A History of Muslim Philosophy Volume 1, Book 3

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A Compendium Of Articles On The History Of Muslim Philosophy. In This Book: Early Centuries.

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Part 1: Theologico-Philosophical Movements

Chapter 10: Mu'tazalism

Mu'tazilism by Mir Valiuddin, M.A Ph.D., Professor of Philosophy, Osmania University, Hyderabad Deccan (India)

The General Mu'tazilite Position

Subsequent to the times of the Companions of the Prophet of Islam, the Mu'tazilah creed made its appearance. It had its inception nearly two centuries after the migration (Hijrah) of the Holy Prophet to Madinah. The Mu'tazilites were thoroughgoing rationalists. They believed that the arbiter of whatever is revealed has to be theoretical reason.

Let us for a moment consider why the Mu'tazilites were so named. The story goes that one day Imam al-Hasan al-Basri was imparting instruction to his pupils in a mosque. Before the lessons were finished someone turned up and addressed him thus:

"Now, in our own times a sect1 of people has made its appearance, the members of which regard the perpetrator of a grave sin as an unbeliever and consider him outside the fold of Islam. Yet another group of people have appeared2 who give hope of salvation to the perpetrator of a grave sin. They lay down

that such a sin can do no harm to a true believer. They do not in the least regard action as a part of faith and hold that as worship is of no use to one who is an unbeliever, so also sin can do no harm to one who is a believer in God. What, in your opinion, is the truth and what creed should we adopt?"

Imam al-Hasan al-Basri was on the point of giving a reply to this query when a long-necked pupil of his got up and said: "The perpetrator of grave sins is neither a complete unbeliever nor a perfect believer; he is placed midway between unbelief and faith-an intermediate state (*manzilah bain al-manzilatain*)."

Having spoken he strode to another corner of the mosque and began to explain this belief of his to others.3 This man was Wasil ibn `Ata. The Imam shot a swift glance at him and said, *"I'tazala `anna,"* i. e.,"He has withdrawn from us." From that very day Wasil and his followers were called al-Mu'tazilah, the Withdrawers or Secessionists.

Ibn Munabbih says that the title of al-Mu'tazilah came into vogue after the death of al-Hasan al-Basri. According to his statement, when al-Hasan passed away, Qatadah succeeded him and continued his work. `Amr ibn `Ubaid and his followers avoided the company of Qatadah; therefore, they were given the name of al-Mu'tazilah.

In brief, the word *i'tizal* means to withdraw or secede, and the Mu'tazilites are the people who in some of their beliefs were diametrically opposed to the unanimous consent of the early theologians or the People of the Approved Way (*ahl al-sunnah*). The leader of all of them was Wasil b. `Ata who was born in 80/699 at Madinah and died in 131/748.

Muslims generally speak of Wasil's party as the Mu'tazilites, but the latter call themselves People of Unity and Justice (*ahl al-tawhid wal `adl*). By justice they imply that it is incumbent on God to requite the obedient for their good deeds and punish the sinners for their misdeeds. By unity they imply the denial of the divine attributes.

Undoubtedly, they admit that God is knowing, powerful, and seeing, but their intellect does not allow them to admit that these divine attributes are separate and different from the divine essence. The reason for this view of theirs is that if the attributes of God are not considered to be identical with the essence of God, "plurality of eternals" would necessarily result and the belief in unity would have to be given up. This, in their opinion, is clear unbelief (*kufr*). Unity and justice are the basic principles of the beliefs of the Mu'tazilites and this is the reason why they call themselves "People of Unity and Justice."

Now, from the basic beliefs of unity and justice a few more beliefs necessarily follow as corollaries:

1. God Almighty's justice necessitates that man should be the author of his own acts; then alone can he be said to be free and responsible for his deeds. The same was claimed by the Qadarites. The Mu'tazilites accepted totally the theory of indeterminism and became true successors of the Qadarites.

If man is not the author of his own acts and if these acts are the creation of God, how can he be held responsible for his acts and deserve punishment for his sins? Would it not be injustice on the part of God that, after creating a man helpless, He should call him to account for his sins and send him to hell?

Thus, all the Mu'tazilites agree in the matter of man's being the creator of his volitional acts. He creates some acts by way of *mubasharah* and some by way of *tawlid*. By the term *tawlid* is implied the necessary occurrence of another act from an act of the doer, e.g., the movement of Zaid's finger necessitates the movement of his ring. Although he does not intend to move the ring, yet he alone will be regarded as the mover.

Of course, to perform this act the medium of another act is necessary. Man creates guidance or misguidance for himself by way of *mubasharah* and his success or failure resulting from this is created by way of *tawlid*. God is not in the least concerned in creating it, nor has God's will anything to do with it.

In other words, if a man is regarded as the author of his own acts, it would mean that it is in his power either to accept Islam and be obedient to God, or become an unbeliever and commit sins, and that God's will has nothing to do with these acts of his. God, on the other hand, wills that all created beings of His should embrace Islam and be obedient to Him. He orders the same to take place and prohibits people from committing sins.

Since man is the author of his own acts, it is necessary for God to reward him for his good deeds and this can be justly claimed by him. As al-Shahrastani puts it: "The Mu'tazilites unanimously maintain that man decides upon and creates his acts, both good and evil; that he deserves reward or punishment in the next world for what he does. In this way the Lord is safeguarded from association with any evil or wrong or any act of unbelief or transgression. For if He created the wrong, He would be wrong, and if He created justice, He would be just."[4]

It is the creed of most of the Mu'tazilites that one possesses "ability" before the accomplishment of the act, but some Mu'tazilites (e. g., Muhammad b. `Isa and Abu `Isa Warraq) like the Sunnites are of the view that one has ability to act besides the act.

2. The justice of God makes it incumbent upon Him not to do anything contrary to justice and equity. It is the unanimous verdict of the Mu'tazilites that the wise can only do what is salutary (*al-salah*) and good, and that God's wisdom always keeps in view what is salutary for His servants; therefore, He cannot be cruel to them. He cannot bring into effect evil deeds. He cannot renounce that which is salutary. He cannot ask His servants to do that which is impossible. Further, reason also suggests that God does not place a burden on any creature greater than it can bear.

According to the Mu'tazilites, things are not good or evil because God declares them to be so. No, God makes the distinction between good and evil on account of their being good and evil. Goodness or evil are innate in the essence of things themselves. This very goodness or evil of things is the cause of the commands and prohibitions of the Law.

The human intellect is capable of perceiving the goodness and evil of a few things and no laws are required to express their goodness and evil, e. g., it is commendable to speak the truth and despicable to commit oneself to untruth. This shows that the evil and goodness of things are obvious and require no proof from the Shari`ah. Shameful and unjust deeds are evil in themselves; therefore, God has banned indulgence in them. It does not imply that His putting a ban on them made them shameful and unjust deeds.

