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Certainty and Ibn Ḥazm's Idea of Religion

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Abstrac

The main purpose of this paper is to reconstruct and thus critically reevaluate Ibn Ḥazm (Abū Muḥammad 'Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥazm 994-1064AD)'s Islamic thought. Ibn Ḥazm's idea of faith is that of certainty. The basic assumption of certainty led Ibn Ḥazm to advocate a single interpretation of faith dismissing any possibility of reevaluating and revisiting the faith. Plurality of interpretation of the faith was dismissed as untrue and un-Islamic. This led Ibn Ḥazm to reject reason or reasoning, analogy, and ijtihād (individual opinion). Ibn Ḥazm had also to reject the use of abrogation and the occasion of revelation as potential methods for revisiting and interpreting the faith. Ibn Ḥazm's project raises a fundamental challenge, namely, whether it is possible to reconstruct an idea of faith that is based on the need for certainty and yet endorses the plurality of views in Islam and is also reasonable. Challenging the fundamentalists' narrative should start with that.

Keywords: Ibn Ḥazm, Certainty, Faith, IslamicThought, Fundamentalism.

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ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إعادة قراءة فكر ابن حزم وذلك باستخدام منهج التفكيك وإعادة البناء. إن فكرة الايمان الأساسية لدى ابن حزم مرتبطة ومرادفة لمفهوم اليقين. بناءً على هذا الافتراض الأساسي طوّر ابن حزم مفهوماً احادياً انتقائياً لفكرة الدين ترفض احتمالية التعدد في المفاهيم والاساليب في فهم الدين والممارسة الدينية. ان تعددية الفهم بالنسبة إلى ابن حزم مرادفة للشك وغياب اليقين وغير إسلامية. وقد دفع هذا الفهم ابن حزم لإنكار المنطق والقياس، وبالتالي التفكير العقلاني، في فهم الدين وتحييد دور الاجتهاد. كما أدى ذلك إلى رفض استخدام النسخ في القرآن أو مناسبة النزول كمداخل مهمة في إعادة قراءة مفهوم الايمان والدين نفسه. إن مشروع ابن حزم يطرح تحدياً فكرياً وهو هل يمكن إعادة قراءة وبناء المشروع الديني القائم على اليقين والقطعية، وفي الوقت ذاته السماح لتعددية المفاهيم المرتبطة بالدين؟ إن طرح فهم بديل للأصولية الدينية يبدأ بالإجابة عن هذا السؤال.

الكلمات الدالة: ابن حزم؛ اليقينيّة؛ الايمان؛ الفكر الإسلامي؛ الاصولية.

Introduction

Our interest in Ibn Ḥazm (Abū Muḥammad ʻAlī ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥazm)'s thought is part of a broader and more general concern in revisiting Islamic thought. It is partly an attempt to understand the theological and intellectual foundations of what has become known as Islamic fundamentalism. It is therefore a contribution to the existing debate between moderate Islamism and that of radical Islamism. Ultimately, however, the purpose is to offer a more comprehensive and critical understanding of Islamic thought in general.

Despite Ibn Ḥazm's rejection of the idea of justification and reasoning in Islamic religion, his intellectual project (theology and jurisprudence) is a work with a single theme. The entirety of Ibn Ḥazm's intellectual works and the building blocks of all its diverse parts fall into a single theme of defining religion as certainty of faith. That assumption, although not unreasonable on its own, led Ibn Ḥazm to advocate one single interpretation of faith, denying any possibility of revisiting either Islamic religion or any of its basic principles or assumptions.

(1) His underlying assumption was that the single true faith, namely Islam, was only compatible with the idea of certainty (absolute truth) which itself would only have meaning if there were only one single view and interpretation of that faith. A pluralistic view of faith is not only a source of discord and disunity among Muslims, but also a form of speculation reflecting a lack of faith. It is a faith of dichotomy and certainty. However, to achieve that certainty and dichotomy, Ibn Ḥazm had to abandon reason and reasoning and remove the idea of logic from the meaning of religion.

There is no doubt that Ibn Ḥazm's appeal to Islamic fundamentalism lies in his notion of conviction based on certainty of faith and the singular interpretation of it. According to Ibn Ḥazm, it is a world free of doubt and worry. Such a simplistic view of faith was to be constructed not only by sacrificing logic and reasoning but also by denying the possibility of placing and revisiting sharīʻa in the context of a broader Islamic ethical framework. For

(1) According to Miftah, for example, the refusal of Ibn Ḥazm on qiyās (deductive analogy of discovery) is mainly caused by the results obtained with the legal provisions of the qiyās still doubt the truth and has an opportunity for the creation of legal uncertainty. See Miftah 2014.

