

THEOLOGY AND TAFSĪR IN THE MAJOR WORKS

OF FAKHR AL-DĪN AL-RĀZĪ

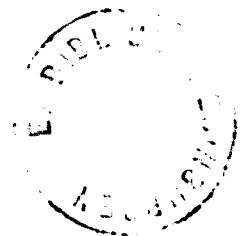
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ABSTRACT

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī was the most celebrated scholar of the sixth Islamic century, famous throughout the Muslim world as a philosopher, theologian and exegetist. However despite this undisputed eminence his contribution to Islamic thought has not yet been properly evaluated. This thesis aims at exposing some of his ideas by a systematic analysis of his thoughts as presented in his major works.

This thesis first presents what little biographical information we have for his life (Chapter I) and proceeds to the study of his major work, his tafsīr (Chapter II). Then follows a detailed analysis of five major problems which occupied al-Rāzī's mind throughout his scholarly life: Creation (Chapter III), God's existence and Divine Attributes (Chapter IV), Free Will and Predestination (Chapter V), Prophethood (Chapter VI) and finally Resurrection (Chapter VII). These topics are also major issues which have concerned Islamic theologians in all ages. The thesis offers a brief conclusion in which al-Rāzī's distinctive views on these issues are summed up.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<u>Arba 'in</u>	al-Rāzī, <u>Kitāb al-Arba 'in fī Uṣūl al-Dīn.</u>
<u>Asās</u>	al-Rāzī, <u>Asās al-Taqdīs.</u>
<u>Bidāya</u>	Ibn Kathīr, <u>al-Bidāya wa-l-Mihāya.</u>
<u>Burhān</u>	al-Zarkashī, <u>al-Burhān fī 'Ulūm al-Ḥur'ān.</u>
<u>Fiṣal</u>	Ibn Ḥazm, <u>al-Fiṣal fī l-Milal wa-l-Ahwā' wa-l-Nihal.</u>
<u>Ibāna</u>	al-Ash'arī, <u>al-Ibāna 'an Uṣūl al-Diyāna.</u>
<u>Ihyā'</u>	al-Ghazālī, <u>Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn.</u>
<u>Iqtisād</u>	al-Ghazālī, <u>al-Iqtisād fī l-I'tiqād.</u>
<u>I'tiqādāt</u>	al-Rāzī, <u>I'tiqādāt Firaq al-Muslimīn wa-l-Mushrikīn.</u>
<u>Itqān</u>	al-Suyūṭī, <u>al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Ḥur'ān.</u>
<u>Jāmi'</u>	Hamadānī, <u>Jāmi' al-Tawārikh.</u>
<u>Jāmi' al-Mukhtaṣar</u>	Ibn Sā'ī, <u>al-Jāmi' al-Mukhtaṣar fī 'Unwān al-Tawārikh wa-'Uyūn al-Siyar.</u>
<u>Kāmil</u>	Ibn al-Athīr, <u>al-Kāmil fī l-Tārīkh.</u>
<u>Kashshāf</u>	al-Zamakhsharī, <u>al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq Ghawāmid al-Tanzīl.</u>

<u>Khamsūn</u>	al-Rāzī, <u>al-Masā'il al-Khamsūn</u>
<u>Kitāb al-Nafs</u>	al-Rāzī, <u>Kitāb al-Nafs wa-Sharḥ Quwāhumā</u>
<u>K. Luma'</u>	al-Ash'arī, <u>Kitāb al-Luma' fī l-Radd 'alā Ahl al-Zaygh wa-l-Bida'</u>
<u>Lawāmi'</u>	al-Rāzī, <u>Lawāmi' al-Bayyināt fī Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh Ta'ālā wa-l-Ṣifāt</u>
<u>Lisān</u>	al-'Asqalānī, <u>Lisān al-Mizān</u>
<u>Lubāb</u>	al-Rāzī, <u>Lubāb al-Ishārāt</u>
<u>Ma'ālim</u>	al-Rāzī, <u>al-Ma'ālim fī Uṣūl al-Dīn</u>
<u>Mabāhith</u>	al-Rāzī, <u>al-Mabāhith al-Mashriqiyya</u>
<u>Mafātih</u>	al-Rāzī, <u>Mafātih al-Ghayb</u>
<u>Manāqib</u>	al-Rāzī, <u>Manāqib al-Imām al-Shāfi'i</u>
<u>Matālib</u>	al-Rāzī, <u>al-Matālib al-'Āliya</u>
<u>Miftāh</u>	Ṭāshkūbrizāda, <u>Miftāh al-Sa'āda wa-l-Misbāh al-Siyāda fī Hawdū'āt al-'Ulūm</u>
<u>Milal</u>	al-Shahrastānī, <u>al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal</u>
<u>Mir'āt</u>	Ibn Jawzī, <u>Mir'āt al-Zamān fī Tārīkh al-A'yān</u>

- Muḥaṣṣal al-Rāzī, Muḥaṣṣal Afkār al-Mutaqaddimīn wa-l-Muta'akhhirīn min al-'Ulamā' wa-l-Hukamā'
- Munāzarāt al-Rāzī, Munāzarāt Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī fī Bilād mā Warā' al-Nahr
- Nihāyat al-Ījāz al-Rāzī, Nihāyat al-Ījāz fī Dirāyat al-I'jāz
- N. Iqdām al-Shahrastānī, Kitāb Nihāyat al-Iqdām fī 'Ilm al-Kalām
- N. 'Uqūl al-Rāzī, Nihāyat al-'Uqūl fī Dirāyat al-Uṣūl
- Nujūm Ibn Taghri-Birdī, al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira
- Qurtubī al-Qurtubī, al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān
- Rawdāt al-Khansārī, Rawdāt al-Jannāt fī Aḥwāl al-'Ulamā' wa-l-Sādāt
- Risāla al-Rāzī, al-Risāla al-Kamāliyya fī l-Ḥaqā'iq al-Ilāhiyya
- Sharḥ al-Rāzī, Sharḥ al-Ishārāt
- Ṭabaqāt al-Subkī, Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā
- Ṭabarī al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān

<u>Tahāfut</u>	al-Ghazālī, <u>Tahāfut al-Falāsifa</u>
<u>Tamhīd</u>	al-Bāqillānī, <u>Tamhīd fī Radd ‘alā l-Mulhida al-Mu‘attila wa-l-Rāfida wa-l-Khawārij wa-l-Mu‘tazila</u>
<u>Tarājim</u>	Abū Shāma, <u>Tarājim Rijāl al-Qarnayn al-Sādis wa l-Sābi‘</u>
<u>Tārīkh</u>	al-Qiftī, <u>Tārīkh al-Hukamā‘</u>
<u>Tawhīd</u>	al-Rāzī, <u>Risāla fī l-Tawhīd</u>
<u>Thalāth Rasā‘il</u>	al-Jurjānī al-Khaṭṭabī Rummānī
	<u>Thalāth Rasā‘il fī I‘jāz al-Qur‘ān</u>
<u>‘Uyūn</u>	Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a, <u>‘Uyūn al-Anbā‘ fī Ṭabaqāt al-Atibbā‘</u>
<u>Wafayāt</u>	Ibn Khallikān, <u>Wafayāt al-A‘yān wa-Anbā‘ Abnā‘ al-Zamān</u>
<u>Wāfī</u>	al-Ṣafadī, <u>al-Wāfī bi-l-Wafayāt</u>

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most important events in the development of Islamic thought is the encounter between the early Muslim community in its formative period and the foreign cultures it met with in its expansion. The collision between the dogmatic principles of Islam and Greek philosophy with its many branches gave rise to a scientific and intellectual movement which reached its climax in the fifth Islamic century. The synthesis of those two distinct approaches was to give rise to two schools of thought; on the one hand, we have Muslim philosophers such as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā who laid more emphasis on the rational and speculative sciences and subjected religious tenets to rational interpretation in order to give them currency and acceptability. On the other hand we have the school of theologians (mutakallims) who particularly in the later period, to safeguard the divine nature of the fundamentals of religion argued against philosophy using the techniques of argumentation developed by their opponents the philosophers. The theologians attempted to endow dogma with a rational basis and did not hesitate to exploit speculation against the anti-dogmatic attitude of the philosophers. The most famous schools of theology to adopt this method of argument were the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites, who were both influenced by the philosophic approach of free thinking although they differ in the degree to which they

were influenced. Following his precursors al-Bāqillānī and al-Juwaynī, al-Ghazālī is the most spectacular figure in this process. Not only was he successful in removing rational obstacles to the acceptance of the veracity of religious tenets, he was also successful in his rebuttal of philosophers through his erudition in philosophy and masterly exploitation of flexible alternatives in speculation, a skill he acquired from his study of philosophy itself.

It is generally accepted that our author Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī is another figure in the chain representing the defence of religion against philosophy. In fact he shares many attributes with his predecessor al-Ghazālī. They were both Ash'arites and Shāfi'ites; both were interested in theology and philosophy and they in general defended religion against the latter in their works. Moreover, they were both the most prominent and widely respected scholars of their times. These similarities are striking when judged at their face value without detailed analysis of their positions. True al-Rāzī was the most learned and celebrated scholar of his time, but what is not beyond doubt is whether like al-Ghazālī he was an exponent of the Ash'arite school against the philosophers. There are many reasons for doubting the assertion.

Firstly, unlike al-Ghazālī al-Rāzī entertained a greater interest in philosophy which occupied almost all of his academic life. His professional knowledge of

philosophy can well be attested by his commentaries on many works of Ibn Sīnā as well as his own purely philosophical works. Thus it is logical that al-Rāzī had more reasons to be influenced by philosophy.

Secondly, al-Rāzī is not always clear and explicit in his treatment of various controversial issues. His unique way of analysing problems, his extensive elaboration, divisions and subdivisions of the issue in the smallest details, together with complete presentation of the opposing views usually make al-Rāzī's position difficult to identify. The straightforward and explicit manner of exposition favoured by al-Ghazālī is not to be found in al-Rāzī. To this his concise treatises are exceptions, but they become less representative of al-Rāzī's views when compared with his major works where his intellectual abilities can be fully observed. Our judgement that al-Rāzī is difficult to understand is despite the fact that he uses an easy and characteristically well-balanced language in his works.

Thirdly, one should note that he is so equivocal in his arguments that it is sometimes difficult to discern whether he is acting as a philosopher in the defence of philosophy or as a theologian in the defence of religion. In this respect he is selective, for he criticises the philosophers and the theologians equally, and adopts a position according to the strength of argument put forward. Thus he cannot be categorically classified as either a traditional theologian or a philosopher. This

unique aspect of his intellectual approach has led many observers to comment that like Ibn Rushd he attempted to reconcile religion with philosophy. This view can find support from the nature of his tafsīr and some other of his works where he mixes religion with philosophy, but whether this was his conscious intent or merely the consequence of other factors necessitates further exploration of al-Rāzī's personality and thought. The evolution in al-Rāzī's ideas can be traced through a study of his works with a special regard for their chronological order. Contradictions can be noted in his treatment of major issues such as the creation of the world and the Divine Attributes. However, such contradictions cannot be explained away as merely the product of intellectual evolution; they must arise from some other factor at work in al-Rāzī's intellectual framework.

Scholars have been aware of the presence of some factor which moulded al-Rāzī's attitudes to his arguments but have shown little unanimity in identifying the nature of this factor. Some are of the opinion that like al-Ghazālī he was a traditional Ash'arite scholar advocating religion against philosophy. Others have found him too philosophical and considered him as having little care for religion, while yet others have termed him a Mu'tazilite. Mystics have regarded him too worldly, arrogant and distant from what they themselves perceived as reality. He was even accused of worshipping stars by a scholar like Ibn Taymiyya.

The main reason for such contrasting evaluations of al-Rāzī's position was his scepticism. When examining the main body of his scholarly contribution we are forced to entertain the notion that they are the product of a sceptical mind. Although scepticism is one of the major conditions of an original thinker, it can be a destructive force unless it is tempered by a new insight into the reality of the universe, an insight which is conducive to the reappraisal of all previous knowledge. However, al-Rāzī was never able to overcome his scepticism. Even in his last work, al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya, he reiterates his case against both philosophy and dogmatism. In this work his scepticism can be observed in the doubt he entertains on such fundamental questions as the validity of dogmatic evidence.

Al-Rāzī's scepticism can also be observed in some of his poems where he complains of his own temperament with a pessimistic view on the kind of knowledge and happiness that man can possess in this transient world.

However, this long-lasting scepticism left al-Rāzī only in the last months of his life when he was seriously ill. He begins his waṣiyya with a long and moving munājāt commending himself to God's mercy and reaffirming his belief in Islam. He denounces both philosophy and theology and advises man against deep contemplation on the nature of phenomena.

In view of the importance of al-Rāzī in the history of Islamic thought, the number of scholarly articles and

works which have taken his life, works and thought as their subjects is surprisingly small. They all contribute towards a better understanding of al-Rāzī's position in Islamic literature but none can claim to have offered an exhaustive study of al-Rāzī's scholarship and his importance. They leave room for further inquiry into the historical environment in which al-Rāzī lived in order that many of the uncertainties surrounding his life may be clarified. Despite the few valuable studies of al-Rāzī's works, there are still gaps to be filled by further studies on those works attributed to him but where his authorship is disputed.

This present study aims at exposing al-Rāzī's treatment of major problems which have been the points of controversy between the theologians and philosophers on the one hand, and the Ash'arites and Mu'tazilites on the other. In the analysis of each issue a brief introduction on the general characteristics of the controversy has been presented so that the reader may be familiar with the particular points relevant to the discussion in question. This is followed by a summary of the major arguments and counter-arguments collected from the works of our author. In their presentation the arguments are re-arranged and simplified usually with the answer following the objection. When necessary, a comparison is drawn between al-Rāzī's solution to the problems and those presented by his predecessors like al-Ghazālī and al-Shahrastānī. Ibn Sīnā has frequently been referred to as al-Rāzī's main

source in philosophical disputes. However it is not the main aim of this work to present a comparative study of al-Rāzī's thoughts, as this could well provide the basis for several further studies on the subject. Many other controversial aspects of minor importance in theology have been omitted as such a comprehensive study cannot be included in a thesis of this nature, and indeed it would be virtually impossible for a single work to encompass all aspects of a prolific scholar such as al-Rāzī.

This study began as an exploration of al-Rāzī's tafsīr Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb for it is in his role as a Qur'ānic commentator that he is best known. As the philosophical and theological arguments are the most striking feature of his tafsīr this study followed the development of several of his arguments throughout his other works. Thus while Chapter One is devoted to a survey of the main characteristics of his Qur'ānic commentary, the following five chapters are each devoted to one of the main controversial issues in theology with which he dealt in his major works.

It is hoped that this study will help to create a better understanding of al-Rāzī's methods and approach to exegesis, theology and philosophy.

CHAPTER I

FAKHR AL-DĪN AL-RĀZĪ'S LIFE AND WORKS

Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. al-Ḥusayn Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī was born in Rayy in 544/1149. He was also known by various titles acquired in his life-time: Abū l-Faḍl, Abū l-Ma'ālī, al-Imām, Ibn al-Khaṭīb, Khaṭīb al-Rayy and Shaykh al-Islām.¹ His father Diyā' al-Dīn, commonly known as Khaṭīb al-Rayy was himself a celebrated scholar of his time. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī was brought up in the Shāfi'ite rite and belonged to the Ash'arite sect, although as we shall see later, being a free thinker, he was not a strict follower of either of these codes. His biographers give very little information about his early life. They unanimously report that al-Rāzī's first teacher in kalām and fiqh was his father. This can also be substantiated by al-Rāzī's narration of views expressed by his father in his works. After his father's death al-Rāzī took lessons in theology from Majd al-Dīn al-Jīlī. His teacher in jurisprudence was al-Kamāl al-Samnānī. His knowledge of theology is traced back through the chain of teachers up to Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī,

1. Tārīkh, p. 291; Miftāḥ, vol. I, p. 445; Wafayāt, vol. I, p. 600; Wāfī, vol. IV, p. 248; Tabaqāt, vol. IV, p. 33; Lisān, vol. IV, p. 426.

and that of jurisprudence to al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī.¹ However, his erudition was attained by his private readings and is attested by his exploitation of a vast scholarly literature in his works.

His Travels

Following the traditional custom in the search of knowledge, al-Rāzī spent many years travelling to various parts of the Muslim world.² The most informative account of his travels can be found in his own work Munāzarāt Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī fī Bilād Mā Warā’ al-Nahr. In this work al-Rāzī lists the places he visited, and the scholars he met, and offers summaries of the discussions he held with them.³ This work consisting of 16 chapters relating to kalām and fiqh, also reveals many aspects of al-Rāzī's personality. It allows us an insight into his manner of debating with the famous scholars of his age. We can observe him exploiting every device known to the expert dialectician in order to gain the upper hand over his opponent. In describing his opponents he is full of irony as when for example he describes al-Rādī al-Nīsābūrī as honest but slow in reasoning⁴, the qādī of Ghazna as

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1. ‘Uyūn, vol. II, p. 23; Miftāh, vol. I, p. 445; Wafayāt, vol. I, pp. 600-02; Wāfi, vol. IV, p. 249; Ṭabaqāt, vol. V, p. 35; Rawdāt, vol. VIII, p. 40.
 2. Tārīkh, p. 291.
 3. Munāzarāt, p. 5 (the reference is to the text).
 4. Ibid.

jealous and ignorant¹, Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Mas'ūdī the famous theologian of Bukhārā as too arrogant and having too much confidence in al-Ghazālī's work², while in Bukhārā he rebukes Nūr al-Ṣābūnī for his saying that he did not find any worthwhile scholar on his journey to Mecca to perform the Ḥajj. After long discussions al-Rāzī forces his opponent to accept his ignorance.³

In the same work al-Rāzī criticises al-Ghazālī's works Shifā' al-'Alīl, Mustaṣfā⁴ and Tahāfut al-Falāsifa.⁵ He is also critical of al-Shahrastānī's al-Milal wa l-Niḥal, alleging that al-Shahrastānī copied many parts of his work from earlier scholars such as for example the chapter on Islamic sects which was taken from al-Baghdādī's al-Farq bayn al-Firaq, which according to al-Rāzī due to the author's partisanship does not reflect the genuine beliefs of the heretics. The part dealing with the practices of the ancient Arabs was taken from al-Jāḥiẓ.⁶ These assertions were investigated by Paul Kraus and found to be justified.⁷ However, in his later works this self-assertive mood of al-Rāzī does not prevail.

1. Ibid., p. 21.

2. Ibid., pp. 32-38.

3. Ibid., p. 14.

4. Ibid., pp. 43-48.

5. Ibid., pp. 35-38.

6. Ibid., pp. 39-42.

7. Kraus, "The Controversies of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī", Islamic Culture XII, 1938, p. 146.

Al-Rāzī travelled to Khwārazm and Transoxiana presumably to convert the Mu'tazilites and the Karramites to Sunnism. As a result of having disputes with the local scholars he was forced to leave these places.¹ Afterwards, he established good relations with Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ghūrī and settled in Herat where he taught in a madrasa built for him. Once in the presence of a large audience including the Sultan Shihāb al-Dīn he held heated discussions with the Karramite leader 'Abd al-Majīd Ibn al-Qudwa which led al-Rāzī to abuse his opponent in harsh words. The incident gained momentum, and the next day, Diyā' al-Dīn al-Ghūrī, the sultan's cousin, who himself was a supporter of Karramism encountered al-Rāzī at the Friday prayer, and accused him of kufr on the grounds that he read the works of Ibn Sīnā and Aristotle, and declared him guilty of abusing the Muslim scholar Ibn Qudwa. The speech aroused the feelings of the populace to such an extent that they were incited to kill al-Rāzī. Realising the danger posed by the incident the sultan calmed the people, assuring them that he would exile al-Rāzī from Herat. As al-Rāzī left the city discreetly a possible riot was averted.² However, the

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1. Wafayāt, vol. I, p. 600; Wāfī, vol. IV, p. 249; Ṭabaqāt, vol. V, p. 35; Rawḍāt, vol. VIII, p. 41.
 2. Wāfī, vol. IV, p. 249; Mir'āt, vol. VIII, p. 542; Bidāya, vol. XIII, p. 55; Rawḍāt, vol. VIII, p. 44. According to Ibn Sā'ī this event took place in the year 595 A.H. (Jāmi' al-Mukhtaṣar, vol. IX, p. 5.).

seriousness of the event was to impress the chroniclers so much that they described the year in which this incident took place as sanat al-fitna.¹

His Scholarship and His Critics

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī was undoubtedly the most celebrated scholar among his contemporaries. He wrote in many fields of knowledge, such as philosophy, theology, law, medicine, astronomy, logic, astrology, physiognomy. According to al-Qiftī, al-Rāzī in his early life was also interested in alchemy, but his ambitions were not fulfilled and he lost a great deal of money in the pursuit of this interest.² Al-Rāzī became acquainted with philosophic arguments when he was still a young boy. In al-Matālib al-‘Āliya he states that when he was still a young student he argued against the thesis that movement is conducive to the eternity of matter.³ It is reported that he could recite by heart Imām al-Ḥaramayn's al-Shāmil.⁴ His clear mind, trained memory, and his great ability for persuasive speech are among the attributes he possessed. He used both Arabic and Persian with great precision.⁵ Although

1. Risāla, introduction, p. yā' wā'.

2. Tārīkh, p. 292.

3. Matālib, vol. II, f. 185b.

4. Wafayāt, vol. I, p. 600; Wāfī, vol. IV, p. 249.

5. Wafayāt, vol. I, p. 600; Miftāḥ, vol. I, p. 445.

The biographers also record some poems written by al-Rāzī in both Arabic and Persian ('Uyūn, vol. II, pp. 28-29; Wāfī, vol. IV, p. 248.).

he adopted many techniques and arguments of Ibn Sīnā in his philosophic works, he always maintained a critical attitude while approaching the issues already dealt with by his predecessors. This can be seen clearly in an examination of al-Mabāḥith al-Mashriqiyya and Sharḥ al-Ishārat. With regard to the latter, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's comment is very famous, that al-Rāzī's commentary on the Ishārāt of Ibn Sīnā is in fact not a commentary at all, but rather a refutation of the text.¹ It was this critical approach of al-Rāzī that forced al-Ṭūsī to write a supercommentary on al-Ishārāt by way of an explanation of the difficult points in the book, as well as in reply to al-Rāzī's criticism.

Although al-Rāzī was an Ash'arite he did not follow the precepts of the sect strictly and on many issues he differs from al-Ash'arī. It was this liberated attitude of al-Rāzī that caused some of his opponents to accuse him of being a Mu'tazilite, and indeed they have some justification for their accusation. On some theological issues al-Rāzī shows a Mu'tazilite tendency as for example in the question of the divine attributes, the visibility of God and the nature of dogmatic evidence.² The influence of his philosophic training is evident in his analysis of many controversial problems. In the elaboration of his

1. Fakhry, A History of Islamic Philosophy, p. 356;
Sharḥ, p. 2.

2. Goldziher, "Aus der Theologie des Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī",
Der Islam III (1912), pp. 213-47.

arguments he shows little hesitation in borrowing from both non-Muslim and heretical Muslim scholars, such as Abū 'l-Barakāt Hibat Allāh b. Malkā al-Baghdādī¹, a Jew, Thābit b. Qurra², a Christian, Abū 'l-'Ālā' al-Ma'arri³, a poet best known for his heretical views.

One of the most striking aspects of al-Rāzī is his reconciliation of philosophy with dogma. This can be seen very clearly in his tafsīr Mafātīh al-Ghayb, where in the interpretation of the verses he uses philosophical conceptions to justify the plausibility of dogmatic principles. This alone would suggest that like Ibn Rushd he believed in the unity of truth, for the attainment of which both philosophy and religion are equally valid. This assumption can further be supported by al-Rāzī's tolerant attitude towards Muslim philosophers like Ibn Sīnā, whom he does not accuse of heresy like his predecessor al-Ghazālī. Although al-Rāzī himself refuted the Muslim philosophers and criticised their views on numerous occasions, this criticism arose from his independent mind and unique rationalism. Thus his disagreement with the philosophers may be attributed less to his role as a theologian than to his respect for sound philosophic argument, as in thinking he is closer to the

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1. Rawdāt, vol. VIII, p. 45; Kraus, "The Controversies of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi", Islamic Culture XII (1938), p. 133.
 2. Mafātīh, vol. V, p. 435.
 3. Ibid., vol. I, p. 4.

philosophers than to the theologians. Al-Rāzī's self-assertion is a significant aspect in his treatment of controversies both philosophical and theological.

Al-Rāzī attracted many opponents in his lifetime, among them the Karramites, the Ḥanbalites and the Mu'tazilites. The Karramites exploited every opportunity to make false allegations against him. It is reported that he died as a result of being poisoned by them.¹ The Ḥanbalites also used to abuse him even when he was preaching from the pulpit and one incident in particular has been recorded. One day while he was preaching in the mosque they handed him a piece of paper on which it was written that his wife and sons were adulterers. Al-Rāzī read the text of the allegation aloud and admitted the possibility that his wife and sons committed such a sin as they were liable to error and then he prayed to God to direct them to good deeds; but as to the sin of conceiving God as a body he vouched that neither he nor his family had ever uttered such a blasphemy.²

1. Tārīkh, p. 292; Nujūm, vol. VI, p. 197.

2. Wāfī, vol. IV, p. 250. According to al-Subkī, it was the Ḥashawiyya who accused al-Rāzī of such baseless charges (Ṭabaqāt, vol. V, p. 36). It is reported that once after being upset by such childish behaviour of his adversaries al-Rāzī expressed his feelings by the following poem:

Al-Mar'u mā dāma ḥayyan yustahāru bihī
wa ya'zumu l-riz'u bihī ḥīna yaftaqidū.

"As long as man is alive he is belittled but when he is dead he is greatly missed." (Miftāḥ, vol. I, p. 449; Wafayāt, vol. I, p. 602; Ṭabaqāt, vol. V, p. 36; Rawdat, vol. VIII, p. 41).

This reply represents a counter-attack by al-Rāzī to the effect that wrong belief in God is a more serious crime. Even al-Rāzī's brother Rukn al-Dīn was guilty of attempting to harm him. This was mainly due to jealousy at his brother's popularity. Despite al-Rāzī's indulgent attitude towards his brother's jealous passions he was never free from malicious attacks. This dangerous hostility on the part of his brother led al-Rāzī to request the Sultan Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ghūrī to hold him in a virtual state of open arrest. The Sultan kept him in a certain town providing him with a regular income from a farm given to him. However, when he died, al-Rāzī's enemies alleged that he had instigated the death of his brother.¹ The same allegation was made when the scholar Majd al-Dīn al-Baghdādī was drowned.² In fact Majd al-Dīn al-Baghdādī was a close friend of al-Rāzī and there was no hostility between them. His opponents were so unscrupulous that they even held him responsible for the murder of the Sultan Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ghūrī³ in the face of the fact that this sultan was a patron of al-Rāzī and a close associate leaving no motive for such treachery and there being absolutely no evidence. However, the very lack of any basis for these calumnies can only attest to the enmity which he aroused in some of his contemporaries.

1. 'Uyūn, vol. II, p. 25.

2. Rawdāt, vol. VIII, p. 43.

3. Jāmi' al-Mukhtaṣar, vol. IX, p. 171.

Al-Rāzī was also to suffer at the hands of the Ismā'īlites who were in a position of strength in his time. It was al-Rāzī's habit to curse them when he discussed their heretical beliefs during his discourse. As this hostile attitude of al-Rāzī was very influential among the populace, the leader of the Ismā'īlites dispatched a secret assassin in the guise of a student who stayed in the madrasa for about seven months, until once he found al-Rāzī alone, and threatened him with a knife. However, the would-be assassin was able to elicit from our author a sworn promise never to curse the Ismā'īlites again. The Ismā'īlite leader sent him an annual gift of money which was to become an unbearable embarrassment to al-Rāzī.¹

One of the major criticisms levelled against al-Rāzī is that in his works he reproduces the objections of the opponents of Sunnism both clearly and in elaborate detail, but when coming to the refutation of these objections al-Rāzī is often too concise and unconvincing.² Some observers thus deduced that al-Rāzī did this intentionally to weaken the position of the Ahl al-Sunna. Presumably, it was this view that led some biographers to accuse him of scepticism in the fundamental principles of faith.³ As to whether this allegation is true or not, there has been

1. Jāmi', p. 170; Risāla, introduction, p. kāf tā'.

2. Mir'āt, vol. VIII, p. 542; Lisān, vol. IV, p. 428; Wāfī, vol. IV, p. 251; Tarājim, p. 68.

3. Lisān, vol. IV, p. 426; Ṭabaqāt, vol. V, p. 36; Miftāh, vol. I, p. 448.

some evaluation of his method in coping with opposing arguments. It has been suggested that having produced the opposing views at length he had so exhausted his patience that he kept his own refutation as succinct as possible. This may have an element of truth, but it is easily recognised from his writings that al-Rāzī has a predilection for the short answer in response to the lengthy argument. However, it is hard to substantiate the claim that he exploited this technique to weaken the position of orthodoxy. It is not consistent with al-Rāzī's temperament or nature to dispute implicitly where he would more characteristically have made his criticism most explicit. He unhesitatingly expressed his disagreement with his masters Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī and al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī whenever he differed from them, and he also exhibited his sympathy with the Mu'tazilites and the philosophers on many issues. Thus if al-Rāzī had not genuinely believed in the general principles of Sunnism he would most certainly have declared his position publicly, as his courage and intellectual honesty is evident in his works and actions.

It can be suggested that the reason for al-Rāzī's terse refutation is as follows: firstly, he took pride in his ability to reproduce the views of his opponents exactly and impartially.¹ This he must have regarded as an attitude required of every honest scholar. In fact

1. Mabāhith, vol. I, pp. 4-5; al-Dhahabī, al-Tafsīr wa-l-Mufasssīrūn, vol. I, p. 295.

al-Ghazālī himself was criticised for reporting the arguments of the philosophers so eloquently in his Tahāfut.¹ Secondly, al-Rāzī in the beginning of every dispute either explains his own line of thought on the issue or indicates his choice among the different alternatives given by him as a possible solution to the problem. Thus when he is content to provide a short answer, he implicitly refers to the account given as the exposition of his view or the preferred alternative. He is therefore concise in the presentation of his own case in reply to the question posed, in order to avoid the repetition of a previously stated position. Thirdly, he does not invariably choose the short answer in his reply, and will sometimes develop his own argument at some length, sometimes far more elaborated than the opposing argument. Once having established his own position at length, he will refrain from repeating his own argument and will refer the reader to his "long answer" should he dwell on the same issue on another occasion. He not only does refer the reader to particular sections within one work, but often directs his reader to his other works to find his elaborate argument. The criticism that he provides short answers to lengthy arguments cannot, therefore, be accepted without qualification.

Another controversial point is centred around al-Rāzī's work al-Sirr al-Maktūm fī Mukhāṭabat al-Nujūm. It has been

1. al-Ghazālī, al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl, pp. 28-29.

alleged that the book advocates sorcery and that al-Rāzī himself believed in it. Al-Subkī while writing on al-Rāzī discusses this matter and claims that it was not written by al-Rāzī.¹ However, recent researches have proved that it is in fact correctly ascribed to our author. However the contents of the book do not justify the view that he is actually advocating or ascribing to sorcery.² Al-Rāzī's views on this matter can also be found in his other works. What he approves of in fact is the study of astrology as a branch of knowledge, but as to its practice he distinguishes between what is permitted by Islam and what is not.³ The fact that he did not believe in astrology can be attested by his refutation in his Munāzarāt of a prediction by some astrologers that a devastating storm would take place in the year 582 A.H. By drawing upon the works of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, al-Rāzī comes to the conclusion that there is no connection between the heavenly movements and events in the sub-lunar world, and that astrology cannot therefore be a real science.⁴

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1. Tabaqāt, vol. V, p. 36; see also Rawḍāt, vol. VIII, p. 46.
 2. Ma'ṣūmī, M. S., "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and his critics", Islamic Studies VI (1967), pp. 355-374, p. 362.
 3. Mafātih, vol. I, pp. 430-36; Mabāhith, vol. II, p. 423.
 4. Munāzarāt, p. 32. However, Dr. Zarkān in his work, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī wa-Ārā'uh al-Kalāmiyya wa-l-Falsafiyya (p. 52) quotes some extracts from al-Rāzī's last work al-Matālib al-'Āliya in order to assert that al-Rāzī believed in the benefits of sorcery. Furthermore, relying on a manuscript of al-Sirr al-Maktūm, the author/

It is clear from the foregoing discussions that the major allegations against al-Rāzī were fabricated by his adversaries. A thorough study of al-Rāzī's life and his ideas will undoubtedly help to invalidate such criticisms.

His Students and Contemporaries

Although the sixth Islamic century marks the end of the age of original scholars it still witnessed great thinkers such as Ibn Rushd (520-595), al-Suhrawardī (549-587), Ibn 'Arabī (560-638) and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jaylānī (471-561). The Jewish scholar Mūsā b. Maymūn is also among the contemporaries of al-Rāzī. We are told that al-Suhrawardī was al-Rāzī's colleague when they both attended the lectures of Majd al-Dīn al-Jīlī. There is no evidence, however, that he had any correspondence with Ibn Rushd in Spain.¹

As to Ibn 'Arabī it is reported that he sent a letter to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī inviting him to embrace mysticism, after learning of al-Rāzī's great abilities from one of his students.² It has been claimed by some

author proves that al-Rāzī himself practiced it. His work al-Ikhtiyārāt al-'Ālā'iyya which was dedicated to 'Alā' al-Dīn Malikshāh to help him to receive guidance from the stars is shown as another proof of al-Rāzī's sympathy with magic. This however contrasts with what al-Rāzī says in the tafsīr.

1. Zarkān, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, p. 16.
2. Risāla, introduction, p. lā' bā'.

of his biographers that al-Rāzī was also a mystic and they report anecdotes concerning his meeting with some Ṣūfīs of his time.¹

As the most prominent scholar of his time al-Rāzī attracted numerous students from every part of the Muslim world. When he moved from one place to another at least 300 students would follow him.² Among the most famous of the students to take classes from him in the various sciences were Quṭb al-Dīn al-Miṣrī, Zayn al-‘Ābidīn al-Kashshī, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nīsābūrī, Muḥammad b. Riḍwān, Sharaf al-Dīn al-Harawī, Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī, Afḍal al-Dīn al-Khunjī, Tāj al-Dīn al-Armawī, Shams al-Dīn al-Khū’ī and al-Shaykh Muḥammad Khusrawshāhī.³

His Death

The biographers claim that al-Rāzī was probably poisoned by his bitter enemies, the Karramites. After suffering from painful illnesses al-Rāzī died in Herat in 606/1209.⁴ Before he died he dictated his waṣiyya to his

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1. Miftāh, vol. I, p. 251.
 2. ‘Uyūn, vol. II, p. 23; Wāfī, vol. IV, p. 248.
 3. Risāla, introduction, p. nūn; Mir’āt, vol. VIII, p. 542; Zarkān, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, p. 32.
 4. ‘Uyūn, vol. II, p. 26; Wafayāt, vol. I, p. 606; Wāfī, vol. IV, p. 250; Mir’āt, vol. VIII, p. 542; Nujūm, vol. VI, p. 197; Bidāya, vol. XIII, p. 55; Kāmil, vol. XII, p. 190; Ṭabaqāt, vol. V, p. 39; Rawḍāt, vol. VIII, p. 42. It is reported by the above-mentioned sources that when al-Rāzī died he left 80,000 dinars in gold, which indicates the enormous wealth he had during/

student Ibrāhīm al-Iṣfahānī. This waṣiyya is a moving example of the absolute resignation of a mortal being to the divine mercy. He admits that he wrote in various fields without sufficient care to distinguish the useful from the harmful. This can be taken as an excuse for his controversial works like al-Sirr al-Maktūm and al-Ikhtiyārāt al-‘Ālā‘iyya, since, as al-Rāzī himself pointed out, his aim was positive and he draws attention particularly to his well-known works (al-kutub al-mu‘tabara) as the expression of his main intentions. In his waṣiyya he also reveals his feelings of dissatisfaction with philosophy and theology; he prefers the Qur’ānic method in the pursuit of truth over the philosophic method, and advises against deep contemplation on unsolvable problems, as according to him the human intellect disintegrates in the face of such complicated issues.¹ This last testament of al-Rāzī on the value of philosophy and theology should be borne in mind when his conclusions on various controversial issues are evaluated.

during his lifetime. This is mainly due to his close association with the rulers of the time like Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ghūrī, the Khwārazmshāh Muḥammad b. Takash and his wazīr ‘Alā’ al-Mulk who was al-Rāzī's son-in-law.

1. Waṣiyya, ‘Uyūn, vol. II, p. 29; Tabaqāt, vol. V, p. 37.

His Works

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī is one of the most prolific scholars in Muslim history. His works are many and the subjects he dealt with are various. As has already been noted, he wrote on exegesis, theology, philosophy, medicine, linguistics, physics, astronomy, history, heresiography, astrology and physiognomy. There are only a few incomplete studies on the works of al-Rāzī. The biographers claim that he wrote over two hundred books, but usually they give the names of only those that are well-known.¹

However, in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī wa Ārā'uh al-Kalāmiyya wa l-Falsafiyya, Dr. Zarkān considers 193 works ascribed to al-Rāzī in various sources, but concludes that only 93 of them could be proved to have been written by al-Rāzī. The rest are either controversial or are works wrongly attributed to him. In reaching this conclusion Dr. Zarkān has used valuable techniques beside the advantage of exploiting the surveys of his predecessors. As this is an excellent and comprehensive analysis of al-Rāzī's works we refer the reader to this work for further information.²

1. Bidāya, vol. XIII, p. 55; Jāmi' al-Mukhtasar, vol. IX, p. 367.

2. Zarkān, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, pp. 56-118.

CHAPTER II

FAKHR AL-DĪN AL-RĀZĪ'S APPROACH TO THE QUR'ĀN

Al-Rāzī is famous as an exegete as well as a theologian-philosopher. His commentary Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb (the keys to the unknown), or commonly known as al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr, is his greatest work both in volume and importance. Before discussing some aspects of this work, the controversy over al-Rāzī's authorship of the whole of the book will be dealt with.