The thoroughgoing rationalism of the Mu'tazilites is thus expressed by al-Shahrastani in these words: "The adherents of justice say: All objects of knowledge fall under the supervision of reason and receive their obligatory power from rational insight. Consequently, obligatory gratitude for divine bounty precedes the orders given by (divine) Law; and beauty and ugliness are qualities belonging intrinsically to what is beautiful and ugly."5

From the second principle of the Mu'tazilites, the unity of God, the following beliefs necessarily result as corollaries:

1. Denial of the beatific vision. The Mu'tazilites hold that vision is not possible without place and direction. As God is exempt from place and direction, therefore, a vision of Him is possible neither in this world nor in the hereafter.

2. Belief that the Qur'an is a created speech of Allah. It was held by them that the Qur'an is an originated work of God and it came into existence together with the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam.

3. God's pleasure and anger, not attributes, but states. According to the Mu'tazilites, God's pleasure and anger should not be regarded as His attributes, because anger and pleasure are states and states are mutable, the essence of God is immutable. They should be taken as heaven and hell.

The following is the summary of some more beliefs of the Mu'tazilites:

1. Denial of punishment and reward meted out to the dead in the grave and the questioning by the angels *Munkar* and *Nakir*.

2. Denial of the indications of the Day of Judgment, of Gog and Magog (*Yajuj* and *Majuj*), and of the appearance of the Antichrist (*al-Dajjal*).

3. Some Mu'tazilites believe in the concrete reality of the Balance (*al-Mizan*) for weighing actions on the Day of Judgment. Some say that it is impossible for it to be a reality and think that the mention made in the Qur'an of weight and balance means only this much that full justice will be done on the Day of Judgment.

It is clearly impossible to elicit the meanings of the words weight and balance literally, for deeds, which have been said to be weighed, are accidents and it is not possible to weigh accidents. Theoretical reason is incapable of comprehending this. Substances alone can possess weight. Further, when

nothing is hidden from God, what is the use of weighing the deeds? It has been mentioned in the Qur'an that the books of bad or good deeds will be handed over to us. This too is merely a metaphor. It means only our being gifted with knowledge.

4. The Mu'tazilites also deny the existence of the Recording Angels (*Kiraman Katibin*). The reason they give for this is that God is well aware of all the deeds done by His servants. The presence of the Recording Angels would have been indispensable if God were not acquainted directly with the doings of His servants.

5. The Mu'tazilites also deny the physical existence of the "Tank" (*al-Hawd*), and the "Bridge" (*al-sirat*). Further, they do not admit that heaven and hell exist now, but believe that they will come into existence on the Day of Judgment.

6. They deny the Covenant (*al-Mithaq*). It is their firm belief that God neither spoke to any prophet, angel, or supporter of the Divine Throne, nor will He cast a glance towards them.

7. For the Mu'tazilites, deeds together with verification (*tasdiq*) are included in faith. They hold that a great sinner will always stay in hell.

8. They deny the miracles (*al-karamat*) of saints (*awliya'*), for, if admitted, they would be mixed up with the evidentiary miracles of the prophets and cause confusion. The same was the belief of the Jahmites too.

9. The Mu'tazilites also deny the Ascension (*al-Mi'raj*) of the Prophet of Islam, because its proof is based on the testimony of individual traditions, which necessitates neither act nor belief; but they do not deny the Holy Prophet's journey as far as Jerusalem.

10. According to them, the one who prays is alone entitled to reap the reward of a prayer; whatever its form, its benefit goes to no one else.

11. As the divine decree cannot be altered, prayers serve no purpose at all. One gains nothing by them, because if the object, for which prayers are offered, is in conformity with destiny, it is needless to ask for it, and if the object conflicts with destiny, it is impossible to secure it.

12. They generally lay down that the angels who are message-bearers of God to prophets are superior in rank to the human messengers of God to mankind, i. e., the prophets themselves.

13. According to them, reason demands that an Imam should necessarily be appointed over the *ummah* (Muslim community).

14. For them, the *mujtahid* (the authorized interpreter of the religious Law) can never be wrong in his view, as against the opinion of the Ash`arite scholastics that "the *mujtahid* sometimes errs and sometimes hits the mark."

The Mu'tazilites and the Sunnites differ mostly from one another in five important matters:

(1) The problem of attributes.

(2) The problem of the beatific vision.

(3) The problem of promise and threat.

(4) The problem of creation of the actions of man.

(5) The problem of the will of God.

Ibn Hazm says in his *Milal wa'l-Nihal* that whosoever believes (1) that the Qur'an is uncreated, (2) that all the actions of man are due to divine decree, and (3) that man will be blessed with the vision of God on the Day of Judgment, and (4) admits the divine attributes mentioned in the Qur'an and the Tradition, and (5) does not regard the perpetrator of a grave sin as an unbeliever, will not be styled as one of the Mu'tazilites, though in all other matters he may agree with them.

This statement of Ibn Hazm shows that the Mu'tazilites were a group of rationalists who judged all Islamic beliefs by theoretical reason and renounced those that relate to all that lies beyond the reach of reason. They hardly realized the fact that reason, like any other faculty with which man is gifted, has its limitations and cannot be expected to comprehend reality in all its details. The point does not need elaboration. As Shakespeare puts it, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Some modern thinkers have recognized that there is a place for intuition in the field of comprehension and, as a corollary to this, have admitted the claim of revelation or *wahi* as a source of knowledge. That is why Iqbal exclaimed

"At the dawn of Life the Angel said to me

`Do not make thy heart a mere slave to reason.'"

And probably on a similar ground Iqbal's guide, Rumi, offered the following meaningful advice

"Surrender thy intellect to the Prophet!

God sufficeth. Say, He sufficeth.

Beware of wilful reasoning,

And boldly welcome madness!

He alone is mad who madness scoffs,

And heeds not the agent of Law!”

Some leading Mu’tazilites

In presenting a bird's-eye view of the beliefs of the Mu'tazilites in the above paragraphs, it has not been suggested that these views were in their totality shared by all the leading Mu'tazilites. There were differences of opinion within themselves. For instance, Abu al-Hudhail al-`Allaf differed from his companions in respect of ten problems; Ibrahim ibn Sayyar al-Nazzam in thirteen; Bishr ibn al-Mu'tamir in six; Mu'ammar ibn Khayyat `Abbad al-Sulami in four; and `Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz, in five. Abu al-Husain and his followers are called the “Mu'tazilites of Baghdad” and Abu al-Jubba'i, his son Abu Hashim, and their followers were known as the “Mu'tazilites of Basrah.” Below is given a brief account of the lives and ideas of some of the leading Mu'tazilites.