Ibn Ḥazm, this could only be the work of non-believers (see Section 5). History, context, and the possibility of using occasions of revelation for revisiting the faith were no better than heresy.

This article is constructed with one purpose in mind, namely, to offer a general view of Ibn Ḥazm's religious world. Section 1 explores Ibn Ḥazm's idea of knowledge and its relation to his idea of faith and certainty. Sections 2, 3, and 4 examine the implications of that notion of certainty for major juristic concepts, namely consensus, abrogation, justification, and reasoning. Section 5 explores Ibn Ḥazm's view of the relation between sharī'a and ethics and how that notion prevented the possibility of revisiting the Islamic faith. A summary of the conclusions is offered at the end.

1. Knowledge, certainty, and faith

Ibn Ḥazm is certainly not ignorant of logic. He wrote Al-Taqrīb li Ḥadd al-Manṭiq (Illustrating Logic), and devoted a large chapter to the idea of logic in his most important work on jurisprudence, namely Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣul al-Aḥkām (Perfection of the Fundamentals of Rulings). Yet Ibn Ḥazm is hardly a rational theologian. There is a certain irony which any serious reader of Ibn Ḥazm would notice, namely Ibn Ḥazm's insistence on using logic but his equal determination to reject the notion of reason and reasoning in explaining and interpreting the Islamic faith. How can such irony, some would suggest inconsistency,(1) be explained? But before venturing on that enterprise, we will restrict ourselves initially to exploring those areas and occasions Ibn Ḥazm was happy to apply logical analysis.

One key concept in Ibn Ḥazm's thought is that of certainty. The very idea of faith is indeed inseparable from the idea of faith. In a statement which is general and sweeping, Ibn Ḥazm asserts that "the purpose and aim of all human beings is to expect worry, and to live a life without worry!"(2) One major source of worry and confusion is not knowing.[3] Knowledge, therefore, is the way to expel worry. That knowledge which ensures certainty (thereby expelling worry and confusion) is that which brings one closer to God. Ibn Ḥazm called that knowledge the "secret treasure."(4) One has always to guard against uncertainty, which for him is the same as confusion—a disturbed and worried state of

(1) Ṭarābīshī 2010.
(2) Ibn Ḥazm 1913: 3.
(3) Ibn Ḥazm 1913: 8.
(4) Ibn Ḥazm 1913: 4.

mind.(1) According to Ibn Ḥazm, what, distinguishes man from animals is "his capacity for virtue and submission to God."(2) Indeed, his world revolves around that certainty of God and a moral responsibility based on that conviction. But Ibn Ḥazm also suggests that the idea of God is logically induced and therefore that the very idea of God is a logical idea and he was happy to demonstrate his argument.

Ibn Ḥazm's idea of knowledge is intuitive and innate in nature. Knowledge, he repeatedly emphasizes, is intuitive in man and an essential part of being through which one has the capacity to differentiate between things, a quality associated with the "early mind."(3) The other source of knowledge is that of the senses mediated through the mind, such as being able to tell that fire is hot and ice is cold.(4) In other words, knowledge is common sense. However, this type of knowledge requires no further evidence or proof; it is self-evidently true.(5) Thus God's existence as eternal creator of the universe and the truth of prophethood and that of the Prophet Muḥammad's mission are self-evidently true.(6) Although Ibn Ḥazm acknowledges in theory the existence of truth based on inductive reasoning as a separate track to that of the "self-evidently true,"(7) he in fact makes findings based on this conditional on the first method (intuitively based knowledge which requires no further proof).(8) Thus, inductive reasoning is at best an evidentiary method to illustrate common sense and/or a small footnote to what is a priori defined as truth. For Ibn Ḥazm, the sequence of the past or what he termed the "chain of events"(9) testifies to the existence of God and Muḥammad's being His messenger. Intuition and inductive reasoning become one and the same. Illustrating further his idea of inductive reasoning as proof, Ibn Ḥazm explains that "in existence there is only creator, essence, and manifestation. The one who is eternal and lasting is neither essence nor manifestation. Conclusion: Only God the Majestic, the creator, is

(1) Ibn Ḥazm 1913: 23.
(2) Ibn Ḥazm 1913: 5.
(3) Ibn Ḥazm 2003: 145.
(4) Ibn Ḥazm 2003: 145-146.
(5) Ibn Ḥazm 2003: 146.
(6) Ibn Ḥazm 2003: 147.
(7) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 65.
(8) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 65.
(9) Ibn Ḥazm 2010, I: 26.

eternal and lasting."[1] Inductive reasoning adds little to a priori definitions of truth and fact.