According to the Kashf al-Zunūn¹ and Wafayāt al-A'yān² al-Rāzī died before completing this work. The former gives the two names of al-Shaykh Najm al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Qammūlī (d. 767 A.H.) and Shihāb al-Dīn b. Khalīl al-Khū'ī as those who completed the Tafsīr. This question, however, has been dealt with by few scholars, all of whom come to the same conclusion, that the book was completely written by al-Rāzī himself.³ In arriving at this conclusion they relied mainly on the dates at the end of some sūras.

1. Kashf, vol. II, p. 1756.

2. Wafayāt, vol. I, p. 600.

3. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī Mufasssiran, pp. 51-63; M. al-Fāḍil Ibn 'Ashūr, al-Tafsīr wa Rijāluh, p. 119; Risāla, introduction by M. Bāqir Sabzawārī, p. 1ā'-hā'; Zarkān, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī wa Ārā'uh al-Kalāmiyya, p. 65, footnote.

The latest of these dates is 603 A.H.¹ at which time al-Rāzī had two years more to live, his death being in 606 A.H. Although this can be taken as reliable evidence for al-Rāzī's authorship of the first half, it cannot remove doubts as to whether the second part was also written by al-Rāzī, as the later suras do not contain dates. Thus there should be another proof for the claim that the whole work was written by al-Rāzī, and it can only lie in the stylistic consistency and uniformity which is manifested through the whole of the book. Such observations can only be made after an extensive and careful reading of the various parts of the work and familiarity with the devices and particular features the author constantly employed in his language.

To strengthen the above-mentioned arguments it can be suggested that if there is an essential resemblance in ideas between what al-Rāzī expresses in the Tafsīr and those expressed in other works, the authorship of which has undoubtedly been ascribed to al-Rāzī, then the doubts in this field will be considerably removed. A study of his Tafsīr and its comparison with other major works of al-Rāzī leads one to the inescapable conclusion that there is no inconsistency between the ideas expressed in the first part of the Tafsīr and those expressed in the second half and also between what he says in the Tafsīr as a whole and in his other works. In reaching this conclusion

1. Risāla, introduction, p. lā'-ḥā'.

the evolution in al-Rāzī's ideas has also been taken into consideration.

In the compilation of his Tafsīr, al-Rāzī made full use of the works of his predecessors. In the explanation of the linguistic aspects of the verses he mainly relied on al-Zamakhshārī's al-Kashshāf, although sometimes he is critical of his sources. In refutation of the Mu'tazilite and other sectarian views he made use of his vast knowledge of philosophy, logic and dialectics. In his treatment of theological points the Mu'tazilite scholar Abū Muslim al-Iṣfahānī's commentary exerted a considerable influence on him.

The encyclopaedic nature of the Tafsīr which, quite apart from the formal interpretation of the Qur'ān, represents al-Rāzī's knowledge in various fields, has drawn severe criticisms from different scholars. According to Ibn Taymiyya it is a commentary which is inclusive of all things except exegesis ("fīh kull shay' illā al-tafsīr"). Al-Subkī answers this criticism stating that it contains all things as well as exegesis.¹

The main reason why al-Rāzī expanded his Tafsīr is that he believed that the Qur'ān embraces all knowledge. As he points out in the introduction, he once claimed that ten thousand different articles could be deduced from the Surat al-Fatiḥa alone but when challenged on this assertion by some less cultured people, he then

1. Wāfī, vol. IV, p. 254.

proceeded to write this long introduction to the Tafsīr to prove that what he claimed was possible.¹

In the following chapter some of the most important aspects of al-Rāzī's tafsīr will be discussed.

al-Rāzī's interpretation of
particular words

Unlike the Mu'tazilite commentators al-Zamakhsharī and Abū Muslim al-Iṣfahānī, al-Rāzī does not favour the idea that the Qur'ān includes otiose (zā'id) words or particles.² In fact the acceptance of such an idea is sometimes the only way by which some unfamiliar constructions such as those which exist in the verses 18/1, 40/40, 14/154, 3/159, 22/25, can be explained. The method applied in such cases is either to change the order of the words or to ignore the grammatical function of certain particles. Al-Rāzī's belief that the arrangement of the verses is divinely fixed prevents him from applying the foregoing devices. Instead he looks for alternatives in syntax, i.e. in the case of the phrase fa-bi-mā rahmatin (3/159), al-Rāzī criticises the commentators who permit the occurrence of otiose particles in the Qur'ān, and claims that the particle mā here is an interrogative, denoting anxiety. The meaning of the phrase is: "with what kind of grace?"³

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1. Mafātiḥ, vol. I, p. 2.
 2. Ibid., vol. III, p. 80.
 3. Ibid.

By contrast al-Zarkashī finds fault with al-Rāzī's explanation on the grounds that if the particle is taken as an interrogative, then we have to accept the combination of mā and rahma as a construction (idāfa). Yet no particles of interrogation except ayy can form a construct with a noun. If as an alternative supposition we consider the word rahma as in apposition to mā, then we need the insertion of a hamza as a sign of interrogation in front of the phrase. As the phrase does not include it both suggestions are groundless.¹

Again in the first verse of Sūrat al-Kahf, the majority of the philologists and the commentators are of the opinion that an exchange of the places of the two adjectives qayyiman and 'iwajan is inevitable and that the verse must be understood as meaning: nazzala-hu qayyiman wa lam yaj'al-hu 'iwajan.

Al-Rāzī tries to refute this view by giving some theological reasons, e.g. that the word 'iwajan indicates that God intended to remove any defect from his identity whereas by qayyiman God's action of perfection is implied. As one cannot perfect another before being perfect oneself, the existing order is correct and need not be altered.²

Al-Zarkashī again criticises al-Rāzī on this point stating that what the linguists do when they change

1. Burhān, vol. III, p. 73.

2. Mafātiḥ, vol. IV, p. 452; cf. al-Kashshāf, vol. II, p. 702.

the places of the words in a sentence is only to bring the construction into conformity with the grammatical rules, which has nothing to do with its meaning.¹

In the interpretation of the verse 37.125, al-Rāzī mentions that a certain al-Rashīd al-Kātib claimed that if the verb tada'ūna were used instead of tadharūna it would sound better in the context. In defence of the Qur'ānic usage, al-Rāzī suggests that the supernatural character of the style of the Qur'ān is not due to the assumption that it should abide by the rules as set for an ideal speech, but that it is due to its powerful meaning and elaborate wording.² Al-Juwaynī gives a different, perhaps more convincing explanation to this question when he indicates the difference in the meanings of the two verbs; the verb yada'u means to leave or to abandon something with some degree of cautiousness whereas yadharu implies an absolute abandonment and a total rejection. Therefore the use of the latter is more in harmony with the theme.³

According to al-Khaṭṭābī some have claimed that the construction in the verse inna-hu li-ḥubbi l-khayri la shadīd (100.8), is not in common use among the Arabs and is not in conformity with the standards of the

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1. Burhān, vol. III, p. 277. See for more information about al-Rāzī's view on additional particles, Mafātīḥ, vol. III, p. 337, vol. VI, p. 152, vol. VII, p. 357.
 2. Mafātīḥ, vol. VII, p. 109.
 3. Burhān, vol. III, p. 453.

language. Al-Rāzī's interpretation of the verse is that he interprets al-khayr as property, and shadīd as stingy or strong. The meaning will be "He is stingy due to the love of property" or "he is strongly in love with property".¹ In his understanding of the verse al-Rāzī seems to follow the same interpretation as al-Zamakhsharī to the extent that he quotes the same verse of Ṭarafa adduced by al-Zamakhsharī to illustrate the meaning of the word shadīd.²

As has been seen in the interpretation of the above-mentioned verse, al-Rāzī has been greatly influenced by al-Kashshāf especially in grammatical explanations. However, he is sometimes critical of it. For instance al-Zamakhsharī explains the root meaning of the word salāh as "the spinal movement" and since the performer of this religious service bends and prostrates, this word has been used to describe this rite.³ al-Rāzī criticises al-Zamakhsharī on the grounds that the community of the Muslims has understood only the formal ritual by this word, and the meaning that al-Zamakhsharī suggests is remote from circulation. Furthermore, if we accept al-Zamakhsharī's claim, people will have doubts about the original meaning of every term in religion, on the assumption that the terms understood in one way might have denoted other meanings in the time of the Prophet.⁴

1. Mafātīh, vol. VIII, p. 491; Ṭhalāth Rasā'il, p. 40.

2. Kashshāf, vol. IV, p. 788.

3. Ibid., vol. I, p. 40.

4. Mafātīh, vol. I, p. 80.

A unique aspect of al-Rāzī's approach is his endeavour to discover theological reasons which justify Qur'ānic usages. Thus in his interpretation of the verse 55.27 he gives evidence of why only the word wajh should be used for the essence of God. The face is the most effective part of a body to reveal the identity of man; that is why we do not say that we have seen somebody unless we see his face. In the course of time, this word came to be used for indicating personality. In this latter sense it has been used for the conception of God. If what the anthropomorphists claim was true, then other parts of God's body such as the hands and the legs must perish, as the verse denotes that everything will perish except God's face, since in this case the word wajh would only mean the face. If it were objected that, since according to our understanding of the verse wajh implies the reality of God, the attributes of God are excluded from the statement, we would answer that supposing we said "Only a garment survived him" (lam yabqa li fulān illā thawb), this would mean a garment including its colour and size. Therefore when we say "There remains only the Countenance of the Lord", it means God and his attributes.¹

On some occasions al-Rāzī differs from the opinions of the majority and adopts his own rational conclusions. For example the majority of the authorities are of the opinion that the word insān in the verse 96.6 has been

1. Mafātih, vol. VIII, p. 17.

used to denote Abū Jahl while al-Rāzī holds that the word has been used in a general sense and covers all mankind; it is more appropriate because the preceding verses are impersonal statements. Consequently there is no reason to restrict it so that it refers to a certain individual. Although - as he admits - there are traditions to support the opinion of the majority, he states that his own view is more suitable in the context of the sūra.¹

Al-Rāzī's opinion also differs from the majority view on the grammatical analysis of the expression lā ilāha illā Allāh, that in order to complete the statement an implicit participle like kā'inun or mawjūdun should be placed after ilāh, e.g. lā ilāha mawjūdan illā Allāh.

Al-Rāzī's reason for not accepting such an analysis is that the supposition of a certain participle after the word ilāh to take the place of a missing predicate is in fact a restriction on the effect of the negation produced by lā, whereas, if we leave it as it is, the negation will comprise all kinds of conception relating to Godhead.²

Seeking alternatives in syntax is another device which enables al-Rāzī to deduce different implications from a single expression. Thus when he interprets the verse 96.1 he thinks of three alternative meanings to the verb khalāqa; (i) no object is required. The meaning is "Whom creation emanated from". (ii) The omitted object

1. Mafātīh, vol. VIII, p. 463.

2. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 52-53.

is taken into consideration. The meaning is, "Who has created everything". The omission would be for the purpose of widening the effect of the verb to cover all created beings. The next verse should be a statement to specify human beings alone among other creatures, because they are the abode of revelation and the best creatures on the Earth. (iii) The verb with its relative pronoun preceding it is a sentence to clarify the ambiguity of the preceding sentence and to draw attention to the phenomenon of the creation of Mankind.¹

In order to explain the words al-jazā', al-'adl and al-shafā'a in the verse 2.123, al-Rāzī draws upon old Arab customs², while in his interpretation of the expression ka-mathali jannatin fī rabwa in the verse 2.265 and the expression ikhtilāfu l-layli wa-n-nahār, 2.164, he uses his vast knowledge of geography and astronomy. Thus most commentators have interpreted the phrase ka-mathali jannatin fī rabwa as "the likeness of a garden on a height". Al-Rāzī disagrees with this interpretation on the grounds that a garden on a high place is not likely to flourish, because besides being exposed to the strong winds, it cannot benefit from the rain properly. The same is true of a garden in a hollow, since it will keep more water than is necessary. It follows that the best place for a garden remains a flat

1. Mafātīh, vol. VIII, p. 461.

2. Ibid., vol. I, p. 337.

land, where it can benefit fully from the facilities of Nature. In conclusion, the word rabwa should be interpreted as: "a fertile ground for vegetation".¹

In his interpretation of the expression ikhtilāfu l-layli wa-l-nahār (2.164) he adds difference as to place to the traditional understanding of the words as referring to difference of night and day as to time, basing this on his belief in the spherical and revolving character of the Earth. In his discussion of this verse he gives lengthy and highly elaborate information about cosmology (16 pages) and then explains how these phenomena are signs of God's sovereignty for people who have sense.²

His logical and discursive mind is another factor that differentiates him from the rest of the commentators. For example almost all the authorities preceding him had understood the word sarḥan in the verse: "And Pharoah said, 'O Hāmān, build for me a tower that haply I may reach the roads'" (40.36) as a genuine tower, and tried to describe the height and splendour of such a tower. In contrast to this al-Rāzī states that it is impossible that Pharoah meant an actual tower by this order, since he knew that a high tower would make no difference in the impossibility of reaching the end of the limitless sky. On the contrary, if he really believed that it would serve such a purpose, he would have been a lunatic. But it is

1. Mafātiḥ, vol. 2, pp. 342-43.

2. Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 55-71.

incongruous for God to send Moses to a lunatic and mention his name in the Qur'ān. Thus, as it is imperative to accept Pharoah as an intelligent man, then he must have meant something different from the external meaning as is indicated in his order to build a tower. The main point must therefore be the intention of Pharoah to dismiss Moses' claim that there is an invisible God. By using this irony, he was really being sarcastic, and meant to convince his people that an inconceivable God cannot exist.¹

Unlike many commentators who have attempted to describe such words as al-'aṣā², al-ḥajar³, al-shajar⁴, which appear in the Qur'ān, al-Rāzī is of the opinion that they must be left alone since we do not have evidence to define them.

As it can be understood from the foregoing examples, al-Rāzī has adopted a free rational approach in the interpretation of various Qur'ānic verses. His rejection of the existence of otiose words or particles in the Qur'ān, however, does not depend on sound evidence. His argument that the order of verses is divinely ordained is contrary to the fact that there are several authoritative recitations of the Qur'ān, in which the order of the particles and words is not always the same. Moreover, as already pointed out by al-Zarkashī the acceptance of otiose particles in

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1. Mafātih, vol. 7, pp. 217-18.
 2. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 363.
 3. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 307.
 4. Ibid.

the Qur'ān does not affect the meaning and is sometimes the only way to put a Qur'ānic sentence into a grammatical structure.

Al-Rāzī's Skill in Reconciling
Qur'ānic Verses

The question of whether there is a relationship between Qur'ānic verses or not is a controversial problem. Some scholars have claimed that there is a crucial relationship between verses and even sūras which make them coordinated statements, while others reject this idea on the grounds that each verse or group of verses was revealed with reference to different circumstances and as these circumstances vary so do the verses which refer to them. It is therefore impossible to find a link between verses.¹

Al-Rāzī is famous for finding links between verses. Al-Suyūṭī quotes him as stating, "Whoever thinks of the art which exists in the ordering of this sūra will realize that the Qur'ān is inimitable in its arrangement and the order of its verses. Maybe those who claimed that the Qur'ān is miraculous because of its style had this aspect in mind. Unfortunately, I have found the majority of the exegetes unaware of these fine points."² Some examples will help us to appreciate better al-Rāzī's skill in this field.

1. Burhān, vol. 1, p. 35.

2. Itqān, vol. 3, p. 223.

The verses from 16 to 19 in the Sūrat al-Qiyāma (75) seem to be irrelevant to its context, while the verses preceding and those which follow echo the same theme.

In order to reconcile these verses with the context, al-Rāzī presents various explanations which can be summed up as follows. When the Prophet received some revelations he hastened to memorize them. Soon after, another revelation came to him implying that haste is forbidden in religions as it is in worldly matters. This is similar to the case of a teacher, who wants his pupil to be more attentive to his remarks in the course of a lecture. However, an outsider who overhears such a warning may miss the point and wrongly put that warning into the context of the lecture.¹

In order to relate the verse, "He hath loosed the two seas they meet" (55.19), to the previous one, which is "He is the Lord of the two Easts and Lord of the two Wests" (55.17), he stresses the resemblance between movement in space and the movement of a ship on the sea. The sun and the moon are moving about in space as a man sails on the sea, which is illustrated in the verse, "It is not for the sun to overtake the moon nor doth the night outstrip the day. They float each in orbit."² (36.39).

As regards the verse 2.151 which is among the major conflicts in this field, al-Rāzī thinks of two possibilities in connection with ka-mā. The first is to relate it to

1. Mafātīh, vol. 8, p. 282.

2. Ibid., vol. 8, p. 13.

the previous phrase, whereby three kinds of interpretation arise: 1) "in order to complete my grace upon you by elevating your position in this world and by rewarding you in the next, just as we have already sent you a prophet as a sign of our grace"; 2) "We will keep our promise to Abraham [stated in verse 2.138] as we complete our favours on you by sending you a prophet"; 3) "Just as we sent you a prophet who possesses many good qualities, we have appointed you people as a middle nation".¹ This last view seems to be the opinion of Abū Muslim al-Iṣfahānī.²

The second alternative is to connect ka-mā to the following verse, the resultant meaning being rendered: "As we have sent upon you the Prophet who instructs in religion and law, glorify my name in return, so that I might consider you".³

Another similar verse introduced by ka-mā is "Even as they Lord caused thee [Muḥammad] to go forth from thy home with Truth..." (8.5). Al-Rāzī thinks of four alternatives to explain away the disharmony of the verse, but his choice is the first. The companions of the Prophet were discontented with the share they received from the booty after the battle of Badr. God compared their dissatisfaction with their unwillingness to fight against the Meccans. So just as their hesitation to fight proved

1. Mafātiḥ, vol. 2, p. 34; cf. Kashshāf, vol. 1, p. 206.

2. Ṭabarī, vol. 3, p. 308.

3. Mafātiḥ, vol. 2, p. 34.

mistaken after their victory, so did their discontent regarding the sharing of the booty.¹

The second part of the verse, "They ask thee [O Muḥammad] of new moons. Say: They are fixed seasons for mankind and for the pilgrimage. It is not righteousness that ye go to houses by the backs thereof [as do the idolators at certain seasons], but the righteous man is he who wardeth off [evil]. So go to houses by the gates thereof, and observe your duty to Allāh, that ye may be successful." (2.189), is also among the isolated verses. Since the first part is a narration, a question concerning the new moons in the second part seems to have a totally different theme.² Most of the commentators have referred to old Arab traditions to explain the phrase "Entering... the houses from the back" and al-Rāzī himself mentions them along with other opinions.

Unsatisfied with all previous interpretations, al-Rāzī puts forward his own opinion as the only one to explain away the difficulty in the verse. Because of its particular value as an example of al-Rāzī's approach, we give a literal translation:

The verse is a parable which God sent to the believers. The purpose is not in its literal sense. The metaphorical explanation is: the well-known correct treatment is to approach

1. Mafātiḥ, vol. 4, p. 349.

2. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 146.

the unknown by the means of the known. The reverse [approaching the known through the unknown] is contrary to the principle and is the opposite of truth. If this is understood we will proceed to say that this universe has a Creator who is free and all wise. It has been proved that the all-wise does only what is correct, that is his actions are free from futility and ignorance. If this is accepted providing that we admit that the variations in the positions of the Moon regarding its light are all brought about by God, then we would soon realise that there is a secret object and a benefit behind this phenomenon. So, our knowledge of the all-wise who does only what is good enables us to see clearly that there must be a purpose in these variations in the moon. For, this is a demonstration which moves from the known to the unknown. On the contrary, if it was done without the awareness of these existing motives in the actions of God, it would consequently be concluded that the agent of these phenomena is unwise. This of course is a false demonstration, because it moves from the unknown at the expense of the known. If this is accepted, then the purpose in God's word, 'It is not virtuous to come to your houses from the back', is that,

being unaware of God's purpose in changing the lights of the Moon, you [believers] were doubtful about whether that purpose is beneficial. You approached the matter neither from the right angle nor with perfect reason. Finally, the right direction is to enter the houses through their doors, that is to proceed from the well-known to the unknown thus [the purpose in the variations of the light of the moon] so that you would be absolutely convinced that here is a purpose behind every action of God, despite the fact that you may not know that purpose. Thus, 'Entering houses from the back' makes an allusion to the turning from right way and 'entering the houses through their doors' makes an allusion to 'following the right way'. This is a well-known device in metonymy. Whoever wants to guide someone in the right direction usually says, 'You have to approach the matter through its door.'¹

The author also tries to find relationships between successive sūras. For instance he gives reason to explain why the Sūrat al-Kahf came after the Sūrat al-Isrā':

1) the expression Subhānu [Allāhi] with which the Sūrat al-Isrā' (17) has been introduced should come first, since it denotes the declaring of God to be free from imperfection.

1. Mafātīh, vol. 2, p. 147.

This means that God is perfect. The expression al-hamdu lillāhi with which the next sūra has been introduced implies God's action of perfecting. 2) The ascension of the Prophet which is the subject-matter of the first sūra is the ascension of his personality from the earth to Heaven, whereas the revelation of the Book which is the subject-matter of the second sūra is the descending of the light of revelation on to him. Yet this second action is more complete than the first. 3) The benefit of the ascension is limited only to the Prophet, but the favours of the Book (Qur'ān) cover all Mankind.¹

With regard to the Sūrat al-Kawthar, al-Rāzī says that this sūra is like a counter-part of the previous Sūrat al-Mā'ūn. Four characteristics of the hypocrite have been mentioned in the Sūrat al-Mā'ūn. They are avarice, avoidance of the ritual prayer, insincerity in worship and abstinence from the payment of alms. In Sūrat al-Kawthar God names four good qualities to correspond with those which were mentioned in the previous sūra.²

It can be seen from these examples that al-Rāzī is very successful in finding links between isolated verses. In doing so, as has been illustrated in the example of 2.189, he uses his vast knowledge of theology to contrive a solution to the seemingly unrelated statements. He uses this technique very frequently throughout his tafsīr.

1. Mafātīh, vol. 5, pp. 452-53.

2. Ibid., vol. 8, p. 517.

Al-Rāzī's Views on the Style of the Qur'ān

The existence of a few verses, such as 52.34, 10.38, 13.4, 17.88, 9.6, implying challenge (taḥaddī) and the superiority of the Qur'ān have led Muslim scholars to search for the concrete characteristics which make the Qur'ān superior to human achievements. The almost unanimous agreement is that the extraordinary feature of the Qur'ān which has been the point of challenge is its inimitable style. As the greatest evidence to support such an opinion, the failure of the contemporary Arabs to bring about the like of the Qur'ān has been put forward.¹ Later scholars were dissatisfied with this claim and have attempted to substantiate it. The most outstanding scholars in this field are al-Rummānī, al-Khaṭṭābī, al-Jurjānī and al-Bāqillānī.²

The majority of the authorities are of the opinion that the Qur'ān is inimitable because of its own merits. That is why the challenge was not met. The other opinion is that the Arabs were deprived of their abilities (ṣarfa) when they tried to produce something equal to the Qur'ān. Al-Nazzām al-Mu'tazilī (993-1064) held this opinion.³ The qādī al-Bāqillānī attacked this theory saying that if the Qur'ān was unrivalled because God made its opponents impotent, then what is extraordinary is only this action of God, not the Qur'ān itself.⁴

1. Mafātīh, vol. 5, p. 441.

2. Itqān, vol. 4, pp. 6-7; Burhān, vol. 2, p. 91.

3. Itqān, vol. 4, p. 8; Nihāyat al-Ījāz, p. 7.

4. Nihāyat al-Ījāz, p. 7.

On the other hand the authorities have claimed some other aspects of the Qur'ān in addition to its unique style to be the features which are humanly unattainable. These are the harmony between expressions, the prediction of certain important events before they took place, the stories of the ancient prophets, etc.¹

Al-Khaṭṭābī suggests that the inimitability of the Qur'ān is shown in three elements, words, meaning and order. Only through the combination of these three elements has the Qur'ān attained superiority.² Al-Jurjānī's opinion is that the challenge did not stand on the grounds of the meaning. The opponents were required to provide a book equal to the Qur'ān in the beauty of wording but different in meaning.³

After this brief introduction we will try to ascertain al-Rāzī's views on this issue. A general summary of his views has been cited by al-Suyūṭī and al-Zarkashī, that the inimitability of the Qur'ān is due to its eloquence, its sublime style and its freedom from any errors.⁴

In this treatment of this topic al-Rāzī has been mainly influenced by al-Jurjānī as he himself states in the introduction to his Nihāyat al-Ījāz⁵ which is in fact the revision of al-Jurjānī's Dalā'il al-I'jāz and Asrār al-Balāgha.

1. Burhān, vol. 2, p. 101.

2. Thalāth Rasā'il, p. 24.

3. Ibid., p. 129.

4. Itqān, vol. 4, p. 8; Burhān, vol. 2, p. 98; Nihāyat al-Ījāz, p. 7.

5. Nihāyat al-Ījāz, p. 4.

According to al-Rāzī there is no superiority as between independent words regarding their direct implications.¹ The point that leads to preference among expressions as far as words are concerned is the secondary meaning derived from their direct implications. In other words it is the connotation of the immediate meaning of the word, (ma'nā l-ma'nā),² That is why scientific works where these connotations are not employed, due to the importance attached to the immediate meanings of the terms in order to avoid confusion, are not regarded as literary works.³

In al-Rāzī's opinion, the Arabs' failure to produce the like of the Qur'ān is the most important evidence for its miraculous nature, since they were free to meet the challenge, and since there were circumstances which compelled them to attempt to do so.⁴ Although al-Rāzī believes that the Qur'ān is superior due to its own merits he makes some concessions to an-Nazzām's theory of sarfa. Thus in this interpretation of the verse 52.34, al-Rāzī, giving his own judgement on the theory of sarfa, makes use of this simile: if someone claimed that he would shake a mountain, this would be regarded as impossible. It would also be regarded as impossible if anyone were to claim that he would perform something as a result of which

1. Nihāyat al-Ijāz, p. 12.

2. Ibid., p. 8.

3. Ibid., p. 10.

4. Mafātīh, vol. 5, p. 441.

nobody would be able to pick up an apple. Both actions would be considered to be miracles if they were fulfilled. This is the approach of the theologians and there is nothing wrong with it so it is permissible to believe in both theories.¹

Thus al-Rāzī shows himself not to be implacably opposed to the theory of sarfa.

According to al-Rāzī the verses that imply challenge may be organised into six stages:

1) The challenge is to produce the like of the Qur'ān as a whole. The verse indicating this is 17.88.

2) The equivalent of ten sūras is required to meet the challenge (11.13).

3) In the third stage the number of sūras has been reduced to one (2.23).

4) In this stage only a few words sufficient to make a statement are required to meet the challenge (52.34).

5) In this stage al-Rāzī puts forward a very unusual view. In the previous stages the challenge was based on the condition that the opponent is equal to the Prophet in being illiterate whereas in this stage the challenge is to any individual to formulate a sūra (10.39).

6) In all the above-mentioned stages, the challenge was directed to individuals, but in this stage the challenge has been directed to Mankind as a whole, permitting general collaboration in achieving this aim. The verse implying this is 10.39.²

1. Mafātīh, vol. 7, p. 492.

2. Ibid., vol. 4, p. 570.

Unlike many scholars in this field al-Rāzī mentions as many extraordinary features of the Qur'ān as possible. Thus the prediction of forthcoming events in the Qur'ān, the agreement between the Qur'ān and the Old Testament on the stories of the Prophets are among these features. Besides all these, the unusual nature of the language of the Qur'ān is another major aspect in the eyes of the author which renders the Book inimitable. In defence of this theory he points out various aspects in the Qur'ān as outside the standards of acceptable speech among the Arabs:¹

1) The theme of popular speech among the Arabs is usually a description of a concrete object or event such as a description of a camel, a horse or a woman or a description of a war or a raid. These things are not to be found in the Qur'ān.

2) The subject-matter of the Qur'ān is not hypothetical or fictitious, as is the case with many poems. This can be understood better by the widely accepted view that the verses of such poets as Labīd b. Abī Rabī'a and Ḥassān b. Thābit were no longer good and attractive after they became converted to Islam and were influenced by the language of the Qur'ān.

3) The popular and favoured words among the Arabs are those which fit the patterns and themes and conform with the poetical devices whereas the Qur'ān does not follow the rules.

1. Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 225.

4) Repetition in speech is normally not acceptable, but is rather regarded as a defect. In contrast, the Qur'ān contains expressions which are repeated several times.¹

5) The Qur'ān follows a didactic style as it prescribes obligations, prohibitions, the principles of ethics and also describes the states of the next world. Such a didactic style is not popular among people who have developed literary interests.

6) It is a known fact that every poet is strong in picturing only a particular item or certain types of events, and is generally weak in other things. But in the case of the Qur'ān the idea of preferring one kind of description to another cannot be applied.

In conclusion, despite all these points which should serve to diminish the value of the language of the Qur'ān it has been unanimously held that it possesses the finest style. Therefore it is called a miracle.²

As to the question whether the shortest sūras, like al-Kawthar and al-Kāfirūn, of the Qur'ān are inimitable, the answer has been given in the affirmative by the majority.³ Some have even held that the challenge includes pieces shorter than the sūra al-Kawthar, basing this on the word hadīth in the verse 52.34. But this view was rejected by al-Baqillānī on the grounds that a statement

1. Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 225.

2. Ibid.

3. Itqān, vol. 4, p. 18.

cannot be made shorter than the length of the sūra al-Kawthar.¹

Al-Rāzī's opinion on this point is not clear though attainable indirectly. In the interpretation of the verse 10.38 he answers a hypothetical question, as to whether the word sūra in the verse includes the shortest sūra. His response is that the word sūra implies the sūra under discussion, that is the sūrat Yūnus.²

In another place he touches upon the same issue while answering a question of an opponent's which runs, "How could you be so senseless as to believe that the challenge covers the shortest sūras, since it is obvious that to produce such a sūra is possible? Will it not be an infringement of rational principles to favour such an idea?"

Al-Rāzī to avoid the consequences of accepting such a view states that the challenge applies to any part of the Qur'ān on the condition that it reaches the point of inimitability. But if it does not reach that point, it is even so inimitable for another reason, namely the failure of the Arabs to produce even such a piece.³

By this last statement, al-Rāzī is again implying God's intervention to divert the minds of the Arabs from meeting the challenge, i.e. the theory of ṣarfa.

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1. Itqān, vol. 4, p. 18.
 2. Mafātīh, vol. 4, p. 570.
 3. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 226.

We will now give an example to illustrate how al-Rāzī deals with the stylistic aspect of the verses. In the interpretation of the verse wa-lakum fī l-qisāsi hayātun (2.179), al-Rāzī quotes some idiomatic expressions drawn from old Arabic usage which express the same idea and afterwards tries to prove why the Qur'ānic statement is superior to the others. The expressions which he considers are:

Qatl al-ba'd ihyā' li-l-jamī'

Akthirū l-qatl li-yaqill al-qatl

Al-qatl anfā li-l-qatl¹

The third in al-Rāzī's opinion is that which best matches the Qur'ānic usage. But if compared with the latter, the following aspects will be seen to show the superiority of the Qur'ānic usage over the other.

i) The Qur'ānic utterance is more concise than the other, since the preposition-pronoun structure can be omitted, because the meaning is implicit in the reversed subject-predicate sentence.

ii) In the expression al-qatl anfā li-l-qatl, killing is asserted to be the reason for the annihilation of the same concept, i.e. killing. This is logically absurd, if the expression is taken at face value. This confusion, however, does not exist in the Qur'ānic expression, since al-qisāsu is only one kind of killing and the word hayātun is an interminate noun and means only one kind of life.

1. Mafātīh, vol. 2, p. 108.

iii) In the expression al-qatl anfā li-l-qatl, there exists the repetition of the word al-qatl which spoils the attractiveness of the utterance, but in the Qur'ānic usage this defect is not found.

iv) In the non-Qur'ānic usage only the prohibition of murder is emphasized whereas in the Qur'ānic usage, besides the prohibition of murder, other offences such as wounding are also prohibited.

v) By the negation of murder in the non-Qur'ānic usage the objective of living is implicitly indicated. In the Qur'ānic expression this objective is explicitly indicated.

vi) In the expression al-qatl anfā li-l-qatl, the word qatl implies every kind of killing. It includes a deliberate murder which in fact is an increase in the number of murders. This is understood when one judges the expression at its face value. On the other hand the word al-qisās in the Qur'ānic expression means only one kind of killing, namely legal execution, and therefore the uneasiness that exists in the former case, does not apply here.¹

As al-Rāzī himself acknowledges, his views on the issue of the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān are mainly taken from 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī. However, his acceptance of the theory of ṣarfa as equally valid shows that he has a broad outlook on the problem. A disputable point in al-Rāzī's treatment of this topic is his arbitrary classification of the verses denoting challenge where no

1. Mafātīh, vol. 2, p. 108.

date backed by ḥadīth has been mentioned to support such a sequence.

Al-Rāzī's view on the ambiguous verses

The verses of the Qur'ān are roughly divided into two: 1) perspicuous verses (al-muhkamāt); and 2) ambiguous verses (al-mutashābihāt). The perspicuous verses are considered the basis for the formation of the sharī'a because of their obvious meanings. The ambiguous verses are not a basis for the Sharī'a and often need to be metaphorically interpreted. Their subject-matter is mainly the essence of God, His qualities and the states of the next world. The attempt to interpret these verses has given rise to various opinions which are the basis of different theological schools.¹

In fact the Qur'ān contains seemingly contradictory statements about the identity of God. There are verses (42.11, 6.104, 112.4) which state that God is above anything that can be conceived and has no resemblance to created things in any way. There are other verses (5.67, 48.10, 20.39, 11.37, 55.27, 48.42) which allude to God's hands, face, eyes and also some human activities such as coming, seeing and hearing. These verses are contradictory. Therefore, one or the other has to be interpreted metaphorically. Many theologians have interpreted the anthropomorphic verses on the basis of the anti-anthropomorphic

1. Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, vol. 3, pp. 46-47.

ones.¹ So they have explained God's hands as His power, His face as His reality² or approval, His eyes as His attention.³ On the other hand some theological sects like the Mujassima and the Mushabbiha have relied on the anthropomorphic verses, and claimed that God possesses some bodily organs such as hands, eyes and legs, though they admit that these organs are different in nature from those of human beings.⁴ Opposition to the literal understanding of the anthropomorphic verses is based on three principles: i) the anti-anthropomorphic verses are more in number than the contrasting ones; ii) they are decisive in meaning, all of them being in the negative form; iii) the early Muslims took the anti-anthropomorphic verses as the basis for the metaphorical interpretation of their counterparts.⁵

As an exponent of the Ash'arite school which interprets these verses metaphorically, al-Rāzī defends this approach using the techniques of philosophy. As a criterion of his treatment of ambiguous verses his definition of muḥkam and mutashābih is interesting.

A word may mean either the object that it usually implies or it may mean something else. If the word means the very thing for which this word has been usually used without allowing any possibility of further speculative

1. Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, vol. 3, p. 46.

2. Mafātīh, vol. 8, p. 17; Asās, p. 114.

3. Asās, p. 122.

4. Ibid., p. 192.

5. Ibid., p. 182; Wolfson, The Philosophy of the Kalam, p. 9.

meanings then this is a nass. However if the word can have another meaning besides its immediate implication, then two possibilities arise: a) one of two implications may be preferred to the other; b) the two implications of the meaning of the word are on equal footing with regard to the word, so that no preference can be given to either of them. Regarding the first possibility (a) as preference is involved we have two consequences: i) the preferred meaning, which is called zāhir; ii) the weak meaning, which is called mu'awwal.

As to the second possibility (b) where no preference can be given to either meaning, the word in this case is called mushtarak, in so far as it covers both possible meanings, but it will be called mujmal if one of these possible meanings is chosen without there being any adequate reason.¹

By this definition al-Rāzī comes to the conclusion as regards the implications of its meaning, that a word may be described by one of these terms: nass, zāhir, mu'awwal, mushtarak, mujmal.