1. Wasil ibn ` Ata

Wasil was born at Madinah in 80/699 and was brought up in Basrah. “Suq-i Ghazzal,” a bazaar in Basrah, used to be his familiar haunt and on that account people associated its name with him. He died in 131/748. Wasil had a very long neck. Amr ibn `Ubaid, who was a celebrated Mu'tazilite, on looking at him once remarked: “There will be no good in a man who has such a neck.”[6] Wasil was *althagh*,[7] i.e., he could not pronounce the letter *r* correctly, but he was a very fluent and accomplished speaker and in his talk totally avoided this letter.

He never allowed it to escape his lips, despite the great difficulty in avoiding it in conversation. He compiled a voluminous treatise in which not a single *r* is to be found. He would often maintain silence which led people to believe that he was mute.

Wasil was a pupil of Abu Hashim `Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah, but in the matter of Imamate, as in some other matters, he opposed his master. Before becoming a Mu'tazilite he used to live in the company of Imam Hasan al-Basri.

His works are: *Kitab al-Manzilah bain al-Manzilatain, Kitab al-Futya*, and *Kitab al-Tawhid*. The first books on the science of al-Kalam were written by him. Ibn Khallikan has recounted a number of his works.

In his illustrious work *al-Milal wa'l-Nihal* [8], al-Shahrastani says that the essential teachings of Wasil consisted of the following: (1) Denial of the attributes of God. (2) Man's possession of free-will to choose good deeds. (3) The belief that one who commits a grave sin is neither a believer nor an unbeliever but occupies an intermediate position, and that one who commits a grave sin goes to hell. (4) The belief that out of the opposing parties that fought in the battle of the Camel and from among the assassinators of `Uthman and his allies one party was in error, though it cannot be established which.

(1) *Denial of Attributes* - Wasil denies that knowledge, power, will, and life belong to the essence of

God. According to him, if any attribute is admitted as eternal, it would necessitate “plurality of eternals” and the belief in the unity of God will thus become false. But this idea of Wasil was not readily accepted. Generally, the Mu'tazilites first reduced all the divine attributes to two – knowledge and power – and called them the “essential attributes.” Afterwards they reduced both of these to one attribute – unity.

(2) *Belief in Free–will* – In this problem Wasil adopted the creed of Ma'bad al–Juhani and Ghailan al–Dimashqi and said that since God is wise and just, evil and injustice cannot be attributed to him. How is it justifiable for Him that He should will contrary to what He commands His servants to do?

Consequently, good and evil, belief and unbelief, obedience and sin are the acts of His servant himself, i.e, the servant alone is their author or creator and is to be rewarded or punished for his deeds. It is impossible that the servant may be ordered to “do” a thing which he is not able to do. Man is ordered to do an act because he has the power to do that act. Whosoever denies this power and authority rejects a self–evident datum of consciousness.

As ibn Hazm frankly said, the excellent work of the Mu'tazilites can be seen in the doctrine of free–will and that of promise and threat. If man were to be regarded as absolutely determined in his actions, the whole edifice of Shari'ah and ethics would tumble down.

(3) *Intermediary Position of the Grave Sinners* – On account of his belief that one who commits a grave sin is neither a believer nor an unbeliever but occupies an intermediate position, Wasil withdrew himself from the company of Imam Hasan al–Basri and earned the title Mu'tazilite. Wasil thought that the expression “true believer” is one which means praise.

The person who commits grave sins can never deserve praise; therefore, he cannot be called a true believer. Such a person has, nevertheless, belief in the Islamic faith and admits that God alone is worthy of being worshipped; therefore, he cannot be regarded as an unbeliever either. If such a person dies without penitence, he will ever stay in hell, but as he is right in his belief, the punishment meted out to him will be moderate.

As Imam al–Ghazali has pointed out in his *Ihya' `Ulum al–Din* misinterpretation of the following verses of the Qur'an was the cause of the Mu'tazilites' misunderstanding:

“By* (*the token of*) *Time* (*through the ages*), *verily mankind is in loss, except such as have faith and do righteous deeds and* (*join together*) *in the mutual teaching of truth, patience, and constancy.” [9]

“For any that disobey God and His Apostle – for them is hell; they shall dwell therein forever:“ [10]

In the light of these and similar other verses, the Mu'tazilites argue that all the perpetrators of grave sins will always stay in hell, but they do not think over the fact that God also says:

“But, without doubt, I am* (*also*) *He that forgiveth again and again those who repent, believe, and

do right, who, in fine, are ready to receive true guidance:"[11]

"God forgiveth not that equals should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth."[12]

The last quoted verse shows that in the case of all sins, except polytheism, God will act according to His pleasure. In support of this, the clear saying of the Holy Prophet of Islam can be cited, viz., "that person too will finally come out of hell who has even an iota of faith in his heart."

Further, some words of God, e.g., ***"Verily We shall not suffer to perish the reward of anyone who does a*** (***single***) ***righteous deed,"***[13] and ***"Verily God will not suffer the reward of the righteous to perish,"***[14] clearly show that for the commission of one sin, He will not ignore a man's basic faith and deprive him of all the reward for his good deeds. Therefore, the general belief is that as the perpetrator of grave sins is by all means a true believer, even if he dies without repentance, after being punished for his sins in hell and thereby purified of them, he will eventually enter heaven.

(4) *Unestablished Errors* – Wasil had firm conviction that out of those who fought in "the battle of the Camel" and "the battle of Siffin" and the killers of `Uthman, the third Caliph, and his allies, one party was definitely in error, though it cannot be established which.[15]

2. Abu al-Hudhail `Allaf

`Allaf was born in 131/748 and died in c. 226/840. He received instruction from `Uthman bin Khalid Tawil, a pupil of Wasil. He was a fluent speaker and vigorous in his arguments. He often made use of dialectical arguments in his discussions. He had a keen insight in philosophy. He wrote about sixty books on the science of Kalam but all of them have long been extinct.

`Allaf was an accomplished dialectician. The story goes that by his dialectics three thousand persons embraced Islam at his hand. We shall here speak of two of his debates. In those days there lived a Magian Salih by name who believed that the ultimate principles of the universe are two realities, Light and Darkness, that both of these are opposed to each other, and that the universe is created by the mixture of these two.

This belief led to a discussion between Salih, the Magian, and Allaf. Allaf inquired of him whether the mixture was distinct and different from Light and Darkness or identical with them. Salih replied that it was one and the same thing. `Allaf then said, "How could two things mix together which are opposed to each other? There ought to be someone who got them mixed, and the mixer alone is the Necessary Existent or God."

On another occasion, while Salih was engaged in a discussion with `Allaf, the latter said, "What do you now desire?" Salih replied, "I asked a blessing of God and still stick to the belief that there are two Gods." `Allaf then asked, "Of which God did you ask a blessing ? The God of whom you asked for it

would not have suggested the name of the other God (who is His rival)."

Wasil was not able to clarify the problem of divine attributes. In this respect his ideas were still crude. `Allaf is opposed to the view that the essence of God has no quality and is absolutely one and by no means plural. The divine qualities are none other than the divine essence and cannot be separated from it. `Allaf accepts such attribute as are one with the essence of God, or one may say, accepts such an essence as is identical with the attributes. He does not differentiate between the two, but regards both as one.

