

Chapter V

THE CONCEPT OF A PERFECT MAN

The concept of a perfect man embraces the ideal goal of moral perfection. Al-Ghazzali describes the perfect experience as a union, that when one abides with the Ultimate God. Interestingly, Mencius also depicts on a similar experience, suggesting that a unity with the *Tian* is the fundamentals of one's moral exercises. On the practical dimension, Al-Ghazzali teaches on the importance of the *Behavioral Knowledge* while Mencius advocates on the basic concepts of moral cultivation related to the *Tian* and the *Xin*. The ends of moral perfection, namely happiness, is also discussed.

5.1 Al-Ghazzali on the Concept of a Perfect Man

Al-Ghazzali teaches that man comes to know God's existence from his very own creation. This is coined in the saying of the Prophet, "He, who knows himself, knows God."¹³⁴ The essence of man, as Al-Ghazzali perceived, is similar to the essence of God for God created man in His own image.¹³⁵ Man has a task to let the Divine, i.e., the true essence of man becomes more vital and to bring to ever closer realization this divine potential of his nature.¹³⁶ It is therefore vital to educate and train the heart that a person may approach God through knowledge and will.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Field, Claud (trans.), *Al-Ghazzali, The Alchemy of Happiness* (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, n.d.) p. 35.

¹³⁵ Refer to C.R.Upper, "Al-Ghazzali's Thought on the Nature of Man" in *The Muslim World, XIII (January, 1952)*, pp. 23-32 in Zolondek, L., *Book XX Of Al-Ghazzali's Ihya' Ulum Al-Din* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1963) p. 3.

¹³⁶ Refer to Obermann, J., *Der Philosophische und religiöse Subjectivismus Ghazalis*, Wien, 1021, p. 102 in Zolondek, p. 3.

¹³⁷ Maulana, Fazal-Ul-Karim (trans.), *Imam Ghazzali's Ihya Ulum-Id-Din (The Revival of Religious Learnings Book 3)* (Lahore: Lahore, Kazi Publication, n.d.) p. 7.

In Al-Ghazzali's writing, there is the idea of a "*Perfect Man*".¹³⁸ The goal of man is the fulfillment of whatever distinguishes him as human. The soul of man seeks to attain its highest fulfillment and free as much as possible from the sway of bodily needs and desires.¹³⁹

Al-Ghazzali therefore proposed a mystical union. The mystical union refers to a relation between man and God, in which union is the climax of the spiritual experience as well as effort of self-purification.¹⁴⁰ Such idea suggests the ultimate experience of transcendence for a *Perfect Man*.

5.1.1 The Mystic Union

The mystic union refers to man's final goal to achieve, firstly, the likeness of God (the *Qurb*), and secondly, the unification of truth (*Tawhid*).¹⁴¹ Acquiring the attributes of God is the goal of a mystic union. Man was created in the image of God and therefore the goal of his life is to live up to the likeness of God in every possible way.

The prophet said: "Acquire ye the character (*akhlak*) of God." The acquiring process is named as "*qurb*".¹⁴² In fact, the 'union' is a metaphor, not so much as

¹³⁸ Hav. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in Al-Ghazzali* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1975) p. 352.

¹³⁹ Fadlou Shehadi, *Ghazzali's Unique Unknowable God: A Philosophical Critical Analysis of Some of the Problems Raised by Ghazzali's View of God as Utterly Unique and Unknowable* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1964) p. 29.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁴² Ibid. "*Qurb*" literally means "nearness".

man merges into the Divine and lives as "One" with the Divine.¹⁴³ The notion of 'qurb' explains the idea in which the mystic becomes very much similar to God in character, with the person's will attuned to His will. In the union, man and God is so much alike and in harmony. Man's heart will be as pure as a mirror that reflects God's good purposes.¹⁴⁴

According to Fadlou Shehadi, Al-Ghazzali's writings touch on two levels of *Tawhid* or the unification of the truth, i.e. the subjective *Tawhid* and the objective *Tawhid*.¹⁴⁵ The subjective *Tawhid* depicts of man's affiliation with the Divine in all aspects of self e.g. his concern, his love, his act of worshiping, his thought, etc. The objective *Tawhid*, however, will happen only when man ascends to the kingdom of the One-and-Only.¹⁴⁶ In the subjective *Tawhid*, man acknowledges God's deity by utterance of the tongue and believing it in the heart. In the objective *Tawhid*, one has the illumination of truth and loses oneself in *Tawhid*. In the utmost stage of *Tawhid*, one forgets himself and sees nobody except God.¹⁴⁷