Nass and zāhir share the quality of being preferred implications, though nass is stronger, since it excludes any other speculated meaning. Since they have the common characteristic of having preferred implications, nass and zāhir are called muhkam. The remaining terms are called mutashābih.²

1. Mafātīh, vol. 2, pp. 401-03.

2. Ibid.; Asās, pp. 178-82.

Al-Rāzī complains about the theologians of different schools who often adopt a selective approach in their use of Qur'ānic verses to support their sectarian views. They call mutashābih the verses that contradict their opinions, and sometimes call a really ambiguous one muhkam because of the advantage which they derive from a particular interpretation of its dubious meaning.¹ Therefore he suggests that firm rules should be established to decide whether a verse is ambiguous or not. If a word implies two possible meanings one of which is preferable to the other the word is muhkam in terms of preferred meaning. If we turn from the preferred to the less preferable, then the word will be mutashābih with regard to that meaning. It is, however, imperative in the latter case to depend on evidence in order to justify the abandonment of the literal meaning which is the preferred meaning. The evidence may be linguistic or rational. However the linguistic criteria cannot be decisive in these matters, because it is not possible to declare the absolute application of one linguistic interpretation as against another. Thus the field is left to reason. If reason decides that the literal meaning of a word or expression is unacceptable, in that case the need for metaphorical interpretation is inescapable. As to the implication derived from interpretation, it is of no value in the essentials of the faith, since reliance is being

1. Mafātīh, vol. 2, pp. 401-03; Asās, p. 181.

placed on evidence of a speculative nature. Such evidence may however be used in jurisprudence.¹

Al-Rāzī's view that the metaphorical interpretation of the ambiguous verses is not sound originates from the judgement that once the literal meaning of the utterance is removed all the metaphorical meanings may be equally applicable. No priority can be attached to any one of them, because such a preference of one metaphorical interpretation over another of the same rank can only be achieved by means of linguistic connotations. Yet this has already been dismissed as not meeting the standards of evidence.

After presentation of these premises al-Rāzī concludes that once it is accepted that the meaning of a verse is incomprehensible at its face value it is pointless to try to find out the exact interpretation.² Al-Rāzī supports this view by his claim that the second part of the verse 3.7: wa-rāsikhūna fī l-'ilmi yaqūlūna āmannā bihi, is a separate sentence and is not to be attached to the previous word (Allāh). If this is accepted the result is that only God can know the meanings of the ambiguous verses.³ He does however concede that the theologians (mutakallimūn) are of the opinion that all the verses of the Qur'ān should be understood at least

1. Asās, pp. 181-82; Mafātīh, vol. 2, p. 402; Maṭālib, vol. 1, f. 46a.

2. Mafātīh, vol. 2, pp. 401-03; Asās, p. 182.

3. Mafātīh, vol. 2, p. 401; Asās, pp. 183-84.

by the scholars. To defend their stand the theologians allude to such verses as: 9.71, 4.45, 4.173, 44.24, 26.195, 17.9, 20.123. Depending on these verses they claim that it would be pointless for the Prophet to receive messages which the people find incomprehensible.¹

Al-Rāzī in defence of the standard Sunnite thesis states that the obligations upon the Muslims are of two kinds. The first kind consists of such injunctions whose benefits can be understood by the believers. The second kind of obligations are beyond the capacities of the believers with regard to the objectives of these commands. What a good believer has to do is to accept such orders despite the fact that the motive in such an obligation is hidden from his understanding since he knows that these commands come from the same source from which the first kind originates. This would mean an absolute submission to the will of God, without allowing the interference of any doubt regarding the practical advantages of the injunctions. This is the final stage of faith.²

A remarkable aspect of al-Rāzī's treatment of the ambiguous verses is his skill at removing the ambiguity existing in the meaning of these verses by analysing them in the light of parallel verses. For example in the

1. Asās, pp. 173-77; Mafātīh, vol. 2, p. 406.

2. Asās, p. 177; cf. Burhān, vol. 1, p. 173.

verse 17.16: "idhā aradnā an nuhlika qaryatan amarnā mutrafihā fa-fasaqū fihā faḥaqqā 'alayhā al-qawlu fadammarnāhā tadmīrā", it is possible to interpret it as being that God commands certain people to sin. In fact this meaning is wrong. This ambiguity can be absolutely removed by the verse 7.28: "Allāh verily enjoineth not lewdness".¹

A similar problem arises in the verse 9.67: "nasū llāha fanasiyahūm", it implies that God forgets which cannot be accepted. This difficulty has been removed by these verses (19.64 and 20.52), "...Thy Lord was never forgetful", "...Thy Lord neither erreth nor forgeteth".²

In the same way the verse 24.35 indicates that God is light, "Allāhu nūru s-samāwāti wa l-ard", whereas it is known that God cannot be anything conceivable. The ambiguity is removed in the following sentence in the same verse: mathalu nūrihi where the word light (nūr) has been attached to the pronoun (hu) which goes back to Allāh. Then the light is not the essence of God, but something attributed to Him.³ Furthermore, in the verses (6.1 and 2.17) the light is implied to be among the things which were created.

It should now be clear that reason plays a great part in al-Rāzī's approach to the interpretation of these verses.

1. Mafātīh, vol. 2, p. 402.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 65; Asās, p. 97.

According to him the rational conclusion is preferable to the tradition when the tradition contradicts reason, since if we decline the priority of reason it will entail grave consequences for the essence of Religion. This is because the basis on which we depend for the validity of prophethood and Religion is reason. The rejected tradition is, however, in this case subject to metaphorical interpretation.¹

Al-Rāzī on the other hand admits that the ambiguous verses have caused many doubts about the authenticity of the Religion, the essence of God, prophethood and the sharī'a. This is because they are liable to various meanings. The existence of such verses in the Qur'ān is however not pointless. They are the source of many advantages, e.g.:

1) Due to the difficulty in reaching the truth through these verses the reward to be expected from God will be greater.

2) If the Qur'ān contained only perspicuous verses it would confirm only one of the different sects and being disappointed by the absence of evidence to support their views many sectarians would ignore the Qur'ān.

3) The perspicuous verses are easy to understand. Thus, if it was not for the existence of ambiguous verses, no one would need the rational arguments. Therefore blind belief would prevail instead of true belief.

1. Asās, pp. 172-73.

4) The ambiguous verses have caused the growth of various sciences such as grammar, syntax and the methodology of the sharī'a.

5) The Qur'ān addresses the illiterate as well as the literate. The existence of a transcendental Being (God) could not have been made comprehensible to the common people without using some anthropomorphic expressions to describe such a being. Therefore these verses made it easier to have an image of the Creator.¹

Apart from his systematic treatment of the ambiguous verses, one of the most important points made by al-Rāzī is that he gives preference to rational evidence over dogmatic when the latter contradicts the former -- a view which was severely criticised by some of the later scholars. As a matter of fact, in al-Rāzī's opinion a true traditional proof should not violate reason. Reason cannot be sacrificed, since it is the only basis on which our acceptance of the validity of religion and prophethood depends.² Therefore, in the case of contradiction it is the traditional proof which should be abandoned.

1. Mafātīh, vol. 2, pp. 403-04; Asās, pp. 189-92; Nihāyat al-Ījāz, p. 163; cf. al-Kashshāf, vol. 1, p. 338.

As-Suyūṭī has also quoted it in his al-Itqān. Similar views on the purpose of the ambiguous verses can be found in al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār's work Uṣūl al-Khamsa, p. 600.

2. Asās, pp. 172-73.

Al-Rāzī's views on Abrogation in the Qur'ān

The view that abrogation has happened in the Qur'ān has been accepted by the majority of the exegetes and jurists. The knowledge of verses which have connections with abrogation is among the necessary information incumbent upon a commentator.¹ Although the theory of abrogation has been accepted by many no agreement has been reached on the verses in which abrogation took place. As-Suyūṭī considered twenty to have been abrogated, putting many verses claimed to be abrogating or abrogated into the theory of restriction (takhsīs).²

Another controversial point is whether a tradition and a Qur'ānic verse can abrogate each other. Apart from al-Shāfi'ī all the leading jurists are of the opinion that a tradition can abrogate a verse and vice versa. Their reliance is on the idea that the Prophet was inspired even in his non-Qur'ānic speeches as he was in the Qur'ānic expressions, basing themselves on the verses 53.3, "Nor doth he speak of [his own] desire."³ An example of the abrogation of a verse by a tradition is the abrogation of the verse 2.180, "It is prescribed for you, when one of you approached death, if he leaveth wealth that he bequeath unto parents and near relatives in kindness. [This is] a duty for all those who ward off [evil]", by

1. Itqān, vol. 3, p. 59.

2. That is, a verse, rather than abrogating a previous one, restricts its application.

3. Qurtubī, vol. 2, p. 59.

this tradition: "No bequest to any of [prescribed] inheritors" (lā waṣiyya li wārith).

As a Shāfi'ite scholar al-Rāzī, who has often defended the Shāfi'ite school throughout his commentary, disagrees with al-Shāfi'ī in his claim that a verse of the Qur'ān can be abrogated only by another Qur'ānic verse, but not by a tradition which is below the rank of the Qur'ān. To support his thesis al-Shāfi'ī alludes to the verse 2.106, "Such of our revelations as we abrogate and cause to be forgotten, We bring [in place] one better or the like thereof. Knowst thou not Allāh to do all things."

mā nansakh min āyatin aw nunsihā na'ti bi
khayrin minhā aw mithlihā a-lam ta'lam anna
allahā 'alā kulli shay'in qadīr.¹

Al-Rāzī dismisses this theory by stating that the expression khayrun minhā does not necessarily mean only a Qur'ānic verse. Moreover, he does not consider the above mentioned verse as a valid proof for the occurrence of abrogation, but as a hypothetical statement. Instead he regards the verse 16.101 as evidence for the actuality of abrogation.²

Al-Shāfi'ī also maintains that whenever a Qur'ānic verse was supposed to be abrogated by a tradition there

1. Al-Shāfi'ī, al-Risāla (1940), p. 106.

2. Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 446. However, in Manāqib al-Rāzī defends the Shāfi'ite theory, p. 46.

was in fact another Qur'ānic verse which had the same effect as the abrogating tradition and whenever a tradition was claimed to be abrogated by a verse there would be found another tradition which would be similar to the abrogating verse. Therefore the Qur'ān and the traditions are affected by abrogations within their own spheres without mutual interference.

Al-Rāzī does not agree with al-Shāfi'ī on this point because of his belief that the traditions from the Prophet were also revelations.¹

The supposition that the purpose in abrogation is the making of an obligation lighter (akhaff) has not been favoured by al-Rāzī. Instead he suggests "what is more beneficial" (aṣlah) should be the objective of cancelling the effect of a verse. For the abrogating verse or tradition may be harder than the abrogated. For example the abrogation of the verse 4.15 indicating the imprisonment of the adulterer and the adulteress by the verse 24.2 indicating whipping and the tradition ordering stoning was the abandonment of a law for the acceptance of a harder substitute. The abrogation of the 'Āshūrā' fasting by that of Ramaḍān is another example. Therefore the idea of abrogation, as having practical advantages, is not always noticeable, and its purpose should be understood to be an increase in reward in the next world.²

1. Mafātīh, vol. 5, p. 349; cf. al-Jaṣṣāṣ, Ahkām al-Qur'ān, vol. 1, p. 68.

2. Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 445.

Although al-Rāzī admits the occurrence of abrogation in the Qur'ān and refutes al-Iṣfahānī's view that abrogation is the replacement of the Old and New Testaments by the Qur'ān, he tends to reduce the number of the abrogated verses to the minimum. In this he seem to be influenced by the Mu'tazilite commentator, al-Iṣfahānī, who opposes the existence of abrogation in the Qur'ān. This influence seems clearer when he advances al-Iṣfahānī's proofs against those who claim that many verses were abrogated. The way in which al-Rāzī sought to re-interpret verses which had previously been claimed by many commentators as abrogating and abrogated verses may be illustrated by the following discussions.

1) It has been generally held that the verse 8.65 has been abrogated by the following verse 8.66. In the former it has been stated that twenty steadfast believers can defeat two hundred unbelievers. If the number of the believers is a hundred they can defeat a thousand unbelievers. Thus, in a fight, odds of ten to one are set for the believers, whereas in the following verse this rule has been reduced to odds of two to one (one hundred can defeat two hundred, and so on).

In opposition to the view held by the majority, al-Rāzī favours al-Iṣfahānī's view that in the first verse there is an implicit condition that the fighters should be resistant enough to face ten times their number. In so far as this condition was difficult to be carried out, in the next verse the odds have been fixed

without taking into account this condition. As to the word khaffafa in the beginning of the abrogating verse which indicates the lightening of the task, al-Rāzī says that it is customary in Arabic usage to attach this word to an alternative duty which somewhat differs from the original, but is not necessarily easier than it. Moreover, he asserts that the occurrence of the abrogating verse immediately after the abrogated one is again a setback for the defendants of abrogation. For a span of time should intervene before the termination of the abrogated verse.¹

2) The verse 24.3 forbids believers, whether men or women, from marrying those guilty of adultery or polytheists. The majority of the authorities believe that this verse has been abrogated by the following two verses:

"...marry of the women who seem good to you" 4.3

"...And marry such of you as are solitary and
pious of your slaves and maidservants" 24.32

Al-Rāzī's refusal to allow any idea of abrogation to exist between these verses is based on his interpretation of the verse as a statement of a natural attitude, i.e. that the righteous man and woman choose their equivalents for marriage, while the adulterers and adulteresses will naturally marry people of a similar attitude. As to the word hurrima which indicates a strict prohibition, this might mean that any desire by righteous people to marry

1. Mafātih, vol. 4, pp. 380-83.

a woman of bad reputation is unacceptable in the opinion of God. Al-Rāzī in adopting such a view seems to be influenced by al-Qaffāl's interpretation of the verse.¹

3) The verse 2.284: "Whether you make known what is in your minds or hide it Allāh will bring you to account for it..." has been regarded as being abrogated by the verse 2.286: "Allāh tasketh not a soul beyond its scope..."

Al-Rāzī denies the existence of any abrogation in these verses for three reasons: i) it is not known that the believers are responsible for what happens in their minds; ii) the verse is not a command nor a prohibition so that it might be affected by abrogation; iii) the verse does not indicate any punishment for such mental transgressions.²

4) Another example concerning abrogation is that the verse 4.33 is supposed to be abrogated by the verse 8.75. The abrogated verse is:

"And unto each we have appointed heirs of that which parents and near kindred leave, and as for those with whom your right hands have made a covenant give them their due.

Lo! Allāh is ever witness over all things."

The abrogating verse:

1. Mafātīh, vol. 6, pp. 221-22.

2. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 379.

"... and those who are akin are nearer one to another in the ordinance of Allah."

There are many theories about what was abolished by the second verse. It has been suggested that the Arab tradition of artificial brotherhood was abrogated by it. The cancellation of the rights of adopted sons to inheritance, or the termination of the agreement that the Prophet established between the Meccan Emigrants and the Medinan Helpers are among other suggestions which have been considered to be abrogated.

In contrast to these suggestions al-Rāzī relates al-Jubbā'ī's view on the issue which has also been adopted by al-Iṣfahānī that the expression "wa-lladhīna 'aqadat aymānukum" in the abrogated verse has to be attached to the subject of the sentence wa-l-wālidāni wa-l-aqrabūn whereby the meaning becomes "the inheritors from the slaves". Secondly, wa-lladhīna 'aqadat aymānukum may mean the husband and wife. Therefore abrogation is not necessary. By resorting to these possible interpretations al-Rāzī does not accept the existence of abrogation in the verses in question.¹

5) The verse 3.102 has also been considered to be among those abrogated. It runs:

"O ye who believe! Observe your duty to Allah with right observance and die not save as those who have surrendered (unto Him)."

1. Mafātīh, vol. 3, pp. 212-13.

The verse which has been supposed to be abrogating is 2.286:

"Allah tasketh not a soul beyond its scope."

The evidence for the defenders of abrogation is a tradition ascribed to Ibn 'Abbās to the effect that when this verse was revealed it put the believers into a difficult position, for how could they observe their duty to God with right observance -- to glorify Him at every point of time? Therefore later on this burden was removed from the shoulders of the believers.

Al-Rāzī by interpreting the verse ittaqū llāha haqqa tuqātihi as "to abide by the commands and to keep away from the prohibitions" explains away the difficulty and denies the possibility of abrogation.¹

In reducing the number of abrogated verses al-Rāzī gives the impression that he in fact did not believe in the occurrence of abrogation in the Qur'ān. This inference can be supported by his statement in Manāqib al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī that he proved in his tafsīr that the theory of abrogation does not rely on any convincing evidence. However, the different attitudes taken by him in his two different works towards al-Shāfi'ī's theory of abrogation throw some ambiguities on al-Rāzī's position on this particular issue.²

1. Mafātīh, vol. 3, p. 16. See also for more examples, vol. 2, p. 226 (verse 2.219) and vol. 2, p. 377 (verse 2.283).

2. Cf. Mafātīh, vol. 5, p. 349, Manāqib, p. 46.

CHAPTER III

AL-RĀZĪ'S VIEWPOINT ON CREATION AND HIS ARGUMENTS FOR CREATION EX NIHILO

One of the controversial issues between the Muslim philosophers and the theologians is whether the world is eternal or temporal. The differences between the two originate mainly from dependence on different sources. For the philosophers Aristotelianism and Neo-Platonism were regarded as reliable sources, whereas for the theologian (mutakallim) the Qur'ān and to some extent traditions were the only true bases for speculation.

The philosophers' thesis is that the world is co-eternal with God, and in order to justify their position they advanced various proofs which have been summarized by al-Ghazālī in his Tahāfut al-Falāsifa. In contrast, the theologian held that the world is not co-eternal with God but was created by Him out of nothing. Despite this major difference, both sides agree that the necessary agent for the existence of the world is the Necessary Being (wājib al-Wujūd).¹ However, their conceptions of the same agent differs considerably, and it is this difference in the conception of the nature of God that leads to disagreement on the question at issue. The philosophers, in order to safeguard the Necessary Being from any similarity to

1. Sharh, p. 220; Muhassal, p. 55.

contingent entities which are corruptible and subject to change, would not concede that the world was brought into existence from a state of non-existence, for prior to this process of creation, a decision must have been taken by God, as it was possible that creation might not have happened. But such a decision would imply a change in God's essence and present the question: Why did He create the world at this point of time but not before? Therefore, if the creation of the world in time is true, God's essence must have undergone change. Yet, change and corruption are attributes of created beings, from which God is free. It follows then, that the existence of the World could not be creation ex nihilo.¹

Another argument advanced by the philosophers for the rejection of creation ex nihilo, intended likewise to safeguard God's independence of the attributes of created beings, is that the act of creation necessitates a selective will which if predicated of God would imply that He was imperfect before creating as the purpose of such an act must be either to achieve an advantage or to avoid a disadvantage. Since God is perfect in every sense of the word, any extra entity created by Him, would be contrary to the notion of this perfection.²

These two arguments advanced by the philosophers for the rejection of creation ex nihilo illustrate the fact

1. Tahāfut al-Tahāfut, vol. 1, p. 3; al-Badawī, al-Aflātuniyya al-Muḥdatha, p. 37.

2. Arba'īn, p. 50; al-Badawī, al-Aflātuniyya al-Muḥdatha, p. 37.

that the philosophers' stand on the issue of the creation of the world mainly depended on their definition of the Necessary Being. They have, as well, other proofs which are derived from the nature of the created entities -- the principle of contingency and the theory of eternal time, which will be discussed below.

As for the theologians, their thesis on the creation of the world rests on the Qur'ānic description of God to whom are attributed many human qualities in the anthropomorphic verses, where He is described as willing, speaking, hearing, seeing, coming, sitting, etc., and on the verses directly referring to creation. These verses usually contain such verbs as sana'a, khalaqa, bada'a, bada'a, ja'ala, faṭara and their agent forms, like khāliq, bādi', jā'il. The general interpretation given by the theologians is that God willed the creation of the world and brought it into existence, and that before this the world was non-existent. However, this general understanding was contested by Ibn Rushd on the grounds that the verses such as 11.7, 14.48, 41.11 imply that the world was created from pre-existent matter, and that time existed before creation.¹

Thus, in the opinion of the mutakallim, the acceptance of the eternity of the world is contrary both to the conception that only God is eternal, and to the observable proofs (substantiated by the Qur'ān) of the temporality of the universe.

1. Ibn Rushd, Faṣl al-Maqāl, p. 42.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's attitude to the problem may be presented in two aspects: his refutation of the philosophers, and his arguments for creation ex nihilo.

Al-Rāzī's refutation of the Philosophers

Al-Rāzī mentions six arguments adduced by the philosophers for the eternity of the world, each of which will be detailed along with his arguments against them.

The First Proof

This is based on the Aristotelian principle of causation whereby every effect must have a specific cause, which itself is the effect of a preceding cause, the chain of causality extending backward to the Uncaused Prime Cause. Cause and effect must be simultaneous, and as propounded by Ibn Sīnā, if the cause ('illa) is consistent enough, and there is no deterrent factor from outside, the effect is a simultaneous phenomenon.¹ It follows that the world as caused by the Necessary Being must be co-existent with Him from eternity. Otherwise, if effect follows cause after a passage of time, then a determinant must be considered for the choice of this particular time. Moreover, this determinant must precede the act of creation. However, another determinant is required to determine the determinant at issue, and so ad infinitum, which entails an infinite regression. Consequently, the same discussion can be shifted to the

1. Sharḥ, p. 233.

emergence of these determinants. It follows that to avoid these impossibilities, the principle of the co-existence of cause and effect should be accepted, i.e. the eternity of the world must be conceded. This proof was regarded by al-Rāzī as the most difficult one.¹

In reply to this argument al-Rāzī mentions the mutakallims' six objections which can be summarized as follows: It is in the nature of God's will to choose a particular time for creation; He can will something irrespective of determinant factors; His knowledge determines the appropriate time for creation.²

The argument which al-Rāzī favours, however, is that the principle of causality would eliminate the possibility of any change in this world; yet we perceive clearly that there are changes and fluctuations.³ These accidents cannot be ascribed to the movements of celestial spheres as the philosophers claim, since any event is caused either by a temporal or eternal determinant. If it is caused by a temporal one then this would call for an infinite chain of determinants which is impossible. Therefore, it is imperative to ascribe it to the uncaused cause. If this is true of accidents in this world, why could it not be true of the world as a whole? On the other hand, if it were caused by an eternal determinant, this

1. Arba'īn, p. 41.

2. Ibid., pp. 42, 44; Muhassal, p. 110.

3. Ma'ālim, p. 26.

would necessitate the postulation of the originated entities with no beginning, which is also absurd.¹

In fact this argument had been previously put forward by al-Ghazālī in his Tahāfut, including the counter-proof that God's will does not require a determinant when it functions.² Thus, al-Rāzī does not seem to have made an original contribution in the rebuttal of this philosophic argument.

Another objection of al-Rāzī is that if the world were eternal it would not need an agent for its existence, and this would impair the oneness of the Creator. Secondly, to accept the eternity of the world is to deny God's attribute of Will and this would imply that He is not an independent creator.³

The Second Proof

This proof is derived from the contention that cause, effect and the act of producing an effect (mu'aththiriyya) are different conceptions. This effectiveness is not identical with the agent and it must be regarded as being among the attributes of the Agent, which like all His other attributes should be eternal. However, this attribute of mu'aththiriyya would require an external result of its function which should be co-existential with it, to be in accordance with the principle of the simultaneity of the

1. Arba'in, p. 51.

2. Tahāfut , pp. 88, 93; Iqtisād, p. 47.

3. Sharh, p. 220; Muhassal, p. 55; Mafātih, vol. 5, p. 286.

effect and the cause. So, the world as the effect of the attribute of effectiveness must be eternal.¹

To this, al-Rāzī responds by rejecting the idea that mu'aththiriyya is an independent additional attribute of divine essence, since attributes, like accidents, are in need of a substratum for their existence, so that the eternity of the attributes also should depend on the substratum. Otherwise, if an attribute is considered separately as eternal in itself this would entail the validity of circular dependence which is a fallacy.²

This point can further be clarified by al-Rāzī's conception of divine attributes, which he regards as contingent in themselves but necessary through the necessity of God's essence. Such an understanding has raised serious difficulties which are indicated in the relevant chapter.³

The Third Proof

This proof in fact is as persuasive as the first one. It has been drawn from the principle of contingency and was advanced by Ibn Sīnā as evidence for the eternity of the world.⁴ It can be summarized thus: All contingent entities prior to their existence had the possibility of existence. This possibility precedes the actual origination and cannot be equated with the creative power of God. It

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1. Arba'īn, p. 48; cf. al-Badawī, al-Aflātūniyya al-Muhdatha, p. 35.
 2. Arba'īn, pp. 51, 89.
 3. Supra, chapter on Divine Attributes.
 4. Najāṭ, p. 219.

must be a positive quality of the contingent itself. If it were not a substantial quality residing in the contingent, then there would be no difference between the possible and the impossible. It follows that, as potentiality is a quality and a quality cannot be independent of that which is qualified, then the form and matter which are the locus for potentiality must, since potentiality is eternal, be eternal as well.¹

In his rebuttal of this argument al-Rāzī advances three counter-proofs. i) We cannot pass judgement on something before it comes into existence. Therefore the philosophers' claim that the contingent prior to its emergence had the potentiality of existence is a fallacy. He admits, however, that this argument could be challenged by holding that we qualify things before their existence as necessary, possible and impossible; to this he replies that this is only a linguistic necessity.² ii) Even if the precedence of contingency (imkān) over the origination of the contingent (al-mumkin) is accepted, it cannot be claimed that contingency is a positive quality, because: a) if it were a positive quality it would be either contingent or necessary. However, it cannot be necessary, for contingency has nothing to do with necessity. It cannot be contingent either, as the same argument would be

1. Arba'īn, p. 49; Sharḥ, p. 226; Muḥaṣṣal, pp. 55, 57, 97; cf. Najāṭ, p. 219.

2. Sharḥ, p. 227; Arba'īn, p. 51; Mulakhkhaṣ, f. 65a, 68b.

repeated, and this would lead to the impasse of infinite regression; b) if contingency were a positive quality, then it would require a substratum which would be either the contingent itself or something else. It could not be the contingent, since it is contingency which precedes the existence of the contingent, in other words, the contingent which is to be the locus for contingency, does not yet exist; if on the other hand, the substratum is something other than the contingent, this also is absurd, since a quality cannot reside except in its substratum.

c) In reality, contingency is a relational quality implying the relation between essence and existence and the condition of such a relation is the existence of two corresponding entities. If contingency were a positive quality, it would necessitate essence and existence at the same time. This would lead to the acceptance of the existence of the contingent before its contingency. Reliance on such an assumption is clearly invalid.¹ iii) Supposing we accept that contingency is a positive quality and that it necessitates matter, then this would be contradictory to the philosophers' theory of eternal entities, e.g. intellects or souls, which do not need a substratum for their existence. Moreover matter itself is contingent and does not need another matter for its existence. Therefore, there is no evidence for the existence and eternity of contingency before the origination of contingent entities.²

1. Sharh, p. 228; Arba'īn, p. 52; Risāla, p. 71.

2. Sharh, p. 228; Arba'īn, p. 52; Risāla, p. 71.

Strangely enough, this counter-argument of al-Rāzī, persuasive though it seems, appears to be contrary to his conception of hudūth (origination) and imkān (contingency). The mutakallims have mainly held that what makes it necessary for the world to have ('illat al-hāja) a creator is hudūth, whereas the philosophers believe that it is imkān, not hudūth. Al-Rāzī prefers imkān as that which necessitates the world having a creator when he states that "In our opinion, hudūth cannot be regarded as a factor in the realisation of cause, either as a complete cause or a part of it, or a condition of it."¹ To justify his position, he explains that origination is posterior to the influence of the Creation. This disposition ~~which~~ is susceptible to effect and in turn is attracted by a ground which is prior to it; therefore, origination is not the principal ground calling for a creator.²

As a matter of fact, by such an explanation al-Rāzī seems to accept the philosophers' theory that the contingent is preceded by the possibility of its existence (through emanation), although in fact this would lead to the acceptance of the eternity of the world. Al-Rāzī's answer to this conclusion, as has been mentioned above, was that an entity cannot be predicated before its actual existence, and that contingency is not a positive quality.

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1. Arba'in, p. 69; Sharh, p. 218; Mabāhith, vol. 1, pp. 134, 135; Muhassal, p. 54; Mafātih, vol. 4, p. 526.
 2. Arba'in, p. 69; Mulakhkhas, f. 80b; Lubāb, p. 79.

However, in discrediting the mutakallims' belief that hudūth is the necessitating cause for a creator and upholding the philosophical approach, he seems, in fact, to think of and predicate matter before its actual existence. This seems to be a significant contradiction. This contradiction can further be substantiated by the fact that he uses both arguments -- arguments based on contingency and on originatedness -- for the existence of God, as will be discussed in the next chapter, whereas the philosophers cautiously avoided the acceptance of originatedness as a valid proof for God's existence.¹

The Fourth Proof

The philosophers' fourth proof is the argument from eternal time. Time in their opinion is the measure of movement in terms of priority and posteriority but not in space.² All that is orginated is preceded by its non-existence. This precedence is not total nothingness since the non-existence before the origination and the one after it are identical whereas the time before and the one after origination are not identical.³ Thus, priority and posteriority

1. Najāṭ, p. 213.

2. Sharḥ, p. 225; Risāla, p. 82; Muḥaṣṣal, pp. 57, 61; Mabāḥith, vol. 1, p. 658. Al-Rāzī ascribes this definition to Aristotle on the authorities of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. According to these sources, the exclusion of space from the definition is due to the fact that the prior and the posterior exist together in space whereas in time the prior does not exist with the posterior.

3. Sharḥ, p. 222; Arba'īn, p. 50.

must be positive qualities of time, the constituents of which are ever-changing in a regular way. These qualities (accidents) can only be manifest in movement, and movement which is the transference of a substance from one locus to another cannot take place except in matter. Therefore the idea of the eternity of time necessitates the eternity of movement which in turn necessitate the eternity of matter. Moreover we cannot help thinking of time before any origination in the past and also after the point of the annihilation of any substance in future. This is the evidence for the eternity of time.¹

Al-Rāzī's answer to this question is on different levels. First, unlike al-Ghazālī who attempted to answer the same question in his Tahāfut, he does not accept the Aristotelian definition of time.² He has two main objections:

i) The relation of time to movement depends on the phenomenon of movement, which is the transference of a substance from one location to another. The first state is prior to the second. These two states, however, cannot take place without the existence of a conception of time independent of movement. If on the other hand time were one of the accidents of movement, different movements would produce different times; alternatively it must be conceded, that one constant accident can be manifested in

1. Ibid.; al-Badawī, al-Aflātūniyya al-Muḥdatha, p. 38.

2. Al-Ghazālī is of the opinion that time was created by God, and has a beginning, but he does not reject the formula that time is the measure of movement (Tahāfut, p. 96).

many varying substrata. If these impossibilities are accepted, then it becomes necessary to postulate another (perhaps more comprehensive and regular) time to cover all these divergent times down to infinity, which is absurd. Consequently, the theory that time is a corollary of movement is groundless.¹

ii) Movement cannot be conceived except in conjunction with time. Thus, movement needs time for its realisation; whereas if we claim that time is a product of movement, then both time and movement would essentially be in need of each other which violates the rule of the impossibility of circular dependence.²

Other objections advanced by al-Rāzī are:

1. Priority and posteriority are not positive properties of time, since these are merely conceptions which indicate the relation between two things. Thus priority would necessitate posteriority in order to operate, which would lead to the acceptance of contemporaneity of priority and posteriority. Secondly, as non-existence precedes the existence of the thing originated, ~~and~~ if we thus qualify the thing originated as something posterior, then we have to qualify non-existence as something prior, which is absurd, because non-existence is absolute privation ('adam) of which nothing can be predicated.³

1. Risāla, p. 82.

2. Ibid., p. 83.

3. Sharh, p. 222; Arba'in, p. 53; Mulakhkhas, f. 137a.

2. God is prior to the universe. This priority cannot be in terms of time, since this would entail the corollary that, as time is a property of movement, God also should be moving.¹ This is absurd. In fact, the precedence of God over the world has nothing to do with time, for this would entail similarity of God with originated things. Therefore this precedence must be different from the five conventional types of priority.² By such an explanation al-Rāzī denies the existence of time before the point of creation. He also rejects the formula of cause and effect as a workable principle for God's priority over the world. Nevertheless, he does not elaborate on the type of precedence which he calls the sixth type, and thus it remains obscure.

1. Sharḥ, p. 224; Arba'īn, p. 9; Mabāḥith, vol. 1, p. 660; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 57; Maṭālib, vol. 1, f. 38a.

2. According to al-Rāzī the precedence of yesterday over today cannot be explained in terms of priority and posteriority. He likens the type of precedence which he envisages, to the precedence of world over privation and that of God over the world (Sharḥ, p. 223; Arba'īn, p. 9). The five types of priority which are mentioned by Ibn Sīnā and al-Shahrastānī are as follows:

1. The priority of cause over effect
2. Priority in numerical order
3. Priority in character
4. Priority in rank
5. Priority in time

(Arba'īn, p. 7; Najāt, pp. 222-23; N. Iqdām, pp. 8-9.)

In his suggestion of a sixth type of priority which he tries to establish in the course of proving the insufficiency of the accepted five types, al-Rāzī seems to have taken the basis of the argument from his predecessor al-Shahrastānī. He too, thinks of a sixth kind of priority without the interference of time; stating that, unless this is accepted, God's essence cannot be freed from change and corruption.¹

In conclusion, it may be observed that despite the fact that al-Rāzī could not produce a solution to the problem of time, and this he has candidly admitted in his al-Mabāhith al-Mashriqiyya², he made a destructive criticism of the Aristotelian theory of time. In his effort to separate time from movement he comes nearer to a more modern understanding of the problem. Simply because movement is the most convenient way of describing time, this should not lead one to the idea that time is a corollary of movement and that they are inseparable. The foregoing arguments also apply to al-Ghazālī's claim

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1. N. Iqdām, p. 9. Al-Shahrastānī, in his attempt to divest God of the notion of time likens the latter to space. Just as the existence of space between God and the universe cannot be accepted, similarly the existence of time between God and the creation of the world is not valid. The difficulty of comprehending this fact is due to the prejudiced human thinking of God in terms of time and space which is not other than illusion (wahm), pp. 18, 33.
 2. Mabāhith, vol. 1, p. 647.

that time is created by God. He may have meant by created time the time which was accompanied by movement, which is merely the basic means of our conception of time. In fact, he implicitly maintains that movement, as a corollary of matter was created by God, since he accepted the Aristotelian theory of time. But what conception of God would be valid up to the moment of creation is not so clear in al-Ghazālī's theory, though in his view of eternal divine will he is of the opinion that the decision by God to create the world is from eternity but that the fulfillment of this was delayed.¹ Here there is an implicit acceptance of the existence of time before creation. This, as noted above, was rejected by both al-Shahristānī and al-Rāzī on the grounds that it is conducive to the assumption that God Himself is a temporal being.

The fifth and the sixth proofs of the philosophers are not as forceful as the preceding ones. The first of these holds that the main reason for God's creation of the world is His generosity; in other words, creation is His benevolence and as God's benevolence cannot be temporal, so creation cannot be temporal. Therefore the world is eternal.²

Al-Rāzī's answer is that all the accidents and changes in this world are also due to the benevolence of God, but

1. Tahāfut, pp. 96-103.

2. Arba 'in, p. 50; al-Badawī, al-Aflātūniyya al-Muḥdatha, p. 34.

yet they are not eternal; therefore the creation of the world is not eternal.¹

The second proof is that if the world were temporal, it would mean that God created it out of His will. But if the existence of something is preferable to its non-existence, that existence (this act of preference) should entail an advantage. To accept this reasoning would entail God's acquiring perfection by creation, while this cannot be valid in God's case, since the Necessary Being is self-subsistent.²

Al-Rāzī's answer to this argument is short and simple. God with His free will may choose something, without any consideration of attracting perfection or any advantage. This is the nature of His will.³ In fact this answer is in agreement with the Ash'arite theory that God's actions are pure actions and are not aimed at good (husn) or evil (qubh).⁴

In conclusion, in the rebuttal of philosophic arguments al-Rāzī showed great skill and competence in using the techniques of speculation which he partly borrowed from al-Ghazālī and al-Shahrastānī. However, by his destructive criticism of the Aristotelian theory of time he arrived at a new and unprecedented line of thought. His systematic treatment of each problem in detail, which is again peculiar to him, is another contribution to this field of speculation.

1. Arba'in, p. 53.

2. Ibid., p. 50; cf. al-Aflātūniyya al-Muḥdatha, p. 37.

3. Arba'in, p. 53.

4. Ibid., p. 249.

Al-Rāzī's Arguments for the
Temporality of the World

In order to prove that the world is not eternal but temporal, al-Rāzī advances five proofs, mainly derived from the nature of contingent entities.

The First Proof

If bodies were eternal they would be either in motion or at rest. It is impossible that they be in motion, for motion means transference of substance from one locus to another; thus, a previous state is always presupposed which is contrary to the notion of eternity. Eternity demands a permanent situation and negates any previous occurrence.¹

The bodies cannot be at rest either. This would amount to the denial of the mobility of the earth, and other heavenly bodies. If they were eternal they should continue motionless for ever; but as they are evidently moving any permanent state is out of the question.²

This argument produces an important point, namely that while bodies are either in motion or at rest they retain their essences without any disintegration. Thus, motion and rest must be positive qualities of the substance.³

1. Arba'īn, p. 14; Ma'ālim, p. 21; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 66; Mafātīḥ, vol. 4, p. 526; vol. 5, p. 286; Khamsūn, p. 333.

2. Arba'īn, p. 17; Ma'ālim, pp. 23, 25.

3. Ibid.; this is in contradiction to the philosophers' claim that immobility is the absence of movement.

Therefore it is not a positive quality (Arba'īn, p. 15).