When one says that God is the knower, one cannot mean that knowledge is found in the essence of God, but that *knowledge is His essence*. In brief, God is knowing, powerful, and living with such knowledge, power, and life as are His very essence (essential nature).

Al-Shahrastani has interpreted the identity of divine essence and attributes thus: God knows with His knowledge and knowledge is His very essence. In the same way, He is powerful with His power and power is His very essence; and lives with His life and life is His very essence. Another interpretation of divine knowledge is that God knows with His essence and not with His knowledge, i.e., He knows through His essence only and not through knowledge.

The difference in these two positions is that, in the latter, the attributes are denied altogether, while in the former, which `Allaf accepts, they are admitted but are identified with God's essence. This conforms to the statements of the philosophers who hold that the essence of God, without quality and quantity, is absolutely one, and by no means admits of plurality, and that the divine attributes are none other than the essence of God.

Whatever qualities of Him may be established, they are either "negation" or "essentials." Those things are termed "negation" which, without the relation of negation, cannot be attributed to God, as, for instance, body, substance, and accidents. When the relation of negation is turned towards them and its sign, i.e., the word of negation, is applied, these can become the attributes of God, e. g., it would be said that God is neither a body, nor a substance, nor an accident. What is meant by "essential" is that the existence of the Necessary Existent is Its very essence and thus Its unity is real.

`Allaf did not admit the attributes of God as separate from His essence in any sense. For he sensed the danger that, by doing so, attributes, too, like essence, would have to be taken as eternal, and by their plurality the "plurality of eternals" or "the plurality of the necessary existents" would become inevitable, and thus the doctrine of unity would be completely nullified. It was for this reason that the Christians who developed the theory of the Trinity of Godhead had to forsake the doctrine of unity.

Among the "heresies" of `Allaf was his view that after the discontinuation of the movement of the inmates of heaven and hell, a state of lethargy would supervene. During this period calm pleasure for the inmates of heaven and pain and misery for the inmates of hell will begin, and this is what is really meant by eternal pleasure and perpetual pain. Since the same was the religious belief of Jahm,

according to whom heaven and hell would be annihilated, the Mu'tazilites used to call `Allaf a Jahmite in his belief in the hereafter.

Allaf has termed justice, unity, promise, threat, and the middle position as the “Five Principles” of the Mu'tazilites.

3. Al-Nazzam

Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Sayyar, called al-Nazzam, was younger than `Allaf and it is generally known that he was `Allaf's pupil. He lived during the reign of Caliphs al-Mamun and al-Mu'tasim and died in 231/845. He was a peerless litterateur and poet. He studied Greek philosophy well and made full use of it in his works. His main ideas are as follows.

(1) *Denial of God's Power over Evil* – God has no power at all over sin and evil. Other Mu'tazilites do not deny the *power of* God over evil, but deny the *act of His* creating evil. In their opinion, God has power over evil, but He does not use it for the creation of evil. Al-Nazzam, in opposition to them, says that when evil or sin is the attribute or essence of a thing, then the possibility of the occurrence of evil or the power to create it will itself be evil.

Therefore, it cannot be attributed to God who is the doer of justice and good. Similarly, al-Nazzam holds that in the life hereafter too, God can neither mitigate nor add to the punishment and reward of the inmates of heaven and hell; nor indeed can He expel them from heaven or hell. As to the accusation that the denial of God's power over evil necessitates the affirmation that He is impotent against evil, al-Nazzam replies that this equally follows from the denial of divine action to create evil. He says: “You, too, deny Him the wrong act, so there is no fundamental difference between the two positions.”[16]

God, who is Absolute Good and Absolute Justice, cannot be the author of evil. Besides, if God has power over evil, it will necessarily follow that He is ignorant and indigent. But this is impossible; therefore, its necessary consequence is also impossible. The sequence of the argument may be explained thus:

If God has power over evil, then the occurrence of evil is possible, and as the supposition of the occurrence of a possible thing entails no impossibility, let us suppose that evil did occur. Now, God might or might not have had knowledge of the evil which occurred. If we say that He did not have the knowledge of it, it would necessarily follow that He was ignorant; and if we say that He did have it, it would necessarily follow that He was in need of this evil; for had He not been in need of it, He would not have created it.

When a person is not in need of a thing and knows its inherent evils, he will have nothing to do with it, if he is wise. It is definitely true that God is all-wise; so when any evil is caused by Him, it necessarily follows that He needed it, otherwise He would have never produced it.

But since it is impossible to think that God needs evil, it is impossible to think that He creates it.

(2) *Denial of the Will of God* – Apart from the power of action and action, al-Nazzam does not admit that God has will, which has priority over both power and action. He holds that when we attribute will to God we only mean that God creates things according to His knowledge. His willing is identical with His acting, and when it is said that God wills the actions of men, what is meant is that He enjoins them to act in a certain way.

Why does al-Nazzam deny the will of God? He does so, because, according to him, will implies want. He who wills lacks or needs the thing which he wills, and since God is altogether independent of His creatures, He does not lack or need anything. Consequently, will cannot be ascribed to Him. Therefore, the will of God really connotes His acts or His commands that are conveyed to man.[17]

(3) *Divisibility of Every Particle ad infinitum* – Al-Nazzam believes in the divisibility of every particle ad infinitum. By this he means that each body is composed of such particles as are divisible to an unlimited extent, i. e., every half of a half goes on becoming half of the other half. During the process of divisions, we never reach a limit after which we may be able to say that it cannot be further divided into halves.

Now, to traverse a distance, which is composed of infinite points, an infinite period of time would necessarily be required. Is, then, the traversing of a distance impossible? Does it not necessitate the denial of the existence of the movement itself? Among the Greek philosophers, Parmenides and Zeno had denied movement itself. They could not declare untrue the movement which is observable and is a fact, so they claimed that perception cannot reveal reality. They maintained that senses are not the instruments of real knowledge and are deceptive; and the phenomenal world is illusory; a mirage. The real world is the rational world, the knowledge of which is gained by reason alone in which there is neither plurality nor multiplicity, neither movement nor change. It is an immutable and immovable reality. But they could not explain how this illusory and deceptive world was born out of the real world. Thus their system of philosophy, in spite of their claiming it to be monism, ended in dualism.

Al-Nazzam did not accept the solution of these Greek philosophers, but to tide over this difficulty he offered the theory of *tafrah*. The word *tafrah* means to leap; it means that the moving thing traverses from one point of distance to another in such a manner that between these two points a number of points are traversed. Obviously, it happens when the moving thing does not cross all the points of a distance, but leaps over them. This indeed is an anticipation of the present-day doctrine of the "quantum jump."

