hazm emphasizes the true meaning of life and how all worldly things are of lesser value in comparison to the morality. He writes:

> If you look deeply into the worldly matters you will become melancholy and will end by reflecting upon the ephemeral nature of everything here below, and the fact that truth lies only in striving for the hereafter [53].

In a section dealing with knowledge, Ibn Hazm reminds those endowed with knowledge to promote it for greater good:

> A man who is a miser with his knowledge is worse than a man who is a miser with his money, for the money-miser is afraid of using up what he possesses but the knowledge-miser is being mean with something which

> does not get used up and is not lost when it is given away [54].

Ibn Hazm also correctly states that "the most noble branches of knowledge are those which bring you close to the Creator and help you to be pleasing to Him" [55].

Ibn Hazm also provides very useful advice concerning friendship and the etiqutte of giving advice: "Anyone who criticizes you cares about your friendship. Anyone who makes light of your faults cares nothing about you" [56].

He cautions us "Do not ask of your friend more than you yourself are not prepared to give. To ask for more is to abuse his friendship" [57].

Ibn Hazm offers practical guide in giving advice to others as follows:

> When you give advice, find a private place and speak gently…If you phrase your advice bluntly, you will annoy and discourage. "Speak to him courteously,"…if you are advising someone and you insist on seeing your advice taken, you are doing wrong since you could be mistaken [58].

Ibn Hazm's section on the treatment of corrupt characters contains many useful lessons too. He rightly observes:

> A man who seeks virtues is like the angels; whereas a man who seeks vices resembles Satan. Man has two sides to his nature; he has the capacity for sin and also for obedience to God [59].

Despite having belief in divine destiny, Ibn Hazm also accepts that virtues can be taught and acquired through practice. A human being has the ability to diagnose the sickness of his soul and seek a remedy. In *Tawq al-hamamah*, Ibn Hazm writes that morality is partly inborn and partly acquired. He maintains this position even after his adoption of the Zahiri *madhhab.* In this regards, Ibn Hazm writes:

> If you study the laws that regulate human nature and the development of different character according to the mixture of elements rooted in their souls, you will surely become convinced that you have no merit from your own virtues, they are only gifts from the Almighty, which, if, He granted them to another, would have made him just like you … for even the most admirable characters can be altered by illness, poverty, fear, anger or decrepitude of old age [60].

As regards a trait of courage Ibn Hazm states that "If you are proud of your courage, remember those who are more valiant than you. Then examine what you do with your courage that God has granted you" [61].

The final part, Section 12 also provides useful advice on the etiquette of learning and interaction during the study session. Ibn Hazm reminds those who want to attend a study- session to "behave only like someone who wishes to increase his knowledge and win greater recompense from God. Do not behave like someone who is content with what he has, who is looking for some fault to criticise" [62].

Further, Ibn Hazm also offers advice concerning the etiquette of asking question during a study-session:

> Ask a questions which someone would ask who wished to learn …What characterizes the questions asked by someone who wishes to learn is that he only asks about the points he does not know, not those he does know. To ask what one already knows is a proof of ineptitude and a weak spirit. It is only palaver and a useless waste of time for oneself and for others. ..If the person you are asking replies satisfactorily, stop questioning. If his reply is not satisfactory or if you do not understand it say to him, "I do not understand", and ask him to elaborate. If he does not explain himself more clearly …keep silent, otherwise you will only bring upon yourself trouble and dislike, without obtaining the desired enlightenment [63].

Indeed, there are many other words of wisdom from Ibn Hazm's *Akhlaq*, which are worth-reading. They offer useful advice on various aspects of practical morality and may be useful in the treatment of our soul and corrupt character.

7. CONCLUSION

Ibn Hazm's views on ethics reject the use of analogical reasoning as a source of religious truth and denial of inspiration (*Ilham)* as a legitimate means of the ethical knowledge. Ibn Hazm strongly believes in the autonomy of God as the sole source of value judgment, against the rationalist approach of the Mu'tazilah. The second principle is that reason determines

ethical values. In fact, this aspect of Ibn Hazm's thought is parallel with al-Ghazali and other mainstream of the Sunni law and theology as opposed to the Mu'tazilah. Ibn Hazm upholds the view that the source of ethical judgment is God, not human beings. By adopting this stance, Ibn Hazm denounces the Mu'tazilah central position that ethical knowledge can be achieved by the independent use of reason before and without the aid of revelation. Although Ibn Hazm's Zahiri doctrine assumes a literal understanding of the holy texts, he does recognize that one has to rely on rational faculty in the textual analysis. Finally, Ibn Hazm's *Akhlaq* contains a lot of words of wisdom on various aspects of practical morality. Nevertheless, this book is not Ibn Hazm's systematic treatise on Islamic ethics. Nykl has rightly pointed out that it is rather "a collection of observations which he had jotted down over the long years as he was pondering the main problem. The approach is autobiographical and personal. Ibn Hazm presents himself as a sincere, earnest seeker after truth, uncompromising and rigid" [64].

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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