To substantiate the claim that bodies cannot be in motion for eternity, or, in other words, to prove that a moving body cannot be eternal, al-Rāzī produces proofs based on the revolutions of the earth and other celestial spheres. In view of the fact that these revolutions are capable of enumeration, they must have a beginning. The mensurability and finitude of rotations is further supported by the fact that two limited periods in the past can be compared in respect of ascertainable length of time each contains, the one being shorter or longer than the other. The result is that both periods are finite since the short one is less than the longer and the long is longer only by a measurable amount. It follows that, substance whether in motion or at rest cannot be eternal.¹

Actually, the argument from the principle of motion and rest had been used by al-Bāqillānī and al-Ghazālī for the same purpose.² What al-Rāzī has done here is to systematize and elaborate it with additional proofs. In this he exhibits what may be regarded as his most significant contribution to speculation: the systematization of the ideas and the demonstration of their contextual relationships.

The Second Proof

This argument seeks to prove the finitude of bodies. Al-Rāzī imagines a line with the terminals AB. Then he marks two points on the line which he calls C and D.

1. Ibid., pp. 14, 15; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 66.

2. Tamhid, pp. 42-44; Iqtisād, p. 15; Ihyā', vol. 1, p. 144.

Afterwards he supposes the A end of CA line as going to infinity and the C end as a finite end. He applies the same argument to the DB line.

Now if the two lines of DA and CA are compared it will be noted that DA is longer than CA by the amount of DC. Therefore one line is shorter than the other. The short line is finite, because it is shorter than a supposed infinite one. The longer is also finite, because it is longer than the short one by a limited amount. From this, al-Rāzī concludes that what is finite is originated, because the reason for the length and shortness or equality of entities cannot be determined except by a willing Creator. Consequently, finitude necessitates origination, which in turn necessitates an Originator.¹

The Third Proof

This argument is connected with the first proof. It runs: supposing bodies were present in eternity, then they would be in a definite locus. Being eternal, it would be impossible for them to leave their loci. So the movement of such a body would be inconceivable. As this is absurd,

1. Arba'īn, pp. 27-29; Mafātīh, vol. 3, p. 119, vol. 4, p. 526, vol. 5, p. 285. This example is similar to the theory based on proportional revolutions of celestial spheres which was used by al-Ghazālī. Ibn Rushd, on the other hand, criticizes this argument on the grounds that there is no proportion between two infinite items. Proportion exists only between two finite wholes, or their parts. (Tahafūt al-Tahāfut, vol. 1, p. 10)

so too is the theory that bodies are eternal.¹ What makes this argument distinct from the first proof is that the stress is here laid on the need of locus for a body. It could properly be included in the first argument.

The Fourth Proof

This argument seems to be the combination of the two classical arguments of imkān and hudūth, which have also been employed for the existence of God.² The gist of the argument is that everything except God is contingent-in-itself (mumkin bi-nafsihi), every contingent-in-itself is originated. In order to achieve the authenticity of the first premise (that everything except God is contingent) al-Rāzī relies on the formula that two necessary beings cannot exist. The contention is that if there were two necessary beings they would be similar to each other in necessity, but distinct in total identity. As the distinctive feature is different from the common, the essences of these supposed two necessary beings would be composed of two elements. Every composed entity is in need of its components for its reality, and since any entity showing the need for others is not necessary per se, but contingent, so the existence of two necessary beings is impossible, and everything other than God is contingent.³

1. Arba'īn, p. 29.

2. Ibid., pp. 30, 68-69.

3. Ibid., pp. 30-31.

From this al-Rāzī proceeds to postulate that every contingent entity demands a determinant for its existence and every thing determined is originated. Therefore, everything which is not God is originated.¹

The Fifth Proof

This proof is about whether eternity is an integral property of a body or an extraneous one. Al-Rāzī refutes both suggestions on the grounds that we can think of bodies without a conception of eternity and that the acceptance of eternity as an extraneous quality of body would necessitate infinite regress, when this additional quality itself is discussed.²

These arguments, although efficient in bringing about persuasive conclusions, seem to be dependent on the pre-supposition of the finitude of bodies. This is very evident in the demonstration of two comparable limited periods of time in the past, and the example of two lines. This was justifiably criticised by Ibn Rushd who denied the comparability of two infinite items. The issue calls for new arguments based on different approaches.

Al-Rāzī's Arguments against the Mu'tazilite theory that the non-existent is something

The origin of this theory and its adoption by the Mu'tazilites is still obscure. According to al-Shahrastānī

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., p. 41.

it was the Aristotelian argument for the pre-eternity of the potentiality of matter that led the Mu'tazilites to believe in the reality of the non-existent.¹ Another suggestion by al-Shahrastānī is that it originated from the philosophers' argument for the eternity of matter devoid of form.² The latter has also been dealt with by al-Rāzī.³ The theory of the conceivability of a non-entity has also something to do with another theory that imaginary visions have realities. For example, genera and species are neither existent nor non-existent, but intermediate realities. These latter are called modes (aḥwāl), a theory which was first advocated by Abū Hāshim the Mu'tazilite scholar. Later on it was also adopted by al-Juwaynī and al-Bāqillānī.⁴

Reasonably enough al-Rāzī attempts to connect the issue to the controversy as to whether existence is the substance itself or an extraneous attribute of it. He states that those who believe that existence is substance itself naturally cannot claim the existence of something without the quality of existence. However, those who believe that existence is an additional quality of the essence are of two classes: those who hold that essence cannot exist devoid of this attribute, and those who still

1. N. Iqdām, p. 33.

2. Ibid., p. 169.

3. Muḥassal, p. 37.

4. N. Iqdām, pp. 159, 163; Milal, p. 67;
Matālib, f. 47a.

conceive essence apart from this attribute. The Mu'tazilites belong to the latter group.¹

Unlike al-Ash'arī and Ibn Sīnā, al-Rāzī holds that existence is an extraneous quality which is common to all existent entities, including the Necessary Being.² However, despite this division of the existent into essence and existence, al-Rāzī unlike the Mu'tazilites does not believe in the continuity of essence independent of existence. His theory can be reduced to the formula that although essence and existence are different things, ~~and~~ however independent essence may be, it cannot survive without existence. Therefore, al-Rāzī is led into an argument on two fronts: he first confronts Ibn Sīnā, al-Ash'arī and their followers who hold that existence is nothing other than the existent itself and is not an additional quality. The second argument is with the Mu'tazilites who believe that existence is a quality additional to the essence but that essence can survive independent of existence.

Al-Rāzī's Arguments for the View that Existence is an Extraneous Quality

Al-Rāzī here advances four proofs to justify his position:

1. Arba'īn, p. 58.

2. Ma'ālim, p. 10; Muhassal, p. 39; Arba'īn, pp. 54-59, 100; Khamsūn, p. 348.

The First Proof

This proof seeks to establish the thesis that existence is a common quality of all existent entities. However, there is some ambiguity regarding his view on the premise. In the Muhassal he refutes the theory that existence is a quality common both to the Necessary Being and the contingent entities, a view which he ascribes to the majority of the philosophers, the Mu'tazilites and to a group within his own madhhab.¹ In his other works, especially in al-Arba'in where he deals with the subject extensively, he favours the theory that existence is a common quality.² As al-Arba'in contains what may be regarded as his final position on the issue -- the Muhassal presumably belonging to an earlier period of his teaching -- it would be best to examine the arguments presented therein.

In other matters too, al-Arba'in represents the mature thought of al-Rāzī; for example, he gives various views on the problem of the existence of God, and favours the notion that existence is common to the Necessary and the Contingent and is additional to the essence.³

In order to substantiate the theory, al-Rāzī states that what makes existent entities differ from each other is the characteristics of their essences. This is further supported by the fact that there is no middle term between

1. Muhassal, p. 33.

2. Arba'in, p. 54.

2. Ibid., p. 110.

existence and non-existence. If existence were not a common quality it would not be the only opposite term to non-existence.

Another implication for the comprehensiveness of existence is that such entities are divided into necessary and contingent, whereas the non-existent cannot be classified.¹

Furthermore, if existence were not a common quality of all living entities, then each of them would have to have a distinctive existence which would demand a separate knowledge for its definition. Since this is absurd, it follows that existence is a single conception for all living entities.²

The Second Proof

This proof has been advanced to justify the view that existence is not the whole entity, but an extraneous quality. It runs as follows: the essences of things are liable both to existence and non-existence. Therefore, essence is different from both of these predicates, as it shows a receptive nature to these opposite alternatives, and thus it must be an independent reality.³

As a matter of fact this argument of al-Rāzī is vulnerable to the very criticism which he levelled at the philosophers' claim that the thing which can receive

1. Mabāhith, vol. 1, pp. 19, 24; Muhassal, p. 38; Sharh, p. 212; Arba'īn, p. 54; Matālib, f. 38a.

2. Ibid.

3. Arba'īn, p. 55.

existence and non-existence is the potentiality of the matter, and this potentiality precedes the actual existence.¹ Al-Rāzī's criticism then, was that matter cannot be predicated prior to its actual existence. However, here he predicates essence as independent of existence, and it is therefore difficult to deny the fact that if essence can be conceived without existence, this essence can be qualified with potentiality.

The Third Proof

We can think of essence though unaware of its quality of existence. Therefore if existence were the essence itself or a part of it, it would be necessarily conceived when the essence was thought of. So, essence and existence are independent realities.²

The Fourth Proof

Al-Rāzī here depends on a linguistic contention. He states that when we say "blackness" and stop without mentioning a predicate, then we say "blackness exists" there would obviously be a difference between the implications of the two utterances. As this difference is necessary, so, blackness devoid of existence can be thought of, and is an independent conception.³

The Mu'tazilite Proofs

The Mu'tazilites put forward five arguments to prove that the non-existence is a reality and is not total privation. These arguments are:

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1. Supra (the philosophers' third proof).
 2. Mabāhith, vol. 1, p. 25.
 3. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 23; Arba'in, p. 58.

The First Argument

The non-existent are distinguishable among themselves. They can be classified into possible and impossible. The impossible (mumtani') is absolute negation, and has no identity, whereas the possible has an element of identity in that it is possible for it to exist and is thus a reality. The qualities which make the possible non-existent differ from each other must reside in the essences of these entities. Since these essences are necessarily qualified, they must be realities.¹

Many examples were given to substantiate the view that the non-existent are distinguishable among themselves due to the qualities of their essences. Examples are the predictability of sunrise from the East tomorrow; our knowledge of things we are potentially able to do, our hopes for wealth and other good fortune, aversions towards illnesses and disasters, etc. All these things are not present at the moment; they do not exist, but yet they are conceivable and discernible realities. Furthermore, God's ability to create the admissible (al-jā'iz) but not the inadmissible (mumtani') is also evidence of the fact that the non-existent can be classified.²

1. Arba'in, p. 61; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 35; Mabāḥith, vol. 1, p. 45; Mafātīḥ, vol. 5, p. 262.

2. Ibid.,; Ma'ālim, p. 11; this argument was presented by al-Shahrastānī as the argument of the philosophers who claim that matter can endure devoid of form. (N. Iqdām, p. 164).

Al-Rāzī's answer to this argument centres on the contention that it is impossible for the non-existent to possess essence and that our thinking of things which are non-existent is not a justification for the assumption that they actually exist. They exist only in fancy but not in reality. For example we can think of a partner to God, and can actually envisage it in imagination, but we know for sure that such a partner does not exist. We can also use our imagination to build up various fictitious ideas, but these imaginary descriptions cannot be conceived as actually existent entities.¹ To this can be added our speculations about abstract relations between actual items. As a matter of fact these abstract relations have no substance and therefore no existence.²

The Second Proof

This proof originates from the doubt concerning the principle of contingency. It runs: the contingent entity is liable both to existence and non-existence, the thing which is capable of receiving either of these two alternatives

1. Ma'ālim, p. 11.

2. Arba'in, p. 64; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 36. The answer of the philosophers to the above-mentioned argument is that even if a matter is capable of taking various accidents this does not mean that it can exist with none of them (N. Iqdām, p. 165).

Another profound answer is given by al-Shahrastānī that our knowledge of the non-existent is dependent on, and originates from, the existent itself. Since we can think of the existence of actual matter we can also think of its non-existence as an opposite conception. But this knowledge comes from the existent not the non-existent (N. Iqdām, p. 153).

must be independent of both cases and it must be a reality.

As noted above, al-Rāzī used the same argument for the conceivability of essence devoid of existence.

In reply to this objection al-Rāzī states that if the essence of the contingent were stable in both cases (existence and non-existence) it could have no attribute of contingency. It follows that contingency is a quality of real and existing entities. Accordingly, the non-existent cannot be called contingent.¹

In fact, this refutation is also applicable to al-Rāzī's own argument of essence separate from existence.

The Third Proof

The Mu'tazilites use as their third proof the argument of the philosophers that contingency precedes the actual origination of the contingent. The philosophers, as was discussed above, used it as evidence for the eternity of the world. The Mu'tazilites however, employ it as evidence for the thingness of the non-existent before origination.²

The answer to this question is the same as the one given to the philosopher which was explained above.

The Fourth Proof

The Mu'tazilite point here is that God's act of creating something is not the thing itself. The thing has

1. Arba'in, p. 67; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 37.

2. This was the basic argument which according to al-Shahrastānī misled the Mu'tazilites into this dilemma (N. Iqdām, p. 33).

an independent identity. God does not create the essence. What God does is to connect this independent identity with existence.¹

Al-Rāzī's answer is that God is effective not only in connecting essence with existence but also in the origination of the essence. To say that God gives only form (existence) to perceived and already existent matters, is to divest Him of His absolute omnipotence.²

The Fifth Proof

This proof is based on the interpretation of the Qur'ānic verse:

"Wa lā taqūlanna li shay'in inni fā'ilun ghadā"

18.23

In this verse, the non-existent has been labelled as something (shay') and it conforms to the theories of the Mu'tazilites.³

The answer according to al-Rāzī is that the verse does not imply that the non-existent is something possessing essence and reality, but instead it indicates that the non-existent can be called (shay') which is only a linguistic necessity.⁴

al-Rāzī's Counter-Arguments

Four arguments have been presented by al-Rāzī to disprove the thesis that the non-existent is a reality.

1. Arba'in, p. 63; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 37.

2. Arba'in, p. 68. Cf. N. Iqdām, pp. 158, 160; Mafātīh, vol. 2, p. 378.

3. Arba'in, p. 64; Mafātīh, vol. 5, p. 473.

4. Arba'in, p. 68.

The First Proof

If things were realities without the attribute of existence, they would be distinct from each other as to their essences. In fact this distinction cannot be maintained in the case of privation. In other words without the property of existence they are indistinguishable. Otherwise, it would be possible for something to exist before it actually exists which is a self-evident fallacy.¹

The Second Proof

This argument relies on the assumption that non-existent entities must be either finite or infinite. Since both suggestions are absurd, so is the thing-ness of the non-existent.

The non-existent are not infinite in quantity as the Mu'tazilites claim. Their finitude can be demonstrated by the fact that prior to the creation of a certain non-existent entity the number of the non-existent is more than that after creation. Thus what increases and decreases is finite.²

The Third Proof

Every contingent is preceded by non-existence and is originated. Therefore, apart from the Necessary Being every existing thing must be originated (hādith). Since the non-existence is not originated it does not exist.³

1. Arba'in, p. 59.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 60.

The Fourth Proof

This depends on the interpretation of a Qur'ānic verse, "wa-'llāhu 'alā kulli shay'in qadīr", which is repeated several times in the Qur'ān. The word "shay'" here should mean something with a distinctive essence. It implies that God is not only effective in connecting the essence with the quality of existence, but also in the creation of the essence itself. It follows that prior to the effectiveness of God the essence was nothing.¹

In his rebuttal of the Mu'tazilites al-Rāzī seems to be successful both in countering their proofs and in issuing positive proofs for the Ash'arite thesis that God created the world out of nothing. In this he confronts both the Muslim philosophers with their view of an eternal world and the Mu'tazilites with their thesis that the world is created out of pre-existent matter.

However, these arguments advanced by al-Rāzī against the philosophers and the Mu'tazilites were somewhat modified in his later work al-Matālib al-'Āliya.² Although

1. Ibid.

2. The two manuscripts of this work which were available for the preparation of this thesis are both incomplete: Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Fatih no. 3145 contains the first part which deals with epistemology; Lâleli no. 2441 contains only chapters on free will and predestination. However, 'Effat Muḥammad al-Sharqāwi in a thesis presented at McGill University and M. Şāliḥ al-Zarkān in a thesis presented at the University of Cairo, both use a more complete text and it is through their work that the observations made above were formed.

there is no evidence that he was influenced by his contemporary Ibn Rushd or vice versa both concede that the Qur'ān makes no explicit statement on whether the world was created out of nothing or out of pre-existent matter. If the issue is not bound by revelation then it becomes a subject of free speculation on which neither theologians nor philosophers can be accused of heresy. Al-Rāzī exhibits the same attitude of compromise in the problems of divine attributes and free will and predestination.

It should be noted that by such a conciliatory approach as that exhibited in al-Matālib al-'Āliya al-Rāzī differs from his predecessor al-Ghazālī who in his treatment of the same problem in Tahāfut accused the philosophers of heresy.

CHAPTER IV

GOD'S EXISTENCE AND DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

Al-Rāzī's Arguments for the Existence of God

The philosophic definition of God and His relationship with the created world were not acceptable to the Muslim theologians. In their efforts to refute the philosophers, they had recourse both to scripture and pure speculative reasoning. The Muslim philosophers like al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā defined the Necessary Being as absolute existence. Although existence is a quality common to all existent entities, in the case of the Necessary Being it cannot receive essence as ~~is~~ in the case of contingent entities.¹ Their argument for this is that if God had essence beside existence, this essence would be the cause of His existence, which would therefore have been caused. However anything caused is not divine, and consequently God cannot have an essence.²

Secondly, as essence cannot survive without existence, to conceive essence independent of existence would lead to the acceptance of an existent entity before its actual existence.

Thirdly, if God were not existence solely, then the combination of essence with existence would be an additional

1. Najāṭ, pp. 230-31; Muhassal, p. 111.

2. Najāṭ, pp. 230-31.

phenomenon, which necessitates a separate discussion of determining factors. Moreover, if God consisted of essence and existence, this notion would be a necessary knowledge self-evident to all. Since this is not the case, God does not possess essence apart from existence, but is pure existence.¹

The main purpose of this philosophic argument is to safeguard the oneness of the Necessary Being. Thus, in their opinion, conceiving God as having essence as well as existence is a denial of God's unity. For the same purpose they have denied the validity of divine attributes, since such an acceptance would bring about plurality in the conception of the Supreme Being.

Al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī did not accept the validity of this argument, but not on religious grounds, as they did not refer to any Qur'ānic verses in their rebuttal of the argument. Both conceived God as having essence and existence, and to justify their position they entered into speculative discussions. Although both Ash'arites, in this they departed from the position of al-Ash'arī, who according to al-Rāzī held the view that existence is a common quality only in linguistic usage, whereas in reality, God's existence differs from that of the contingent.²

In one of his early works, Nihāyat al-'Uqūl, al-Rāzī considers three theories on the issue: (i) that of philosophers, (ii) that of al-Ash'arī and his followers,

1. Maṭālib, f. 169a; N. 'Uqūl, f. 55b.

2. N. 'Uqūl, f. 56a; cf. N. Iqdām, p. 160.

(iii) that of Abū Hāshim the Mu'tazilite scholar.¹

Rejecting the first as the weakest, he seems to approve the second and the third. However, in his later teaching he favours only Abū Hāshim's theory, as does al-Ghazālī also. The latter advances two arguments against the philosophers' thesis that God is not other than existence. The first is that existence devoid of essence cannot be conceived; and as we cannot think of absolute non-existence unless we link it to something whose non-existence is presumed, so similarly we cannot think of pure existence without the notion of an essence to which it is attributed. The second counters the philosophic objection that if an essence be accepted alongside existence in the nature of God, then this essence would be the cause ('illa) of His existence. Al-Ghazālī's answer is that essence is not the cause of existence in the case of contingent entities, so why should it be the cause in the case of the Necessary Being?²

Al-Rāzī adds more proofs to this antithesis that God consists of essence and existence. Although he does not refer to al-Ghazālī it is clear that he accepts his second argument as the most convincing³, and goes on to elaborate further arguments in refutation of the philosophers. These can be summarized as follows:

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1. N. 'Uqūl, f. 56a; Arba'in, p. 100.
 2. Tahāfut, pp. 166-67.
 3. N. 'Uqūl, f. 56a.

(i) The comprehension of existence is a priori. As existence is a common quality of both the contingent and the necessary, so God's existence is easily understood just as the existence of the contingent. However, it is widely accepted that God's essence is not known to the human mind.¹ If God were nothing more than existence, then His reality would easily be known by the human intellect.

(ii) The quality of existence is the same in the contingent and in the necessary. Since the contingent consists of essence and existence so too, must the necessary.²

(iii) Necessity (wujūb) is a relative quality connecting one conception to the other. Therefore, it is more reasonable to say that the relation between the essence and existence of God is necessary. Otherwise, we would have to say that the relation between God's existence and

1. In al-Rāzī's opinion God's reality cannot be comprehended on the grounds that He is the Cause of all the created. If this cause is known, the all which is created must be known, which is impossible. Secondly, all we know about Him is His relative and peculiar qualities, whereas His reality is different from these qualities. However, God's presence is manifest everywhere; but since this manifestation is unlimited, our limited minds cannot encompass it (Risāla, p. 48; Tawhīd, f. 15a).
2. Risāla, p. 45; Sharḥ, p. 202; Arba'īn, pp. 100-04.

existence (in general) is necessary which is illogical.¹

(iv) Existence is a predicate like oneness. Therefore, it cannot be conceived alone independent of other realities.

He then directs his attention to Ibn Sīnā's argument that if God possessed essence then this would be the cause of His existence, and that therefore this would entail the existence of essence before the actual existence. To this al-Rāzī replies that essence is capable of receiving existence without the need for another existence. This reception and effectiveness is valid regardless of its being existent or non-existent, just as the essence of the contingent is capable of potentiality without regard to its being existent or non-existent. Therefore, the precedence of essence over existence is not in terms of existence.

Another difficulty which al-Rāzī finds in the position of the philosophers is that if God were only existence, without being capable of receiving essence, then in His act of creation He would be either effective as solely existence without the quality of having no essence, or with this quality. If He is effective without it, every created thing would be equal to Him. However if He is effective with it, then this would entail the acceptance of a negative quality as a cause of a positive effect. Therefore, God has essence as well as existence.²

Despite his disciplined mind and his ability in argumentation al-Rāzī cannot be regarded as an original

1. Ibid.

2. Arba'īn, p. 101; Maṭālib, vol. 1, f. 169a.

thinker on this issue. The theory he advances derives from the Mu'tazilite Abū Hāshim, and two arguments in support of it were taken from al-Ghazālī. His contribution was to elaborate the discussion in a more organized presentation and to furnish it with further proofs.

Al-Rāzī's Arguments for the Existence of God

Al-Rāzī adduced various arguments in proof of the existence of God. In his work Risāla fī l-Tawhīd he discusses two major approaches to the Divinity: one active and the other passive. The active method includes:

1. The approach of Orthodoxy,
2. The Shī'ite approach,
3. The approach of Spiritual Illumination (Ishrāq),
4. The rational approach,
5. The approach of star-worshippers.

As to the passive method, it is represented by the Sufi approach to the notion of deity.¹

In another work, al-Mabāhith al-Mashriqiyya he divides the seekers after divine knowledge into six classes:

1. The philosophers,
2. The theologians,
3. The proponents of the teleological argument,
4. The naturalists,
5. The empiricists,
6. The mystics.²

1. Tawhīd, f. 19a.

2. Mabāhith, vol. 2, pp. 448-51.

Despite the fact that al-Rāzī accepted to some degree the validity of the positions held by each of these groups, it was that of the philosophers and theologians that he himself preferred. The rational approach of the first attracted him, because he believed that all truths, even those of religion, can be authenticated only by reason, while the position of the theologians allowed this rationalism to be applied within the conventional approach to religious thought, he was prepared to make some modification in it in order to accommodate philosophical speculation. Thus, for example, he can make such statements as: "Our [philosophical] argument is stronger than that of the theologians."¹

By this unprecedented eclectic attitude al-Rāzī shapes a new type of reasoning for the argument on the problem of the existence of God, and makes a particular contribution to the position of philosophy as well as theology; while it cannot be claimed that he has successfully answered all the complex problems which the matter presents, his contribution is both original and unique in Islamic thought.

The first argument which he advances for the existence of God derives from the basic notion of existence; there is no doubt about a universal existence which must be either possible or necessary. If it is necessary, then it is what we are looking for. If on the other hand it is possible, then every such entity is in need of a determinant

1. Tawhīd, f. 23a; Arba'īn, p. 69.

for its existence, as it is equally liable both to existence or non-existence. This determinant cannot come except from the Necessary Being. Otherwise we would be forced to accept the validity of either a circular dependence of causes or an infinite regress. Thus, the concept of existence itself is an irrefutable proof for the reality of the Supreme Being.¹

This argument had previously been used by Ibn Sīnā who maintained that this is the only proof, for the validity of which we do not need to postulate any other secondary conception such as God's acts and His creation, because it originates from pure existence.² Al-Rāzi, in his commentary on al-Ishārāt was satisfied with this³; but in his later works he objected to it on the grounds that we cannot think of existence independent of existing entities.⁴ In another instance he states that to comprehend the reality of God is impossible, and that the only way to make an approach towards such a knowledge is through the study of the different aspects of the created world.⁵ Thus, existence without the witness of a reality (a conceivable essence) is impossible.

1. Risāla, p. 38; Arba'īn, p. 70; Muḥaṣṣal, pp. 106-07; Sharḥ, pp. 204-74; Khamsūn, p. 341.

2. al-Ishārāt wa l-Tanbīhāt, vol. 3, p. 36; Sharḥ, p. 214.

3. Ibid.

4. Zarkān, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, p. 191.

5. Tawḥīd, f. 17a.

After this criticism of Ibn Sīnā's argument al-Rāzī arrays his own proofs which are a contribution to the philosophic and theological positions on the subject. These proofs are mainly four, but in some of his works a fifth is added. These are:

1. The argument from the contingency of ~~the~~ substances
2. The argument from the contingency of accidents
3. The argument from the originatedness of substances
4. The argument from the originatedness of accidents
5. The argument from the design and order in the universe.¹

1. The argument from the contingency of ~~the~~ substances:

This argument has a premise that every possible entity is in need of a determinant, which causes it to come into existence from non-existence. The pre-existence of such a determinant is inevitable, because the contingent cannot originate from non-existence into existence by itself. This determinant must be external and not contingent, for if it were so, it would necessitate another determinant for its realisation, and so on ad infinitum. As an endless chain of determinants is not acceptable, it must therefore stop at an ultimate determinant which is the Necessary Being. Nor can the existence of these determinants be inter-dependent, because it would entail a circular causal

1. N. 'Uqūl, f. 53b; Arba 'īn, p. 70; Ma'ālim, p. 26; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 106; Lubāb, p. 90.

connection necessitating the existence of an existent before its actual realisation which is illogical.¹

This argument which is the main proof used by the philosophers is sometimes interchangeable with the argument from absolute existence, though it is one stage down from the latter. This is because the argument from existence does not rest on the created, whereas the argument from contingency depends on the created world.²

2. The argument from the originatedness of ~~the~~ substances:

This argument derives from the actual and observable presence of the created world. Thus, the universe has doubtless been created, and every creation demands a creator. This is God, who has no similarity to the created universe.³

This is the argument upon which the reasoning of the theologians rests, and to them it is more plausible than the first. It is also appealingly simple, as they do not need to argue against infinite regression and circular causation for its validity.

By contrast, to the philosophers this argument is groundless, because before the origination of the contingent there are other considerations, such as the effect of the

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1. This is refutation of infinite regress. See Muḥaṣṣal, p. 108; Arba'īn, p. 81; Risāla, p. 39.
 2. N. 'Uqūl, f. 53b; Tawhīd, f. 23a; Arba'īn, p. 70; Risāla, p. 38.
 3. Arba'īn, p. 89; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 107; Ma'ālim, p. 28; Tawhīd, f. 23a.

determinant and the nature of the created things which attract the influence of the determinant. This quality is contingency. From this contention they conclude that matter is eternal, as the quality of contingency needs a substratum for itself. Thus, while the philosophers use this argument for the existence of God, they have also used it for the eternity of the world. It follows that the acceptance of this proof would necessitate the denial of the temporality of the created world.

Being influenced by philosophic studies al-Rāzī could not be satisfied with the theologians' argument. Therefore, he sought to combine the two schools. However throughout his many works he shows a preference for the philosophic argument from contingency, holding that the latent need for a creator in the contingent lies not in its being originated, but in its potential to exist. Thus, origination comes after the influence of the determinant, which in turn is subsequent to the attraction of this influence by the receptive cause ('illat al-hāja) (contingency).¹

In his work Risāla fī l-Tawhīd al-Rāzī further criticises the mutakallims on the grounds that their proof from origination and temporality of entities depends entirely on the principle of motion and rest. Motion and rest need space for their operation, as motion is the transference of a substance from one locus to another. If the existence

1. Sharḥ, vol. 1, p. 215; Arba'īn, p. 69.

of an entity without locus, and consequently without the quality of motion could be proved, then this would invalidate the theological argument, because in al-Rāzī's opinion an entity without locus might exist, but still not be identical with God. Likeness in this respect is only in a negative quality. Therefore he claims that the philosophical argument is stronger than that of the theologians.¹

However skillful and conciliatory this endeavour of al-Rāzī might seem, a great difficulty still remains: how to purge the philosophers' argument from its necessary corollary -- the eternity of the world. This difficulty has not been eliminated by al-Rāzī.²

3. The arguments from the contingency of accidents:

This argument in fact is a repetition of the first argument, but focusing the thrust of the reasoning on accidents. It runs: all created entities are equal in their essences and realities. Any distinctive feature which makes something differ from another is capable of modifying any other substance. The characteristics which distinguish a man from a brute animal are equally applicable to the animal. Thus all distinctive qualities of substances are interchangeable, but the question remains: why has each substance taken a special quality or set of qualities leaving out others? To this al-Rāzī replies that it is

1. Tawhīd, p. 23a.

2. E.M. Sharqāwi considers this endeavour as a reconciliation of theology with philosophy, Philosophy and Religion in the Thought of ar-Razi, p. 242.

because there is one great architect who shapes everything differently through his free will. Therefore, any particular aspect of a substance which differentiates it from other substances has been allocated by a determinant, and this is the ultimate cause of any event, and must be necessarily existent.¹

This proof, in fact, is the application of the same reasoning used in the first argument. The premises here, however, start from conceptions which are based on observation rather than theory, and in this respect it is less dependent on abstractions ^{than} ~~as~~ is the case with the former.

4. The argument from the originatedness of accidents:

This argument relies on the phenomenon of the variety of accidents as they affect substances. The argument from accidents has two aspects, the subjective and the objective. Of the first type the development of man through different stages from embryo to maturity is given as an example. Such changes cannot take place on their own, as there is a purposeful and foreordained process being followed. This process has been laid down by the Necessary Being.

The objective argument is based on matters of common observation such as the nature of plants, minerals, cosmological movements, etc.²

1. Arba'īn, pp. 84-86; Ma'ālim, p. 28; Muhaṣṣal, p. 107; N. 'Uqūl, f. 54a.

2. Arba'īn, p. 90; N. 'Uqūl, f. 54a. The subjective proof has also been regarded by al-Ash'arī as evidence for God's existence. Kitāb al-Luma', p. 6.

According to al-Rāzī this is to be inferred from the Qur'ān itself. His division of the argument into subjective and objective proofs rests on his interpretation of the verse: "We shall show them Our portents on the horizons and within themselves..." (41.53), alluding to many other verses which express the importance of phenomenal events as proofs for God's existence. In his ^{last} latest work, al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya he seems to have preferred this approach over the others on the grounds that it is simpler, more easily observed and more familiar to human experience.¹

5. The argument from design and order in the universe:

In al-Rāzī's opinion this can be included in the four preceding arguments. By observation of the harmony and balance in the world the absolute knowledge of the Creator is demonstrated, whereby His very existence is concluded.² This proof has also been considered by Ibn Rushd as the strongest evidence for God's existence.³

Apart from these philosophical observations al-Rāzī introduces also the mystical approach. He starts from two premises which are basic to the argument from contingency, namely that everything is contingent and that every contingent needs a determinant to cause it to come into existence. Proceeding from these two axioms on the nature of creation one has to pass from the rational to the intuitional. Thus al-Rāzī adduces the Qur'ānic verse, "So take off

1. Zarkān, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, p. 193.

2. N. ‘Uqūl, f. 54a.

3. Zarkān, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, p. 175.

thy shoes" 20.12, which occurs in the context of Moses' conversation with God on Mt. Sinai, as divine vindication of this approach, interpreting it to mean "Divest yourself of the things of this world when you would seek contact with the deity."¹

The seeker after truth, therefore, having passed through the level of rational speculation and having become aware of the immanence of God, achieves the mystical state of wasl, which might be rendered "arrival", but is distinguished from ittihād (union). Experience can go no further than this; but such experience, by its very distance from all other kinds of experience cannot be communicated and must remain hidden in the heart of the mystic as a personal perception. In this light al-Rāzī would seek to understand the succeeding words, "for lo! thou art in the holy valley of Tuwa" 20.12, as expressing man's final arrival at his goal in the quest for the knowledge of divinity.

Thus, al-Rāzī follows the path already trodden by al-Ghazālī, proceeding through the stages of philosophical argument and metaphysical speculation to an ultimate reality, the knowledge of which transcends the grasp of reason and can be attained by powers which are neither of the mind nor the reason.²

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1. In the interpretation of this verse in a mystical sense he takes "na'layk" (thy shoes) as meaning the two philosophical premises the abandonment of which is conditional for the next stage (Mafātīh, vol. 6, p. 12).
 2. Tawhīd, ff. 16a-19a.

Divine Attributes

The problem of divine attributes has played an important part in the origination of various theological schools in the early centuries of Islam. One of the significant questions which occupied the minds of the second generation was how to interpret the anthropomorphic verses in the Qur'ān which describe God in corporeal terms. This question later on took shape as the "problem of divine attributes" and this forms a major section in the works of theology.¹

The problem has been variously dealt with by different schools, extreme and diametrically opposed views being moderated by intervening interpretations. The extreme positions are often named tashbīh and ta'tīl. Those who hold a middle position are sometimes called Ṣifātiyya.²

The Mushabbiha or Anthropomorphists who take the position of tashbīh do not venture to interpret the anthropomorphic verses, but accept them at their face value,

thereby ascribing human qualities to God.³ To these can be added the Karramites who are sometimes identified as mujassima (corporealists), who attribute jism or body to God but who differ in some respects from the Mushabbiha.⁴

The Mu'aṭṭila or the exponents of ta'tīl reject the possibility of attributes distinct from God's essence.

1. Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, vol. 3, pp. 46-47.

2. I'tiqādāt, p. 34; Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 69.

3. Milal, p. 75; I'tiqādāt, p. 97; Ma'ālim, p. 50.

4. Milal, p. 79.

Therefore, they apply metaphorical interpretation (ta'wīl) to the anthropomorphic verses and justify this procedure by quoting anti-anthropomorphic verses.¹ The Muslim philosophers clearly adopt the position of ta'tīl. Al-Shahrastānī as an Ash'arite regards the Mu'tazilites as holding the doctrine of ta'tīl although their views differ considerably from those of the philosophers. The Mu'tazilites believe that eternal divine attributes like knowledge and power exist but that they are not different from the essence, whereas the attributes of will and speech exist but originated.²

The Ash'arites sought for a comprehensive solution lying between the two extremes. The founder of the school, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, who had at first been a Mu'tazilite was dissatisfied with the extreme rationalism of this school and worked out this formula which was to become the prototype for the later theologians of his sect. His formula is quoted thus by al-Shahrastānī: "God is knowing in virtue of knowledge, powerful in virtue of power, living in virtue of life, willing in virtue of will, speaking, hearing, seeing...these attributes are co-eternal with His essence. They are neither identified with Him, nor are they different from Him."³

Such a compromise between ta'tīl and tashbīh while offering a new basis for speculation for thinkers in a

1. Ibid., p. 67.

2. Iqtisād, p. 60.

3. Milal, p. 67; al-Baghdādī, Kitāb al-Usūl, p. 90; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 131.

middle position, did not satisfy either the philosophers on one hand or the Mushabbiha on the other. Both attacked the Ash'arites who in rebuttal of these attacks and defence of their position used many different proofs. Al-Juwaynī, al-Bāqillānī, al-Ghazālī and al-Shahrastānī were among the notable defenders of this doctrine. In the sixth century after the Hijra, the most prominent exponent of Ash'arism was Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.¹

Before discussing his treatment of the two extreme positions, namely the philosophers (including the Mu'tazilites) and the Anthropomorphists, his classification of the various positions which have been taken on the problem of attributes must be presented.

First, he draws a distinction between noun (ism) and adjective (ṣifa). In his opinion ism includes all kinds of meaningful words -- nouns, verbs, which he regards as being derived from the verbal noun (maṣdar) and adjectives. In support of this view he cites the verse 2.31, "And He taught Adam all the names", interpreting al-asmā' as covering all forms of the meaningful units of a language.² By this interpretation he implicitly asserts the existence of attributes on the basis of scripture, since the word

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1. Apart from these main schools discussed there are two other theories on the issue: Abū Hāshim's theory of modes (aḥwāl) and Mu'ammār's theory of al-ma'nā. The former term was accepted by al-Juwaynī and with some reservations by al-Bāqillānī (al-Milal, p. 67).
 2. Lawāmi', p. 27; Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 264.

sifa itself is not used in the Qur'ān.¹ Accordingly, the phrase al-asmā' al-ḥusnā which appears four times in the Qur'ān (7.180, 17.110, 20.8, 59.24), is in al-Rāzī's opinion a sufficient proof for the existence of the attributes.