(4) *Latency and Manifestation* (*Kumun wa Buruz*) – According to al-Nazzam, creation is to be regarded as a single act of God by which all things were brought into being simultaneously and kept in a state of latency (*kumun*). It was from their original state of latency that all existing things: minerals, plants, animals, and men, have evolved in the process of time. This also implies that the whole of mankind was potentially in Adam.

Whatever priority or posteriority there may be, it is not in birth but in appearance. All things came into existence at the same time, but were kept hidden till the time of their becoming operative arrived, and when it did arrive, they were brought from the state of latency to the state of manifestation. This doctrine stands in direct opposition to the Ash'arite view that God is creating things at all moments of time.[18]

(5) *Materialism of al-Nazzam* – For al-Nazzam, as for many before and after him, the real being of man is the soul, and body is merely its instrument. But the soul is, according to him, a rarefied body permeating the physical body, the same way as fragrance permeates flowers, butter milk, or oil sesame.[19] Abu Mansur `Abd al-Qahir ibn Tahir, in his work *al-Farq bain al-Firaq*, has discussed this theory critically and has attempted to refute it.

Besides these philosophical ideas, there are what the orthodox called the "heresies" of al-Nazzam. For example, he did not believe in miracles, was not convinced of the inimitability of the Qur'an, considered a statute necessary for the determination of an Imam, and thought that the statute establishing the Imamate of `Ali was concealed by `Umar, that the *salat al-tarawih* was unauthorized, that the actual vision of the *jinn* was a physical impossibility, and that belated performance of missed prayers was unnecessary.

Among al-Nazzam's followers, the following are well known: Muhammad ibn Shabib, Abu Shumar, Yunus ibn 'Imran, Ahmad ibn Hayat, Bishr ibn Mu`tamir, and Thamamah ibn Ashras. Ahmad ibn Hayat who lived in the company of al-Nazzam held that there are two deities: one, the creator and eternal deity, and the other, the created one which is Jesus Christ son of Mary. He regarded Christ as the Son of God. On account of this belief he was considered to have renounced Islam. According to his faith, Christ in the hereafter will ask the created beings to account for their deeds in this world, and in support of his claim Ahmad ibn Hayat quoted the verse: ***"Will they wait until God comes to them in canopies of clouds?"***[20] There is a tradition that, looking towards the moon on the fourteenth day of the lunar month, the Holy Prophet of Islam said, "Ye will behold your Lord just as ye behold this moon."[21] Ahmad ibn Hayat twisted the meaning of this tradition and said that the word Lord referred to Jesus Christ. He also believed in incarnation for, according to him, the spirit of God is incarnated into the bodies of the Imams.

Fadl al-Hadathi, who was another pupil of al-Nazzam, had faith similar to that of Ibn Hayat. He and his followers believed in transmigration. According to them, in another world God created animals mature and wise, bestowed on them innumerable blessings, and conferred on them many sciences too. God then desired to put them to a test and so commanded them to offer thanks to Him for His gifts. Some obeyed His command and some did not.

He rewarded His thankful creatures by giving them heaven and condemned the ungrateful ones to hell. There were some among them who had partly obeyed the divine command and partly not obeyed it. They were sent to the world, were given filthy bodies, and, according to the magnitude of their sins, sorrow and pain, joy and pleasure.

Those who had not sinned much and had obeyed most of God's commands were given lovely faces and mild punishment. But those who did only a few good deeds and committed a large number of sins were given ugly faces, and were subjected to severe tribulations. So long as an animal is not purified of all its sins, it will be always changing its forms.

4. Bishr ibn al-Mu'tamir

One of the celebrated personalities of al-Nazzam's circle is Bishr ibn al Mu'tamir. The exact date of his birth is not known, but his date of death is 210/825.

Bishr made the "Theory of Generated Acts" (*tawlid*) current among the Mu'tazilites. The Mu`tazilites believe in-free-will. They admit that man is the author of his voluntary actions. Some actions arise by way of *mubasharah*, i. e., they are created directly by man, but some actions arise by way of *tawlid*, i.e., they necessarily result from the acts done by way of *mubasharah*.

Throwing of a stone in water, for example, necessitates the appearance of ripples. Even if the movement of the ripples is not intended by the stone-thrower, yet he is rightly regarded as its agent. Similarly, man is the creator of his deeds and misdeeds by way of *mubasharah*, and all the consequential actions necessarily result by way of *tawlid*. Neither type of actions is due to divine activity.

Bishr regards the will of God as His grace and divides it into two attributes: the attribute of essence and the attribute of action. Through the attribute of essence He wills all His actions as well as men's good deeds. He is absolutely wise, and in consequence His will is necessarily concerned with that which is suitable and salutary. The attribute of action also is of two kinds. If actions are concerned with God, they would imply creation, and if concerned with men, they would mean command.

According to Bishr, God could have made a different world, better than the present one, in which all might have attained salvation. But in opposition to the common Mu'tazilite belief, Bishr held that God was not bound to create such a world. All that was necessary for God to do was that He should have bestowed upon man free-will and choice, and after that it was sufficient to bestow reason for his guidance to discover divine revelation and the laws of nature, and combining reason with choice, attain salvation.

Mu'tamir's pupil Abu Musa Isa bin Sabih, nicknamed Mizdar, was a very pious man and was given the title of the hermit of the Mu'tazilites. He held some very peculiar views. God, he thought, could act tyrannically and lie, and this would not make His lordship imperfect. The style of the Qur'an is not inimitable; a work like it or even better than it can be produced. A person who admits that God can be seen by the eye, though without form, is an unbeliever, and he who is doubtful about the unbelief of such a person is also an unbeliever.

5. Mu'ammar

Mu'ammar's full name was Mu'ammar ibn `Abbad al-Sulami. Neither the date of his birth nor that of his death can be determined precisely. According to some, he died in 228/842.

To a great extent Mu`ammar's ideas tally with those of the other Mu'tazilites, but he resorts to great exaggeration in the denial of the divine attributes and in the Theory of Predestination.

The following is the gist of his ideas.

(1) *Denial of Divine Knowledge* - Mu'ammar maintains that the essence of God is free from every aspect of plurality. He is of the view that if we believe in the attributes of God, then God's essence becomes plural; therefore, he denies all the attributes, and in this denial he is so vehement that he says that God knows neither Himself nor anyone else, for knowing (or knowledge) is something either within or without God.

In the first case, it necessarily follows that the knower and the known are one and the same, which is impossible, for it is necessary that the known should be other than and distinct from the knower. If knowledge is not something within God, and the known is separate from the knower, it means that God's essence is dual. Further, it follows also that God's knowledge is dependent on and is in need of an "other." Consequently, His absoluteness is entirely denied.