Al-Ghazzali uses a metaphor of the glass and the wine to depict the experience of the subjective *Tawhid*. When a person is totally absorbed into the relationship with God with dimensions of affection, contemplation as well as adoration, he will

¹⁴³ Detailed argument may be found in Fadlou Shehadi, *Ghazzali's Unique Unknowable God: A Philosophical Critical Analysis of Some of the Problems Raised by Ghazzali's View of God as Utterly Unique and Unknowable* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1964) pp. 25-28.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 31-32.

¹⁴⁷ Refer to Maulana, Fazal-Ul-Karim (trans.), *Imam Ghazzali's Ihya Ulum-Id-Din (The Revival of Religious Learnings Book 4)* (Lahore: Lahore, Kazi Publication, n.d.) p. 238.

experience a consciousness where God is the sole "content" of him. The person's heart will be as transparent as the glass with God as the wine filling within.¹⁴⁸

On the other hand, the objective *Tawhid* is where and when one is totally lifted to a state he is able to perceive things on earth from the viewpoint of God. When it is so, God will not be merely an 'object' of thoughts as the universe is. Rather, man will perceive from God's agency a new relationship with the universe and other metaphysical truth.¹⁴⁹

Al-Ghazzali was not totally consistent in his teachings on the esoteric aspect of man. Parts of his writing maintained that only few could rise to the rank of the saints, prophets and angels. However, he also teaches that man is able to purify himself by will and effort.

5.1.2 The *Ilm al-Muamala* and the *Ilm al-Mukashafa*

In the process to become a perfect man, one has to acquire: firstly, the *Ilm al-Muamala* (Behavioral or Relational Knowledge) or *Ilm Ahwal al-Qalb* (the Knowledge of the State of the Heart); secondly, the *Ilm al-Mukashafa* (Intuitive Knowledge). *Ilm al-Muamala* consists of the cultivation of outer and inner virtues, and in the doing away of the outer and inner vices. *Ilm al-Mukashafa* is the outcome

¹⁴⁸ Refer to the discussion in Fadlou Shehadi, *Ghazzali's Unique Unknowable God: A Philosophical Critical Analysis of Some of the Problems Raised by Ghazzali's View of God as Utterly Unique and Unknowable* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1964), p. 33. Refer also to *Ihya Ulum-Id-Din*, Book 2, Chapter 2..

¹⁴⁹ Fadlou, p.33.

of *Ilm al-Muamala*. It is the ultimate goal of a perfect man leading to perfect love to God and the realization of His Vision.¹⁵⁰

Al-Ghazzali states that he will only treat *Ilm al-Muamala* in the *Ihya*, like the prophets who preceded him. Yet at the same time, Al-Ghazzali adds that the prophets left behind hints of the *Ilm Al-Mukashafa* through inference, allegory and generalization.¹⁵¹ Therefore, his approach towards perfection has a dual aspect, that of general application for all as well as that of esoteric application for the keen and qualified only.

The *Ilm al-Muamala* is a lower knowledge as compared to the *Ilm al-Mukashafa*. It complements on the latter as knowledge and action are necessary means towards happiness.¹⁵² It deals with the basic properties of the heart and the uprooting of these properties from the heart.¹⁵³ The properties of the heart would include fear of poverty, opposition to God's decree, hatred, jealousy, ambition, conceit, vanity, pride, miserliness, inconsideration and oppression of others, worldliness, pursuance of worldly pleasure etc. Negatively, a person has to abstain from the vices of the heart but positively, he may constantly acquire some desirable qualities. Positively, one may strive to acquire the desirable qualities such as

¹⁵⁰ Umaruddin, M., *The Ethical Philosophy Of Al-Ghazzali* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1991) p. 103.

¹⁵¹ Hav. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in Al-Ghazzali* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1975) pp. 366-367.