However, there are three points in which nouns are superior to adjectives. (i) Adjectives are derived from root-nouns; and the root is prior to the derivative, because if the derived word does not stop at a root, either circular dependence or infinite regress would be entailed.² (ii) The derived word is composite whereas the root is irreducible and simple. (iii) The noun refers to an essence (māhiyya), whereas the adjectives refer to a state (ḥāl) related to that essence. Therefore, nouns are more significant.

After this analysis al-Rāzī mentions three main views held on the controversy over divine names and attributes:

1. There are those who accept attributes but reject nouns. They base their argument on the premise that God's reality cannot be known but his manifestations can be observed.³

1. The absence of this word in the Qur'ān is the basis of Ibn Ḥazm's rejection of divine attributes (Fiṣāl, vol. 2, p. 120).

2. Lawāmi', p. 27.

3. Ibid., p. 29. Al-Rāzī refutes this theory on the grounds that God might enable some chosen people to know His reality. This concession contradicts his previous claim that God's reality cannot be comprehended by human reason (Lawāmi', p. 29; Arba'in, p. 218).

2. Those who accept nouns but reject attributes. They are philosophers. The objections which they advance are of a complexity which necessitates a separate discussion, which will be given below.¹

3. Finally there are those who accept both nouns and attributes, who are represented by the Ash'arites.²

Al-Rāzī then presents another classification based on the issue of attributes in particular:

1. The philosophers who accept only negative and relative attributes.³

2. The Mu'tazilites who despite the ambiguity in their position are unanimous in accepting two divine qualities: knowledge and power.

3. Abū Hāshim and his followers, whose theory of attributes is expressed thus: "Knowing and powerfulness cannot be predicated as existent or non-existent, or as something known or unknown."⁴

4. The Ash'arites who believe in positive as well as negative qualities.

Al-Rāzī's Treatment of the Philosophic Arguments against the Validity of Positive Attributes

As the Mu'tazilites were strongly influenced by the philosophers, al-Rāzī in most cases includes among those

1. Ibid.; Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 69; Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 460; Arba'īn, p. 157; Risāla, p. 53.

2. Ibid.

3. Lawāmi', p. 33.

4. Al-Rāzī rejects this theory, claiming that something neither existent nor non-existent etc. cannot be a topic for any judgement (Lawāmi', p. 35).

of the philosophers their arguments for the Necessary Being without attributes. In some of his works he combines the two positions under the general term "anti-attributists" (munkirū al-ṣifāt), whereas in others he mentions their arguments separately.¹ Due to the similarity of the proofs offered by both sides, and because of the lack of a clear-cut distinction in the author's own works it seems appropriate to deal with the arguments of the philosophers and those of the Mu'tazilites under the same heading.

The main purpose of the philosophic arguments is to defend four characteristics of the Necessary Being: necessity, eternity, unity and perfection. Basic to this position is the acceptance by the philosophers of relations (al-idāfāt) as attributive to God.² However, they reject the real attributes which according to the Ash'arites are seven: power, knowledge, will, seeing, hearing, speaking and living.

Al-Rāzī presents the arguments of the anti-attributists as follows:

1. If real attributes were predicated of God, then they would be either necessary or contingent. They cannot be necessary due to two major difficulties: a) there would be more than one necessary being and these beings would be composite having the dual nature of a shared necessity and an individual identity. This would lead to the

1. Arba'in, p. 155.

2. Risāla, p. 65.

acceptance of contingency of the Necessary Being in as much as any composite is per se contingent. b) An attribute cannot exist independently, always needing a substratum. Thus anything which shows need for another thing cannot be associated with God.

If on the other hand, the attributes are contingent, again two difficulties arise. a) God's essence would be the cause and recipient of these attributes at the same time (al-qābil wa l-fā'il) which is unacceptable. b) If the attributes were contingent they would need a cause for their emergence. However, since everything caused is originated, these attributes cannot be ascribed to the deity!¹

Al-Rāzī replies briefly to this forceful argument, without discussing the various headings under which it was presented. He states that attributes can be contingent in their essences but necessary through the Necessary Being.² This is an unprecedented argument containing difficulties which will be mentioned in due course. As to the objection that God cannot be simultaneously active and recipient, al-Rāzī maintains that there is nothing contradictory in this, since philosophers themselves agree that God knows universals, and they accept that knowing is the reflection of the knowable in the knower. Therefore,

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1. Mafātih, vol. 1, p. 69; Lawāmi', p. 30; Arba'in, p. 157; Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 460. Cf. N. Iqdām, p. 200.
 2. Arba'in, p. 162; Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 466; Ma'ālim, p. 49.

God is receptive to the objects which are caused by Him.¹ The philosophers claim too that He is the First Principle (al-Mabda' al-Awwal) and the Prime Cause (al-'Illa), and these notions would necessitate positive relations between Him and the caused world. This, therefore, would contradict their assertion that "an entity cannot be active and passive at the same time."²

The first of these two rebuttals of the philosophers had already been used by al-Ghazālī who attempted to disprove their conception of God's absolute oneness.³

The second argument of al-Rāzī too had appeared previously in both al-Ghazālī and al-Shahrastānī. In order to refute the philosophers' thesis that all divine attributes are reducible to His very essence, al-Shahrastānī claims that the philosophically accepted conceptions al-mabda' and al-'illa are not to be included in the conception of Necessary Being (Wājib al-Wujūd). They are only relations ascribable to His essence. The same reasoning is true of His attributes.⁴

Another point raised by al-Shahrastānī is that even in the notion of Necessary Being there is a duality -- necessity and existence. If this is acceptable to the philosophers, why then not the attributes?⁵

1. Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 460; N. 'Uqūl, f. 112b.

2. Ibid., cf. N. Iqdām, pp. 208, 217.

3. Tahāfut, p. 162.

4. N. Iqdām, p. 176; Tahāfut, p. 164.

5. N. Iqdām, p. 204.

As regards al-Rāzī's argument that attributes are contingent in essence but necessary through God's reality -- a theory he also defended while commenting on Ibn Sīnā's al-Ishārāt¹ -- it is worth pointing out the difficulties inherent therein. In the previous chapter al-Rāzī attempted to treat two premises as equal: 1) every contingent is originated, and 2) every originated is contingent. In conceding that every contingent is originated he allows the presence of temporal qualities in God's essence, a fallacy of which he accused the Karramites. However, this apparent contradiction can be mitigated somewhat by his explanation that there is no change and novelty in God's real attributes, but that only His relative attributes are subject to change.²

The second argument of the anti-attributists depends mainly on the notion of eternity: the divine attributes are either eternal or temporal. They cannot be eternal, as there would then be more than one eternal being. Moreover, they would all be composite. They cannot be temporal either, since God's essence does not accept temporality.³

1. Sharḥ, p. 242.

2. Ibid. Such a distinction is not always found in al-Rāzī's works. For example in his al-Arba'īn he takes the word sifa to mean attribute in general (Arba'īn, p. 162; Lawāmi', p. 32).

3. Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 70; Lawāmi', p. 31; Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 465; Arba'īn, p. 157.

Their third proposition is that God is complete and perfect, This completeness and perfection is either with the attributes or without them. In the first case, He would be in need of attributes for perfection, which is contrary to the idea of divinity. In the second there is simply no need for the attributes.

Fourthly, the anti-attributists claim that God has blamed the Christians in the Qur'ān (5.73) because of their belief in distinctive attributes of God, as the Christians do not hold the existence of three different gods.¹

In order to disprove the second argument al-Rāzī maintains that eternity is not a positive quality. To consider eternity a negative quality is to permit it to be shared by different entities. Moreover, even if it were conceded that eternity is a positive quality, the fact of its being shared by different entities does not entail total sameness, just as, for example, all contingent entities are different while all sharing the quality of contingency.²

This would appear to contradict his argument against the eternality of creation, which was dealt with in chapter III, where he claimed that the acceptance of the eternal world would invalidate the uniqueness of God.

To explain away the difficulties the third and fourth objections he suggests that God's very essence necessitates

1. Ibid., p. 159.

2. Arba'in, p. 164; N. 'Uqūl, f. 114b.

(awjaba) attributes, but this does not imply that He is composite. Although necessitating the presence of attributes, He remains complete in Himself and not through any other entity. Thus, attributes are with Him essentially.¹

As a matter of fact, if al-Rāzī by "necessitating" means "causing" this answer would raise more difficulties instead of being a reply to the question under consideration.

The relation between essence and attribute was dealt with by al-Ghazālī more convincingly, when he asserted that attributes cannot be judged separately. They are with His essence initially and the relation of cause and effect is not valid here. Moreover, it is only through these attributes which are His necessary properties, that He is perfect and complete. Therefore, there is no independent notion of knowledge or power of which God may have need. In order to remove any doubt of His being composite al-Ghazālī states that as His existence and necessity cannot be established by reason so neither can His attributes and His relations with them.²

Al-Ghazālī had chosen a more circumspect approach in his response to the philosophers; however, al-Rāzī in employing statements such as "attributes are contingent by essence but necessary through God's reality; and God's essence necessitates the existence of attributes", involves himself in ambiguity.

1. Lawāmi', p. 32; Arba'in, p. 163.

2. Tahāfut, p. 162; see also Wolfson, Philosophy of the Kalām, p. 175.

Al-Rāzī's answer to the final argument of the philosophers is that the Christians have not been accused of belief in attributes, but rather of believing in three independent hypostases and in incarnation. Thus, an analogy between God's attributes and the principle of Trinity is groundless.¹

Apart from these counter-arguments al-Rāzī advances the Ash'arite proofs for the validity of divine attributes:

1. There is a clear difference between the notion of God's existence and His being knowledgeable and powerful. Taking for example the following statements:

dhāt allāh dhāt

dhāt allāh 'ālima wa-qādira

The fact that these two statements are different in form and signification shows that His attributes are not identical with His essence.²

2. It is possible to conceive of His essence while being unaware of His being knowledgeable and powerful. Therefore His essence and attributes are different conceptions.

3. His knowledge relates to the necessary, the possible and the impossible, whereas His power only relates to the possible. This distinction between the two attributes is again evidence for the separateness of the attributes.

4. God's power affects the existence of the created things, whereas His knowledge does not influence the

1. Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 70; Arba'īn, p. 164; Lawāmi', p. 32; N. 'Uqūl, f. 115b.

2. Ibid.; cf. Iqtisād, p. 61.

creation of any entity. This difference between the functions of the two attributes proves the existence of these two attributes.

5. This proof is actually another version of the first. Non-existence contradicts existence and ignorance contradicts knowledge. As non-existence and ignorance are not identical nor are their opposites -- existence and knowledge. Therefore, attributes are not reduceable to God's essence.¹

After this refutation of the anti-attributists we can now turn to al-Rāzī's discussion of the anthropomorphists, and this may be best presented in his refutation of the Karramites who ascribe various human characteristics to God. The special point which al-Rāzī tries to refute here is their contention that change and novelty may occur in

1. This proof is usually known as dalīl al-Nafy wa l-ithbāt which had been used previously by theologians like al-Shahrastānī (N. Iqdām, p. 194). Apart from these proofs there are others advanced by the Ash'arites for the validity of attributes. One is that if we do not attribute to God qualities such as knowledge, power and living, then we would have to qualify Him by the opposite conceptions such as ignorance, impotence and mortality which are incongruous to divinity (N. Iqdām, p. 171). To al-Rāzī this is not a sound argument because the opposite of knowledge is not necessarily ignorance.

God's attributes¹; or, in other words, God's attributes are originated. These are al-Rāzī's proofs against the Karramites:

1. If the attributes were originated, then before their origination God would be imperfect and achieve perfection after acquiring them. This is incompatible with the notion of deity.²

2. If the attributes were originated and God's nature were receptive to them, such receptiveness would be an eternal attribute of God. This would imply the existence of the consequences of the attributes from eternity, i.e. the eternity of the world. However, this is absurd, because the world is created which means it has a beginning. If it has a beginning, it cannot be eternal.³

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1. See Milal, p. 79. Although only Karramites have been accused of belief in the originated attributes, in al-Rāzī's opinion, all other theological schools implicitly approve of this: the philosophers by accepting real relative qualities and God's knowledge of entities as reflection on His essence, the Mu'tazilites by accepting originated attributes of will and speech, the Ash'arites by accepting abrogation (in the Qur'ān). Yet the attributists call these qualities real attributes, whereas the anti-attributists call them accidents or relations. Thus the difference between them is in ~~letters~~^{words} not in meanings (Arba'īn, p. 118; Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 464; N. 'Uqūl, f. 112b).
2. Arba'īn, p. 120; Ma'ālim, p. 34; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 114.
3. Arba'īn, p. 121; Iqtiṣād, p. 68.

3. The third argument depends on a Qur'ānic verse (6.76) in which reference is made to Abraham's statement that he would not accept as God anything variable.¹

It will be seen that these proofs depend on the contrast between on the one hand the notion of temporality and change, and on the other, the essential qualities of the Necessary Being -- eternity and permanence.

Al-Rāzī's Classification of Attributes

The divine attributes may be divided into two categories: the positive and the negative. The latter refer to any qualities which are denied to God's reality, such as: he is neither a body nor an atom (jawhar), neither contingent, nor originated.² The former denotes any qualities which are ascribable in reason to God such as divine knowledge, power, seeing, hearing.³

However, this simple classification is modified by al-Rāzī, who would prefer to regard the divine attributes under three categories: real attributes, such as existence and living; relative attributes, such as being an object of worship (ma'būd), being known (ma'lum), being an object of gratitude (mashkūr); negative attributes, that is such as are denied to all other existence, e.g. being holy

1. Muḥaṣṣal, p. 111.

2. Risāla, p. 63.

3. Arba'in, p. 120.

(quddūs), imperturbable (salām), self-sufficient (ghanī) and unique (wahīd).¹

These three categories can further be subdivided:

1. Real attributes implying relations: knowing ('ālim), powerfulness (qādir).
2. Real attributes which include negation: the First (al-awwal), the Last (al-ākhir).
3. Real attributes which imply relation and also include their negatives: the Judicious (al-hakīm), the Sovereign (al-malik).²

The term "relative" here means any attribute which has something to do with the created world. Therefore the attribute of knowledge while being a real attribute is also relative, since it is involved with what is known. The only real attribute which has no relation to a secondary conception is the attribute of living.³

Al-Ghazālī's classification, although similar, shows some differences. He would conceive of attributes as of four classes:

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1. Al-Rāzī conceives three types of negative attributes:
 - a) those which are negated from His essence such as: He is not contingent, body, originated; b) those which are negated from His real attributes such as: ignorance, impotence, imperfection, etc.; c) those which are negated from His actions, such as: futility, cruelty, etc. (Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 73, vol. 4, p. 319; Lawāmi', p. 40.)
 2. Mafātīh, vol. 4, p. 319; Lawāmi', p. 40.
 3. Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 71; in his N. 'Uqūl he claims that there is no evidence for or against any related attribute.

1. Those which refer to essence only: existence (wujūd).
2. Those referring to essence but including negation: eternity (qādim), permanence (bāqī).
3. Real attributes with an existential reference: power, knowledge.
4. Real attributes with the existential reference particular to divine activity: creativity (khāliq), providence (razzāq), benevolence (jawwād).¹

Al-Rāzī mentions five other methods of classifying of the attributes:

1. The division of the attributes into three: necessary, possible and impossible. This approach has mainly been used by the theologians.²
2. Another tripartite division: essential, real and actual (related to action).
3. A dual division into those which are ascribable only to God, and those which are common to God and human beings. Examples of the first type are Allāh, rahmān, and of the second type, karīm, rahīm, 'azīz, latīf.
4. Another dual division into those attributes which are capable of being spoken of without qualification, like: Allāh, rahmān, hakīm, and those which demand qualification in order to be meaningful as qualities of the divinity: mumīt, dārr.

1. Iqtisād, p. 72.

2. Mafātīh, vol. 4, p. 320; Lawāmi', p. 43.

5. The final method mentioned by al-Rāzī is a means of establishing the validity of the attributes rather than a classification. It is a rational demonstration for the existence of a creator who is knowing, powerful and living.¹

An important aspect of al-Rāzī's treatment of divine attributes is his way of explaining certain anthropomorphic characteristics ascribed to God in the Qur'ān. Anger (ghadab), deception (makr), mockery (istihzā), shyness (istiḥyā'), pride (takabbur). These are states peculiar to human beings, but the Necessary Being cannot be so qualified. Al-Rāzī proposes a comprehensive rule for the interpretation of such words when found used in reference to God:

It should be known that the surest rule for the interpretation of such words is to consider that for each of these states there are circumstances which appear in their beginning and consequences which emerge from them. For example anger is a state which is produced in the heart when the blood therein rises, coupled with an increase in body temperature. The consequence of this process is to intend harm to the cause of the anger. If anger is used for God then, conceive it as denoting the consequence of anger, but not the corporeal states which mark its beginning. 2

On the question whether we may apply names and attributes to God arbitrarily, al-Rāzī is in agreement with al-Ghazālī that the names of God are those which are mentioned in the Qur'ān and that no more can be added to

1. Mafātīh, vol. 4, p. 320; Lawāmi', p. 43.

2. Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 81, 236; see also Lawāmi', p. 38.

them. The case of attributes however, is different because, just as there is no objection to applying commendatory epithets to a human being, so too is the case with God. Therefore, apart from those which are mentioned in the Qur'ān any predicate of praise can be used for God.¹

One is forced to the conclusion that in his treatment of divine attributes al-Rāzī was greatly influenced by philosophy, as may be seen in his theory of contingent attributes. But the Mu'tazilites, too, would seem to have influenced his thinking, despite his general attitude of hostility towards their doctrines. Thus, in his Tafsīr, when commenting on the divine attributes, he poses the question: why should not all the seven attributes be regarded as relative qualities, while among them creation and knowledge can be taken as pertaining also to His very essence? By leaving the question open, al-Rāzī is conceding the position taken by the Mu'tazilites who regarded attributes as functions of the divine essence. In another place, he allows that all the attributes of perfection may be comprehended within the two primary qualities, knowledge and power; and this too, is in accord with the reasoning of the Mu'tazilites.

To al-Rāzī the chief points of difference between the attributists and anti-attributists arise from two antitheses. One, unity is perfection and plurality is imperfection. Those who maintained this were driven by the logic of their position to such extremes as to deny

1. Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 81, vol. 4, p. 321; Lawāmi', p. 36.

the existence of divine attributes entirely. Two, possession of absolute knowledge and power is the only notion that is appropriate to divinity, and any derogation from these conspicuous qualities would imply a lack of perfection. The adherents of this position were consequently obliged to state that divine attributes were inseparable from divinity. While the former sought perfection in unity, the latter held it to reside in deity. Both however, have the same object in their reasoning: the assertion of God's perfection. Al-Rāzī counselled a middle way between these positions.¹

Positive Attributes

Those divine attributes which excited controversy among the speculative thinkers of al-Rāzī's age were the seven qualities known collectively as al-ṣifāt al-ḥaqīqiyya, al-ṣifāt al-thubūtiyya or al-ṣifāt al-ijābiyya.² They are power, knowledge, will, speech, hearing, seeing and living. Al-Ash'arī and some of his immediate followers also regraded eternity (al-qidam) as one of the positive qualities.³ Later theologians of this school did not accept eternity as a positive attribute, but as a subsistent corollary of the conception of the Necessary per se.⁴

1. Lawāmi', p. 33; Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 94.

2. Milal, p. 67; N. 'Uqūl, f. 71a; Ihyā', vol. 1, p. 98.

3. According to al-Rāzī the Mu'tazilites believe in two substantial and four secondary attributes (N. 'Uqūl, f. 71a).

4. See Iqtisād, p. 18; Kitāb al-Tamhīd (introduction), pp. 1-30; al-Baghdādī, Kitāb Uṣūl al-Dīn, p. 42; Arba'in, p. 189.

Al-Rāzī advances two brief arguments against the acceptance of qidam as a separate attribute. First, if eternity is conceived as an independent quality, then the Necessary Being would depend on it for His perfection. This would violate the basic principle of the self-sufficiency of the Necessary Being. Thus eternity in al-Rāzī's opinion is an implicit notion in the conception of Wājib al-Wujūd.¹

His second argument is that if the Necessary Being were conceived to be eternal by virtue of such a separable quality, then this independent notion of eternity would itself have to be dependent on another eternity, which of necessity would be either self-sufficient or dependent. If the first, then it would have to be identical with the Necessary Being, which is a fallacy. If the second, it would imply infinite regression or circular causation, both of which are absurd.²

It seems that al-Rāzī took the prototype of this argument from al-Ghazālī, who in his al-Iqtisād argues that "You should not think that eternity is an additional

1. Arba'īn, p. 189.

2. Ibid.; al-Rāzī also rejects permanency (baqā') as a separate attribute using the same arguments which he used against the conception that eternity is a separate attribute. However, the main argument he employs for the permanent Necessary Being is that anything eternal must also be persistent, but not vice versa, i.e. something created cannot be eternal, but it can be permanent through the will of God (see Mafātīh, vol. 1, pp. 68, 69; Arba'īn, p. 185; Muhassal, p. 126; Ma'ālim, p. 58; Lawāmi', p. 350.).

quality to the essence of the Eternal, for it would force us to postulate that this quality is eternal through another notion of eternity and so on, ad infinitum."¹

In the light of these two arguments one can speculate that the theologians by rejecting eternity as an independent attribute wanted to stress that eternity cannot be considered as a secondary property of the deity like the divine attributes. This is so self-evident that the eternity of the Supreme Being has not become a matter of dispute between the theologians and the philosophers. Moreover, all the divine attributes share the unique quality of eternity which again shows that it is a superior quality with regard to the idea of Godhead.

After this introduction and presentation of al-Rāzī's view on the notion of eternity, the positive attributes can now be discussed separately.

Divine Power

By divine power the theologians mean God's ability to act if He wishes or not to act if He does not.² Thus, God's power functions according to divine will. This is at variance with the philosophers' view that the Necessary Being is a natural agent; His influence on the creation is as necessary as the sun's effect of light or the fire's of heat. The question, however, can be reduced to the opposition of natural agent versus voluntary agent.

1. Iqtisād, p. 18.

2. Arba'īn, pp. 122, 128; Risāla, p. 64.

The problem, in fact, is another version of the arguments against or for creation ex nihilo. For creation is the most significant manifestation of God's might. As this problem has already been dealt with, only a summary of the discussion with the emphasis on the nature of divine will (whether it is free or otherwise) will be presented here.

In his Nihāyat al-'Uqūl, al-Rāzī mentions many groups of people both inside and outside Islam, as disbelieving in the absolute power of God.¹ It is philosophy that has been the source of most doubt and disbelief, and to refute the arguments which it presents, serves to refute also those of all other schools of thought.²

He finds three philosophic maxims as contrary to the notion of the absolute and arbitrary power of God: i) that He is a natural agent; ii) that He is not composite; iii) that from one only one can originate.³

Treating the philosophers through an examination of their relevant principles as al-Rāzī partly does, and pointing out the differences between the theologians and the philosophers would have been more persuasive than branding them as disbelievers in God's power. For as Ṭūsī rightly indicates in his commentary on the Muḥaṣṣal the philosophers do not reject God's power, and their disagreement

1. N. 'Uqūl, f. 59a; Arba'in, p. 129; Mabāḥith, vol. 2, p. 492; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 116.

2. N. 'Uqūl, f. 72a.

3. Ibid., f. 66a.

with the theologians centres on the question whether effect is co-extensive with the cause which is the combination of divine will with divine power or posterior to this combination. The philosophers believe that it is co-extensive, which led them to the theory of the eternal world, whereas the theologians claim that it is posterior, which led them to the belief in the originatedness of the world.¹

A further defence of the thesis that the philosophers do not reject God's power, is expounded most fully in Ibn Sīnā's explanation of power in the context of the other attributes of God. According to Ibn Sīnā, being immaterial and alive, God knows Himself and being the First Principle (al-Mabda' al-Awwal) He knows the created world. However, His knowledge of the universe is sufficient for the realisation of what He is thinking of. For to Him the known is willed and affected (created). When man decides to do something the object conceived in the mind cannot be actualized unless there is a directing will, coupled with effective power. Therefore, there should be physical effort to acquire the means for the realisation of the thing conceived. As God is not in need of secondary means, what He knows and envisages is at the same time what He wills and affects. Thus, His knowledge in itself is sufficient for the creation of the world.²

1. See the commentary of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī on the footnote of Muḥaṣṣal, p. 116.

2. Najāṭ, p. 251.

Al-Rāzī in one place cites this argument and calls the type of knowledge Ibn Sīnā describes active knowledge (al-'ilm al-fi'lī), but he seems to ignore its implications.¹ The same argument had drawn al-Ghazālī's attention in his rebuttal of the philosophers, and he puts forward two counter-arguments. The first is that such a creation through a knowledge which also implies will and power is contrary to the principle of natural emanation which is held by many philosophers. The second is that even if the above mentioned argument were accepted it would contradict the philosophic principle of "only one thing can come out of one". Thus, if God is held to have produced only one entity which is called First Intellect, then His knowledge must be limited to only this first product. There is no proof that He should know the products of the First Intellect. This, however, would violate the idea that everything is caused by a comprehensive divine knowledge.²

In fact, this counter-argument can be further supported by the fact that the philosophers deny God's knowledge of particulars. Therefore, the question would have to be asked: How can a knowledge which excludes particulars be the source of all the created world? It follows that such a comprehensive and active divine knowledge

1. N. 'Uqūl, f. 76a.

2. Tahāfut, p. 187. Al-Shahrastāni argues against the same philosophic thesis stating that if His knowledge were what He willed and affected then, as He knows Himself He would be able to create Himself, which is absurd (N. Iqdām, p. 227).

was not totally rejected by al-Ghazālī, but he finds it out of harmony with the rest of the philosophic tenets. With some modification it would be more congruous to include it in the principles of kalām rather than philosophy. It may be concluded that philosophers like Ibn Sīnā, though appearing inconsistent in postulating an active divine knowledge, are not denying God's power.

After these brief remarks on the position of the philosophers, their main reservations against the mutakallims' conception of free agent or absolute free power can be discussed.

Any action by God must depend on a factor which determines the preference of an action over non-action. To deny a determinant would contradict the principle of contingency as well as common experience, for purposeful action must rest upon preference. When the determinant can employ all the means needed for the realisation of the desired end, then this is immediately achieved, the effect being simultaneous with the cause. Were the effect not to be immediate, an intermediate determinant would be required to explain the lapse of time between it and its cause, and would involve another discussion. Thus, all God's actions must be conceived of as the necessary operation of the principle of causality, their determinants being implicit in the acts themselves, as God is not susceptible to external influence.¹

1. Arba'īn, p. 122; N. 'Uqūl, f. 57a; Muhassal, p. 117.

Other arguments advanced by the philosophers for the thesis of natural agent are as follows. Firstly, God's attributes are eternal, so their effects must be eternal. Thus what is eternal is not subject to any alteration by a freely acting power. Secondly, what God knows from eternity will necessarily take place. A free power is contrary to the conception of eternal knowledge. Thirdly, God's power can influence only the things whose existence is possible; it cannot affect the non-existent, for total privation is not subject to a positive influence. Thus, if God's power over the non-existent is impossible it should be necessary over the possible.¹

To the first argument by the philosophers the mutakallims respond in two ways: first, while it is true that the actions which are willed by God are mediated through a determinant, this factor does not imply necessity, but rather choice of possibilities.² However, al-Rāzī is not satisfied with this answer, on the grounds that when the creation and the non-creation of something is in the balance, the preference for bringing that thing into existence is impossible. If, therefore, creation were impossible before the exercise of preference, then it must be necessary after creation is preferred.³

The second answer of the mutakallims asserts that a determinant is not always a necessitating factor for the

1. Arba'īn, p. 123; N. 'Uqūl, f. 57a.

2. Arba'īn, p. 123; Muḥassal, p. 118.

3. Ibid.

realisation of something, e.g. if two equal loaves of bread are offered to a hungry person, or two equal glasses of water offered to one who is thirsting, in both cases the person would take one with no consideration of preference. Therefore, realisation of an act is valid even without choice of a determinant.¹

The answer to the second argument is that by free agent the mutakallims mean the freedom to act or not to act. However, this should not be taken to mean that God is under any obligation to act when he has decided to act or vice versa.²

1. Ibid.; N. 'Uqūl, f. 58a; al-Ghazālī tackles the same problem and maintains that God possesses an attribute of will (irāda) through which he chooses anything rather than another without necessity or a determinant. He gives two examples in proof of this. Firstly, it was equally possible for God to choose any two diametrically opposite points on any part of heaven instead of the present poles. Thus as His acts are not aimed at securing advantage, that they were done in a certain way is not necessary nor determined by any circumstance. The second example is based on the movements of the celestial spheres. According to al-Ghazālī, if the direction of movements of all heavenly bodies were reversed there would not be any change in the regular operation of astronomical phenomena (Tahāfut, p. 88; Iqtisād, p. 49). See Ibn Rushd's answer to the mutakallims' argument which can be summarized as: the option in fact is not between two loaves of bread or two glasses of water, it is in fact between taking a loaf or leaving it as it is between taking a glass of water or leaving it (Tahāfut al-Tahāfut, vol. 1, p. 22).

2. Arba'īn, p. 129.

In answering the third argument al-Rāzī goes into an explanation of the relation between knowledge and power: Knowledge is subordinate to the event which results from the combination of will and power; therefore power is not posterior to or dependent on knowledge. That is to say knowledge is subordinate to events which are caused by power.¹

This argument seems to be weak, for while it is true of acquired human knowledge as it derives from the observation of events beyond man's agency and foreknowledge, it should not be true of divine knowledge as nothing can lie outside his absolute power and all-embracing knowledge. Moreover, it is one of man's limitations not to be able to forecast with precision an event in the future. However, since the Supreme Being is perfect He is free of any such limitations. Furthermore, thinking before action is necessary and an action devoid of a previous plan is inconceivable for God. In fact it was this conception of a comprehensive and unimpeded divine knowledge that made Ibn Sīnā consider this knowledge sufficient for realisation of a thing and identify His power and Will with it.²

The weakness in the mutakallims' position can further be illustrated by al-Rāzī's answer to the question: Can God's power operate against His knowledge? His answer is that as far as it is possible it can so operate.³ He

1. Ibid., p. 129.

2. Najāt, p. 251.

3. N. 'Uqūl, f. 76a.

fails to notice that any conflict between power and knowledge must arise from defect or inadequacy in one or the other, whereas impotence and ignorance is inconsistent with the notion of Godhead, just as is a disharmony among the divine attributes. The question is, therefore, irrelevant in considering the concept of divinity.

Leaving his attempt to support the theological position, al-Rāzī advances his own arguments for the arbitrary exercise of divine power. In the Ma'ālim Usūl al-Dīn he maintains that effectiveness is dependent upon the prior receptivity of the result (the created object); the impossible and the necessary cannot receive influence. Hence, if the only basis for the exercise of power were the admissibility (jawāz) of its result (i.e. a contingent), and if every contingent were equally liable to either existence or non-existence, any intervention that might tip the balance in the favour of the former must come from a free agent, there being no primary compulsion or necessity for action.¹ This argument, it will be recognised, depends on the nature of the created beings, whereas the previous discussions centered on the nature of the Necessary Being.

Al-Rāzī advances another argument for the Free Agent, based on the impermanency and variability of created things the very variety of which must be the expression of an independent will. If God were bound to act in accordance with an imperative necessity, there would be a constant

1. Ma'ālim, p. 42; N. 'Uqūl, f. 58b.

sameness in the sequence of events.¹

In a third argument al-Rāzī considers the concept of the determining factor. Proceeding from the generally agreed postulate that every contingent entity owes its existence to a determining factor, the universe as contingent entity must have been either possible or necessary. However, it cannot be necessary, because then the action of the Creator would be dependent on a prior determinant; and if this were not so, then the universe would be coeternal with its Creator. Moreover, if it required a determinant this determinant would need to be co-eternal, provided, of course, that the determining factor were itself eternal. However, if the determinant were temporal, this would necessitate a prior determinant, and so ad infinitum, producing a condition of infinite regress. Therefore God's actions must be voluntary.²

The argument from determination had in fact been used by the philosophers against the theologians in their insistence on the necessary relation of cause to effect, and then simultaneity in creation. The response of the theologians was that God's creative power is potential and becomes actual by a subsequent exercise of will³; and

1. Ma'ālim, p. 42.

2. Muḥaṣṣal, p. 116; Arba'īn, p. 129; N. 'Uqūl, f. 56b.

3. In al-Rāzī's opinion the attribute of power is a positive quality, and its effect is a mental consideration. N. 'Uqūl, f. 58a.

moreover, one cannot speak of necessary causal relationships in respect of God, who can act independently of determinants.¹

In connection with the problem of divine power, another issue entered into the discussion; is God capable of creating things which are seen to be cruel, evil and unjust? The Mu'tazilite al-Nazzām maintained that He was not, although most of the other members of the school believed that He was. The latter argue that just as God has purpose when He inflicts retributive suffering on evil-doers, this purpose is not restricted to such instances and may be inscrutably influential in other circumstances also.² The Ash'arites would agree with this, but add that while God is capable of creating suffering and evil, these are implicit in the creative act and can only be understood as such through revelation. When revelation is not granted, then God's actions towards mankind must be regarded as neutral.³

On examining the position taken by the philosophers and theologians on the question of divine power, it can be said that they are not so far apart as the heat of argument might suggest. The chapter on divine attributes in general has already reviewed discussion as to whether the attribute of power is identifiable with divine essence, and here the point at issue is how this power operates, by

1. Muḥaṣṣal, p. 118; Arba'īn, p. 127; cf. Tahāfut, p. 90; Iqtisād, p. 49; Tamhīd, p. 52.

2. N. 'Uqūl, f. 74a.

3. Ibid.

necessity or by choice. It is apparent that the argument is ultimately reducible to the problem of creation ex nihilo, exhibiting the same arbitrariness in premises and weakness in reasoning therefrom.

The intellectual honesty of al-Rāzī led him to conclude that neither revealed scripture nor human reasoning could supply an adequate or satisfying answer to these problems and ultimately he found that only in faith could man arrive at satisfaction which would sustain him in a mysterious world. This conclusion, which was arrived at while dealing with the question of the creation of the world, is also valid with regard to the question at issue.

Divine Attribute of Knowledge and the Controversy
on God's Knowledge of Particulars

The Muslim theologians and philosophers are unanimous on the general principle that God knows. However, they are in disagreement as to how He knows and whether this knowledge includes only universals or is a comprehensive knowledge covering all particulars. They are also at variance on the definition of knowledge and its connotations.¹

The philosophic definition of knowledge is that it is the reflection of the image of the known in the knower's mind (al-'ilm sūra ḥāṣila fī l-nafs muṭābaqa li-l-ma'lūm).²

This definition, according to al-Rāzī, would lead us to difficulties; how, for example, can rivers and mountains be

1. N. Iqdām, p. 215.

2. Mabāhith, vol. 2, pp. 460, 469; Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 280; Arba'in, p. 137; Maṭālib, vol. 1, f. 2b; Najāt, p. 247; N. 'Uqūl, f. 103a.

reflected in our small minds; secondly, how can self-cognition be explained by this definition, and thirdly our thinking about the non-existent cannot be the impression of the knowable in our minds.¹ He also criticises various definitions given by al-Ash'arī, al-Bāqillānī, al-Juwaynī and al-Ghazālī.² In al-Rāzī's opinion knowledge cannot be defined. Our inability to define something is either due to its obscurity or due to its absolute manifestness. It is because of its absolute manifestness that we are unable to define knowledge. Therefore, it is self-evident.³ Another reason for the indefinability of knowledge is that everything other than knowledge is understood through knowledge, thus it is impossible that there should be something by means of which the nature of knowledge could be comprehended. Another proof is that the knowledge of self-existence is necessary, and the conception of knowledge is part of this necessary notion.⁴

Although al-Rāzī did not attempt to define knowledge, nevertheless he tried to describe it. To him, knowledge is a special relation between the known and the knower. He calls this relation nisba or idāfa.⁵ The origin of this

1. Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 280.

2. Ibid., p. 281.

3. Ibid.; Ma'ālim, p. 5.

4. Muḥaṣṣal, p. 69; Arba'in, p. 156; Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 280. By this definition al-Rāzī differs from the mutakallims who consider this special relation between the known and the knower as a consequence of knowledge but not knowledge itself (Arba'in, p. 155).

5. Arba'in, p. 155.

description of knowledge cannot be traced back to the earlier mutakallims, but as has already been discussed, the terms nisba and idāfa were used by the philosophers as substitutes for divine attributes, whereby they wanted to free God from plurality or essential changes.¹ We have also seen al-Shahrastānī and before him al-Ghazālī using these terms in their classifications of divine attributes.²

In many places al-Rāzī compares the relation between the thing known and the knower to the relation of the number one to other numbers, in order to demonstrate that by such relations the number one is not involved in any kind of plurality. Furthermore these relationships are not conducive to any change in the nature of the number.³

It can be claimed however that al-Rāzī's main purpose in espousing such an understanding of knowledge was to counter the strong philosophic argument that if God knew things qua things then a change in God's essence would be inevitable.⁴

However, the objection could be made that although such a formula may be an answer to the philosophic argument and save God's essence from temporal changes, it cannot on the other hand be either a consistent explanation

1. Najāṭ, p. 251; Iqtisād, p. 72.

2. Supra (Chapter: Divine Attributes).

3. Arba'īn, pp. 135, 137, 140, 141, 143. Ma'ālim, p. 48. Cf. Rasā'il al-Kindī al-Falsafiyya, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Hādī, vol. 1, pp. 148-51.