By linking induction to intuition and the senses, Ibn Ḥazm has prevented any possibility of falsification for a priori-held beliefs presented as facts. This notion allowed him to dismiss and attack any attempt to question his facts as being by definition false and even the product of madness.[2] Ultimately, only inductive reasoning which reinforces a priori-held ideas presented as facts could be allowed and commended.[3] Debate and reasoning which might undermine such facts or lead to a questioning of their validity is dismissed as "bad debate," which was condemned.[4]

The key word which captures Ibn Ḥazm's intellectual project is that of "certainty." Uncertainty is an expression of lack of faith. Faith is certainty, absolute, and final. His intellectual effort was to guard against any hint of doubt (intellectual or methodological). His ad hoc and selective attitude toward reason and reasoning is a product of genuine concern that allowing an open-ended process of reasoning would make it impossible to establish facts, any fact.[5]

Ibn Ḥazm defines the very idea of the Islamic faith as "declaring and witnessing that there is no God but Allāh and that Muḥammad is His Messenger. The declaration resonates in the heart, absolute and sincere, with no trace of doubt in it and it must be with no trace of doubt."[6] Faith and uncertainty are the antithesis of each other. Ibn Ḥazm's most common appeal to God is that of guarding against uncertainty and doubt.[7] Uncertainty and doubt are expressions of a lack and absence of faith. People of no faith, according to Ibn Ḥazm, are those who are uncertain and doubtful, not only about God and His Prophet but also about His teachings.[8]

Having established, or rather asserted, the truth about God and His Prophet, Ibn Ḥazm simply utilizes inductive reasoning to reconstruct his idea of Islamic faith. Al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth are both evidence and an explanation of faith, taken literally and absolutely. From the premise that God is absolute and certain,

(1) Ibn Ḥazm 2003: 126.
(2) See, Ibn Ḥazm 2003: 147.; Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 7.
(3) *Al-Iḥkām*, I: 20.
(4) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 15.
(5) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 57-65.
(6) Ibn Ḥazm 2010, I: 22.
(7) See, Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 9.; Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 484.
(8) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 8.

which is not an unreasonable assumption, Ibn Ḥazm moved to the assertion that both al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth are also absolute, final, and certain, thus preventing the possibility of a plurality of interpretations of faith. Ibn Ḥazm seemed completely convinced that there was only one possible interpretation of faith, that based on a literal interpretation,(1) and that any attempt to allow for a plurality of interpretations would dilute the certainty of faith itself, creating doubt and uncertainty and leading ultimately to the disappearance of faith. Plurality of interpretation would allow, Ibn Ḥazm feared, formation of an alternative faith to that of God's.(2)

Thus it can be argued that Ibn Ḥazm's strategy for ensuring certainty of faith was to present a single narrative of faith (idea and method) as being one and singular. By selecting a literal interpretation of faith (al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth), Ibn Ḥazm was convinced that no counter-narrative to his idea of faith was possible. Integrating ḥadīth into the idea of faith, Ibn Ḥazm was able to present his idea as being comprehensive and holistic. Being complete and God-revealed, Islamic faith in its totality could not be inconsistent or contradictory. Contradiction between verses of al-Qur'ān or those of ḥadīth and al-Qur'ān could only be apparent and not real. Human effort is not called for to add or to revisit the faith but rather to point out and identify relevant verses and/or ḥadīth in reference to any issue of faith. Any attempt to revisit the faith amounts to proposing an alternative faith to the one and only true faith. A perfect painting can only be admired and appreciated, not tampered with. Revisiting faith mounted to tampering and distorting an already perfect faith. Revisiting faith, according to Ibn Ḥazm, amounted to setting oneself up as equal to God in is revealed faith.

Having asserted the true, perfect, and comprehensive nature of the Islamic faith which needed to be followed to the letter and interpreted literally, Ibn Ḥazm used this assertion to revisit major Islamic ideas, including consensus, abrogation, analogy, and public interest. The result was simply to empty such ideas of meaning, making it extremely hard to revisit the Islamic faith using such ideas as elements of such a framework or even as points of reference. Narrowing the idea of faith, which for Ibn Ḥazm amounted to preservation of faith, was the most obvious result of this effort.