By Mu'ammar's times, more and more people were taking interest in philosophy and Neo-Platonism was gaining ground. In denying the attributes Mu'ammar was following in the footsteps of Plotinus. According to the basic assumptigns of Plotinus, the essence of God is one and absolute. God is so transcendent that whatever we say of Him merely limits Him. Hence we cannot attribute to Him beauty, goodness, thought, or will, for all such attributes are limitations and imperfections. We cannot say what He is, but only what He is not. As a poet has said, He is

"The One whom the reason does not know,

The Eternal, the Absolute whom neither senses know nor fancy.

He is such a One, who cannot be counted He is such a Pure Being!"

It is universally believed in Islam that human reason, understanding, senses, or fancy cannot fathom the essence of God or the reality of His attributes or His origin. Says `Attar:

"Why exert to probe the essence of God?

Why strain thyself by stretching thy limitations?

When thou canst not catch even the essence of an atom,

How canst thou claim to know the essence of God Himself?"

To reflect on the essence of God has been regarded as "illegitimate thinking." The Prophet of Islam is reported to have said: "We are all fools in the matter of the gnosis of the essence of God."[22] Therefore, he has warned the thinkers thus: "Don't indulge in speculating on the nature of God lest ye may be destroyed."[23] He has said about himself: "I have not known Thee to the extent that Thy knowledge demands !"[24]

Hafiz has expressed the same idea in his own words thus

"Take off thy net; thou canst not catch '*anqa*[25]

For that is like attempting to catch the air!"

(2) *Denial of Divine Will* – Mu'ammar says that, like knowledge, will too cannot be attributed to the essence of God. Nor can His will be regarded as eternal, because eternity expresses temporal priority and sequence and God transcends time. When we say that the will of God is eternal, we mean only that the aspects of the essence of God, like His essence, transcend time.

(3) *God as the Creator of Substances and not of Accidents* – According to Mu'ammar, God is the creator of the world, but He did not create anything except bodies. Accidents are the innovations of bodies created either (i) by nature, e. g., burning from fire, heat from the sun, or (ii) by free choice, such as the actions of men and animals. In brief, God creates matter and then keeps Himself aloof from it. Afterwards He is not concerned at all with the changes that are produced through matter, whether they may be natural or voluntary. God is the creator of bodies, not of accidents which flow out of the bodies as their effects.[26]

(4) Mu'ammar regards man as something other than the sensible body. Man is living, knowing, able to act, and possesses free–will. It is not man himself who moves or keeps quiet, or is coloured, or sees, or touches, or changes from place to place; nor does one place contain him to the exclusion of another, because he has neither length nor breadth, neither weight nor depth; in short, he is something other than the body.

6. Thamamah

Thamamah ibn Ashras al–Numayri lived during the reign of Caliphs Harun al–Rashid and al–Mamun. He was in those days the leader of the Qadarites. Harun al–Rashid imprisoned him on the charge of heresy, but he was in the good books of al–Mamun and was released by him. He died in 213/828. The following is the substance of his ideas.

(1) As good and evil are necessarily known through the intellect and God is good, the gnosis of God is an intellectual necessity. Had there been no Shari'ah, that is, had we not acquired the gnosis of God

through the prophets, even then it would have been necessitated by the intellect.

(2) The world being necessitated by the nature of God, it has, like God, existed from eternity and will last till eternity. Following in the footsteps of Aristotle, he thinks that the world is eternal (*qadim*) and not originated (*hadith*) and regards God as creating things by the necessity of His nature and not by will and choice.

(3) Bishr ibn al–Mu'tamir, who had put into usage the theory of generated acts among the Mu'tazilites, was wrong in thinking that men are not directly but only indirectly the authors of such acts. Neither God nor man is the author of generated acts; they just happen without any author. Man is not their author, for otherwise when a deed has been generated after a man's death, he, as a dead man, will have to be taken as its author. God cannot be regarded as the author of these acts, for some generated acts are evil and evil cannot be attributed to God.

(4) Christians, Jews, and Magians, after they are dead, will all become dust. They will neither go to heaven nor to hell. Lower animals and children also will be treated in the same manner. The unbeliever, who does not possess and is not keen to possess the gnosis of his Creator, is not under the obligation to know Him. He is quite helpless and resembles the lower animals.

7. Al–Jahiz

`Amr ibn Bahr al–Jahiz, a contemporary of Mu'ammar, was a pupil of al–Nazzam and was himself one of the Imams of the Mu'tazilites. Both the master and the disciple, it was held, were almost of one mind. Al–Jahiz had drunk deep of Greek philosophy. He had a keen sense of humour and was a good anecdotist. He usually lived in the company of the Caliphs of Baghdad. His permanent residence was the palace of Ibn Zayyat, the Prime Minister of the Caliph Mutawakkil.

When Ibn Zayyat was put to death by the orders of the Caliph, Jahiz too was imprisoned. He was released after some time. He was the ugliest of men; his eyes protruded out, and children were frightened at his very sight. In his last years he had a stroke of paralysis. He died in his ninetieth year at Basrah in 255/869. During his illness he would often recite the following couplets

“Dost thou hope in old age to look like what you were in youth?

Thy heart belieth thee: an old garment never turns into a new one.”

He was the author of a number of books out of which the following are noteworthy: *Kitab al–Bayan, Kitab al–Hayawan*, and *Kitab al–Ghilman*. He also wrote a book dealing with Muslim sects.

It was the belief of al–Jahiz that all knowledge comes by nature, and it is an activity of man in which he has no choice. He was a scientist–philosopher. In the introduction to his *Kitab al–Hayawan*, he writes that he is inspired by the philosophical spirit which consists in deriving knowledge from

sense–experience and reason. It employs observation, comparison, and experiment as methods of investigation. He experimented on different species of animals, sometimes by cutting their organs, sometimes even by poisoning them, in order to see what effects were thus produced on animal organism.

In this respect he was the precursor of Bacon whom he anticipated seven and a half centuries earlier. Al–Jahiz did not, however, base knowledge on sense–experience alone. Since sense–experience is sometimes likely to give false reports, it needs the help of reason. In fact, in knowledge reason has to play the decisive role. He Says, “You should not accept whatever your eyes tell you; follow the lead of reason. Every fact is determined by two factors: one apparent, and that is sensory; the other hidden, and that is reason; and in reality reason is the final determinant.”

According to al–Jahiz, the will is not an attribute of man, for attributes are continually subject to change, but the will is non–changing and non–temporal.

He holds that the sinners will not be condemned to hell permanently but will naturally turn into fire. God will not send anybody to hell, but the fire of hell by its very nature will draw the sinners towards itself. Al–Jahiz denies that God can commit a mistake or that an error can be imputed to Him. Al–Jahiz, also denies the vision of God.

8. Al–Jubba'i

Abu 'Ali al–Jubba'i was born in 235/849 at Jubba, a town in Khuzistan. His patronymic name is Abu `Ali and his descent is traced to Hamran, a slave of `Uthman. Al–Jubba'i belonged to the later Mu`tazilites. He was the teacher of Abu al–Hasan al–Ash`ari and a pupil of Abu Ya'qub bin `Abd Allah al Shahham who was the leader of the Mu'tazilites in Basrah.