4. Mafātīḥ, vol. 4, p. 54; Ma'ālim, p. 41; Arba'īn, p. 141.

of the mechanism of knowing, or a feasible solution for differences between the philosophers and the theologians on the problem of divine knowledge.

The relations conceived of by al-Rāzī which have been compared to the relation of the number one to other numbers or the relation of a central point in a circle to all points on the circumference are passive and dead relations, whereas knowing something although still a relation is an active interrelationship distinguishing it from other types of relations existent between every two entities in the universe. Furthermore God's power has also relations with the created world as has been accepted by al-Rāzī so that he describes divine power as "real with a relative quality".¹ This relationship is not identical with that existent between the known and the knower. It follows that as these relations are non-active and indistinguishable from other types of relations, they can only be an incomplete explanation of knowledge and are also defective when applied to divine knowledge.

Al-Rāzī divides knowledge into two: a) Conceptions (Tasawwurāt); b) Propositions (Tasdiqāt).

The Tasawwurāt are also divided into two:

1. Evident; such as our image of cold and hot.
2. Acquired, such as our image of jinns.

The Tasdiqāt in turn are divided into two:

1. Evident; e.g. the fact that one cannot negate and affirm something simultaneously.

1. Supra (Chapter: Divine Power).

2. Acquired; the unity of God, or the creation of the world out of nothing.¹

He also draws a distinction between knowledge and belief (al-i'tiqādāt) such that the latter includes only taṣḍīqāt leaving out taṣawwurāt; thus he conceives of knowledge as the more comprehensive term.²

Having made these preliminary observations, we will now discuss God's attribute of knowledge as viewed by the philosophers on the one hand, and the theologians on the other.

The philosophers adopted two approaches in their treatment of the issue. The first is that God, being the cause of all the created world knows everything. If He knows things other than Himself He must also know Himself.³ This argument was also approved by al-Ghazālī.⁴ The second approach is that God is living and that He is immaterial. Every living immaterial entity is capable of self-knowledge. By self-knowledge He is also aware of His being the Origin (al-Mabda') of the contingent entities. Thus He knows Himself and other things.⁵

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1. Ma'ālim, p. 5; Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 79; this classification is almost the same as that of the logicians in general and that of al-Ghazālī in particular (al-Ghazālī, Mihakk al-Nazar, p. 6).
 2. Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 281.
 3. N. 'Uqūl, f. 105b; Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 469.
 4. Iqtisād, p. 46.
 5. Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 468; N. 'Uqūl, f. 105b; Risāla, p. 58; Ma'ālim, p. 42. Al-Shahrastānī refutes the second theory stating that being immaterial is not conducive to self-cognition (N. Iqdām, p. 224).

However, the philosophers are not unanimous in their understanding of divine knowledge. Some of them hold that He possesses only self-knowledge, whereas others claim that He knows Himself and the universals.¹ Ibn Sīnā is among the latter whom al-Ghazālī credits as accepting God's knowledge of Himself and the universals, but criticizes for believing that knowing particulars is conducive to plurality.²

The most controversial point on which the philosophers seem to be in agreement and which has drawn strong criticisms from the mutakallims is their denial of God's knowledge of particulars. It should be noted that the philosophers' conception of God's knowledge of others is different from that of the mutakallims. By accepting a divine knowledge of universals the philosophers imply that God knows things from His being the cause of their origination. Thus His knowledge is a causal knowledge which does not depend on things qua things.³ It follows that as universals are static and are abstract rules they are known by God whereas particulars are not known by Him

1. N. Iqdām, p. 215; N. 'Uqūl, f. 105a.

2. Tahāfut, p. 192.

3. Najāṭ, p. 247; Risāla, p. 63. In fact the philosophers are not explicit in denial of God's knowledge of particulars. In their opinion the tenth Intellect (al-'aql al-fa'āl) is concerned with the particular affairs in the sublunar world and naturally knows them. This knowledge of particulars can be ascribed to the First Cause through intermediary intellects.

because they are subject to time which means they are ever-changing, and changing events should not be known to God.¹ To prove why God should not know particular events, they advance this argument; God's knowledge of Zayd's being out while he is out is a true knowledge. However, when he enters the house there are two alternatives regarding this knowledge: it will either change with the change of the event, in which case changeability of God's knowledge will be conceded, or it will remain unchanged, in which case, ignorance would replace God's knowledge, because this knowledge no longer reflects the new event.²

The mutakallims are divided into two camps in answering this argument; some of them counter it by maintaining that God knows everything since eternity and His knowledge

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1. Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 475; Arba'īn, p. 138; Ma'ālim, p. 41; Mafātīh, vol. 2, p. 317, vol. 3, p. 454, vol. 4, p. 54, 259, vol. 7, p. 24. Cf. Tahāfut, p. 163; N. Iqdām, p. 215.
 2. Arba'īn, p. 138; N. 'Uqūl, f. 104a. Apart from the possibility of change in God's knowledge on acceptance of His knowledge of particulars, there are other correlated difficulties such as: He would be at the same time active by being the cause of the known things, and passive by knowing them which is unacceptable. Secondly, He would be considered as a body in order to contain changing accidents. Thirdly, He would be considered as acquiring perfection by knowing particulars which again is absurd (Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 471).

of what ^{will} ~~would~~ happen in the future is the same knowledge when it actually happens. Therefore, neither change nor ignorance in His knowledge is involved in that particular event.¹ This answer did not satisfy Abū Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, a notable Mu'tazilite theologian whom al-Rāzī quotes abundantly. He advances five proofs against this theory, arguing that our knowledge of what ^{will} ~~would~~ happen in the future is not the same when it actually happens, mainly because our present speculation about future events occurs under different circumstances from when these events actually take place, by which time our knowledge of the same fact would be determined by co-extensive circumstances.² This argument seems to have had an influence on al-Rāzī though he indicates the difficulties implicit in it.³

The second answer which is also al-Rāzī's choice is that change is inevitable in knowledge when the known changes, but occurrence of change and alterations are rejected only in God's essence and His real attributes, whereas, in relative attributes these cannot be denied.⁴

This answer does not seem to be satisfactory, since knowledge is among the attributes which are real but with an aspect of relativity.

If the arguments and the counter-arguments are closely examined, it will be noticed that the main cause of

1. Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 447; Arba'īn, p. 138; Ma'ālim, p. 42.

2. Arba'īn, p. 139.

3. Ibid., p. 140.

4. Ibid., p. 141.

differences arises from comparing divine knowledge to human knowledge. Nonetheless, the philosophers should be less often accused of the error of such a comparison as they regarded God's knowledge as prior to the knowable, which is unlike human knowledge, but how this prior knowledge should exclude the knowledge of particulars has not been convincingly proved by them. The inevitability of change which they inferred from the example of Zayd, is true of human knowledge, but not necessarily true of divine knowledge. Thus in their first premise the philosophers were right in differentiating between divine and human knowledge, but in the second (God's knowledge of particulars) they failed to observe the same rule. However it can be argued that as there is no place for change and coincidence in this universe, and regularity and meticulous order are the primary principles of any permanent existence; thus why should particular events not be known by causal knowledge (which is prior to the event) and why should particular events not be linked to the universal knowledge which the philosophers admit God possesses? Secondly the main reason for alterations in our knowledge is our lack of full acquaintance with the rules governing the universe. As we know more, our predications about future events will be more accurate. Moreover, it is a fact that one of the main obstacles to a comprehensive and a far-reaching knowledge is the phenomenon of time, and since time is not a hindrance to God's knowledge and God is not subject to the

limitations of time and space, it thus follows that it is quite possible that any event whether universal or particular or whether a prior cause or a posterior effect is known by God.

Apart from the apologetic arguments presented above al-Rāzī argues positively for a comprehensive and unlimited divine knowledge. These arguments can be summarized as follows:

1. The full regularity in the mechanism of all living bodies is evidence for a caretaker, who possesses the knowledge of every particular event. Furthermore, the growth of man from embryo to manhood cannot be supervised except by an omniscient God.¹

Al-Shahrastānī in his treatment of the same issue goes further in saying that if the delicate integration of particulars is removed, then there would not be balance and harmony in this world. Thus balance and harmonious occurrences of events can only be achieved by a very fine skill which is the product of a penetrating knowledge. Otherwise, the knowledge of universals which exist only mentally and are not manifest on the material plane cannot procure the order and harmony existent in the world.²

2. God is the cause of all created beings. He is also the Giver of shapes and characteristics, which make one entity distinct from the other. Therefore, He must know everything of which He is the creator.³

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1. Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 481; Ma'ālim, p. 41; N. 'Uqūl, f. 104b; Mafātīh, vol. 7, p. 24; Risāla, p. 63.
2. N. Iqdām, p. 224.
3. Ma'ālim, p. 41; Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 484.

3. Comprehensive knowledge is an attribute of perfection, therefore it should be possessed by God.¹ However, in some of his works al-Rāzī considers this last proof weak and rhetorical.²

In his interpretation of the Qur'ānic verse 6.59 he explains the phrase mafātīh al-ghayb as denoting either absolute power, or absolute knowledge, and attempts on this basis to establish God's knowledge of particulars.³ He also refers to the verse 7.89 as evidence for God's knowledge of particulars. Interpreting the verse he gives sixteen probabilities as instantly known by God. These probabilities are the knowledge of a single entity in respect of its present, past and future and non-existence.⁴

One of the important arguments of the opponents of the mutakallims is that if God knew particulars, as the particulars are various, His knowledge too in order to correspond to them must be various. Therefore, if He knew particulars His knowledge would not be one but many.⁵

This has been challenged by al-Rāzī on the grounds that a knowledge can cover two conceptions; for example our knowledge of the opposition of white and black includes both conceptions of whiteness and blackness. Secondly, the idea of attribution includes both the attribute and the attributed.⁶

1. Ma'ālim, p. 41.

2. Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 484.

3. Mafātīh, vol. 4, p. 54; see also vol. 3, p. 454.

4. Ibid., vol. 4, p. 259.

5. Arba'in, p. 137; Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 471.

6. N. 'Uqūl, f. 116b; Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 471.

Another answer to the question is that God's knowledge is single but the relations between this knowledge and the multitude of the knowable are many. This last argument is similar to al-Shahrastānī's view that what is one is His ability of knowing, which shows the flexibility of knowledge in receiving various impressions. Therefore, knowledge of many things is not conducive to plurality in God's essence.¹

After this presentation the philosophic arguments and counter-arguments by the theologians let us now discuss the theological method of proving God's knowledge.

The first and the most important argument of the theologians is that God knows, because the universe is in balance and constant order. These harmonious phenomena cannot be realised without a governing knowledge.² The same argument can be found in the teachings of al-Ash'arī, al-Bāqillānī and al-Ghazālī.³

The second argument which has been advanced by al-Rāzī for God's absolute knowledge is that He is powerful and has a free will. If He possesses these qualities He must also be knowing, because before He exercises His power He must conceive and envisage the things He is going to create. It follows that God possesses absolute knowledge.⁴

The Ash'arite argument that if God did not have knowledge then He would have the opposite of it, which is

1. N. Iqdām, p. 236.

2. Arba'īn, p. 133; Ma'ālim, p. 40; N. 'Uqūl, f. 102b.

3. K. Luma', p. 10; Tamhīd, p. 47; Iqtisād, p. 47.

4. N. 'Uqūl, f. 105a.

ignorance, has not been accepted by al-Rāzī on the grounds that if one does not have a certain quality it does not mean that one should have its opposite.¹

It should also be mentioned here that the Ash'arite theologians have conceived knowledge as a separate attribute additional to God's essence, which contradicts the Mu'tazilite thesis that God knows by virtue of His very essence. To prove this they mainly concentrate on the difference between essence and attribute.² Al-Rāzī alludes to the verse 4.166 as evidence for God's knowledge as a separate quality.³

In conclusion, if the two approaches are compared it will be noticed that the differences which separated the theologians from the philosophers in the demonstration of God's attribute of knowledge are in some ways identical with their differences on the problem of God's existence where the philosophers attempted to prove God's existence by the very notion of existence with no fundamental reference to the created world, whereas the theological approach was to prove God's existence by His creation.⁴ Similarly, here, in proving God's quality of knowledge the philosophers base their argument on the very notion of Godhead; whereas the theologians start from the conspicuous features of the visible world as the basis for

1. Arba'in, p. 146; cf. K. Luma', p. 11.

2. Ma'alim, p. 48; N. 'Uqūl, f. 109a; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 131.

3. Mafātīḥ, vol. 3, p. 344.

4. Supra (Chapter: Creation ex nihilo).

God's absolute knowledge. Being well-acquainted with both schools, al-Rāzī incorporated elements of both in his treatment of the issue. He acts selectively in the establishment of his opinions. However, his theory of knowledge as a specific relationship between the knower and the thing known as a compromise solution between the two schools had its own difficulties which have been indicated previously. Al-Rāzī becomes more ambiguous when he attempts to define God's attribute of knowledge in terms of this relationship¹, just as when he goes into unnecessary and lengthy discussions on unimportant details. Such details sometimes leave his major points unattended to, since the places where he puts emphasis cannot be easily identified. Nevertheless, his writings are a very good example of the reconciliation of free thinking with dogma. In this field he made an undeniable contribution.

Divine Will

The main argument on the question of Divine Will is between the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites. Among the latter al-Nazzām maintained that God wills by virtue of His very essence, thus rejecting the Ash'arite theory of separate attributes. Of more importance is the theory held by the Mu'tazilite scholars like Abū Hāshim and al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār that God possesses an originated but unlocated will which has been the focus of criticisms by the Ash'arite school.² The reason why the Mu'tazilites

1. Ma'ālim, p. 48.

2. N. 'Uqūl, f. 117b; Arba'in, p. 153; Muhassal, p. 121; see also N. Iqdām, p. 238; Iqtisād, p. 48.

argued for an originated will is probably that by such a theory they could avoid ascribing temporal events to a permanent eternal will as the Ash'arites do; accordingly, to free God from any temporality, they defended an originated will as the determinant factor of anything temporal. On the other hand, by modifying this originated attribute as unlocated (without substratum) they wanted to bring it into accord with the prerequisites of the Supreme Being, thus differentiating it from human characteristics. Although such a conception of divine will has its logical basis for its validity, it is not without its difficulties. These difficulties have been presented by al-Rāzī as follows:

i) The existence of an accident without locus is impossible.¹

ii) If an unlocated will is appropriate for God, why should it not be so for human beings? If this is answered by the argument that God has no substratum, and therefore an unlocated will is more suitable for Him, the counter-argument can be made that God's not having a substratum is a negative quality. A negative quality cannot be a base for priority.²

iii) If His will is originated, then a prior will will be necessary as the cause of existing will, which would lead to the acceptance of infinite regression.³

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1. Arba'īn, p. 154; N. 'Uqūl, f. 19a.
 2. Ma'ālim, p. 50; Arba'īn, p. 154.
 3. Ma'ālim, p. 50; N. 'Uqūl, f. 118b.

iv) Accepting an originated divine attribute necessitates the acceptance of temporal events in God's essence which has been strongly rejected by both philosophers and theologians.¹

The argument which has been put forward by al-Ash'arī for the justification of a separate will is that what has been created should be willed, a thesis which he supports by the Qur'ānic verse "fa' 'ālun limā yurīd". Otherwise, if there is any occurrence beyond this will it will necessitate His impotence which is absurd. It follows that every created entity is decreed by a divine will.² The later theologians of the same school, al-Bāqillānī, al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī, have developed another argument to indicate their position. It runs: any observable temporal event takes place at a particular point of time with the possibility of happening before or after that point. Therefore, a factor is needed for the choosing of a particular event in a particular time. This factor is no other than divine will.³

Al-Shahrastānī adopts a different approach, maintaining that God's creation of certain contingent entities and his leaving out of others at His own discretion, is the

1. N. 'Uqūl, f. 119a; Ma'ālim, p. 50.

2. K. Luma', p. 24.

3. Tamhīd, p. 47; Iqtisād, p. 47; Ma'ālim, p. 45; Arba'in, p. 147; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 121; N. 'Uqūl, f. 117b.

main evidence for God's attribute of will.¹ Al-Rāzī approaches the same view by claiming that the characterization of the contingent entities with distinctive features, which are logically interchangeable between different entities, is the act of a free and willing power.

The argument based on the assumption that it is quite possible for any event to take place prior or posterior to the actual time of occurrence has its disadvantages for al-Shahrastānī and al-Rāzī both of whom denied any conception of time before the creation of the world. They propounded a sixth type of priority by which God precedes the universe. This precedence is not in terms of time.² The disadvantage is the inference that if there is no time before the creation of the world, then the question of the possibility that the creation of the world could have been before or after the actual time is irrelevant. However, the argument of priority and posteriority is valid in respect of phenomena after the creation. But as it does not work when applied to the most important event, the creation of the world, it remains unpersuasive.

1. N. Iqdām, p. 242. Although al-Ghazālī maintains the same view by his theory that the revolutions of the celestial spheres can be reversed with no difference in their positions, a view which was also borrowed by al-Rāzī, here the fact that al-Shahrastānī lays special emphasis on it to the exclusion of other proofs is significant. (Iqtisād, p. 47.)

2. Supra (Chapter: Creation ex nihilo).

It seems that when al-Shahrastānī by-passed the argument of priority and posteriority and clung to the theory of the selective contingent, he was fully aware of the above-mentioned counter-proof, whereas al-Rāzī, by defending the argument, raises doubts about his consistency.

There are other attempts to argue against the Ash'arite theory of God's attribute of will. One of the strong arguments is that any kind of possible creation should be preconceived by God's knowledge, as what God knows to be created and what not to be created is an unchangeable rule, the contrary of which is impossible. Therefore, his preference of creating one kind of the contingent over the other should be determined by His knowledge not by a separate will.¹

Another argument is that what God's power affects is what He creates, thus creation is carried out solely by His power. Therefore, there is no need for a separate divine will.² This argument was refuted by al-Ghazālī, al-Shahrastānī and al-Rāzī, who based themselves on the counter-argument that any contingent is on an equal basis with respect to divine power, i.e. as far as the object to be affected is contingent, it is equal to the influence of divine power in whatever shape or size it is required that it should be affected. This requirement cannot be fulfilled by power as it only affects but does not select.

1. N. 'Uqūl, f. 118a; cf. Iqtisād, p. 47; N. Iqdām, p. 24C.

2. N. 'Uqūl, f. 120a.

Therefore, the necessity for an executive will to decree the times and the shapes of the contingent is evident.¹

As will be noticed an analogy between knowledge and will is more intelligible than an analogy between power and will. The counter-argument which has been put forward by three prominent exponents of the Ash'arites that knowledge is subordinate to the known is a weak argument in the case of divinity, whereas it is valid with regards to human knowledge, because having a limited knowledge we cannot accurately speculate about future events. But this accurate information can be obtained from a comprehensive knowledge based on the regular and non-accidental proceedings of events from the past to the future. Such a comprehensive knowledge is within the reach of divinity. It follows that divine knowledge is prior to any events and is not subordinate to them.²

The Ash'arite conception of divine will, furthermore, is a will not dependent on any factor which may partake in its function.³ The rejection of a factor or an aim as a basis for God's preference of something over another is based on the argument that if God willed according to a factor, or to achieve an advantage, this would lead us to consider the infinite regression of factors which are all originated, previous to the one at issue. Also, if God's acts are based on the idea of attracting advantages, and

1. Ibid.

2. Supra (Chapter: Divine Power).

3. N. 'Uqūl, f. 120a.

avoiding disadvantage, this would lead us to the assumption that God acquires perfection by such act which is valid only in the human case. Thus al-Rāzī states: "fa stahāl an yakūn af'āluh tab'ā li-l-masālih." ¹

It is also the Ash'arite belief that God's acts of willing and creating have not any purpose of good and evil. They become good and evil when they are associated with human will which has been ordered to act according to divine revelation.² The neutrality of God's actions and their disassociation from any purpose is against the literal understanding of many Qur'ānic verses which express God's purpose of creation. Moreover a will with no basis to function on is unintelligible to the human mind, as we cannot think of any conscious discretion without a reason for preferring something over the other. A will functioning efficiently regardless of any purpose seems to imply the acceptance of efficient coincidence, which is contrary to the idea of efficient will. It follows that if God possesses a will which when put in intelligible terms violates the very concept of will and becomes something nearer to coincidence, then the name of such a divine quality, which the Ash'arites differentiated from divine knowledge and power, should not be will proper; or by necessity it should be called will only metaphorically.

1. Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 483.

2. N. Iqdām, p. 256.

Divine Attributes of Hearing and Seeing

Unlike the attributes of knowledge, power and will, the attributes of hearing and seeing are closely connected with human beings. This peculiarity as opposed to other attributes caused some Mu'tazilites to include these two attributes in the attribute of knowledge.¹ It has also led the theologians and the philosophically minded scholars to investigate the true nature of the mechanisms of hearing and seeing.²

In order to draw a distinction between seeing and knowing al-Rāzī argues that there is a difference between the states of thinking of something and seeing it. Moreover we may see what we do not know and know what we do not see. Therefore seeing and hearing are not the same as knowledge but are separate qualities.³

As to the physical process of hearing and seeing to which al-Rāzī devotes thirteen folios in his Nihāyat al-'Uqūl, the mutakallims' position does not seem to be on a scientific basis. Al-Rāzī rejects the theory that hearing is the

1. Kitāb al-Ibāna, p. 42; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 124.

2. N. 'Uqūl, f. 131a; Arba'īn, p. 168.

3. N. 'Uqūl, f. 131b. He also considers the verse "innī ma'akumā asma'u wa arā" (20.46) as evidence for the distinctiveness of these two qualities from knowledge. He interprets "innī ma'akumā" as denoting knowledge and takes the word asma'u wa arā at their face value. Otherwise, if these two meanings were to be taken as implying knowledge, then there would be a pointless tautology (Mafātīh, vol. 6, p. 39).

reception by the ear of sound waves, and that seeing is a sense perception.¹ However, as regards the latter, in some of his works he modifies his position, maintaining that although it might be true that seeing is a sense perception, nevertheless it is something extraneous to sense perception -- a view which accepts sense perception as a condition of seeing.² Such an unscientific explanation seems to be the result of confrontation with the philosophic argument that since seeing and hearing are sensory impressions they should not be ascribed to God.³

The mutakallims have presented two major arguments for the validity of the attributes of hearing and seeing. The first argument which was used by al-Ash'arī⁴ is that every living entity is capable of the qualities of hearing and seeing, or their opposites, deafness and blindness. It is necessary that a living entity should be qualified by these qualities or by their opposites; thus there is no third alternative. It is also a prerequisite for the deity to possess the qualities of perfection and be free of defective attributes. As ^{is} seeing and hearing are the qualities of perfection and their opposites, blindness and deafness, are imperfection. God should have the attributes of hearing and seeing.⁵

1. Ma'ālim, p. 43; Arba'in, p. 169; N. 'Uqūl, f. 131a.

2. Arba'in, p. 169; N. 'Uqūl, f. 131b.

3. N. 'Uqūl, f. 145a; Arba'in, p. 173.

4. K. Luma', p. 25.

5. N. 'Uqūl, f. 140a; Arba'in, p. 170; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 124.

Although a mutakallim al-Rāzī does not accept this argument. He advances various objections to disprove the argument. Firstly, the analogy between our living and divine living is unsound, since His life is different from ours by essence.¹ Secondly, even if a similarity is conceded, why should it be necessary for God to possess either these qualities or their opposites, because one may lack a quality but still not adopt its opposite. For blindness and deafness are not in reality the opposites of seeing and hearing, since blindness and deafness are the non-existence of two positive qualities. Thus, non-existence of an existential quality is not its opposite. Moreover, an entity can have no colour at all, like the air, or one can be neither approving nor disapproving of something.² It follows that if someone rejects the idea of God's seeing and hearing, it does not signify the assumption that he thinks of God as blind or deaf. Accordingly, God may not possess hearing and seeing as we conceive them but still not be regarded as deaf and blind.

Al-Rāzī's objection to the last premise of the argument is that it is not certain whether the opposites of these two qualities are imperfection. For it is imperfection in our case not to have the senses of hearing and seeing, whereas it may be imperfection in the case of the divinity to have these senses. He then puts this into a formula:

1. N. 'Uqūl, f. 140a.

2. Arba'īn, p. 172.

"fa-idhā'mā huwa naqs fī l-shāhid laysa naqs
fī l-ghā'ib"

"Thus what is a defect in the visible [world]
is not a defect in the invisible."¹

If it were possible to predicate certain qualities for God through a comparison of His existence with ours then He should also have attributed to Him the qualities of smelling, tasting and touching, which cannot be ascribed to Him.² This last argument was answered by al-Ghazālī on the grounds that qualities such as enjoyment, suffering and desires if closely examined are imperfections in themselves, as they are means for perfecting human defects.³

Having rebutted the mutakallims' argument for divine hearing and seeing, al-Rāzī further maintains that if the mutakallims should attempt to substantiate their thesis by an alleged consensus (ijmā'), then this consensus should depend on a principle derived from the Scripture (e.g., "He said fear not. Lo! I am with you twain, Hearing and Seeing". 20.46), and in this case referring directly to the scripture would be preferable to depending on the above-mentioned ambiguous and inconclusive demonstrations.⁴ However, in his Nihāyat al-'Uqūl he accepts consensus alongside the Qur'ānic evidence as supplementary to the latter.⁵

1. N. 'Uqūl, f. 141a.

2. Ibid.; Muhassal, p. 51.

3. Iqtisād, p. 51.

4. Arba'in, p. 172; Muhassal, p. 124.

5. N. 'Uqūl, f. 145a.

The second rational approach which was first introduced by al-Ghazālī¹, and later advocated by al-Rāzī, is that seeing and hearing are the qualities of perfection, and that a person capable of these qualities is closer to perfection than a person who lacks them. Therefore, since God deserves all kinds of perfection, He must also be hearing and seeing.²

It can be noticed that this proof is in fact a part of the previous one. The distinctive feature here is the abandonment of the first premise of the former -- that every living body must possess these qualities or their opposites. However, as it is simpler and more explicit al-Rāzī defends it. Nevertheless, in his Muḥaṣṣal he rejects it by the argument that if God should possess these qualities only because they are qualities of perfection, then it would also be appropriate that He should possess qualities such as walking, as a walking man is better than the opposite.³

Al-Rāzī also rejects al-Ghazālī's claim that hearing and seeing are contributory to a better knowledge.⁴ To refute this al-Rāzī argues that the complete knowledge for keeping a delicate balance and harmony in the universe precedes the actual creation, and since seeing can be only after creation it has no part in the perfect divine knowledge.⁵

1. Ihyā', vol. 1, p. 96; Iqtisād, p. 51.

2. N. 'Uqūl, f. 145a; Arba'in, p. 170; Ma'ālim, p. 45.
Cf. Iqtisād, p. 51.

3. Muḥaṣṣal, p. 124.

4. Iqtisād, p. 51.

5. N. 'Uqūl, f. 143 b. However, in his Lawāmi' he accepts al-Ghazālī's theory (Lawāmi', p. 239).

Although this last statement justifies al-Rāzī in his refutation of al-Ghazālī, nevertheless it is contradictory to his previous contention that knowledge is subordinate to the known -- a theory which he also applied to divine knowledge.¹ Furthermore, the same statement throws some doubts on the eternity of the attributes of seeing and hearing as they can function only after creation, since before it there is nothing to see or to hear.² Al-Rāzī's answer to this difficulty is that God's hearing and seeing are eternal as potential qualities, but their actual functions are in time.³ However, al-Rāzī concedes that this answer can be countered by an argument that the potential and active qualities may differ, so that there will be many more attributes. This objection was not answered by al-Rāzī. This tendency towards acceptance of originated divine attributes is more obvious when he replies to a question of the opponents regarding the originatedness of the two attributes at issue:

"qawluh yalzam an yakūn maḥallā li l-ḥawādith qulnā in 'anayta bi dhālik ḥudūth ḥādhih l-ṣifāt bi-dhātih ba'da an lam yakun ḥādithā fihā, fa-ḥādihā huwa l-madhhab fa-limā qultum annahu muḥāl."⁴

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1. Supra (Chapter: Divine Power).
 2. Arba'in, p. 173; N. 'Uqūl, f. 145a.
 3. Ibid.
 4. N. 'Uqūl, f. 145a. "As for his argument that it is necessary that He should be the locus of temporal events, we reply that if you mean by that the temporality of this attribute which is subsistent in His essence having previously not been temporal in it, this is our approach, so why do you maintain that it is absurd?"

He answers another question of the same nature by this statement:

"fa-lim lā yajūz an yaḥduthā fī dhātih 'alā mā dhahaba ilayh al-karrāmiyya."¹

This is a clear acceptance of the originatedness of the attributes of seeing and hearing, which is a sharp departure from the traditional Ash'arite school towards an anthropomorphic conception of divine attributes. It should be recalled that al-Rāzī claimed the contingency of divine attributes in general as was discussed in a previous chapter.² However, here he does not find anything wrong with the assumption that hearing and seeing can be originated attributes ascribable to God's essence.

As to the objection that hearing and seeing are sense perceptions and therefore cannot be true of the deity, al-Rāzī replies that as we declined the necessity of having biological organs for divine power and knowledge, so we should decline the necessity of sense perception for divine hearing and seeing.³ This is also al-Ghazālī's position on the issue.⁴

In conclusion, it can be understood from the foregoing discussions that al-Rāzī could not produce a rational proof for the validity of the attributes of seeing and

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1. Ibid. "So why is it not possible for them to happen [in time] in His essence as the Karrāmites believe?"
 2. Supra (Chapter: Divine Attributes).
 3. Arba'in, p. 173; N. 'Uqūl, f. 145a.
 4. Ihyā', vol. 1, p. 96.

hearing and moreover, he showed dissatisfaction with the arguments of his predecessors. The only evidence for him in this issue is scripture. However, in many places he claimed that in rational principles we cannot depend on traditional evidence or literal interpretation of scripture.¹ It follows that al-Rāzī's belief concerning these two attributes differs from the position held by the Ash'arite school and is difficult to accord with his rational approach. His sceptical attitude towards these two attributes which are closely associated with human characteristics is more noticeable in his statement that all the attributes of perfection are confined to the two attributes of power and knowledge, which is very similar to the Mu'tazilite position.²

Divine Living

The Ash'arite argument for a separate attitude of living is that essences are all equal in respect of their existence. What makes one differ from the other is their association with the attribute of living, whereby some existent bodies are able to know and influence, whereas the entities devoid of this attribute such as the inanimate world have neither the quality of knowledge nor power.³ Thus, the main features of a living body are knowledge and power. Any existent entity possessing these two qualities must be living as well.⁴

1. N. 'Uqūl, f. 144b; Asās, p. 120.

2. Mafātīh, vol. 4, p. 18.

3. Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 71; Arba'in, p. 154.

4. Ibid.; Muḥassal, p. 121; Ma'ālim, p. 44. Cf. Iqtisād, p. 47; Tamhīd, p. 47.

Another definition was given by Abū Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī: living is the absence of the impossibility of knowledge and power. This was interpreted by al-Rāzī as the negation of impossibility which means the affirmation of a positive predicate. Therefore it is more reasonable to describe it positively which renders living an existential divine quality.¹

The philosophic explanation of living, on the other hand, is that as a divine attribute it signifies that He should be endowed with perfect knowledge and absolute power (darrāk, fa'-'āl).²

Al-Rāzī's own conception of living does not accord with any of the above-mentioned definitions. In Mafātīh al-Ghayb, he refutes the Ash'arite theory, maintaining that God is different from the rest of existent entities by His very essence. Thus, the essential difference is not due to essence having the attribute of living as al-Ash'arī claims. For if this thesis is accepted, then for the different levels of receptivity of essence to the attribute of living a determinant would be necessary, which would lead us to the impasse of infinite regression.³ Therefore, the Ash'arite argument for the validity of this thesis is weak.

Al-Rāzī is also in disagreement with the philosophers' definition on the grounds that it does not distinguish the attribute of living from the attributes of knowledge and

1. Mafātīh, vol. 2, p. 315.

2. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 71

3. Ibid.

power, as they equate the latter with the former. Moreover, the attribute of living has no relation to the created world, whereas the divine attributes of knowledge and power are real as well as relative qualities.

Al-Rāzī criticises the widely-used argument of the mutakallims that we can think of God's essence though unaware of His attribute of living and that therefore living is a separate attribute additional to the essence. Al-Rāzī's criticism is that we cannot comprehend God's essence substantially. If our thinking about God's nature cannot be conclusive, the mutakallims' theory that we can contemplate on God's essence while unaware of His attributes is unsound. For there is no definite explanation of how we think of God's reality and what conceptions with regards to this reality are involved in this process. Even if this process is described it cannot be a proof for any assertion.¹

In fact, this refutation seems to be a self-contradiction, because as has been observed in the foregoing chapters he used the same argument to establish the validity of separate divine attributes of knowledge, power and will.² The same argument was also employed in proving the duality of God's nature -- essence and existence.³ However, al-Rāzī's position here can be evaluated as the abandonment of his former view, as the tafsīr where the latter

1. Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 71

2. Supra (Chapter: Divine Attributes).

3. Supra (Chapter: God's Existence).

view is expressed is among his latest teachings.

It follows that al-Rāzī, unlike his predecessors of his school, is not of the opinion that living, like other divine attributes, is an independent quality. His attitude in the tafsīr which suggests the present comment can be supported by al-Rāzī's report of a question by Abū Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī who conceived living as a notion inseparable from God's essence. Al-Rāzī regards the question as pertinent and leaves it unanswered.¹ In this, he appears to be justified, since living, like eternity, is a substantial quality, the non-existence of which adversely affects all the divine attributes. Knowledge and power cannot be conceived without the presupposition of a living existent entity. Therefore it is not groundless to say that living is an implicit inseparable notion in the very conception of the Necessary Being.

Another differentiating point is that the effect of this attribute is not manifest in the created world, since the lives of all the living bodies are rightly ascribed to God's power and knowledge, not to His living. The fact that the qualities of knowledge and power will not function without a preassumed living is paralleled by another fact, that all divine attributes cannot function without an existing essence. If living has no manifestation in the created world and is a notion close to the concept of existence, then what is the point in ascribing this quality which is common to all living bodies to the Supreme Being?

1. Arba'īn, p. 155.

Al-Rāzī presents three different answers to the question in three different places: in Lawāmi' al-Bayyināt, he interprets divine living as implying immortality; therefore it differs from the limited lives of mortals as the latter have been regarded as dead in the Qur'ān even during their life-times:

"Innaka mayyitun wa-innahum mayyitūn"¹

"Lo thou wilt die, and lo! they will die" 39.30

The second answer has been given in the first volume of his tafsīr where he maintains that being alive (hayy) by itself is not an attribute of praise and can only be taken in conjunction with the divine name qayyūm, the combination of which signifies absolute knowledge and power.² The third answer has been given in the second volume of the tafsīr where he interprets living (al-hayāt) as absolute perfection, and maintains therefore that, in this sense, it becomes an epithet of praise for the deity.³

The Divine Attribute of Speech and the Controversy
Over the Nature of the Qur'ān

The divine attribute of speech has been a more controversial issue between the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites than the other attributes, as the views on this issue are also the basis for belief concerning whether the Qur'ān was created or not. One of the essential differences between the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites is their divergence

1. Lawāmi', p. 303.

2. Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 71.

3. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 315.

in their conception of speech (kalām). The latter are of the opinion that speech consists of arranged letters and combinations of letters which are articulated by the tongue.¹ Thus if such a process is attributed to God it cannot be an eternal quality, since the pronouncements of statements or orders and prohibitions have more to do with temporality than eternity. Yet as the Mu'tazilites were anti-anthropomorphists they had to disassociate all temporal events from the deity. Thus they suggested that in order to communicate with His creatures, God creates words and sounds in a body, whereby the prophets are instructed as to how they should guide their fellow-men.² In fact, this view of the Mu'tazilites is in disharmony with their general principles of divine attributes which are not regarded as separate from God's essence, whereas the idea that God speaks through creation of words and sounds in a body cannot be identified with His essence. It is nearer to the conception of being a separate quality. Moreover, as al-Rāzī points out the explanation of God's speech in this way would lead us to accepting that temporal events may take place in God's essence.³

On the other hand the Ash'arites are of the opinion that the real speech is the mental speech and that the

1. Mu'tazila, p. 77; Arba'in, p. 176; N. 'Uqūl, f. 123a.

2. N. Iqdām, p. 279; Arba'in, p. 176; N. 'Uqūl, f. 123a; Ma'ālim, p. 54; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 124.