¹⁵² Quesem, Muhammad Abul, *The Ethics of Al-Ghazali: A Composite Ethics in Islam* (Petaling Jaya: Muhammad Abul Quesem, 1975) p. 64. Also refer to Al-Ghazzali, Imam, *Timbangan Amal: Menuju Kebahagiaan Akhirat* (Singapura: Pustaka Nasional Ptd. Ltd., 1983) pp. 25-28.

¹⁵³ Hav. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in Al-Ghazzali* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1975) p. 359.

endurance of suffering, gratitude, fear and devoutness, acceptance of the inevitable, abstinence and honesty and goodness in dealing with one's fellowmen, etc.¹⁵⁴

The *Ilm al-Muamala* includes the knowledge of *Ibadat* (worship, i.e. man's relation to God); *Adat* (modes, i.e. man's relation to man) and the knowledge of the good and bad qualities of the soul.¹⁵⁵ *Ibadat*, as in an ordinary man's understanding, is restricted to devotional acts prescribed by the *Syariat* only. Al-Ghazzali, however, believes that the involvement of the person's inward (*batin*) self should be emphasized over a person's outward (*zahir*) good doings. He finds the traditional Muslim jurisprudence imposing rules and regulations on the acts of the outward but could not check on the person's inward being. His emphasis on the *Ibadat* cherishes the Sufis way that keeps a balance of both the inner and outer aspects of a person.¹⁵⁶

A big portion of the *Ihya Ulum-Id-Din* deals with man's relationship and accountability to God. In addition, there are also portions that teach on the appropriate manners of which man relates to the other man. Al-Ghazzali dedicated a big section on the other dimension of the *Ilm al-Muamala*, namely man's relating to the other man. Being concerned of the application of good virtues, Al-Ghazzali views friendship with another person as the an expression of good conduct as well as enmity of bad conduct.¹⁵⁷ He asserts that a perfect man should seek to relate with the others with love. Besides, a person has to fulfill his duties and obligations to another person who is a friend, relative, neighbor, other Muslim brethren or some less-privileged one.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Umaruddin, M., *The Ethical Philosophy Of Al-Ghazzali* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1991) p. 81.

¹⁵⁶ Quesem, Muhammad Abul, *The Ethics of Al-Ghazali: A Composite Ethics in Islam* (Petaling Jaya: Muhammad Abul Quesem, 1975) p. 65.

Quoting from the saying of the Prophet from Abū-Hurayrah, Al-Ghazzali teaches that “one should keep the tie of relationship with the other person who cuts it off, forgiving one who oppressed him and gives in charity to one who deprives him.”¹⁵⁸ Another saying of the Prophet runs as such: “that the more beloved of God is one who loves his friends more.” Al-Ghazzali elaborated on a number of rights and duties in the interpersonal relationship, e.g. sharing with each other in times of need, forgiving the faults of the friend, treating people with good words and in good manner, maintaining friendship with loyalty (*wafa*) and sincerity (*ikhlas*), praying for others, etc.¹⁵⁹

The knowledge of differentiating the good and bad qualities of the soul is very crucial for one to be fit for the knowledge of God. Al-Ghazzali believes that there are spiritual forces that help man to walk along the path to approach perfection, namely *Tawfiq*, the gift of God.¹⁶⁰ *Tawfiq* manifests itself in different forms. Firstly, the *Hidaya* (divine guidance). *Hidaya* consults a person on things to do and things not to do. No virtues is possible with *Hidaya*. Secondly, *Rushd* (divine direction). It guides man to realize his end. Thirdly, *Tasdid* (divine leadership). This spiritual force guides the body to submit to the will and behaves accordingly. Fourthly, *Taid* (divine strengthening). It makes internal and external circumstances align with the good purposes. Internally, the person will gain insight on his judgment and decision.

¹⁵⁷ Maulana, Fazal-Ul-Karim (trans.), *Imam Ghazzali's Ihya Ulum-Id-Din (The Revival of Religious Learnings Book 1)* (Lahore: Lahore, Kazi Publication, n.d.) p. 109.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 126-144.

¹⁶⁰ Umaruddin, M., *The Ethical Philosophy Of Al-Ghazzali* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1991) p 104.