Once there was a discussion between him and Imam al–Ash’ari in respect of the Theory of the Salutary to which reference has already been made in the foregoing pages. The story goes that one day he asked Imam al–Ash'ari: “What do you mean by obedience?” The Imam replied, “Assent to a command,” and then asked for al–Jubba’i’s own opinion in this matter.

Al–Jubba'i said, “The essence of obedience, according to me, is agreement to the will, and whoever fulfils the will of another obeys him.” The Imam answered, “According to this, one must conclude that God is obedient to His servant if He fulfils his will.” Al–Jubba'i granted this. The Imam said, “You differ from the community of Muslims and you blaspheme the Lord of the worlds. For if God is obedient to His servant, then He must be subject to him, but God is above this.”

Al–Jubba'i further claimed that the names of God are subject to the regular rules of grammar. He, therefore, considered it possible to derive a name for Him from every deed which He performs. On this Imam al–Ash`ari said that, according to this view, God should be named “the producer of pregnancy among women,” because he creates pregnancy in them. Al–Jubba'i could not escape this conclusion.

The Imam added: “This heresy of yours is worse than that of the Christians in calling God the father of Jesus, although even they do not hold that He produced pregnancy in Mary.”27 The following are other notable views of al-Jubba'i.

(1) Like other Mu'tazilites, he denies the divine attributes. He holds that the very essence of God is knowing; no attribute of knowledge can be attributed to Him so as to subsist besides His essence. Nor is there any “state” which enables Him to acquire the “state of knowing.” Unlike al-Jubba'i, his son abu Hashim did believe in “states.” To say that God is all-hearing and all-seeing really means that God is alive and there is no defect of any kind in Him. The attributes of hearing and seeing in God originate at the time of the origination of what is seen and what is heard.

(2) Al-Jubba'i and the other Mu'tazilites regard the world as originated and the will of God as the cause of its being originated; they also think that the will of God too is something originated, for if the temporal will is regarded as subsisting in God, He will have to be regarded as the “locus of temporal events.” This view he held against the Karramites who claimed that the will subsists in God Himself, is eternal and instrumental in creating the world which is originated, and, therefore, not eternal.

Against al-Jubba'i it has been held that independent subsistence of the will is entirely incomprehensible, for it tantamounts to saying that an attribute exists without its subject or an accident exists without some substance. Besides, it means that God who has the will is devoid of it, i.e., does not have it – a clear contradiction.

(3) For a1-Jubba'i the speech of God is compounded of letters and sound: and God creates it in somebody. The speaker is He Himself and not the body in which it subsists. Such speech will necessarily be a thing originated. Therefore, the speech of God is a thing originated and not eternal.

(4) Like other Mu'tazilities, al-Jubba'i denies the physical vision of God in the hereafter, for that, according to him, is impossible. It is impossible because whatever is not physical cannot fulfil the conditions of vision.

(5) He equally agrees with other Mu'tazilites regarding the gnosis of God, the knowledge of good and evil, and the destiny of those who commit grave sins. With them he holds that man is the author of his own actions and that it lies in his power to produce good or evil or commit sins and wrongs, and that it is compulsory for God to punish the sinner and reward the obedient.

(6) In the matter of Imamate, al-Jubba'i supports the belief of the Sunnites, viz., the appointment of an Imam is to be founded on catholic consent.

9. Abu Hashim

Al-Jubba'is son, Abu Hashim `Abd al-Salam, was born in Basrah in 247/861 and died in 321/933. In literature he eclipsed al-Jubba'i. Both of them undertook new researches in the problems of Kalam. In

general, Abu Hashim agreed with his father, but in the matter of divine attributes he widely differed from him.

Many Muslim thinkers of the time believed that the attributes of God are eternal and inherent in His essence. Contrary to this belief, the Shi'ites and the followers of the Greek philosophers held that it is by virtue of His essence that God has knowledge. He does not know by virtue of His knowledge. The divine essence, which is without quality and quantity, is one and in no way does it admit of plurality.

According to the Mu'tazilites, attributes constitute the essence of God, i.e., God possesses knowledge due to the attribute of knowledge, but this attribute is identical with His essence. God knows by virtue of His knowledge and knowledge is His essence; similarly, He is omnipotent by virtue of His power, etc. Al-Jubba'is theory is that though God knows according to His essence, yet knowing is neither an attribute nor a state, owing to which God may be called a knower.

As a solution to this problem, Abu Hashim presents the conception of "state." He says that we know essence and know it in different states. The states go on changing, but the essence remains the same. These states are in themselves inconceivable; they are known through their relation to essence. They are different from the essence, but are not found apart from the essence. To quote his own words, "A state-in-itself is neither existent nor non-existent, neither unknown nor known, neither eternal nor contingent; it cannot be known separately, but only together with the essence."

Abu Hashim supports his conception of states by this argument: Reason evidently distinguishes between knowing a thing absolutely and knowing it together with some attribute. When we know an essence, we do not know, that it is knowing also. Similarly, when we know a substance, we do not know whether it is bounded or whether the accidents subsist in it. Certainly, man perceives the common qualities of things in one thing and the differentiating qualities in another, and necessarily gains knowledge of the fact that the quality which is common is different from the quauty which is not common.

These are rational propositions that no sane man would deny. Their locus is essence and not an accident, for otherwise it would necessarily follow that an accident subsists in another accident. In this way, states are necessarily determined. Therefore, to be a knower of the world refers to a state, which is an attribute besides the essence and has not the same sense as the essence. In like manner Abu Hashim proves the states for God; these states are not found apart but with the essence.

Al-Jubba'i and the other deniers of states refute this theory of Abu Hashim. Al-Jubba'i says that these states are really mental aspects that are not contained in the divine essence but are found in the percipient, i. e., in the perceiver of the essence. In other words, they are such generalizations or relations as do not-exist externally but are found only in the percipient's mind. Ibn Taimiyyah also denies states. In this respect one of his couplets has gained much fame

"Abu Hashim believes in State, al-Ash'ari in Acquisition and al-Nazzam in Leap. These three things have verbal and no real existence."[28]

After a little hesitation, Imam Baqilani supported Abu Hashim's views. Imam al-Ash'ari and the majority of his followers disputed them and Imam al-Haramain first supported but later opposed them.

The End

Besides the Mu'tazilites an account of whose views has been given above in some detail, there were some others the details of whose beliefs are given in the *Milal wal-Nahal* of Shahrastani and *al-Farq bain al-Firaq* of al-Baghdadi.