(1) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 276.
(2) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 608.

2. Faith and consensus

Ibn Ḥazm's idea of consensus is inseparable from his general doctrine, namely that the only acceptable sources of the Islamic religion are al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth. Consensus in that sense is not an independent source of defining and authenticating the Islamic faith, but rather derives its validity and proof from al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth. This is also true of the idea of ijtihād (opinion), which has no validity independent of being rooted in Quranic verse and/or ḥadīth. The idea of independent judgment does not exist, meaning it is a false doctrine if not verified and supported by a clear reference to al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth.

This apparently simple and clear-cut doctrine allowed Ibn Ḥazm to revisit the idea of consensus, as well as to explain the reasons behind the diversity and differences which characterized most of Islamic history. Therefore, Islamic unity, that most highly-prized of all ideas for Ibn Ḥazm, could only be enforced by following the true path of al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth.

Questioning the authenticity of ḥadīth attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad seemed to praise diversity of opinion among the Islamic community.(1) Ibn Ḥazm commented that if this were true, which it was not, then disagreement would be praised as mercy whereas agreement would be condemned as damnation.(2) He noted "there, only be agreement or disagreement, mercy or damnation, there is no other way!"(3)

Using this dichotomy of agreement and disagreement, Ibn Ḥazm made a thinly veiled criticism of some followers of all major Islamic jurists, including al-Shāfi'ī, al-Ḥanafī, al-Mālikī, and al-Ḥanbalī. Many of their followers, even when confronted with evidence and proof based on al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth, retained their allegiances and adhered to the views of 'this and that' of scholars expressing disagreement and accepting only those verses from al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth which supported their previously held views.(4) Abandoning such views was the only way to agreement and unity.(5) Although Ibn Ḥazm was careful to avoid direct criticism of major Islamic jurists, his criticism of what their followers made of their views was unmistakable. Speculation is not truth, no

(1) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, II: 61.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibid.: 65.
(5) Ibid.: 65-66.

one should abandon truth for speculation. After the fourth Islamic century, 'careless' believers who did not give God's religion the respect it deserved ignored God's words and those of His Prophet in favor of a worthless imitation of al-Ḥanafī, al-Mālikī and al-Shāfi'ī, who had themselves warned against imitation. This led them (the followers) to support their false ideas in contradiction to Quranic verse and ḥadīth.(1)

When it came to religion, Ibn Ḥazm was more than eager to emphasize that no view, opinion, or judgment, regardless of its quality or the authority of its holder, should be permitted if it had no clear reference to al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth.

There could be no other authority on religious issues but the al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth. All others were men and we are men quoting Abū Ḥanīfa with approval.(2) This led Ibn Ḥazm to take an essentially lonely view of faith: "By God I will live and die committed to al-Qur'ān. God willing, I will pursue no other road but that of al-Qur'ān. I will take no notice of others, even if all the inhabitants of earth were to choose a different path."(3)

The idea that consensus could be used as an independent source of addressing issues related to religion was explicitly rejected by Ibn Ḥazm. As the above quotation indicates, 'numbers' was not relevant to the truth (truth is truth even if no one were to declare it, falsehood is falsehood even if all the inhabitants of earth were to agree on it.[4] Individual Muslims and believers, therefore, are the guardians of preserving and upholding the purity of the Islamic faith, thus placing Ibn Ḥazm at the heart of Islamic radicalism. Unlike Ibn Taymīya, for example, who placed a high value on order and great deal of difference to established political authority, Ibn Ḥazm had no such constraints on his doctrine. Political authority is not treated differently from any other groups or individuals who, in principle as well as in practice, should be subjected to the truth based on the tenets of al-Qur'ān and the teachings of His Prophet. Political authority has no independent moral authority of its own. Political authority cannot legislate, and being in authority is not relevant to

(1) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 577.
(2) Ibid.: 588-589.
(3) Ibid.: 586.
(4) Ibid.: 95.

established religious truth.(1) God, Ibn Ḥazm famously stressed, has never commanded us to follow what our rulers dictate.(2)

It is true that Ibn Ḥazm condemned rebelling against a legitimate ruler as being an absolute injustice,(3) yet no other major theologian allowed for an almost opened-ended challenge to political authority as Ibn Ḥazm did. Using the principle of commanding right and forbidding wrong to its limit, Ibn Ḥazm allowed for the principle to be used by any Muslim believer to challenge political authority.(4) God, Ibn Ḥazm declared, does not distinguish between "just" or "unjust" authorities. It is the religious duty of Muslims to fight against the 'unjust' regardless of the circumstances.(5)

By rejecting the idea that consensus could in any way be a source of legislation independent of the al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth, Ibn Ḥazm undermined the notion that either religious or political authorities could claim any monopoly of religious truth. Both political and religious authorities were placed on the defensive. Individual believers were imbued with a moral and religious mission creating an essentially fundamentalist notion of Islamic faith.