Meanwhile, the external conditions turn suitable for the person with the means to achieve his desired end.¹⁶¹

The four forms of grace have not exhausted on God's gift to human. Al-Ghazzali perceives another grace, which surpasses the four. It illuminates man towards a higher knowledge, the *Ilm al-Mukashafa*. The *Ilm al-Mukashafa* is not acquirable by man's will or action. It deals with the true knowledge of God, God's attributes and deeds, cosmology, prophetic revelation, the nature of the angels and the devil, the concepts of paradise, hell, etc. Al-Ghazzali believed that this science is the result of prophetic revelation and inspiration granted by Divine Grace to man who is worthy of them only.¹⁶²

The *Ilm al-Mukashafa* is the seed of happiness in the hereafter or even happiness itself.¹⁶³ A man who toils along the way of the *Ilm al-Muamala* will have to set his mind upon *Ilm al-Mukashafa* as the final stage of his effort to perfection. Even though there is a doubt whether every single individual is worthy of such knowledge, Al-Ghazzali affirms his readers that the grace of God is irrevocably tied to human effort.¹⁶⁴ Hence, all must actively expose oneself to the learning of the things of the world as well as the acquiring of the knowledge of the hereafter. When one's effort is mature, he will be revealed to the reality of spiritual things.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 360.

¹⁶³ Quesem, Muhammad Abul, *The Ethics of Al-Ghazali: A Composite Ethics in Islam* (Petaling Jaya: Muhammad Abul Quesem, 1975) p. 66.

¹⁶⁴ Umaruddin, M., *The Ethical Philosophy Of Al-Ghazzali* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1991) p. 106.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 114-119.

5.2 Mencius on the Concept of a Perfect Man

In the Confucius' School of thought, the birth of capable man with high moral integrity is most significant for a generally illiterate agricultural society. Moreover, moral deterioration was the said phenomenon then. Thus, in the writing of Mencius, there are numerous discussions on the "Godly man", "Sage-king", "Sage", "Great man", "Complete man", "Superior man", "Scholar", "Worthy", "Virtuous" and "Talented". The discussion here will use "Perfect Man" to sum up the totality of Mencius' concept of perfect personality.

The idea of a "Perfect Man" in Mencius' writings has two broad dimensions. Firstly, it refers to moral cultivation as a relation to the Heaven, the *Tian* (天). Secondly, the moral cultivation with regards to the entire exercise of rectifying the heart and mind. Our discussion will focus on the unity of the *Heaven* (天, *Tian*) and man (人, *Ren*), as well as the cultivation of the *Immense Passion-nature* (浩然之气, *Haoran Zhi Qi*) in Mencius' theory of moral exercise.

Mencius teaches that the world is built from a country, the country from a home, a home from a man.¹⁶⁶ It is an elaboration of Confucius' teaching that one should cultivate oneself in order to be capable of giving rest to the people.¹⁶⁷ In self-

¹⁶⁶ Mencius said, "People have this common saying, — 'The empire, the state, the family.' The root of the empire is in the state. The root of the state is in the family. The root of the family is in the person of its head." Refer to "Lilou, Part 1, 5" in "The Works of Mencius" in Legge, James, *The Chinese Classics, Vol.2* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1994)

¹⁶⁷ In answering to the question posed by Zilu regarding what constituted the superior man, Confucius said, "He who cultivate himself in reverential carefulness." Confucius elaborated that a person of stature like this will cultivate himself so as to give rest to all the people. Refer to "Xiamwen, Chapter 45" in *The Confucian Analects* in Legge, James, *The Chinese Classics, Vol.2* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1994)

cultivation, the Confucius school proposed a very interesting concept of the unity of "Tian" and the "Ren" .

5.2.1 The Unity of Tian-Ren

Even though the theory of the unity of *Tian-Ren* was popularised by the Sung Learners, it was originated from Mencius' detailed discussion of the relationship of *Tian-Ren*. Ever since the prehistoric era, the Chinese believed in a pseudo-god, namely, the "Tian" .¹⁶⁸ During the period of Warring States, Mencius was among the many philosophers who gave "Tian" a clearer definition. In "*Wanzhang, Part 1*," there was a record of a dialogue between Mencius and his student Wan Zhang:

Wan Zhang said, "Was it the case that Yao gave the throne to Shun?"