3. Ma'ālim, p. 54; Mafātīḥ, vol. 4, p. 402 (Sharafiyya ed. used throughout this chapter). Cf. N. Iqdām, p. 280.

words and sounds are the means to express it. The mental speech is different from will and knowledge. This is also their definition of God's attribute of speaking which is eternal as it is not words or sounds.¹ In order to prove the thesis of mental speech and to differentiate it from will and knowledge al-Rāzī argues that:

- i) The nature of mental speech does not change in respect of time and place, whereas the words denoting this mental process change.
- ii) As the words are only the means to express the mental speech, what they are is not what they imply (al-dalīl gayr al-madlūl).
- iii) The intentions and meanings implied by words are invariable as to circumstances, whereas the ways these meanings are expressed are circumstantial and variable.²

This mental speech is also different from God's will as He may will what He does not say, or say what He does not will. To the latter al-Rāzī gives as an example the fact that God has ordered the disbelievers to believe, whereas He knew from eternity that they will not believe. So, since the contrary of His knowledge is an impossible occurrence, it is also impossible that God should want the disbelievers to believe.³

To this al-Baghdādī adds other examples such as: God asked Abraham to slaughter his son while in fact He

1. Iqtisād, p. 54; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 124; Arba'īn, p. 177; N. 'Uqūl, f. 146a.

2. Arba'īn, p. 174; N. 'Uqūl, f. 123a; Iqtisād, p. 54; N. Iqdām, p. 299.

3. Arba'īn, p. 175.

did not want this from him; and also that God ordered Satan to prostrate himself, but in fact He did not will it. To illustrate this further another example has been given which can be found in the works of al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī. This is that a person guilty of beating his servant without a legal reason, would, if called upon to prove the legality of his action, order his servant to do something, while in reality he would want the opposite, i.e. he would want the servant not to obey his orders, as this would justify his action to the court. It follows that mental speech (al-hukm al-dhihnī) is different from will.²

Al-Rāzī also disassociates mental statements from knowledge and belief, maintaining that fanciful ideas occurring to the mind which can be expressed in language are neither knowledge nor beliefs, as we neither gain information from such ideas nor do we hold them.³

By drawing these distinctions between articulated speech, will and knowledge al-Rāzī is establishing the existence of something different (which is mental speech) from what the Mu'tazilites are negating with respect to God (verbal speech). Although al-Rāzī agrees with the Mu'tazilites that verbal speech cannot be ascribed to God, nevertheless he advocates the Ash'arite thesis that God possesses this intellectual speech which like other divine attributes is also eternal.⁴

1. al-Baghdādī, Kitāb Usūl al-Dīn, p. 104.

2. Ibid.; N. 'Uqūl, f. 124a; Iqtisād, p. 55.

3. Arba'in, p. 176.

4. Muḥaṣṣal, p. 124; Mafātīḥ, vol. 4, p. 280; Arba'in, p. 177.

The arguments which al-Rāzī advances above and which were also used by his predecessors do not seem to be persuasive. It can reasonably be claimed that speech is the expression of will and knowledge. If what are pronounced meaningfully can be categorised as statements and orders and prohibitions, the former are the expression of knowledge in mind, and the latter the expression of will. The distinction that al-Rāzī tried to establish between mental speech and will is in fact not obtainable unless so-called mental speech is expressed in words, in which case the difference between what is thought and what is articulated can be proved. Otherwise, an unexpressed mental speech is not distinguishable from prescriptive or informative considerations which are the basis of will and knowledge. It follows that speech is only identifiable by its physical operation as the vehicle for the expression of ideas which are either subjective or objective. Therefore, what the mutakallims try to establish as mental speech is not other than will and knowledge. The example of master and servant shows in fact that sometimes words can express false desires, and that the real intention has not been expressed with corresponding words. The disguising of the real will by false statements is the product of another will which intervenes between the expression and the real will. However, there is an agreement between the intervening will and the expression. Thus real expressions define real intentions and false expressions define false intentions. To claim

that false expression can be independent of will is to claim that mind is incapable of false intentions. Moreover, even if the validity of such an example is conceded in the case of human beings it cannot be claimed that it is also applicable to God, since He is free from such human characteristics.

Al-Rāzī's claim that God does not want belief from the disbelievers, as He by His eternal knowledge knows that the disbeliever will not believe, would lead to very serious consequences if pursued to its logical conclusion. For if He only intentionally enjoins belief upon those who are going to believe, then what is the purpose of revealed religion, and what difference does it make to the disbeliever who is previously known not to be going to believe? A further point is that the Ash'arites claim that God's speech is eternal in which case it can be asked how eternal knowledge can precede an eternal command. If we accept that God's knowledge precedes His speech then we are compelled to agree with the Mu'tazilites on the temporality of God's speech and the createdness of the Qur'ān. Consequently, the arguments of the Ash'arite school for a mental speech separate from will and knowledge has not been convincingly established.

Having rejected the theory of mental speech and upheld verbal speech, the Mu'tazilites do not agree that the divine speech is eternal which also led them to the necessary corollary that the Qur'ān is created. Their concept of the Qur'ān depends on the visible revealed book which consists of words and sounds and their

implications. The Mu'tazilites advance the following proofs for the thesis that the Qur'ān is created:

i) The verse "hattā yasma'a kalām allāh" (9.6) indicates that God's speech can be heard. What is heard by human beings cannot be eternal.

ii) The Qur'ān is a miracle and miracles are not eternal.

iii) The Qur'ān is formed of chapters and verses and is in Arabic, therefore it is limited and cannot be eternal.

iv) As human beings are created in time, if the commands and prohibitions in the Qur'ān were from eternity then it would mean that these commands and prohibitions existed when there was no man to obey them, which is absurd.

v) There are various verses in the Qur'ān referring to events which took place in time, for example:

"And we verily sent Noah unto his folk..." (23.23)

"Lo we revealed it on the Night of power" (97.1)

The verbs in these verses are used in the past. Therefore the Qur'ān is temporal.

vi) If the verses of the Qur'ān were eternal, then there would not be abrogation in the Qur'ān, whereas it is generally accepted that some verses of the Qur'ān were abrogated by other verses.¹

In reply to these difficult questions al-Rāzī resorts to an analogy between God's knowledge and His speech. Just as God knew everything from eternity, and knowing temporal events in eternity does not cause any change in His knowledge, so is the case with His eternal speech,

1. Arba'īn, p. 180; Ma'ālim, p. 55; N. 'Uqūl, f. 145a.

the temporal manifestation of which does not imply the temporality of this attribute. He also compares God's speech to His power which was efficient in eternity but with effect in time.¹

Al-Shahrastānī's answer to these arguments is that God's speech is one and eternal, but it can take different manifestations in respect of time and space, for example God's order to Moses "take off your shoes" was in form of a future predicate before Moses was created. However, during Moses' lifetime it denoted an order in present time.² Furthermore, before Adam's creation mention was made of his regency in future. Thus one speech in eternity can take various forms, and it is this mental speech which God possesses.³ The analogy between God's knowledge and His speech was also an argument used by al-Shahrastānī.⁴

In fact al-Rāzī is in agreement with the Mu'tazilites on the arguments for the temporality of the visible features of the Qur'ān, and he also agrees that God may express Himself through creation of words and sounds in a substance, but where he differs from the Mu'tazilites is his acceptance of an eternal mental speech as possessed by God. In the view of this assertion one may ask the question: If you concede that God communicates by creating speech in a substance then is this type of speech created or not? If it is created, which he seems to admit

1. Arba'īn, p. 184.

2. N. Iqdām, p. 298.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 304.

when he states "This is what we say and admit"¹ is this creation the effect of an eternal mental speech, or of eternal divine power? As we do not find answers to these questions, it seems that al-Rāzī's attempt at reconciling the views of the Ash'arites with those of the Mu'tazilites is not conclusive.

Al-Rāzī's Mu'tazilite tendency is more visible when he attacks the Ḥanbalites because of their claim that the words and sounds of the Qur'ān are eternal, or that when the Qur'ān is recited what is heard is eternal. According to al-Rāzī if the words of the Qur'ān and their expression were eternal then when one recites them he would be acquiring this eternal quality which is absurd.²

As to al-Ghazālī's position on the issue it is not so clear. He maintains that the Qur'ān is evidence for the eternal attribute of mental speech, as the world is evidence for the eternal attribute of power. This would naturally lead us to the conclusion that as the world is created so too should be the Qur'ān, both being evidence for their eternal backgrounds. However, this conclusion is not what al-Ghazālī arrives at. By contrast he claims that if by the Qur'ān what is recited is meant it is eternal and uncreated.³ Al-Shahrastānī's conclusion is somewhat similar. It is that the words of the Qur'ān are created but their implications are not.⁴

1. Arba'in, p. 177.

2. Ma'ālim, p. 56.

3. Iqtisād, p. 58.

4. N. Iqdām, p. 311.

It is not so difficult to understand that the arguments used by al-Ghazālī and al-Shaharastānī are not conducive to the views they assert, for the arguments can only prove the eternity of God's attribute of mental speech. However, they did not claim that the Qur'ān is God's mental speech; what they claimed is that it is evidence for the existence of an eternal attribute of speech in the same way as the world is evidence for God's attribute of power. However, this does not necessitate the eternity either of the world or the Qur'ān.

Al-Rāzī on the other hand did not arrive at the same conclusion. From his concession to the Mu'tazilites and his attack on the Ḥanbalites it can be inferred that he did not think that the Qur'ān is uncreated. This inference is further strengthened by his refutation of the Ash'arite argument that the verse 16.40 "innamā qawlunā li shay'in idhā aradnāhu an naqūla kun fa yakūn" is a proof for the eternity of divine speech. To al-Rāzī the word "kun" is temporal, because it is formed of two letters of which the kāf must of necessity be articulated before the nūn and is therefore prior to it, thus the word cannot be eternal. Furthermore, if the argument is accepted God would have to say "kun" to everything He creates including the word kun itself which would lead us to the impasse of infinite regression.¹

There is also an objection by the Mu'tazilites that if God had an eternal speech this speech would be various,

1. Mafātīh, vol. 5, p. 310; vol. 7, p. 117. Cf. Ibāna, p. 21.

as speech is formed of statements, orders and prohibitions.¹
 To this al-Rāzī replies that all kinds of speech is reducible to subject-predicate statements. Thus the real meaning of an order is "if you do it you will be rewarded."²

Al-Rāzī mentions four proofs of the mutakallims for the validity of the eternal divine speech:

i) God is living, therefore, He must have this quality. Otherwise, He would be characterized by the opposite quality.

ii) Commands and prohibitions in the revealed books are evidence for a speaking God.

iii) As God is the Sovereign He should instruct men how to obey Him.

iv) There is a consensus that God possesses this quality.³

None of these arguments was acceptable to al-Ghazālī who was satisfied only with his general principle that as far as an attribute is a quality of perfection it must be ascribed to God. The reason why he rejected consensus (al-ijmā') is his view that consensus must depend on a Qur'ān rule or an authentic hadīth the source of which is the Prophet. However, the veracity of a prophet cannot be established unless God's attribute of speech is accepted. Therefore, the above-mentioned arguments are insufficient for the validity of this attribute.⁴

1. Ma'ālim, p. 57.

2. Ibid., cf. N. Iqdām, p. 290.

3. Muhassal, p. 124; N. 'Uqūl, f. 145b.

4. Iqtisād, p. 53.

By contrast to al-Rāzī the authenticity of prophet-hood does not depend on the validity of God's attribute of speech. This is because the main evidence for a prophet's veracity is a miracle which can take place without the function of speech. Therefore, consensus is a valid proof.¹

In conclusion, as far as the rational exposition of the arguments is concerned the Mu'tazilite thesis looks more plausible than that of the Ash'arites, as the latter presents various difficulties and forces one to the metaphorical interpretation of some Qur'ānic verses. Although a clear-cut conclusion cannot be obtained from the dispute as to whether speech is the expression of will and knowledge or the expression of an essential (mental) quality residing in God's essence, nevertheless, the revealed books as the embodiment of this quality are not identifiable with such an eternal attribute. In as much as they are for human beings and contain the events^{which} took place in time their being temporal is nearer to a rational analysis of the issue. The fact that the Qur'ān is a more explicit source for divine intentions than other divine manifestations, e.g. the creation of the world, should not lead us to the idea that it is co-eternal with God. The difference between God's act of communication and other divine acts should not be in terms of time. One is a direct revelation covering all degrees of the mind, the other an indirect manifestation of divine existence

1. Ma'ālim, p. 47; N. 'Uqūl, f. 145b; Arba'īn, p. 179.

and His purposeful creation. However, both phenomena share the common quality of being apprehendable by human intellect which lacks the capacity and the knowledge of eternity. Human intellect cannot know realities independent of time and space but it cannot disprove the existence of an entity devoid of time and space. It is only this recognition of limitations by reason that enables us to think of an existence different from ours, and eternity is the principal differentiating attribute for such an existence. Thus the idea of eternity is only a mental possibility the full knowledge of which is incomprehensible to the human mind. Any object which can be sensed and defined in a certain way cannot be independent of time and space and has the disadvantage of being apprehended by the conditioned human intellect, and therefore, cannot be eternal. It follows that the notion of eternity can be ascribed only to the Supreme Being whose nature is also unknown to the human mind.

The Visibility of God

One of the doctrinal principles which differentiates the Ash'arite school from the Mu'tazilite is the former's acceptance of the visibility of God. The main ground for such a belief is the existence of two verses in the Qur'ān: 7.143 and 75.23. Apart from these two verses there are other verses (for example, 10.26, 2.46, 18.105, 18.108, 32.10, 33.44, 76.20) where this point can be inferred by demonstrative interpretation.

The Ash'arites have also worked out rational proofs to strengthen this interpretational possibility. These proofs chiefly rely on an analogy between the visible and the invisible. They argue that the common feature in all visible entities is either originatedness or existence. It cannot be the former, because origination is preceded by non-existence ('adam); therefore, it cannot be a cause for a positive effect (vision). It follows that there is no property other than existence which all visible things can share. If existence is the main ground for visibility and since God exists then it should be possible to behold Him.¹

Although it is not clear what every Ash'arite scholar means by beholding God, some of the great exponents of this school like al-Ghazālī, al-Shahrastānī and al-Rāzī do not imply physical visibility but a sort of perception whose relation to God is like the relation of seeing to the visible. It has also been described as a further knowledge or intuition (inkishāf).²

This Ash'arite thesis has been rejected by the Mu'tazilites on the grounds that a supernatural supreme being cannot be perceived by human senses and this would contradict all the absolute divine attributes ascribed to Him.

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1. N. 'Uqūl, f. 154a; Mafātīh, vol. 8, p. 284; Arba'īn, p. 190; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 137; Ma'ālim, p. 59.
 2. Iqtisād, p. 30; N. Iqdām, p. 356.

To establish their thesis, the Mu'tazilites first interpret the verses which denote God's visibility in their own way; secondly, they point out the verses which clearly support their point; and thirdly, they advance rational arguments against the Ash'arite position.

Before examining the thesis and the antithesis in the light of scriptural proofs, al-Rāzī's treatment of the above-mentioned argument (from existence) of the Ash'arites should be presented.

As an Ash'arite scholar al-Rāzī differs from the rest of the proponents of this school by maintaining that the vision of God cannot be demonstrated through rational arguments. His position on the issue is that of Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī who relied only on scripture for the validity of the visibility of God.¹

In order to show his dissatisfaction with the Ash'arite argument -- that existence is the only property which makes things visible and therefore that since God exists He too could be seen -- al-Rāzī advances various objections to this reasoning which can be summed up as follows.

Firstly, he does not accept the first premise that there can be only two properties common among all visible things namely originatedness (hudūth) and existence (wujūd) (the first of which is eliminated because of its being preceded by non-existence). He claims that contingency (imkān) is another property which is common to all visible

1. Arba'īn, p. 198; N. 'Uqūl, f. 157b; Ma'ālim, p. 60.

entities. Therefore why should contingency not be the basis for visibility?¹ It is clear that by making contingency the most essential quality of all visible things al-Rāzī wants to exclude the Necessary Being from the conclusion of the syllogism.

Secondly, the combination of existence with contingency can be the main reason for visibility.

He is also dissatisfied with the assertion that originatedness cannot be an essential property of the visible because of its being preceded by non-existence. For to be posterior to non-existence is not a negative effect.

Thirdly, even if it is granted that existence is the main cause for the visibility this cannot enable us to establish that God can be seen because He exists. For God also shares the quality of living with us while He does not share many consequences of a living creature such as sufferings, pleasure, desires, etc. Therefore, sharing one quality does not entail similar judgements in particular aspects.²

This refutation of al-Rāzī clearly shows the weakness in the Ash'arite thesis. The error can also be illustrated in logical terms. The thesis depends on a very comprehensive genre (existence) for the verification of a proposition which in fact is peculiar only to a species of the genre.

1. Arba'īn, p. 195.

2. N. 'Uqūl, p. 154a; Arba'īn, p. 195; Ma'ālim, p. 60.

For example if we take living as the main cause for walking then all living entities should be walking which is absurd, because there are living entities like plants which do not walk. Therefore, the property of walking should contain less members than the concept of living; for example the possession of legs in the living bodies or a more accurate common quality among the walking bodies -- which in any case will be less comprehensive than the conception of living.

Now let us discuss the scriptural proofs for the visibility of God as explained by al-Rāzī:

1. The verse "rabbi arinī anzur ilayka" 7.143.

In this verse Moses asks God to let him see His reality. The Ash'arites interpret the verse as evidence for the possibility of God's vision. To them it is impossible for a prophet not to know if the vision of God were impossible. However the negative answer "lan tarānī" does not mean that He is not visible, but it means that He could not be seen in this world, because if God had meant that He was invisible He would have said "lā urā", "I am not visible".

On the other hand, the Mu'tazilites interpret this verse differently. They advance these possible interpretations for the verse:

a) Moses did not know that to see God was impossible; that is why this request was rejected by God.

b) He asked this question not because he did not know it was impossible but because his followers insisted that they should see God and he wanted to certify this impossibility by God's own words.

c) He did not ask for vision but for a perfect knowledge of divinity.¹

It can be commented here that since the question has been replied to negatively it cannot be a persuasive proof for the visibility of God. The inference that the negation is valid only in this world can be validated only by a clear grammatical proof which cannot be obtained from the construction "lan tarānī" since the particle lan categorically negates an action in the future as well as the present.²

2. The verse: "wujūhun yawmaidhin nādiratun ilā rabbihā nāziratun" 75.22, 23.

All the discussions with regard to the interpretation of this verse have been centred on the verb "nazara" with the particles ilā. According to the supporters of visibility it implies "seeing" whereas to the Mu'tazilites it implies turning of the eyes towards something to see. Thus it is not seeing.

1. Mafātīh, vol. 4, p. 283; N. 'Uqūl, f. 158b; Arba'īn, p. 197; Ma'ālim, p. 63.

2. Al-Ghazālī in his al-Iqtisād claims that if the vision of God were impossible this must have been known to Moses, while he admits that as the request was rejected this request did not come at the appropriate time, because he may have not known this fact. The prophets know only what has been revealed to them. One can object to this explanation maintaining that if Moses did not know the appropriate time for the question, he also may have not known that the request was possible since by essence the latter is more difficult than the former (Iqtisād, p. 34).

Both sides have gone into lengthy linguistic explanations to justify their positions. Al-Razī after discussing different points of both sides concludes that "nazara ilā" means to turn the eyeball in a certain direction in order to see. Therefore as it is the first step and in fact the cause (sabab) of vision by convention it can be used for the verb "to see" (ra'ā).¹

3. The verse: "li-lladhīna aḥsanū l-husnā wa-ziyāda"
10.27.

According to al-Rāzī the word ziyāda here implies vision. In order to prove this al-Rāzī refers to other verses:

wa-idhā ra'ayta thumma ra'ayta na'īman wa-malikan
kabīrā 76.20

He interprets the word husnā in the first verse by na'īman in the second, and the word ziyāda by malikan respectively.

On the other hand Abū l-'Alī al-Jubbā'ī, a leading Mu'tazilite scholar, interprets husnā as the deserved reward and ziyāda as what God bestows additionally to what is deserved.²

4. The verses like 18.105, 110; 32.10; 33.44, in which meeting with God (liqā') has been mentioned. According to al-Rāzī although liqā' does not mean vision, in conventional usage it has been used as a metaphor for vision.³

1. Mafātīh, vol. 8, p. 284; Arba'īn, p. 201; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 139. Cf. K. Luma', p. 32; N. Iqdām, p. 369.

2. Mafātīh, vol. 4, p. 560; Ma'ālim, p. 62.

3. Mafātīh, vol. 5, p. 509; Ma'ālim, p. 63.

The Mu'tazilite Arguments from Scripture

In order to prove that the vision of God is impossible the Mu'tazilites refer to these verses:

1. lā tudrikuhu l-absār. (6.104) This verse clearly shows that eyes cannot see Him.¹

Al-Rāzī interprets this verse as meaning that eyes cannot contain Him or comprehend His reality. Thus it negates a complete vision but not vision in absolute sense. Secondly, the article al in front of the word absār denotes that some definite eyes will not see Him -- which is true as God says in another verse that all eyes will not see Him. Thirdly, even if it were as the Mu'tazilites understand it has been modified by the verse "wujūhun nādiratun ilā rabbiha nāzira" 75.22.² All of these interpretations were also advanced by al-Ghazālī.³

2. "lan tarānī". If God gave this negative answer to Moses who was a prophet it should be equally valid for all mankind.

The counter-interpretation of this verse by the Ash'arites has been given above.

3. wa-mā kāna li-basharin an yukallimahu illā wahyā
42.51

This verse denotes that at the time of speaking to God nobody can see Him. If therefore seeing is impossible on this most suitable occasion it should be impossible at other times too.

1. Arba'in, p. 210.

2. Arba'in, p. 215; Muhassal, p. 193; Ma'ālim, p. 64.

3. Iqtisād, p. 35. Al-Ash'arī claims that the meaning of this verse is valid only in this world (K.Luma', p. 35).

4. In various places in the Qur'ān whenever prophets' request of divine vision is mentioned, this has been regarded as presumptuous and irrelevant by God. Therefore, divine vision must be impossible.

The relevant verses are:

"And when ye said O Moses! We will not believe in thee till we see Allah plainly; and even while ye gazed the lightning seized you." 2.55

"...They asked a greater thing of Moses aforetime, for they said: Show us Allah plainly. The storm of lightning seized them for their wickedness.."

4.153

"And those who look not for a meeting with Us say: Why are angels not sent down unto us and (why) do we not see our Lord? Assuredly they think too highly of themselves and are scornful with great pride." 25.21.¹

Apart from these proofs from scripture the Mu'tazilites also advance rational arguments for their thesis. These arguments originate from a comparison between visible objects and the divine existence which can only be comprehended by the intellect and not by the senses. They assert that for an object to be seen it should fulfil various physical conditions such as that it should be a body in space. As these kinds of finite conceptions cannot be predicated of God, He cannot be visible.²

1. Arba'in, p. 215.

2. Arba'in, p. 212; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 139; Ma'ālim, p. 64.

On examining the positions taken by the proponents and the opponents of the thesis, it can be suggested that the assertion that God can be seen is in disharmony with the absolute conceptions ascribed to Him by both the theologians and the philosophers. If He is in no way similar to the created and superior to any imaginable greatness, then visibility should not be one of the possible properties of such a supreme being.

Secondly, even if this controversial possibility is granted, the realisation of this possibility can further be questioned. If God were to be seen by us, it would be either in His absolute reality or in another way. He cannot be seen in His absoluteness since the sense of vision cannot comprehend such an object: what contribution therefore would it make to a better knowledge of Him? The second alternative is again fallacious, since His reality cannot be limited to suit our senses. If however, the vision whose existence is speculated is different by essence from that experienced in this world, and is a sort of intuition or a further degree of knowledge as maintained by al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī then why should it be called vision? In fact it is this disharmony between the term and its arbitrary employment for alien meanings that caused such lengthy discussions, since the opponents of the visibility of God have not rejected any more than others, the idea that a clearer conception of God or a better knowledge of Him in the next world is possible.

Thirdly, the existence of the Supreme Being can only be perceived intellectually, based either on ontological or cosmological reasonings. This intellectually perceived existence cannot be demonstrated by experience though this may not diminish the reality of such an existence. All the qualities that we ascribe to Him are absolute and indeterminate and have nothing to do with perceived determinate qualities of the sense-world. Thus, if we go further and attach determinate qualities such as visibility -- which can be demonstrated only by experience -- to the Supreme Being whose existence is only intellectually established, that would be similar to an attempt to describe a theoretically existent planet, which has not been observed by any human device.

CHAPTER V

FREE WILL AND PREDESTINATION

One of the most controversial issues both in philosophy and theology is whether human beings are free in their acts or whether their acts are determined by factors beyond their power. The biological functions of the body and hereditary characteristics are exempted from the controversy, as their being predestined is unanimously agreed, even though the effect they produce on deliberations is a crucial part of the issue.

Unlike some of the problems dealt with in previous chapters, the difference of opinions on the question of free will and predestination is not only due to the divergence between dogma and free thinking, but it is rather due to the intrinsic difficulty in the nature of the question itself. The chief reason for this unsurmountable difficulty is the fact that our so-called free actions are not the product of a single, definite factor so that one can attain the simplicity of explanation along the lines of the principle of cause and effect. If one act is caused by many factors, which may be both internal and external, then the difficulty arises in assessing the role of each single factor in the production of that act. These ambiguities are inescapable when the necessitarian thesis is applied. However, the libertarian argument, in its most moderate form, by adding free will

as a factor in the exercise of a human act, instead of removing some of the difficulties already recognised in the necessitarian position, makes the problem more complicated. For whereas the causal factors as the determinants of a specific action in the deterministic view can be identified to a certain degree, especially by the application of the principle of universal causality, the role of will, and its control over other factors, can never be measured. This is due to the fact that no rule or regularity can be applied to will; as it is by definition a spontaneous and independent factor.

The problem is rendered yet more paradoxical when the logical consequences of either of the theories are fully examined. On the one hand, responsibility and punishment are denied as the consequence of the theory that all human behaviours are determined by uncontrollable factors. On the other hand, responsibility and punishment are extended to the actions in which free will may have an extremely minimal role when compared with that of unavoidable determining factors.

The treatment of the problem by the Muslim theologians has not yielded a conclusive solution, but has rather testified to the enormous ambiguity latent in the nature of the question. The Mu'tazilites who adopted a libertarian approach adduced various arguments both from scripture and free speculation in defence of the thesis that human will is independent and not determined and thus man is author of his actions. The Jabriyya and some

of the Ash'arites adopted the necessitarian approach and put forward many arguments in support of the thesis that human actions are predetermined by external factors which are referred backward to the First Uncaused Cause.¹

Before discussing al-Rāzī's view on the issue it is useful to present his classifications of various lines of thought on the controversy of free will and predestination. He divides those who hold that man is not independent in his actions into four branches:

a) Those who believe that the occurrence of an action is dependent on a causal factor (al-dā'ī) which in the event of union with human power makes the exertion of the action necessary. Al-Rāzī includes Abū Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī in this group, although as a Mu'tazilite scholar he defended the view that man is self-determined in his actions. This is because he acknowledged the role of the causal factor (al-dā'ī) in the production of an action. This position has been held by the majority of the philosophers.

b) Those who believe that an action is the result of both divine and human power. This was the position of Abū Ishāq al-Isfarā'inī.

c) Those who hold that all actions whether bad or good are created by God. However, what makes an action bad or good is man's initiative. This view was advocated by Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī.

1. Milal, p. 60; al-Baghdādī, Kitāb Uṣūl al-Dīn, p. 134; I'tiqādāt, pp. 27, 103.

d) Those who hold that man has no influence either in creation of an action nor in modification of it. It is God who creates the action and the human power which is related to it. Al-Rāzī ascribes this view to Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī.¹

The Mu'tazilites who claim man's independence in his actions are divided into two: a) Those who maintain that the knowledge of man's freedom of action is self-evident (ḍarūrī); and b) those who believe that this knowledge is demonstrative.²

Al-Rāzī's choice as an opponent of the Mu'tazilites is the first view of necessitarianism which holds that not only is man determined by various internal and external factors, but he is further irresistably forced to act in the direction of these factors. The main ground of his argument is the key factor of al-dā'ī, on which he lays heavy emphasis, as the prime agent of every human action. His fully developed argument which is also the summary of his necessitarian approach, and which is repeated several times in many of his theological works runs as follows:

When a person has decided to act it is either possible for him not to act or it is impossible. If it is possible for him to abandon an action once it has been decided upon, then this must be due to a determining factor. Assuming that the role of this factor makes the abandonment of an action necessary, this would prove the necessitarian

1. Arba'in, p. 227; Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 2b; N. 'Uqūl, f. 30b.

2. Ibid.

position. If on the other hand it is not necessary but coincidental, occurring at one time but not another, this would again support necessitarianism, because coincidence is not acceptable to the idea of free action.

The necessity of a determined action originates from the idea that when performing an action and not performing it is in the balance, i.e. one is not preferred over the other, it is not possible to do either of them. Thus, when one is preferred over the other it is impossible for the abandoned alternative to occur and the occurrence of the preferred alternative is necessary.

As to the origin of the determining factor which al-Rāzī calls al-dā'ī, it cannot be within human capacity. For every determinant would need a previous one for its origination and so on ad infinitum. As the endless chain of causes is a fallacy, they should stop at a Necessary Cause which is divine power.

It follows that, as man cannot act without a decision and this decision is motivated by a causal factor which cannot come from human capacity but originates from divine power, it is an imperative conclusion that man is determined in his actions by factors beyond his power and totally lacks freedom of Will.¹

Al-Rāzī puts forward other proofs to support this necessitarian argument: a) If man were free in actions

1. Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 492, vol. 3, p. 12, p. 250, vol. 5, p. 211; N. 'Uqūl, f. 78a; Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 4b; Arba'in, p. 228; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 140; Ma'ālim, p. 73; Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 516.

and these actions were self-determined, then he would necessarily possess the knowledge concerning any particular aspect of his actions, viz. the number of steps he takes every day. As he is ignorant of these particulars he is not the real author of his behaviour.¹

b) The idea that man is independent in his actions leads us to the assumption that when an action is wanted by man and not wanted by God, there will be no preference, as both powers are able to exercise their powers equally on that specific action. However, if God's will prevails over man's will, then this is the denial of the freedom of man's will.

Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī counters this argument, which is also widely used for proving God's one-ness, by maintaining that when such a contradiction of wills occurs divine will must dominate, since there is no equality in the two wills.

1. Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī who comments on al-Rāzī's Muḥaṣṣal argues against this proof, stating that knowing the particulars of actions is not a necessary condition for being the real author of them. Thus, the sun's heating and lighting effects are not produced with its knowledge but still the sun is the source of these effects.

This objection is refutable by the fact that the sun's heating and lighting are comparable to the involuntary actions of human beings, not the voluntary ones, as the sun does not produce these effects at will. Therefore, the parallel is invalid. (Muḥaṣṣal, p. 141; Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 36a.)

If so, the comparison is unacceptable.¹

As a determinist al-Rāzī faces many objections raised by the Mu'tazilites such as that if man is determined by factors beyond his control and does not possess freedom of will then what is the point in divine obligations? Why should the believer be praised for his belief and the unbeliever be condemned for his unbelief if it is God who forces them so to believe? What would be the criteria for reward and punishment in the next world? What is the position of prophets in the necessitarian theory?² To avoid these difficulties he has recourse to the Ash'arite theory that duties can be demanded of man which are beyond his power (taklīf mā lā yuṭāq). This amounts to saying that although man has no power to act according to his free will, and everything he does is predetermined by divine power, he is yet ordered to perform certain actions. For example a person who is predestined not to believe may be asked to believe.

The Mu'tazilites do not accept this argument on the grounds that it would lead us to regard unbelief, and all sort of crimes as divine actions, and regard the unbeliever and the criminal as innocent, whereas God is far above such attributions. This position has led the Mu'tazilites

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1. Muḥaṣṣal, p. 141 (beneath text); Arba'īn, p. 232; Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 33b; Mafātīh, vol. 5, p. 192. Cf. al-Baghdādī, Kitāb Uṣūl al-Dīn, p. 136.
 2. 'Abd al-Jabbār, al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa, p. 396; al-Mu'tazila, p. 97; Mafātīh, vol. 4, p. 25; N. 'Uqūl, f. 79b; Ma'ālim, p. 76.

to believe that bad actions cannot originate from God, and that God always acts in the most favourable way (aṣlah).

In order to prove that the principle of the imposition of unfulfillable duties is valid, al-Rāzī advances these arguments:

1. God, by His eternal knowledge, knows that the unbeliever will not believe, but yet He asks him to believe, which he is unable to do, since if he believes, it would mean that God's knowledge was false which is unacceptable.¹

2. In the Qur'ān, God has stated that Abū Lahab, a contemporary of the Prophet, will not believe, whereas he was requested by the Prophet to believe in the Qur'ān, which also contains the statement that he would not believe. Thus, he was asked to believe that he would not believe which is a contradiction. This proves that he was required to perform the impossible.

3. Man's belief depends on propositions (or judgements) which are dependent on conceptions. Conceptions do not appear in the mind at will, and are not a human product; the propositions are dependent on conceptions which are

1. Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 17a; he also alludes to the verses "...They fain would change the verdict of Allah..." (48.15) and "As for the disbelievers whether thou warn them or thou warn them not it is all one for them; they believe not." (2.6) as the Qur'ānic proof for this argument (Maṭālib, vol. 2 f. 18b). Arba'īn, p. 233; Ma'ālim, p. 83; N. 'Uqūl, f. 84a; Mafātīḥ, vol. 1, p. 179.

beyond our power, then they are also determined dispositions. Therefore, man's belief and unbelief is beyond his control.¹

4. As a matter of fact what all the disbelievers ask for is the right belief and certain knowlege, whereas the opposite, i.e. unbelief and ignorance are facilitated for them. If unbelief and ignorance are traced back to previous causes this leads us to the impasse of infinite regress. To avoid this difficulty it should be accepted that ignorance and unbelief are created by God.²

Al-Rāzī also draws upon environmental and hereditary factors in determining man's convictions. These are customs and traditions, the faith in which he is instructed, education, psychological structure, mental ability, biological characteristics, etc.³

When asked if, despite all these circumstances which affect our behaviour, we can still feel that we are free, and are able to abandon an enforced decision to act in a certain way, al-Rāzī's answer is that the condition of a determined action is that the causal factor (al-dā'ī) should not be contradicted by an opposite one. If it is challenged, or neutralised by an opposite factor, this does not mean that this new situation is of our free choice. It is in fact the outcome of some other determinants from which we are powerless to deviate.⁴ The idea that we are

1. Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 15b, 42a.

2. Mafātīh, vol. 2, p. 348; vol. 4, p. 139, 141, 230;
Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 45a.

3. Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 14b.

4. Ibid., vol. 2, f. 16b.

free in our actions is a mere delusion.¹ Although we feel we are able to act according to what we will, we cannot in fact will to will.²

In his Muḥaṣṣal where he discusses the Ash'arite theory of acquisition, he comes to the conclusion that "it is a word for a concept without meaning."³ He also refutes al-Bāqillānī's view that human will characterizes actions as obedience to, or rebellion against, God. The basis of his refutation is that if man has no power to create or prevent the causal factor (al-dā'ī) which incites actions, he is also unable to characterize these actions.⁴

As another explanation for the predetermination of human actions al-Rāzī equates human actions with divine actions. For they are all contingent and for their emergence are in need of a determinant factor (murajjih). From this premise he proceeds to the conclusion that if necessitarianism is rejected God's existence cannot be proved.⁵

There seems to be a great degree of similarity between the views of Jahm b. Ṣafwān, the founder of the necessitarian (mujabbira) school, and those of al-Rāzī. This judgement can further be supported by their common view that obligations, prohibitions, reward and punishment are also

1. Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 8a. "Inna al-Insān muḍṭarr fī sūra mukhtāra".

2. Ibid.

3. Muḥaṣṣal, p. 143. Cf. K. Luma', p. 43.

4. N. 'Uqūl, f. 85a.

5. Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 5b, 11b; Mabāḥith, vol. 2, p. 516.

determined and imposed upon man.¹ Despite these parallel views it seems unlikely that al-Rāzī was influenced by the dogmatic views of Jahm b. Ṣafwān.

When al-Rāzī addresses himself to the solution of this paradoxical problem of absolute determination on the one hand and obligations on the other, he replies that the answer is not to ask such a question and then he refers to the following verses:

"...Allah doeth what He will" 2.253

"...Lo Allah ordaineth that which pleaseth Him"

5.1

"He will not be questioned as to that which he

doeth but they will be questioned" 21.23

as the Qur'ānic evidence for the impossibility of an answer to the question.²

There is the objection that if we accept the theory of determinism, the occurrence of human actions becomes imperative as they are decreed by divine power. If this necessity of occurrence is applied to other divine actions, it would lead to the conclusion that God is a Necessary Agent rather than being a Free Agent.

Instead of giving a direct answer to this question al-Rāzī points out a more serious difficulty in the libertarian position, that by rejecting the role of al-dā'ī the libertarian risks the denial of God's existence.³

1. Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 516; Milal, p. 60; Mafātih, vol. 3, p. 250.

2. Arba'in, p. 236.

3. Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 48b.

Another important point relevant to the question of free will is whether man's ability to act (istiṭā'a) is before action or simultaneous with it. The Mu'tazilites hold that it is before action, whereas the Ash'arites claim that it is simultaneous with the action. This difference is the necessary corollary of their different approach, as it is evident that an ability to act before action is in harmony with the libertarian position, while the simultaneity of ability with action is the denial of man's freedom of action.

Al-Rāzī's stand on this particular point is that the ability regarding the potentiality of the body for action is before the action, but as far as the deliberation of the action which involves ~~in~~ an external causal factor is concerned, it is simultaneous with the action.¹

Apart from the speculative demonstrations discussed above, both the Mu'tazilites and the Jabarites have referred to the Qur'ān to substantiate their points of view. When the Qur'ān itself is examined in respect of freedom of will and the questions connected to it, it can easily be realised that it does not offer a solution. There are on the one hand, many verses (2.225, 2.79, 12.18, 52.21, 40.17, 20.15, 27.90, 17.94, 13.11, 4.123, 37.30, 6.164, 55.60, 3.101, 7.12, 20.92, 84.20, 6.148, 18.29, 41.40, 86.29, 18.55) which support the libertarian approach. These verses suggest that human beings are free to choose between belief and unbelief, and are responsible for their actions.