3. Certainty and abrogation

In theory, the idea of abrogation, which simply means changing and amending laws and rules, should serve as an opening to an enlightened debate about Islamic faith. The fact that verses of al-Qur'ān were abrogated but not removed offers an opportunity for contemplation. In other words, why were such verses not simply removed to be replaced by the newer rule or law? Abrogation is simply a reflection of an evolutionary process and a reflection of changing circumstances and contexts. The moral status of the community and its ability to meet new demands were certainly contributing factors. This, for example, is why the prohibition on producing and drinking alcohol started with a discouragement of drinking and moved (i.e. was abrogated) into a total and complete prohibition. There are certainly other examples.

This, however, was not the view of Ibn Ḥazm. He took a stand which meant rejecting any engagement with al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth, but simply obeying them unquestioningly. Abrogation is not for him an opportunity to ask "why"; it is an

(1) Ibid.: 540.
(2) Ibn Ḥazm 2010, II: 345.
(3) Ibid.: 335.
(4) Ibid.
(5) Ibid.: 336.

opportunity to accept abrogation without either wishing to or needing to ask "why." For Ibn Ḥazm, raising the question of why certain verses were abrogated amounted to demanding that God explain Himself and His acts and commandments.(1) He asserted that we have no right to do that, God's acts cannot be subjected to our reason; true believers accept whatever God does and says without raising the question of why.(2) He asks rhetorically:

What is the difference between God telling us about a certain act and informing us that at a given point in the future that act will be changed, and not telling us? There must be no difference! We cannot place conditions on God and He need not tell us. God does not need to consider our views and anyone who demands that is simply not a believer!(3)

To illustrate his point, Ibn Ḥazm even went further:

We say that Almighty God could if He so wished abrogate the oneness of God and command us to follow duality, trinity, and paganism, and if He did so that would be wisdom, just, and truth! And so the oneness of God would be disbelief, unjust, and meaningless; but God could never do that simply because He told us so and that he would not alter His Faith whom we were commanded by God to follow. What God dissociated Him from was, therefore, disbelief, unjust and meaningless. The only things God commanded was truth, just, and wisdom. Our belief in the oneness of God was neither true nor wise by itself without God telling us as such… This is almighty God telling religion commanded us to follow and endorsed that faith which he named it as true, just and wisdom.(4)

Ibn Ḥazm accepted the idea of abrogation because it was referred to in al-Qur'ān and supported by ḥadīth. However, he rejected the idea that abrogation itself should be explained, justified, or even interpreted. He simply refused to revisit Islam using abrogation as a point of entry. Explaining abrogation by asking "why" amounted to creating a new faith and a new religion(5) and using abrogation freely could also lead to suspending God's commandments, destroying Faith itself in the process.(6)

(1) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 482-483.
(2) Ibid.: 480.
(3) Ibid.: 485.
(4) Ibid.: 488.
(5) Ibid.: 270-271.
(6) Ibid.: 204.

Similar to other ideas Ibn Ḥazm used, he used the idea of abrogation to make the possibility of rethinking Islam impossible. He also used the idea of abrogation to make the point that later verses of al-Qur'ān were final judgments on earlier verses, thereby preventing the idea of an occasion of revelation being put to any meaningful use. And the idea of revelation as an evolutionary process, allowing for constant readjustment and revisiting of the holy Islamic texts,(1) has no place in Ibn Ḥazm's idea of abrogation. He repeatedly reminded his readers that a certain verse, which was the final one to be revealed to the Prophet, being the final judgment on the subject, there was nothing more to be said or argued about it.(2) This is also true of using ḥadīth as a judgment regardless of context or historical limitation. Historical anecdote was not seen as such but as a final and general judgment of principle.(3)

Whether Islamic universal ideals and the idea that Islam (as agreed by all Muslims) is relevant to all times and peoples, is compatible with the notion that prevents revisiting the faith is another question. Ibn Ḥazm simply dismissed that concern on the grounds that the Islamic faith is complete in a literal sense and that whatever questions were raised were already answered if one looked into the text. He seemed to believe that the idea of Islam being a complete faith was incompatible with the idea of revisiting the faith. The latter was the path of the non-believer.|(4) It was impossible that anything in the world of relevance to the issue of faith could exist if there was no reference to it in al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth(5)

This day I have perfected for you your religion, completed my favor upon you and chosen for you Islam as your religion (Q: al-Ma'ida, 3)

Nothing we have omitted from the book, and they shall be gathered to their lord in the end (ḥ: al-na'ām 6: 38)

The task of a believer is simply to search for an answer which is to be found in al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth.