Mencius said, "No. The sovereign cannot give the throne to another."

"Yes, but Shun had the throne. Who gave it to him?"

"Heaven gave it to him," was the answer.

"Heaven gave it to him? – did Heaven confer His appointment on him with specific injunctions?"

Mencius replied, "No. Heaven does not speak (on this specific matter). Heaven simply showed His will by his {Shun's} personal conduct and his conduct of affairs."

"Heaven showed His will by his (Shun's) personal conduct and his conduct of affairs? How was this?"

Mencius' answer was, "The sovereign can present a man to Heaven, but he cannot make Heaven give that man the throne. A prince can present a man to the sovereign, but he cannot cause the sovereign to make that man a prince. A great officer can present a man to his prince, but he cannot cause the prince to make that man a high-ranking officer. Yao presented Shun to Heaven, and Heaven accepted him. He presented him to the people, and the people accepted him. Therefore I say, Heaven does not speak. Heaven simply indicated His will by his (Shun's) personal conduct and his conduct of affairs."

Mencius concluded, "When things which you did not plan take its course, it is the act of *Tian*" .

In Mencius' understanding, there are three broad meanings for "*Tian*". Firstly, the natural "*Tian*". Man's appropriate attitude towards the natural "*Tian*" is obedience, i.e. "*Shun Tian*". Secondly, the rational "*Tian*". It refers to a supernatural governing power that man should be "*Tian-fearing*". The third meaning is the moral "*Tian*". The moral "*Tian*" is the basic ruling of the universe and man should attempt to understand the moral "*Tian*". In short, obeying the natural "*Tian*", being "*Tian-fearing*" and understanding the moral "*Tian*" are dimensions of the relations of *Tian-Ren*. Mencius has basically formed a concept of man relating to the "*Tian*" (天人相通, *Tian-Ren Xiang Tong*). [Refer to the Appendix IV for Chart (C).]

The discussion here will focus on the Moral "*Tian*". Mencius suggests that "*Tian*" is a moral existence. In "*Lilou Part I*", he said, "sincerity is the way of *Tian*; man should imitate and walk in such a way too." Aligning man's way with the way of *Tian* is the proper application of man relating to the *Tian*.

Mencius teaches, "When one puts on one's best attempt to develop the goodness in one's nature, one will understand the original state of one's nature. When one understands the nature, one will understand the mandate of the *Tian*. The appropriate manner to the mandate of the *Tian* is preserving one's original heart and original nature. When it is so, long life would not be an issue. Mencius said, "He who has exhausted all his mental constitution knows his nature. Knowing his nature, he knows Heaven. To preserve one's mental constitution, and nourish one's nature, is

¹⁶⁸ This "*Tian*" literally means 'heaven'. The term, however, does not have the connotation with 'God' as in Islam or Christianity.

the way to serve Heaven.”¹⁶⁹ The Confucian away of living a meaning life is thus coined in the phrase: “*An Shen Li Ming* (安身立命)”¹⁷⁰ Dai Zheng, a scholar of the Ching dynasty, explaining on the developing of the goodness in one’s nature, said, “The heart of *Ren* and *Yi*, originates from the Moral *Tian*... And this is why the moral is clear and district within man. This is what it means to ‘put on one’s best attempt to develop the goodness in one’s nature’ ”¹⁷¹

A perfect man is one who is highly credited for his moral character. Even though it is almost impossible to “walk in the way of *Tian*, every ordinary man should model after the Moral *Tian*” . In “*Jinxin Part 2, 2.15*” , Mencius said, “A sage is the teacher of a hundred generations; this is true of Po Yi and Liu Xia Hui. Therefore when men now hear the character of Po Yi, the corrupt become pure, and the weak acquire determination, when they hear the character of Liu Xia Hui, the mean become generous, and the niggardly become liberal. The two made themselves distinguished a hundred generations ago, and after a hundred generations, those who hear of them, are all encouraged. It is only the caliber of the sage to bring about such life-transforming influence on the others. For those who are akin to the sage, how much more will they be changed!”¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Refer to “*Jinxin, Part 1, 1.1-2*” in “*The Works of Mencius*” in Legge, James, *The Chinese Classics, Vol. 2* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1994)

