

Review Article

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Ethics of Communication in the Philosophy of Muhammad Al-Ghazali

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ABSTRACT

This article explores Al-Ghazali's views on the ethics of communication. The scholar calls for prudence, politeness, respectfulness, carefulness, and tolerance in conversation, which contribute to mutual understanding, friendship, peace, and tranquility among people.

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Introduction

Abuhamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1059-1111) was one of the outstanding Islamic philosophers who had a rich spiritual heritage. He is the author of around 100 books and writings, spanning theology, philosophy, logic, Sufism and ethics. The scientist was also interested in the ethics of communication [1].

Al-Ghazali described language and speech as “priceless blessings”, and the tasks of each person is to appreciate and be thankful to God, and criticizes those who do not recognize it. “He (Allah) created human. He taught him eloquent speech” (Holy Quran, 55: 3-4).

Muhammad al-Ghazali considers short, meaningful speech to be a source of comfort. In his opinion, an honorable person is always careful in communication, so as not to pronounce a bad word and not get into an unpleasant situation. The tongue should be accustomed to speaking kindly, so it brings love to the heart. God has commanded the following: “... tell My servants to speak good words...”. (Holy Quran, 17:53).

Al-Ghazali emphasizes that the language should be used only for kind purposes, and the content and style of speech should be logical. The holy book says: “Most secret conversations hold no good, except those that assist charity, kindness, or peace among people. Those who do these deeds seeking Allah's pleasure will be granted a great reward” (Holy Quran, 4: 114).

Al-Ghazali indicates that every person should first think. Is there a reason to start talking? If there is such a need, then one can speak. In this case, it is better to be silent and respectful. Silence as a human duty and means of education; that is, silence regulates one's thoughts and movements. Silence is self-control. The ancients of the Persian-Tajik people called silence “the beauty of human character, gloriousness, fortress, essential need”. Silence is health,

and verbosity is harmful. Talkativeness, even if it is sincere, weakens the heart; useless speech shows ignorance. A person should remain silent for a long time, as it calms the heart and helps to do good deeds. Silence is the most virtuous action, and whoever remains silent will be blessed. An honest person can organize his actions and keep himself safe. Silence should be for a long time, so that the devil leaves the human's soul, and it helps to do beneficial things.

Al-Ghazali inform, that a cold word (evil-speaking) is the most bitter thing in the world. The tongue is the only thing on earth that deserves a long prison sentence, because all evils come from it. The tragedies of the tongue are many, and it is difficult to keep oneself from it; on that account, silence is a better action. Therefore, a person should not speak except in necessity.

Al-Ghazali points out that kindness, humility, and generosity originate from a pure heart. He considers sweet speech a means of putting down the fire of conflict, antagonism, and hate. Kind speech can decrease the flames of an enmity's aggression and stop spreading anger and its sparks. “...respond with that which is better, and [you will see] that he between whom you and him were enemies, it will be as if he had become a close friend” (Holy Quran, 41:34). Therefore, a person should greet people with a smile and a gentle tone. A person may win people's hearts not with wealth, but with openness and kind words. But, each person should speak according to his position, that is, to an intellectual, a merchant, or a farmer, in a manner that suits his mood [4].

Al-Ghazali notes that man's lips should always be sealed; otherwise, untimely speaking is “as stupid as that”. A scientist categorically requires that a person not join a conversation that does not relate to him, because it creates a negative environment for him; he should not start a dialogue until he finds a suitable word. In a dialogue, a person should strive for mutual understanding and compromise. Soft-spoken and a smile are the key to harmony, pacification (except in situations that lead to evil), and a pleasant impression [5].

A polite person should be tolerant of the shameless and should not try to improve his behavior. Not every immodest person should be called to reform, because his machinations and gossip can hurt others. Therefore, Al-Ghazali advises being humble for self-preservation. That is, a person should relate kindly to the inhumanity; through this way, be able to stop evil. "God does not like the loud pronouncing of evil, except by one who has been wronged..." (Holy Quran, 4:148).

However, making peace with the ignorant does not mean supporting his actions; there is a big difference between these two situations. First, humility is a method of preventing provocation, so that anger does not arise and the opponent does not become greedy for revenge. Second, tolerance of evil arises from humility and modesty [6].

According to the scientist, humble communication is a sign of reasonableness purity and clean heart, and its observers are the God's most faithful and deserving of everlasting life. A Hadith states: "Those who talk warmly, give charity and pray at night time, shall go to Paradise".

Al-Ghazali emphasizes that most people who speak often repeat their ideology and ignorance, assuming it is not known to the audience. An uncontrollable tongue is "a devil's toy". Chatter and interrupting someone's talk is a reason for a person's dishonor. If a person does not control his or her speech, his or her mouth will be a source of impurity (or will speak garbage), and the person's heart will become blackened.