4. Certainty and reasoning

For a man who wrote a book on logic and reasoning, Ibn Ḥazm's attitude to faith and reason is certainly quite ironic. Calling for explanation and reasoning

(1) See al-Jābirī 2008.
(2) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 252.
(3) Ibid.: 154.
(4) See Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 84, 270-277, and 541.
(5) Ibn Ḥazm 2010, VIII: 430.

in relation to issues of faith was seen by Ibn Ḥazm as questioning God's wisdom; while whatever God commands or acts upon is also wise and just,(1) it also amounts to limiting and subjecting the divine God's wisdom to our senses and reason.(2) Instead of God being the judge of man, the latter becomes the judge of God's acts.(3) For Ibn Ḥazm, this was an insult to the idea of God and the divine.

Although Ibn Ḥazm recognized that there were certain verses in al-Qur'ān and many ḥadīth which required explanation and reasoning as to why they were revealed, he restricted those explanations to these specific verses or ḥadīth and refused to suggest any general principle of the need for explanation and reasoning.(4) Accepting a general principle of the need for explaining and reasoning regarding issues of faith contradicts the principle that the Islamic religion (al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth) is a perfect and complete faith,(5) moving religion from certainty into speculation.(6) Explanation and reasoning introduce new elements and principles which are not part of faith, essentially introducing and inventing a new religion.(7) Speculation, which Ibn Ḥazm associated with explanation and reasoning, could also lead to dilution of the idea of faith, in the process undermining religion itself.(8) Explanation and reasoning, therefore, lead to undermining the integrity of faith by undermining certainty and opening God's revealed religion to speculation.

Ibn Ḥazm's refusal to accommodate the notion of explanation and reasoning as part of faith is also a product of equating explanation with questioning the God's judgment,(9) which he rejected. Although he insists that all God's acts are just and wise, yet he also claims that "God's enactment needs no reason or cause."(10) For believers, he claims that their path is that of admiration of a perfect religion, and bowing and acting obediently.(11)

(1) Ibn Ḥazm 2010, I: 59.
(2) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 488.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, II: 583.
(5) Ibn Ḥazm 2010, I: 432.
(6) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I:209.
(7) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, II: 608.
(8) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 57.
(9) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, II: 605.
(10) Ibid.: 583.
(11)Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 283, 291.

Rejection of methods of explanation and reasoning of faith is also extended to cover the idea of analogy as a method of extending certain religious rules to other similar cases. For a complete and comprehensive religion, there is no need for analogy, he claims.(1) For religious issues analogy is obsolete. Other reasons given to justify the rejection of reasoning and explanation are in fact indistinguishable from the absolute rejection of analogy.

Ibn Ḥazm's absolute reverence of al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth prevented him from contemplating the idea of revisiting the faith; he saw it as tampering with the divine. This attitude colored his idea of al-Qur'ān itself as final in its structure: every letter, every word, every verse should be preserved and kept in its given order. Any attempt at reordering al-Qur'ān is the road of non-believers(2) and his verdict that al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth were the final judgment on previous rules prevented any possibility of introducing a notion of context or historical setting to any reading and rereading of the Islamic faith. Context, occasion of revelation, and thus historical sensitivity to the faith would be seen by Ibn Ḥazm as reordering al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth, and thus should be rejected.(3)

5. Sharī'a and ethics

Unlike our earthly experience, Ibn Ḥazm refers to the life of heaven where there is no place for misery.(4) Indeed, Ibn Ḥazm himself experienced the misery of life at first hand. In a biographical note which Ibn Ḥazm included in Rings of the Dove, he complained about being away from home, worrying about a family he left behind, expressing disappointment in friendship, and wondering about changing times and fortunes.(5) But then, as if regaining composure, Ibn Ḥazm reminded himself and others about the idea of life itself, its purpose and meaning, and about the relation of life to faith.