¹⁷⁰ The phrase has become popular in use nowadays. The original saying by Mencius goes as such: “Establishing one’s Heaven-ordained being” .Refer to “*Jinxin, Part 1, 1.3*” in “*The Works of Mencius*” in Legge, James, *The Chinese Classics, Vol. 2* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1994)

¹⁷¹ The commentary by Dai Zheng on “*The Work of Mencius*” reads as such: “仁义之心，原于天地之德者也。天人道德，靡不豁然于心，故曰‘尽其心。’”(《孟子字义疏证·原善卷上》) Refer to Mao, Huaixin (trans. with commentary), *Mengzi Zhiyi Shuzheng Quanyi* (Chengdu: Bashu Shushe, 1992) p. 120.

¹⁷² Refer to “*The Works of Mencius*” in Legge, James, *The Chinese Classics, Vol. 2* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1994).

5.2.2 The Immense Passion-nature

Mencius holds that a perfect man cultivates his personality and thus capable of bringing tranquility to the kingdom.¹⁷³ He believes that one should expand the roots of good virtues i.e. the *Ren*, *Yi Li* and *Zhi*, into four cardinal virtues. The exhaustion of virtues will make possible a moral man with *immense passion-nature*. The necessary means to achieve the said condition are the preservation of the mind (*cunxin*), exhaustion of the mental constitution (*jinxin*), the control over one's desire (*guayu*), the accumulation of passion-nature (*yangqi*) and regular self-examination (*fan qiu zhu ji*).¹⁷⁴ [Refer to the Appendix V for Chart (D) .]

The preservation of the mind refers to the preservation of human natural heart or mind, the *Xin* that is of empathy, sense of guilt, propriety and moral judgment. Mencius said, "the superior man is distinguished from the others for his ability to preserve benevolence and propriety in the heart"¹⁷⁵ The purpose of preservation of the *Xin* is to preserve the goodness of nature and make it the basis of one's moral standard. Contrary to the effort to preserve is "*fangxin*", i.e. when one loses the goodness of the *Xin*. When it is so, man will be degraded to an amoral being. In "*Gaozi, Part 1 Chap 8*", Mencius used the metaphor of the tree of the Nu mountain losing its original beauty to argue that the nature of the mountain is fertile and scenic as it is enjoying the nourishing of the rain and dew. However, it loses the natural appearance when it was not taken care of as well as exposing to the gazing of

¹⁷³ Refer to "*Jinxin, Part 2, 32.2*" in "*The Works of Mencius*" in Legge, James, *The Chinese Classics, Vol.2* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1994). Note that the term "superior man" is used in the original text.

¹⁷⁴ Cui, Yongdong, *Nei Sheng Yu Wai Wang: Zhongguo Ren De Renge Guan* (Kunming: Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, 1999) p. 14.

¹⁷⁵ Refer to "*Lilou, Part 2, 28.1*" in "*The Works of Mencius*" in Legge, James, *The Chinese Classics, Vol. 2* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1994).

the domestic flock and intensive axing. It is thus said that the mind (*Xin*) of any man is with benevolence and righteousness. However, a man may lose his proper goodness of mind like the way the trees are denuded by axes and bills.¹⁷⁶ The proper way to treat the lost goodness of the mind is to reclaim them just as one will do to their lost fowls or pets!¹⁷⁷

When one reclaims the lost mind (*Xin*), he could proceed with a series of process, which begins with the exhaustion of the mental constitution, followed by the discovery of one's nature and then the state where one knows the "*Tian*".¹⁷⁸ Chinese scholar Fong Youlan, elaborating on the text, said that the *Tian* is a moral entity. Thus, when one exhausts the goodness of his mind, he not only discovers his nature but also understands the moral *Tian*.

Mencius teaches that positively, a person is to preserve and exhaust the goodness of his mind but negatively, one has to control over his desire.¹⁷⁹ The emphasis is not to do away with desire but to keep it few, lest it affects one's act of benevolence and righteousness. This is what Mencius called *Guayu*.