Muhammad (s) said: "If the heart is not clean, the faith of the slave is not complete. If the heart is pure, then faith is also pure and smooth".

The scientist brings to mind the words of God, which contribute to the strengthening of a union of people and bring the result: "And say to My slaves (believers of Islam) that they should (only) say those words that are the best. (Because) Shaitan (Satan) verily, sows' disagreements among them. Surely, Shaitan (Satan) is to man a really enemy!" (Quran, 17: 53).

Al-Ghazali advises that in conversation, humor and satire should be used in an allowable way, which is a good habit. If person sense humor in the first case, should respond in the second case. However, unsuitable humor can cause pain. Joking is forbidden, but sometimes it is acceptable, but should not become a habit. Too much humor can cause more laughter, and it can darken the heart and take away a person's dignity and honor. Humor can cause anger.

Mocking and laughing at someone's words and actions (by repeating their tone of voice and mannerisms) is a bad habit. Putting down the honor of others is disrespectful and it can lead to conflict.

Al-Ghazali condemns those who argue with everyone with enthusiasm, never get tired of gossip, and interfere in people's affairs with their tongues, causing harm: the tongue of this group of people is fast and has no limits in talk; they strive to speak egotistic to enjoy their own self-praise; if they present themselves as orators and argue irrational on matters of religion, politics, science, and literature, all these fronts will weaken; perhaps, the debate was the cause of antagonism and fall of civilization, which brought serious disaster to the masses of the people; Those who do not compromise in solving problems and engage in disputes

are dishonorable. The hadith states: «Don't debate! Many have died because of this».

Al-Ghazali was against those who charm themselves with curiosity, gossip about others and enjoy their wealth. A scientist says, slander wins over tongues and is a great evil. Gossip is when you talk about someone's shortcomings and do not like it, but you also talk about yourself. Bad feeling, suspicion it is, believing something that you have not seen or heard. Provocation as motivation to conflict, and the slanderer is answerable for sin, sorrow, crime, and slandering is worse than adultery. Vanity nonsense-speaking increases sin. This is the secret of ignorance and the weakness of the tongue, like those that destroy the seed and the future harvest.

Al-Ghazali determines barbarity, rudeness, cruelty, and harshness to be the result of shamelessness, and criticizes those who possess this quality. The scholar indicate that these people are not ashamed of their own falsity and honorable qualities cannot inspire them to honesty; whenever they find an opportunity, and attack into evil deeds, they cry out constantly with anger, and it is impossible to calm them down, because anger has created much evil within them; for this reason, human is free from the stimulation of anger, and all forms of disagreement, whether true or false, are forbidden.

Al-Ghazali also strongly criticized useless acts and the waste of time and effort for them. People are created for essential tasks of life. Life is unique and passes quickly. No one should avoid what he is obligated to do.

Conclusion

Thus, Al-Ghazali calls on people to be polite and respectful when interacting with others, restraining anger, avoiding useless and malicious speech, and not using the tongue to harm others. The philosopher challenges everyone to peace, humanity, beneficence, gentleness, virtue, honesty, sincerity and appreciate life. The scholar strongly criticizes mindless talk, gossip, slander, false statements, etc., considering them sins and crimes.

Muhammad Ghazali's view on the ethics of communication has theoretical and practical importance. He confirms his scientific analyses with verses from the Holy Quran and hadiths. The ethical ideas of Al-Ghazali are one of the pearls of the East, which reflect the spiritual values of mankind.

Indeed, freedom of speech is a human right. Psychologically and ethically, a person needs communication, which contributes to the development of his morality. Therefore, a person must know and observe an ethics of communication. In fact, all good and evil originate from speech. Words have the property of a miracle; they can turn a friend into an enemy, or vice versa. Therefore, everyone should communicate with each other with respect, talent, and intelligence to achieve friendship.

In conversation, respect for the partner is primary; people's thoughts, interests, and time should be valued. In particular, special respect and honour should be shown to the elderly and children. A person should speak with an open face, eloquent, expressive, clear, calmly, energetically, thinking first, then start talk, should not give in to emotions, and to the point, should not go over the scope of the conversation, do not criticize the speaker in front of others for unasked speech, should do not reject speaker's opinion out of love or hate, should listen patiently to the opinion of his or her companion and should not interrupt him or her, and at the end of the conversation, express gratitude to the listeners for a pleasant conversation.

Life consists of relationships between people. Communication reflects a person's morality. Observance of the ethics of conversation is inevitable for every person. Enjoyable, pleasant talk is the key to mutual understanding. Therefore, communication should be sincere and respectful to achieve solidarity and friendship.

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