Life according to Ibn Ḥazm is "a temporary illusion"(6) and those who deliberately choose life over the afterlife (where there is no pain and agony, eternal and enormous in its return and benefit) is a sign of "stupidity and

(1) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, II 516.
(2) Ibn Ḥazm 1980,XI: 566.
(3) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 252.; Ibn Ḥazm 2010, Ⅷ: 425.
(4) Ibn Ḥazm 2010, I: 31.
(5) Ibn Ḥazm 2002: 163.
(6) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 7.

mindless behavior."(1) In the transitory illusion we call "life", all God's commandments and orders were to be happily accepted and followed, even if they required "killing oneself, one's children, and one's parents."(2) It is a small price to pay for huge and eternal returns, he claims.(3) Life, he declares, is not a place of judgment and reward.(4)

Therefore, the only meaning to life is to promote justice, suppress untrue doctrines, rule according to God's orders and those of His Prophet, revive the true traditions, and eliminate signs of injustice.(5) It is, in other words, a life with a moral mission, a mission to be accomplished regardless of consequences and with any price considered bearable, even if it entailed "killing of self, children, and parents."(6)

Ibn Ḥazm certainly saw himself and his followers as people with a clear, holy mission in life. That notion was clearly reflected in his deep sense of pride as well as conscious self-discipline. "Never accept humility not requested by God" declared Ibn Ḥazm.(7) "Bravery is to offer one's life in defense of faith, women, or neighbor calling for help who faces injustice against his wealth, honor, and regardless of how many people one has to face—few or many. Bearing (humility and injustice) is cowardice and weakness."(8) Virtuous souls prefer death to humiliation which means souls find humiliation easier to bear.(9) "Justice is a shelter for every fearing person."(10)

Ibn Ḥazm's book Rings of the Dove (Ṭawq al-Ḥamāmat) makes curious reading. The book is full of images with almost graphic descriptions of temptations and uncontrollable displays of desire. There is no need to feel guilty for being in love and experiencing desire, he contends.(11) The book contains an element of what was essentially a tolerant moral principle, namely assuming good intentions in people and their conduct.(12) There is no sense of bigotry in

(1) Ibid.: 180.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibn Ḥazm 2007: 77.
(5) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 8-9.
(6) Ibid.: 180.
(7) Ibn Ḥazm 1913: 4-5.
(8) Ibid.: 13.
(9) Ibid.: 47.
(10) Ibid.: 44.
(11) Ibn Ḥazm 2002: 19
(12) Ibid.: 163.

this book, yet this book is also about self-discipline and self-control, qualities necessary for Ibn Ḥazm's moral mission.

He defines human nature as constituted of reason (mind) and of temptation and desire leading to evil and wrongdoing.(1) The soul, contends Ibn Ḥazm, is in constant movement between reason and temptation.(2) The role of religion, through its codes of conduct, is to force reason on temptation. Left to one's own devices, the human capacity for indulgence and temptation is very high, leading to moral self-destruction.(3) Without God's moral guidance and blessing, a human being becomes indistinguishable from a wild beast.(4)

Morality can only be achieved by denying our nature and constraining temptation and desire, which Ibn Ḥazm described as an "ulcer."(5) Ultimately, he never allowed this harmless pleasure and innocent detour to color his ethical doctrine, nor did he permit it to develop as a point of reference for a potential tolerant ethical perspective. The reason is that Ibn Ḥazm, by reducing the ethical to the legal (i.e. sharīʿa) and considering the latter as the operational and literal interpretation of the ethical, diluted the two into a legislative dogma, sucking the life out of his ethical doctrines and reducing them to a mere shadow of a fragmented and detailed legal system. Thus, instead of allowing ethical principles to be broad moral principles and to consider sharīʿa as an illustration of them, Ibn Ḥazm simply allowed sharīʿa to absorb the ethical doctrines, so that they were considered as a mere footnote in a gigantic legal edifice whose ethical foundations cannot be seen or recognized.

Ibn Ḥazm, as shown earlier, dismissed the notions of analogy and reasoning (i.e. explaining the reasons behind certain rules or commandments) as speculation. Analogy and reasoning taken too far, he argued, could amount to the introduction of a new and different religion to that of true Islam. In other words, any attempt to revisit the Islamic faith is not far from an exercise in infidelity.

Therefore, to inquire about the nature of the relationship between Islamic ethics and that of sharīʿa and attempting to find an answer would also be seen by Ibn Ḥazm as an exercise in speculative reasoning leading to uncertainty and

(1) Ibid.: 134.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Ibid.: 154 and 156.
(4) Ibid.: 141 and 144.
(5) Ibid.: 152.

doubt, and therefore to be dismissed. The way he proceeded in interpreting Islamic faith would certainly prevent that possibility.