Mencius' idea of a perfect man is most elaborated in "*Gongsun Chou, Part 1, 2.11-15*". He described a perfect man as one who owns some *Immense Passion-nature*, which is exceedingly great and strong. The *Immense Passion-nature* is harmless and nourished by rectitude. It fills up the void between heaven and earth. It is the mate and assistant of righteousness and reason. It is produced by the

¹⁷⁶ Refer to "*Gaozi, Part 1, 8.1*" in "*The Works of Mencius*" in Legge.

¹⁷⁷ Refer to "*Gaozi, Part 1, 11.2*" in "*The Works of Mencius*" in Legge.

¹⁷⁸ Refer to "*Jinxin, Part 1, 1.1*" in "*The Works of Mencius*" in Legge.

¹⁷⁹ Refer to "*Jinxin, Part 2, 35*" in "*The Works of Mencius*" in Legge.

accumulation of righteous deeds. It is produced by the accumulation of righteous deeds. It can be enhanced by every single righteous act. Mencius said that its cultivating process is not easy as it is ruined every time the person commits an unethical act. The process cannot be hastened as one might attempt to the growing crops. A person who managed to cultivate the *Immense Passion-nature* is visibly glorious and self-fulfilled as a divine being.

James Legge, commenting on the text, said that the idea of perfect man expressed by Mencius is one who is complete in all the parts of his constitution. Zhu Xi, the Sung Scholar, explained that the *Immense Passion-nature* is born of accumulation of goodness and righteous deeds. It should be noted that the accumulation is of the within goodness and cannot be accomplished immediately by external elements.¹⁸⁰ Therefore, a perfect man is one who gradually cultivating his moral self and gathering the immense energy. As the cultivation is progressing, his four cardinal virtues will also expand to its exhaustion. Lastly, in the cultivation process, Mencius teaches that one should be sincere in self-examination, i.e. “*fān qiu zhu ji*” .¹⁸¹ He said that there are people who act without understanding and act habitually without self-examination. This is the way of multitudes and it cannot help to set one's life in the knowledge of its true nature.¹⁸² As for a perfect man, all things are already complete in him. This ‘all things’ refers to the state when the mind (*Xin*) and the nature (*Xing*) of a person reconcile and unite with the *Tian*. The exercising of the *Immense Passion-nature* is complete in such a condition.

¹⁸⁰ Zhang, Maozhe (ed.), Zhuxi, *Sishu Jizhu* (Xian: Sanqin Chubanshe, 1998) p. 350.

¹⁸¹ Refer to “*Jinxin, Part I, 4.2*” in “*The Works of Mencius*” in Legge.

¹⁸² Ibid.

Mencius said that the *Immense Passion-nature* is rather difficult to gather. Hence, he only requests the learned and not the peasants to cultivate it. It is interesting to note that Mencius was fairly satisfied with himself as far as the exercising of the *Immense Passion-nature* is concerned. When asked by his disciple Gongsun Chou whether he felt that he surpassed the others in moral discipline, Mencius said that he was skillful in nourishing his vast, flowing passion-nature!¹⁸³

5.3 Moral Perfection and Happiness

Al-Ghazzali described the fruit of moral-perfection as "happiness". He said, "the happiness of anything lies in its perfection."¹⁸⁴ This happiness does refer to the pleasure (*ladhdha*) and delight (*naim*) of this world, for it is sensual, temporal and still building on the basis that is imperfect. It refers to something obtainable in the life hereafter, i.e., the eternal. This is the goal of all Muslims and Sufis.

There are, of course, some this-worldly joy and rewards that serve as means to otherworldly happiness. Al-Ghazzali, however, treated them as temporal forms of happiness (*saadat*). According to him, such happiness can be cherished but of no significance as that of the otherworldly, ultimate happiness.

He described the otherworldly happiness as the "joy without sorrow"; "a continuity without end", "knowledge without ignorance" and "sufficiency

¹⁸³ Refer to "Gongsun Chou, Part 1, 2.11 in *The Works of Mencius*" in Legge.

¹⁸⁴ Abu-Sway, Mustafa, *Al-Ghazzaliyy: A Study in Islamic Epistemology* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Putaka, 1996) p. 77.