1. Ma'ālim, p. 80. Cf. 'Abd al-Jabbār, al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa, p. 396.

Punishment and reward are necessary in the next world. The mission of the prophets is to clear the right path for humanity so that the believers and the unbelievers can be distinguished from each other. On the other hand, there are verses (13.6, 6.125, 11.107, 37.96, 45.23) which suggest that God is the creator of man and his actions, that it is He who facilitates belief for the believers and unbelief for the unbelievers and that the ultimate decision has already been taken for future events, etc.

As will be recalled from previous chapters, a similar picture was presented by the Qur'ān for the issues of the divine attributes, and the creation of the World.

In the face of such a paradoxical situation al-Rāzī gives the following explanation for the scriptural evidence: The traditional (sam'ī) evidence cannot produce certainty regarding such matters as this. This is, firstly, because they are transmitted by human beings who are subject to error. It is also not certain what they really meant by the words they transmitted. Secondly, omissions (ḥadhf), superfluous words (zā'id), reversal of the normal word order (taqdīm wa-ta'khīr), restriction (takhsīs) or generality ('āmm) of implications which are used abundantly in the Qur'ān are not governed by unanimously agreed principles. Thirdly, one has to take into account the existence of metaphors (majāz) and ambiguous verses (al-mutashābihāt). All these features are obstacles for an accurate understanding of the words and sentences which thus become liable to various interpretations, a fact which sometimes enables the exponents of different views to rely on the

same verse. This analysis shows that the meanings drawn from these verses can only serve as preferred assumptions (al-zann al-ghālib) but not as convincing postulates.¹

This conclusion is ~~as~~ the same as the one he arrived at when he discussed the position of the anthropomorphic verses, coming to the conclusion that they could not describe the deity in their literal meanings. What he did on this occasion was to metaphorically interpret these verses on the basis of anti-anthropomorphic verses.² What he does now is to interpret the verses which express libertarian views on the basis of those which support the necessitarian approach.³

In conclusion, it can easily be understood from the above-mentioned discussions that as an extreme determinist al-Rāzī mainly substantiated and diversified the necessitarian aspects which are already acknowledged by the moderate libertarians. He is realistic in explanation of various circumstances which affect man's faith and behaviour. His comments on the nature of dogmatic evidence and its role represent a profound line of thought, the like of which can hardly be found in previous theologians. This fact demonstrates persuasively that al-Rāzī was a genuine free thinker within the framework of the values which were

1. Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 46a.

2. Supra (Chapter: Ambiguous Verses). His work Asās al-Taqdīs was written exclusively for this purpose.

3. In this field al-Rāzī goes to the extreme degree of denying the role of Satan in the misbehaviour of human beings. (Mafātīh, vol. 3, p. 248, vol. 7, p. 114.)

available to him. However, he could not produce a convincing answer to the major questions of the libertarians. Instead of explaining away the difficulties presented to him, he reiterates his own questions, maintaining that his questions were more difficult to answer. Although he elaborates on the conditions which determine man's decisions and actions, he does not penetrate into the nature of will itself. In one place he states that by introspection everyone can tell that he is determined¹, but does not seem to accept that by introspection one can also come to the conclusion that despite the existence of certain determinants one is still free to choose between the alternatives. Necessitarianism, as has already been observed, is the application of the universal principle of causality. This principle when applied in the physical sphere is explicit and valid, since the phenomenon of cause and effect is an observable fact. When it is applied to the mental sphere the outcome is not decisive as neither stage of the principle can be satisfactorily explained. This is one of the most fundamental difficulties in the necessitarian position. It is necessary to examine the interrelations between intellect, dispositions and will in order to substantiate such a claim. Presumably the reason why al-Rāzī neglected such crucial points in the question of free will and predestination, was the lack of an advanced science of psychology.

1. Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 16a.

CHAPTER VI

PROPHETHOOD

Al-Rāzī considers various approaches to prophethood. Those who refuse to accept the validity of prophethood base their arguments on different grounds. Apart from the rationalists and the determinists who question the principles of prophethood, there are those who deny it only because they doubt the occurrence of miracles which are the major evidence for a prophet's veracity, or the transmission of such past events to our present time.¹

In his definition of prophethood al-Rāzī regards three conditions as essential for the truthfulness of a prophet. The first is that he should assert his own prophethood, the second is that he should justify this assertion by a miracle, the third that this miracle should not be invalidated by a challenge. Only by the combination of all three conditions can prophethood be established. For they may occur independently or two of them may occur simultaneously but still this will not be regarded as fulfilling the requirements for prophethood. Therefore, the supernatural performances of a magician or a saint are insufficient for such a claim, as they lack either assertion of prophecy or immunity from a challenge.²

1. Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 257; N. 'Uqūl, f. 196a; Arba'īn, p. 303.

2. Arba'īn, p. 387; Mafātīh, vol. 5, p. 4.

In his rebuttal of the rationalists who maintain that reason is sufficient in guiding man to the knowledge of what is good and what is bad, al-Rāzī states that there are cases in which reason can act independently, e.g. our knowledge of the need for a creator of this universe, and cases in which reason cannot act independently. In respect of the first revelation functions to consolidate reason, in the second, it supplements reason's shortcomings. The second covers rituals, punishment and reward, certainty about the existence of the next world, and prescription of good and evil in fields in which reason hesitates. Strangely enough al-Rāzī includes in the field of the religious revelation our knowledge of what food is wholesome and social transactions in society which are in fact in the domain of reason and human experience.¹

In reply to the determinists who maintain that, as man has no free will and all his convictions and his behaviour are predetermined, the concepts of prophethood and obligation (taklīf) are pointless, al-Rāzī states,

In our opinion the main purpose of obligation is to inform us of the reality of punishment and reward. If actions are in accordance with obligation, this will be an indication of future reward. If one fails to act in accordance with commands this will be the sign of punishment. No one has the right to take issue with God the Highest as to why He specifies one action for reward and the other for punishment. 2

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1. Muhassal, p. 156; Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 262; Arba'īn, p. 328.
 2. Arba'īn, p. 328; Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 259a.

Bearing in mind the fact that al-Rāzī himself is a determinist the implicit conclusion in the above statement is that the prophet's mission which is prescribed by divine revelation is not to direct people to the right path and influence them, but to inform them of what kind of consequences follow their actions over which they have no real control.

In al-Rāzī's opinion, as the chief evidence of a prophet's veracity, miracles are extraordinary events which on challenge are not invalidated.¹ He classifies miracles into two main branches: a) the perceptual and b) the rational. The first type are the supernatural events which can be sensed by the spectators. The second are general observations of a prophet's position, e.g. the illiteracy of the Prophet Muḥammad.² As to the relevance of perceptual miracles to those who have not themselves seen them al-Rāzī claims that these events have been reported to us by a large number of people; therefore, there is no reason why they should not be trusted. After discussing various objections of the opponents who do not accept the validity of the transmission of these events al-Rāzī agrees that these reports cannot reach the point of tawātur (the widely transmitted reports).³

There is another objection of the opponents which arises from the Ash'arite theory that God's actions do not

1. Muḥaṣṣal, p. 151.

2. Arba'īn, p. 309; Ma'ālim, p. 91.

3. Arba'īn, p. 305; Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 280a; Ma'ālim, p. 93.

aim at any purpose, "inna af'āl Allāh ghayr mu'allala bi-l-aghrād". This theory gives rise to the objection that if no purpose can be attached to God's actions and a miracle is manifested by God, then how can it be claimed that the purpose of the manifesting of this miracle is to justify a prophet's veracity? For God may create a miracle on the request of a liar as He is the Creator of good and evil.

Al-Rāzī's answer to this question is consistent with the Ash'arite theory. He admits that God's creation of a miracle is not in order to verify a prophet's claim, but he points out that there is an obvious difference between a cause and instructive evidence (al-Mu'arrif). Although the justification of a prophet by a miracle is not a cause of the occurrence of such a miracle, it is instructive evidence for God's act of justification. Thus in the occurrence of every miracle there is a necessary knowledge that a prophet's veracity is established.¹

As a matter of fact, this answer does not seem to be in harmony with the Ash'arite theory that God's acts do not depend on any purpose. For it is an indirect confirmation of the antithesis that God's actions are purposeful, as the performance of a miracle is to produce a necessary knowledge of a prophet's veracity though this may not be the main cause for such a performance. Thus, al-Rāzī's answer is not satisfactory.

1. Arba'in, pp. 322, 324; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 156; Ma'ālim, p. 103; Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 288b.

Al-Rāzī adopts two main approaches in his analysis of the position of a prophet in a community. In his al-Mabāhith al-Mashriqiyya he follows the same line taken by Ibn Sīnā. In this philosophical approach the first matter discussed is how a civilised society is established. Intercommunal relations in the society necessitate a code of conduct which can only be prescribed by a leader who possesses high qualities. The three main qualities according to al-Rāzī are the following:

a) Intellectual superiority. Possessing this quality the leader has the capacity of quick reasoning by which he arrives at accurate judgements.

b) Superiority in the imaginative faculty, by which he can see angels while awake, hear God's words, and report the events of the past and the future.

c) Dominance (mutaṣarrifa) by which he can cause changes in the natural phenomena such as miracles mentioned in the Qur'ān.¹

Commenting on a Qur'ānic verse in his Tafsīr, he suggests that the prophets must be different from the rest of the people both in bodily and spiritual capabilities. He then classifies the bodily capabilities into the faculty of understanding (al-Mudrika) which includes the five senses, intelligence and memory and the faculty of activation (al-muḥarrika), e.g. the Prophet Muḥammad's ascension to Heaven (mi'rāj).

1. Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 523; Najāṭ, p. 303.

The spiritual capabilities consist of perfection in all virtues relating to the refinement of the soul. At this point al-Rāzī puts forward the rather strange view that the holy prophetic soul is different by essence from other souls -- a view which is suggestive of the idea that the prophet may be a superhuman being.¹

Al-Rāzī classifies human beings into three main groups: 1) The Imperfect (al-nāqis), which consists of common people; 2) The Perfect (al-kāmil) who is nevertheless unable to perfect others. These are the saints (awliyā'). 3) The perfect who perfects others (al-kāmil wa-l-mukammil). Only divinely assigned prophets represent this group.² Among the qualities they possess is the lack of interest in material pleasures.³ He states: "The art of prophecy consists of diverting people from indulgence in worldly affairs to the service of the Almighty and from preoccupation with this world to the next."⁴

In proving the Prophet Muḥammad's veracity al-Rāzī discusses three approaches:

a) Miracles, among which the Qur'ān is the most outstanding. The inimitability of the Qur'ān is either due to its intrinsic values, such as an extraordinary style, its psychological influence on the readers, its accurate narration of the stories of ancient times, and the foretelling of future events, or it is due to the

1. Mafātīh, vol. 2, p. 439.

2. Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 289b; Ma'ālim, p. 96.

3. Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 291a.

4. Ibid., f. 295a.

fact that God prevents the opponents when they try to reproduce the like of the Qur'ān -- a Mu'tazilite theory which is known as ṣarfa.

b) The prophet's personal behaviour, his decent life, pure morality and good manners, is a stronger evidence for Muḥammad's truthfulness in his claim that he was a messenger appointed by God. Al-Rāzī ascribes the same view to al-Jāḥiẓ.

c) The third evidence is the foretelling of his arrival in the Bible.¹

The Infallibility of the Prophets

There are many aspects in which the infallibility of a prophet has been discussed:

a) Concerning the essentials of the religion, there is unanimous agreement that they are infallible in this field.

b) Concerning the rules for the practical life (al-sharā'i'), the agreement is also unanimous on this point.

c) Concerning a prophet's judgement on a particular case (al-fatwā). Making a mistake deliberately is unanimously rejected, but there is disagreement whether they err unintentionally.

1. Muḥaṣṣal, p. 151; Arba'īn, p. 309; Ma'ālim, p. 90; N. 'Uqūl, f. 220a; Matālib, vol. 2, f. 289a; cf. Iqtisād, p. 88; N. Iqdām, p. 446.

d) Concerning their actions and behaviour. The difference of opinion is wider on this point. The Mu'tazilites believe that prophets do not commit grave sins, but they may commit minor ones.¹ The Ḥashawiyya (extremists) believe that they can commit both grave and minor sins. Other views on this point are that they can commit minor mistakes only inadvertently, or that they are liable neither to great sins nor to small ones, deliberately nor otherwise. The last view has been held by the Shī'ites (Rāfiḍa).²

Al-Rāzī argues against those who claim that the prophets are not infallible:

a) If they could be sinners their position in the next world would be worse than that of their followers. This is contrary to the fact that divine revelation is the highest degree of God's benevolence to mankind.

b) If they were sinners they could not be accepted as witnesses in a court, as indicated by the verse: "O ye who believe! If an evil-liver bring you tidings verify ~~it~~ lest ye smite some folk in ignorance and afterward repent of what ye did." 49.6

c) The idea of the fallibility of the prophets is contrary to the following verses: 2.143, 33.57, 3.31, 72.23, 61.2, 2.44, 15.40, 21.90, 38.47.

1. 'Abd al-Jabbār, al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa, p. 575.

2. Arba'in, p. 329. See also Mafātīh, vol. 3, p. 252, 308, vol. 4, p. 49, 84, vol. 5, p. 320, 420, 497, 542.

Al-Rāzī is of the opinion that there should be four qualities in a prophet as far as his infallibility is concerned:

1) A distinctive quality which prevents him from sins; 2) perfect knowledge of what is good and what is bad; 3) the reinforcement of this knowledge by revelation; 4) divine warning when he fails to choose the best alternative or when he forgets.¹

In his treatment of the verses in which there is either the mention of a sin forgiven by God, or a warning against a certain action al-Rāzī interprets these verses according to his own thoughts. An example of this is the verse 94.1,2:

"wa wada'na 'anka wizraka alladhi anqada zahrak"

"Have we not caused thy bosom to dilate, and eased thee of the burden"

In this verse sin (wizr) has been ascribed to the prophet. Al-Rāzī's interpretation is as follows: This sin should be understood as referring to a sin committed before his divine mission, or as the neglect of the best alternative, but not the opposite of the good. Furthermore, the word wizr means "burden" in which sense it can be interpreted as his immense sorrows due to his people's insistence on polytheism, and moreover the prophet and his followers were oppressed. So when he accomplished his cause that burden was lifted. The lifting of the

1. Muḥaṣṣal, p. 159.

burden in this verse should be taken as an allusion to those facts.¹

As to the verse:

"li-yaghfira Allāhu mā taqaddama min dhanbika wa-mā ta'akhhkar"

"That Allah may forgive thee of thy sin that which is past and that which is to come..." 48.2

al-Rāzī gives this interpretation: The mentioned sin (dhanb) in the verse should be conceived as the abandonment of the best, or the expression "dhanbika" should be understood as "the sin of your people" or the interpretation is: "Thanks to your grace God has forgiven your people's sins in their ill treatment of you".²

Another important aspect of the problem of prophethood is whether the prophets are superior to angels or inferior to them.

In one of his earlier works, Ma'ālim Uṣūl al-Dīn, al-Rāzī argues that the angels are superior to the prophets. The proofs he puts forward are:

a) The angels are spiritual beings. Their essences are free from any kind of corruption, and they are qualified with high attributes such as constant obedience and worship, whereas human beings are subject to various desires, anger, etc. Therefore the angels are superior.

1. Arba'īn, p. 363; Mafātīh, vol. 8, p. 455.

2. Arba'īn, p. 366; Mafātīh, vol. 7, p. 382.

b) The verses 78.37, 2.285 suggest that the angels have been put in a higher rank by divine revelation.

c) The heavens (aflāk) are the bodies of the angels and the stars are their hearts when compared with human bodies and the hearts therein.¹

Al-Rāzī in his later works changes his position and claims that the prophets should be superior to the angels in deserving more reward (thawāb) from God, but in respect of power and authority the latter might be superior. This latter view has also been held by the Shī'ites and by al-Bāqillānī among the Sunnites. Al-Rāzī's proofs for the superiority of the prophets are:

1) The angels were ordered to prostrate themselves to Adam: 2.34.

2) Adam was more learned than the angels: "And He taught Adam all the names" 2.31.

3) The angels act according to instructions given to them and they do not exercise free will by which choosing the right option is more difficult.

4) Human beings are subject to the deception and incitements of Satan, whereby the right belief becomes more difficult for them. Therefore, if they reach the right belief their reward should be more than that of the angels.

Finally al-Rāzī suggests that the angels have reason, but no desires (shahawāt), the brute animals possess desires but no reason, and that human beings possess both reason

1. Ma'ālim, p. 105.

and desires. Accordingly if man prefers reason over desires he deserves to be superior to the angels.¹

Al-Rāzī's views on prophethood are not so different from the traditional attitude taken by other major Ash'arite scholars.² However, apart from elaborating on the views of his predecessors his main contribution in this field is the adoption of a philosophic line of thought, which was exhibited in his al-Mabāhith al-Mashriqiyya and al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya.³

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1. Arba‘īn, p. 369; Mafātīh, vol. 1, p. 289; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 162.
 2. Cf. al-Baghdādī, Kitāb Uṣūl al-Dīn, pp. 153-84; N. Iqdām, pp. 417-505; Iqtisād, p. 88.
 3. Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 523; Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 290b.

CHAPTER VII

RESURRECTION

One of the basic principles of most religions is the belief in man's existence after death. The possibility of the continuation of life after death is also a significant issue in philosophy. As our experimental knowledge cannot extend beyond the point of death, all information about life after death found in religious books has no rational basis for assertion of certainty. They can be accepted either on the understanding that dogmatic tenets are not to be contradicted by reason and that their certainty is not open to speculative scepticism, or by the notion that although these beliefs cannot be established by reason, they equally cannot be also disproved by it, and that the criterion for the credibility of such assertions is something other than reason. This second position seems to underlie Ibn Sīnā's assertion that perceptual resurrection can only be claimed by religion, whereas rationally only spiritual resurrection can be established.¹ Although this is not a denial of bodily restoration, as there is no indication that Ibn Sīnā rejected the dogmatic evidence, it has generally been understood by the Muslim theologians that the Muslim philosophers did not believe

1. Najāṭ, p. 291; Ibn Sīnā, Risāle-i Nafs, p. 77. Cf. al-Sahykh Muḥammad 'Abduh, Bayna l-Falāsifa wa-l-Kalāmiyyīn, vol. 1, p. 607.

in bodily resurrection.¹ The only evidence on which the theologians can base this accusation is the fact that the philosophers have over-emphasized the intellectual existence and spiritual happiness and its superiority over perpetual pleasures.² Therefore, there is no clear evidence that they denied bodily resurrection. Moreover, in summarising the philosophers' position on the issue, al-Ghazālī seems to have referred only to Ibn Sīnā's Najāt which itself is not conducive to such an allegation, while other philosophers' views have not been represented.³

While discussing the problem of resurrection, al-Rāzī himself is of the opinion that the philosophers believed in the permanent existence of the soul, but that as to the body, it cannot be recovered after death.⁴ In his analysis of the question al-Rāzī first deals with the definition of Self. What is meant by the first singular pronoun "I"? In his Risāla he suggests that Self cannot be defined, since we can feel only its effects, but as to its nature we cannot know it. Moreover, everybody is aware of the fact that he is distinct from others, as this knowledge is self-evident and therefore does not need a

1. Tahāfut, p. 268.

2. Najāt, p. 291.

3. Cf. Tahāfut, p. 268, and Najāt, p. 291. The editor of Tahāfut quotes al-Fanārī as saying that al-Fārābī believed in the resurrection of the body either by the restoration of the previous one or by the creation of a new one (Tahāfut, p. 281, footnote).

4. Muḥaṣṣal, p. 163; Mafātīḥ, vol. 5, p. 435.

definite explanation.¹ In other works, he presents these views on the nature of man: According to philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā man consists of the soul, while the body is the instrument of the soul. On the other hand the majority of the mutakallims hold that man consists of only visible body.² Al-Rāzī argues as follows against the latter view, maintaining that by a human being what is referred to is not the body but the soul:

i) When someone thinks of himself he is usually unaware of his material existence. No part of the body is taken into consideration in self-contemplation. Thus, man should consist of the soul, but not the body.³

ii) The body is exposed to various external influences and it is in constant change and alteration. No component of the body and its organs is permanent. This is contrary to the fact that we always feel that we are the same persons throughout long periods of time. Therefore, the body as it is every-changing cannot be man's essence. The permanent nature of self-cognition is based on the existence of the immaterial soul.

1. Risāla, p. 106.

2. Risāla, p. 106; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 163; Mafātīḥ, vol. 5, p. 429; Ma'ālim, p. 114; Mabāḥith, vol. 2, p. 222.

3. Al-Rāzī is of the opinion that while unawareness of physical existence in self-contemplation is not a proof for the incorporeality of the soul, one's consciousness of that he is the same person as he was a moment ago is a proof for the incorporeality of the soul (Mabāḥith, vol. 2, p. 226).

iii) The place of sensations, understandings and deliberations cannot be the body itself, for from man's capability of analysis and synthesis it can be understood that all these intellectual experiences are performed by a single non-composite entity, and this cannot be other than the soul.

iv) It can be inferred from our experiences that what is perfection for the spiritual existence is weakness for the body. For example deep contemplation, abstention from sleep, old age, and mystic experiences weaken the position of the body, whereas they increase the strength of the soul and its influence.¹

Although al-Rāzī is in agreement with the philosophers on the existence of the soul as the essence of a human being, in some of his works he differs from them on the nature of the soul. According to the philosophers the soul is incorporeal and abstracted from space and thus it is an immaterial entity.² In order to prove this claim they argue that the intellectual perceptions are indivisible, and that the substratum of these perceptions should therefore also be indivisible. As an example our knowledge of the divinity is one and indivisible; if it were perceived by a part of the body or the body as whole this would bring about difficulties, e.g. only a part of

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1. Risāla, p. 114; Mafātīh, vol. 2, p. 37, vol. 3, p. 94, vol. 5, p. 438; Ma'ālim, p. 114; Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 224; Matālib, vol. 2, pp. 179a-184a; Muhassal, p. 167; Kitāb al-Nafs, p. 27; Lubāb, p. 109.
2. Matālib, vol. 2, f. 179a.

the body would be knowledgeable and the other parts ignorant, or the total of the parts of the body would be knowledgeable, both of which are absurd. Moreover, as all the parts of the body are divisible, they are not suitable to be the substratum of an indivisible knowledge. Thus the substratum of the knowledge is not the body but it is the soul which is abstracted from all the bodily properties.¹

Al-Rāzī counters this argument on the grounds that the conceptions of unity, relations and the theory of the atom show an indivisible notion can occupy a divisible locus.² Therefore, there is no necessity that the soul be immaterial. He also maintains that if the soul were immaterial ^{and used the body} ~~it would use the~~ body as its instrument, ^{then} since immaterial entities influence directly ~~and thus~~ the human soul would have a greater field of influence than ^{is the case} ~~what is~~ known. Thus, ^{the} human soul cannot be immaterial, but is a noble material similar to light which penetrates into the body and uses it as its instrument.³

In Mafātīh when commenting on the verse 17.85 he regards the philosophic thesis that the soul is immaterial and incorporeal, and his view that it is a heavenly material similar to light as equally valid.⁴

1. Ma'ālim, p. 119; Risāla, p. 114; Mafātīh, vol. 5, p. 435; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 164; Lubāb, p. 74; Mulakhkhaṣ, f. 220a.

2. Muḥaṣṣal, p. 164; Ma'ālim, p. 119.

3. Ma'ālim, p. 118.

4. Mafātīh, vol. 5, pp. 435-39.

In al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya he modifies his position claiming that the human soul is of the same nature as that of the angels, and that the efficient causes in its creation, which cause the emergence of knowledge and intuitions in the soul, are immaterial and produced by the Intellects. All the attributes of the soul are also the effect of the intellectual powers. Its relation to the body is on the basis of the subjugation of the body to the soul. However, this relationship between the soul and the body is of the weakest degree in existence and it is a kind of accident to which the soul is susceptible. Termination of this relationship between the soul and the body is the death of the body, but as to the soul, as the intellectual incorporeal powers are still effective in its nature and its properties, it will persist in time and it will remain permanent due to the permanency of its causes.¹ At this stage al-Rāzī shows more inclination towards the philosophic thesis. His belief in full dominion of the soul over the body caused him to differ from Ibn Sīnā on the question of the soul's knowledge of particulars. According to al-Rāzī Ibn Sīnā's writings are suggestive of the idea that the soul cannot know the particulars directly, but through bodily organs, whereas as the universals have

1. Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 182a. In his Kitāb al-Nafs al-Rāzī claims that the relation of the soul to the body is through the heart; thus the heart is the primary organ to have connection with the soul. The other parts of the body are dominated by the soul through the heart (K. al-Nafs, p. 51).

nothing to do with the sense world, they are apprehended by the soul without any intermediary. Al-Rāzī's objection is that if the soul learns something through a sense organ it does not mean that these sense organs have the capacity of sensation, e.g. the eye and the ear do not have the ability of seeing and hearing. Therefore, the soul's knowledge of particulars is not dependent on any bodily instrument and it remains capable of knowing them after its departure from the body.¹

Al-Rāzī is also at variance with the Aristotelian view that all human souls are one by essence. He thinks that since there are different performances of the souls such as intelligence and ignorance the souls must be different by essence from each other.² It is also the Aristotelian thesis that maintains the originatedness of the soul. This is because if the soul were eternal it would either be one in eternity or many. It cannot be

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1. Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 192b; Risāla, p. 110; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 167. Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī while commenting on al-Rāzī's views on the soul, accuses al-Rāzī of making false allegations against the philosophers that they do not believe in the soul's cognitions of the particulars. However, this accusation of al-Ṭūsī can be rejected on the ground that al-Rāzī does not pretend to be sure of what Ibn Sīnā says on this issue. What al-Rāzī says is that "It can be inferred from Ibn Sīnā's words that..." (Muḥaṣṣal, p. 167; Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 192b).
 2. Risāla, p. 117; Ma'ālim, p. 127; Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 387; Mulakhkhaṣ, f. 241a.

one, for then, what you know would be also known by me. If on the other hand, it is many, it can only be so after union with the body. Therefore, as the body is temporal so too is the soul. Although al-Rāzī accepts the originatedness of the soul he does not accept the arguments presented for this purpose, since according to him these arguments depend on the homogeneity of the human soul, and as he rejects this, he also rejects the arguments based on this principle. His argument for the originatedness of the soul is that if it were eternal we would be able to remember various events in the past, before the soul's union with the body.¹ However, in al-Mabāhith al-Mashriqiyya he regards this argument as a weak one.²

The Immortality of the Soul

The philosophers claim that the soul is immortal, for if it were receptive to non-existence, this would be an essential quality of the soul, but as the soul exists it cannot possess a quality opposite to existence. An entity cannot have the quality of existence and non-existence at the same time. Thus, if the soul's possession of susceptibility to non-existence were true it would be manifest only through its annihilation. It follows that an existing entity is more capable of continuation of existence than going into non-existence. Therefore, the soul is immortal.

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1. Arba'in, p. 296; Ma'ālim, p. 120; Muhassal, p. 166; Risāla, p. 120; Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 170a.
 2. Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 396.

Secondly, if the soul were mortal it should consist of matter and form, but it is already proved that it is incorporeal, and abstracted from position, and thus it is not receptive to non-existence.¹

In al-Arba'īn al-Rāzī refutes this argument with the Qur'ānic verse that everything except God will be annihilated. The arguments and counter-arguments on this issue are related to those on the question of whether the world is eternal or created in time. According to al-Rāzī everything other than God is capable of non-existence. This capability is an essential property of all the contingent entities.² In fact al-Rāzī's purpose in objecting to the philosophic arguments here is to show that the soul is susceptible to decay, but not that this will actually happen. In other words he does not believe like the philosophers that the soul is necessarily permanent.³

1. Maṭālib, vol. 2, f. 188a; Arba'īn, p. 279; Ma'ālim, p. 123; Muḥaṣṣal, p. 167; Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 399; Lubāb, p. 110.

2. Arba'īn, p. 279.

3. Ibid., pp. 279, 283. Al-Rāzī is of the opinion that although it is possible for the soul to disappear, the question of whether this possibility will actualize can be answered only through the literal meaning of the Qur'ānic verses. However, general rules of the Qur'ān can be restricted by evidence (Arba'īn, p. 292).

Resurrection of the body

There are certain philosophical arguments reproduced by al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī against the restoration of the body after death. They can be summarized as follows:

i) When the body perishes it becomes non-existent, and to restore a non-existent entity is impossible, and it cannot be subject to judgement.

ii) If the dead body is restored it will be either in the shape and size which it possessed when it died, or will include all the components and variations it possessed in its life-time. If, taking the first alternative, a disabled person were to be resurrected in a defective form this would be absurd, while in the second case, the person would be recreated with various qualities of mind and body, e.g. if he was previously a disbeliever, then became a believer, which case would be dominant in the resurrection?

iii) All the parts of the body are in constant alteration and renewal. There is no definite substance for recreation. Moreover, if someone eats another person's flesh and absorbs the latter's body, when both are to be revived how can their bodies be discerned from each other?

iv) A genuine resurrection can be only through the recreation of the deceased with all the related circumstances in time and place which if applied to the human body would mean a replica of the first creation not a resurrection.¹

1. Arba'in, pp. 277-89; Mabāhith, vol. 2, p. 433; Muhassal, p. 168. Cf. Tahāfut, p. 282; Mulakhkhas, f. 68b.

In answer to the first argument al-Rāzī suggests that to recover a perished body is possible through divine knowledge and power, and that there is no necessity for the real existence of a matter in order for it to be subject to judgement. Moreover, the statement that the dead body cannot be restored is also a judgement.¹

The second argument has been answered by al-Rāzī on the grounds that there is a permanent substance in man's nature, and it does not change. Change and alteration occur only to the secondary parts of the body. Thus this permanent substance in man's body survives all circumstances and even death. When asked how this can be harmonized with the Qur'ānic verse that everything except God will perish, he replies that sometimes general rules can be modified. He regards this counter-argument as an answer also to the third philosophic argument.²

As to the fourth argument, al-Rāzī claims that the creation of time and other circumstances is not necessary for the resurrection. Resurrection cannot be equated with the first creation, since the former is preceded by a previous state, whereas the latter is not.³

Al-Rāzī refers to many verses of the Qur'ān to substantiate bodily resurrection. He also gives credence to the view that the death of the body is the disintegration

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1. Ma'ālim, p. 128; Muhassal, p. 168; Arba'īn, p. 276
Mulakhkhas, f. 68b.
 2. Ma'ālim, p. 131; Arba'īn, pp. 290-92.
 3. Arba'īn, p. 278.

of its parts and resurrection is the reassembling of all dispersed components back into a body. Thus, he does not consider the verse "Think not of those who are slain in the way of Allah as dead. Nay they are living. With their Lord they have provision" (3.169), as implying the life after death, but to him it implies that those who are killed for the sake of God are alive at the present time.¹ He is also of the opinion that the integration of the body and its unity is not a condition for life since God is able to give life to the scattered pieces of the body without assembling them.²

He maintains that rejecting bodily resurrection is contrary to the literal meaning of the Qur'ān.³ He refers to the following verses as evidence for the restoration of the body after death, 10.34, 17.99, 36.78/79, 29.19, 56.50/58/59/63, 75.40, 86.8. He adduces two rational arguments for this purpose. First, the right and the wicked should receive their due rewards and punishment. Therefore, there should be life after death. Secondly, the purpose of creation is either for pleasure or for suffering or for neither of these. It cannot be for suffering or for neither suffering nor pleasure since it is contrary to the wisdom of God. Thus, it should be for getting satisfaction. However, this purpose does not seem to be fulfilled in this world, because many so-called

1. Mafātīh, vol. 3, p. 93; K. Nafs, p. 43.

2. Mafātīh, vol. 2, p. 36.

3. Arba'in, p. 288.

pleasures are in fact the avoidance of suffering, therefore, there should be a next world where full satisfaction can be fully enjoyed.¹ It is also impossible in this world to combine the pleasures of both the soul and the body, since when one is indulged in sensory pleasures he is unaware of spiritual pleasures and vice versa. Thus, when the soul abandons the body in this world and gets stronger through heavenly powers and attains perfection, after that if it occupies a new body, spiritual and sensory pleasure can fully be enjoyed. Al-Rāzī calls this view the combination of philosophy with faith.² This is also al-Ghazālī's position in his Tahāfut where he maintains that restoration of the decayed body or creating a new body for the soul is possible for God, and such re-existence is superior to the individual existence of both the soul and the body. Thus perfection is attained by the restoration of both the soul and the body.³

However, this last argument can be contested on the grounds that what philosophers are aiming at by holding spiritual happiness to be superior to the perceptual is also to secure full satisfaction of the human soul. For to them, sensory pleasures are defective and preventive to real spiritual happiness, and when the soul leaves the body it will have the full capacity of full satisfaction.

1. Arba'īn, p. 294.

2. Ibid., p. 300.

3. Tahāfut, pp. 276, 285.

That is why even in this world intellectual joyfulness has been regarded as more worthwhile than perceptual comforts.¹ It follows that what philosophers like Ibn Sīnā reject is not the perfection of happiness, but that what they reject is the idea that having sensory pleasures alongside with the spiritual is perfection. Therefore, the disagreement can be reduced to differences in the definition of perfection.

1. Najāṭ, p. 294.

CONCLUSION

Any clear-cut evaluation of al-Rāzī's place in the history of Islamic thought is rendered difficult by some of the major characteristics of his writings. The vacillation between philosophy and religion which he exhibited throughout his academic life produced one of the best examples of speculative investigation that human intellect is capable of. His aim was neither to elevate the cause of kalām nor that of philosophy. In order to satisfy his quest for truth he did not hesitate to destroy any philosophic or dogmatic principle which stood in his way, for he possessed a sceptical as well as a discursive mind. As far as his role as a theologian-philosopher is concerned his contribution is not through his allegiance to a particular school of thought, but through the elaboration of the faculty of speculation in general. In this respect al-Rāzī deserves a universal recognition as one of the best examples of a critical and incisive mind.

His works are characterized by his willingness to question received and accepted opinions. Although his main source in philosophy was Ibn Sīnā, he disagreed with him on such major issues as existence, epistemology, and the creation of the world. Al-Rāzī conceived existence as a comprehensive concept covering all entities equally, but for him differences among the existent entities are due to differences in their

essences -- a theory which he also applied to the reality of God. Thus, like contingent entities God consists of existence and essence. On the other hand, Ibn Sīnā believed that although this theory is applicable to the contingent world it is invalid in the case of God, since the absolute one-ness of the deity necessitates the notion that He is pure existence which unlike the existence of the contingent is not susceptible to essence. In understanding God as existence and essence, al-Rāzī followed the same argument put forward by his predecessors al-Ghazālī and al-Shahrastānī, although he furnished it with further arguments.

In the problem of the creation of the world al-Rāzī adopted an eclectic approach by using both philosophical and theological arguments. By giving precedence to contingency (imkān) as the more credible principle for the createdness of the world and its need for a creator, while upholding the theological argument based on originatedness (ḥudūth), he placed himself in a difficult position and could not escape contradictions. However, in his last work al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliya, his ideas on this particular problem are of great interest, for here he reviewed his previous position and chose to suspend judgement on the issue as he felt that there was no explicit guidance from the scriptures, and no conclusive evidence from speculation.

In proving God's existence he followed the same eclectic approach using philosophical and theological arguments together and giving them more elaboration.

Al-Rāzī presents very complicated theories on the question of the Divine Attributes. He predicated knowledge as a special relationship between the knower and the thing known, a theory by which he differed from both the philosophers and the theologians. However, he did not mention any characteristics of this relationship to differentiate it from other kinds of relationships. His concept of the Attributes fluctuates between Ash'arism, Mu'tazilism and the philosophical approach with a considerable change of mind and intellectual evolution in his various works.

He is an extreme determinist, his main argument being the theory based on the motivative factor (al-dā'ī) in the exercise of human will. Man's choice of an action over non-action or one of possible alternatives is not the result of a free will, but all human decisions and actions are the product of divine will. By adhering to this theory he encountered major difficulties in dealing with the question of obligation and prophethood.

However, in his waṣiyya, al-Rāzī abandons his speculative assertions and states a preference for faith over reason and regards the role of the latter in the investigation of truth as unproductive.

Al-Rāzī exercised a tremendous influence on his contemporaries and posterity. His influence is noticeable even on his major critics such as Ibn Taymiyya. His works were so popular that we are told by his biographers that being fascinated by his books the scholars ignored the works of his predecessors.

One of the major sources for al-Rāzī's thoughts and his influence is his magnam opus Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb, the commentary on the Qur'ān. His broad approach to the interpretation of the Qur'ān with the presentation of various alternative comments on each verse is a source of inspiration for all even for the present generation of commentators. In his tafsīr al-Rāzī was influenced by al-Zamakhsharī's al-Kashshāf for the linguistic explanation of verses, and by Abū Muslim al-Iṣfahānī in some theological disputes. However, this does not denote a lack of originality in al-Rāzī, for he is original both in his unique method of treating a verse and in producing new solutions or postulating a logical preference for one of those of his predecessors. Unfortunately al-Rāzī's originality is often submerged in the daunting volume of detail with which he presents each issue. This is also a general characteristic of his major works which are marked by effusion of unnecessary detail which forms a barrier to the appreciation of his original mind for all but the most determined reader.

One can only conclude a study of al-Rāzī by observing that he is a thinker worthy of far more scholarship than he has so far received. A great deal of research into al-Rāzī's thought still needs to be carried out before a definitive assessment of his place in the history of Islamic thought can be undertaken. It is hoped that the present study will be a useful contribution to such an assessment.

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