Ibn Ḥazm started with the basic assumption that in interpreting the two sources of the Islamic faith, both al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth, interpretation is a literary and linguistic task and that its meaning has to be taken at face value unless stated otherwise (for Ibn Ḥazm, both texts stood on an equal footing as revealed texts, the only difference being that al-Qur'ān stood as a miraculous text and a permanent challenge for anyone to produce a similar text). Thus, Ibn Ḥazm asserted that anyone who denies or doubts a single letter in al-Qur'ān is an infidel and a non-believer.(1)

He equally emphasized that "al-Qur'ān as a whole in its letters and words as they are ordered and every single verse and as was later collected was God's act and was revealed to His Prophet (Peace be Upon Him), so it is prohibited for anyone to try to change that order."(2) Such constraints taken to their limits prevent the emergence of any intellectual curiosity in terms of approaching the faith.

Although Ibn Ḥazm never specifically raised the question concerning the relationship between ethics and sharī'a and his objection to it in principle, his religious doctrine demonstrates the primacy of sharī'a over ethics. Sharī'a, as clearly demonstrated by Ibn Ḥazm, was seen as the operational definition of faith. Justice, he argued, was the enforcement and implementation of sharī'a.(3) More broadly, the idea of upholding the faith was simply a matter of the enforcement of sharī'a.(4) The only justification for life was "to ensure justice prevailed and acting according to God's commandments and the orders of His Prophet, and the revival of true tradition..."(5) This notion of the implementation of sharī'a was equally extended to individual judgments and acts of the Prophet regardless of the context or historical circumstances of that act or judgment.(6)

More specifically, Ibn Ḥazm suggested that enforcement of the penal code was an expression of repentance and an appeal to God for forgiveness; in other

(1) Ibn Ḥazm 2010, I: 32.
(2) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 566.
(3) Ibn Ḥazm 2010, II: 343.
(4) Ibn Ḥazm 2007: 3-4.
(5) Ibn Ḥazm 1980, I: 8-9.
(6) Ibid.: 54.

words, being cleansed of an evil act.(1) Enforcement of the law was not seen as a punishment but rather as doing the violator of sharī'a a favor. Thus, enforcement of sharī'a was not for the purpose of maintaining order, there was no utilitarian calculation here; it was rather for undoing the burden of evil acts.(2)

Conclusions

Let us sum up our argument. As discussed in Section 2, Ibn Ḥazm's theory of knowledge and the centrality of the notion of absolute certainty as a defining feature of faith do not allow for the possibility of revisiting the Islamic faith or accepting the notion of a plurality of religious interpretations. Plurality of interpretation for Ibn Ḥazm is a source of confusion, worry, and ultimately lack of faith.

This single unitary interpretation of faith was taken to its limit in addressing major Islamic juristic concepts and principles, including abrogation, analogy and reasoning, as discussed in Section 3. Ibn Ḥazm's idea is simply that any notion which might lead to a (3) plurality of views and interpretation of the faith should be rejected as a source of discord and disunity in Islam.

Applying his notion of the unitary interpretation of faith to previous jurists and their followers, Ibn Ḥazm criticized what he saw as a deviation from the one and only true view of Islam (see section 2). Conformity, therefore, is an unavoidable virtue.

As noted in Section 5, Ibn Ḥazm's apparent singular and 'face value' interpretation of Islam led him to consider the idea of revisiting the relation between ethics and sharī'a as an exercise in speculation contradicting truth and bordering on disbelief. The very notion of justice is sharī'a-based and the implementation and enforcement of sharī'a is an absolute and eternal principle.

Using this notion of one true singular interpretation of faith, Ibn Ḥazm established what essentially is at the heart of later Islamic fundamentalism, namely the legitimization of open-ended rebellion against any political authority failing to adhere to the true faith (see section 2). For Ibn Ḥazm, the

(1) Ibn Ḥazm 2010, I: 63.
(2) Ibid.: 69.

ideal Muslim is that of a man of mission, come what may. It is a lethal combination of conviction and integrity. By activating the principle of commanding right and forbidding wrong as an active social doctrine, he opened in Islamic thought a Pandora's Box which it has proven difficult to seal. Ibn Ḥazm was certain that the source of discord and disunity in Islam was not the activation of that principle but rather the plurality of views concerning religion.

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