(*ghina*)” , after which nothing more is needed for perfect satisfaction.¹⁸⁵ This happiness is both physical and spiritual as the idea co-relates with the promises from the *Quran* and *Sunnah*.

Al-Ghazzali said that one who is seeking such happiness should attempt to purify himself from lust, conquering the body and free himself from the slavery of evils. Even though it is rather certain that one could not uproot the entire bad nature by human will alone, one should carry out these ‘*spiritual exercises*’ (*riyadah*) in order to be fit to receive the grace of God.

In the spiritual exercises, man’s honorable aim is to ‘*unveil*’ (*kashf*) the divine matters through the divine inspiration (*ilham*). The metaphor of the ‘*mirror*’ and ‘*picture*’ explained what happens when man takes the spiritual exercises seriously.¹⁸⁶ Human soul is said to resemble a ‘*mirror*’ . After a person is given birth, he is connected to the world and the ‘*mirror*’ starts accumulating ‘*dirts*’ , the worldly desires. When it is so, the ‘*mirror*’ is not likely to reflect the image of the ‘*picture*’ (the divine knowledge) accurately. This distorted reflection of the ‘*mirror*’ upsets man’s dignity, for the essence of man should reflect the essence of God. Man has a task to let the Divine shine through him!

Mencius shared a same notion like that Al-Ghazzali’s, that “the soul uses the body as its vehicle to acquire provision for its happiness.”¹⁸⁷ In “*Jinxin, Part I*,

¹⁸⁵ Quesem, Muhammad Abul, *The Ethics of Al-Ghazali: A Composite Ethics in Islam* (Petaling Jaya: Muhammad Abul Quesem, 1975) p. 55.

¹⁸⁶ Maulana, Fazal-Ul-Karim (trans.), *Imam Ghazzali's Ihya Ulum-Id-Din (The Revival of Religious Learnings Book 3)* (Lahore: Lahore, Kazi Publication, n.d.) p. 13.

¹⁸⁷ Quesem, Muhammad Abul, *The Ethics of Al-Ghazali: A Composite Ethics in Islam* (Petaling Jaya: Muhammad Abul Quesem, 1975) p. 46.

38” , Mencius said, “The bodily organs with their functions belong to the Heaven-conferred nature – But a man must be a *Sage* before he can satisfy the design of his bodily organization.” For Mencius, the acquisition of perfection brings upon a person happiness. He said: “Honour virtue and delight in righteousness, and so you will always be perfectly satisfied” .¹⁸⁸

According to him, a perfect man is definitely fulfilled and composed. It is said so because his happiness relies on the calmness and firmness *within* and not of the *without*. When one determines to cultivate good virtues and act righteously, he becomes the changing factor to improve on his own’s well-being as well as the well-being of others. With the inner resources, a perfect man edifies many and in return meets everything with great ease. Mencius describes that a man of such moral standing will meet with open doors everywhere. “There will also be fountains flowing from everything that the man comes in touch with!”¹⁸⁹

It is to be taken note that Mencius did not count the power and fame as the source of happiness. In “*Jinxin, Part 1, 20:1-5*” , an account of three happiness was given and it was emphasized that “to be a ruler over the empire is not one of them (the three happiness)” .¹⁹⁰ The first happiness is attained when the parents of the man are both alive, and that the siblings do not bring sorrow to the family. The second happiness is when one has no blame before the Heaven and not having any hick-ups with men. The third happiness is acquired when the man becomes one who edifies many, for example, being able to gather the most talented individuals from the entire empire under his lectureship and nourishment. Hence, for Mencius, the happiness of a

¹⁸⁸ “*Jinxin, Part 1, 9.3*” in “*The Works of Mencius*” in Legge.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

perfect man is defined as one's being able to keep a clear conscience, enjoy a good family tie, have a good rapport with the fellow men and get to establish a career that nurtures and edifies others.

Mencius' ethics contains a clear concern for humanity. He is concerned about the social implication that one will bring upon the others within one's moral influence. Nevertheless, just as the intended goal in Al-Ghazzali's spiritual exercises, the goal of Mencius' moral exercises is the acquisition of a surpassing happiness that the world cannot give.

¹⁹⁰ "Jinxi, Part 1, 20:1-5" in *"The Works of Mencius"* in Legge.