They were `Amr ibn `Ubaid; abu 'Ali `Amr bin Qa'id Aswari who had almost the same position as al-Nazzam, but differed from him in the view that God has no power over what He knows He does not do, or what He says He would not do, and man has the power to do that; Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn `Abd Allah who shared al-Nazzam's views but believed that to God can be attributed the power to oppress children and madmen, but not those who are in their full senses; Jafar ibn Bishr and Jafar ibn Harb who held that among the corrupt of the Muslim community there were some who were worse than the Jews, Christians, and Magians, and that those who committed trivial sins would also be condemned to eternal hell; Hisham ibn `Amr al Fuwati who had very exaggerated views on the problem of predestination and did not ascribe any act to God; and Abu Qasim `Abd Allah ibn Ahmad ibn Mahmud al-Balkhi, a Mu'tazilite of Baghdad known as al-Ka'bi, who used to say that the deed of God is accomplished without His will.

When it is said that God wills deeds, it is implied that He is their creator and there is wisdom in His doing so; and when it is said that He of Himself wills the deeds of others, all that is meant is that He commands these deeds. Al-Ka'bi believed that God neither sees Himself nor others. His seeing and hearing mean nothing other than His knowledge. Al-Ka'bi wrote a commentary on the Qur'an which consisted of twelve volumes. No one till then had written such a voluminous commentary. He died in 309/921.

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1. The name of this sect is ahl al-wa'id.
2. This group is called the Murji'ites. The same was the belief of Jahm bin Safwa also.
3. His companion, `Amr ibn `Ubaid, from the beginning, shared this view of his. The Khawarij too come under the same category.
4. Al-Shahrastani, Kitab al-Milal wa'l-Nihal, quoted by A. J. Wensinck in The Muslim Creed, Cambridge, 1932, p. 62.
5. Ibid., pp. 62, 63.
6. Siddiq Hasan, Kashf al- Ghummah `an Iftiraq al- Ummah, Matb'ah Lahjahani, Bhopal, India, 1304/1886, p. 19.
7. Ibid.
8. Cf. Urdu translation: Madhaq al-`Arifin, Newal Kishore Press, Luclmow, p. 135.
9. Qur'an, ciii, 1-3.
10. Ibid., lxxii, 23.
11. Ibid., xx, 82.
12. Ibid., iv, 48.
13. Ibid.; xviii, 30
14. Ibid., xi, 115.
15. Al-Shahrastani. op. cit., p. 21
16. Ibid., p. 24.
17. Ibid.
18. T. J. de Boer, "Muslim Philosophy," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.
19. Al-Shahrastani, op. cit., Chap Khaneh-i `Ilmi, Teheran, 1321/1903, p. 77.
20. Qur'an, ii, 120
21. The tradition: Innakum satarauna rabbakum kama tarauna hadh al-qamar.
22. The tradition: Kullu al-nas fi dhati Allahi humaqa'.
23. The tradition: La tufakkiru fi Allahi fatahlaku.
24. Ma 'arafnaka haqqa ma'rifatika.
25. 'Anqa' is a fabulous bird said to be known as to name but unknown as to body.
26. Al-Shahrastani has criticized this statement of Mu'ammar, op. cit., p. 29.
27. Al-Baghdadi, op. cit., pp. 188-89.
28. Muhammad Najm al-Ghani Khan, Madhahib al-Islam, Lucknow, 1924, p. 132.

Chapter 11: Ash'arism

Ash'arism by M. Abdul Hye, M.A, Ph.D, Professor of Philosophy, Government College, Rajshahi (Pakistan)

Al-Ashari's Life and Work

Asharism is the name of a philosophico-religious school of thought in Islam that developed during the fourth and fifth/tenth and eleventh centuries. This movement was "an attempt not only to purge Islam of all non-Islamic elements which had quietly crept into it but also to harmonize the religious consciousness with the religious thought of Islam."

It laid the foundation of an orthodox Islamic theology or orthodox *Kalam*, as opposed to the rationalist *Kalam* of the Mu'tazilites; and in opposition to the extreme orthodox class, it made use of the dialectical method for the defence of the authority of divine revelation as applied to theological subjects.

The position at the end of the third/ninth century was such that the development of such a movement as orthodox Kalamwas inevitable. The rationalization of faith, which developed, at the beginning of the second century of the Hijrah as a systematic movement of thought, in the name of rationalism in Islam or Mu'tazilite movement, was, in its original stage, simply an attempt to put Islam and its basic principles on a rational foundation, by giving a consistent rational interpretation to the different dogmas and doctrines of Islam.

But when the Mu'tazilite rationalists began to study the Arabic translations of the works of Greek physicists and philosophers made available to them by the early 'Abbasid Caliphs, particularly by al-Mansur and al-Mamun, they began to apply the Greek philosophical methods and ideas to the interpretation of the basic principles of Islam as well.

Some of the early 'Abbasid Caliphs, particularly al-Mamun, began to patronize the rationalism of the Mu'tazilites in public. The Mu'tazilite speculation, in the hands of the later Mu'tazilites, those of the second and third generations, under the influence of Greek philosophy and with the active support and patronage of the Caliphs, tended to be purely speculative and "absolutely unfettered, and in some cases led to a merely negative attitude of thought."[1]

They made reason the sole basis of truth and reality and thus identified the sphere of philosophy with that of religion. They tried to interpret faith in terms of pure thought. They ignored the fact that the basic principles of religion are, by their very nature, incapable of logical demonstration or rational proof. The basic principles of Islam deal with supersensible realities and, as such, they must first be accepted on the authority of revelation.

The Mu'tazilites, in their zeal to judge everything by reason alone, destroyed the personality of God and reduced Him to a bare indefinable universality or to an abstract unity. This idea of an abstract, impersonal, absolute God could not appeal to the ordinary Muslims. The orthodox section of the people reacted strongly against the Mu'tazilite rationalism and began to consider the Mu'tazilites to be heretics.

The extreme rationalistic attitude of the later Mu'tazilites was followed by powerful reaction from the

orthodox section of the people. This reaction was greatly aggravated by the unfortunate attempt of the Caliph al-Mamun to force Mu'tazilism (rationalist *Kalam*) on his subjects by introducing *mihnah* (a compulsory test of faith) in the Mu'tazilite doctrines, particularly in their doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'an. The whole of the third/ninth century was a time of reaction.

The orthodox Muslims (and among them were the Traditionists [the Muhaddithin]), the Zahirites (the followers of Dawud ibn `Ali), and the Muslim jurists (*fuqaha'*) adhered strictly to Tradition and literal interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah,[2] and refused to admit any "innovation" (*bid'ah*) in the Shari'ah (the Islamic Code). Any theological discussion was considered an "innovation" and was as such a cause of displeasure to them.[3] The reactionary influence of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal and his Zahirite followers was very strong at that period and the orthodox Muslims kept themselves safely aloof from the Mu'tazilites and the philosophers.

The reaction against the rationalist *Kalam* went to such an extreme that even the anthropomorphic verses of the Qur'an were interpreted by them in a purely literal sense. Malik bin Anas said: "God's settling Himself firmly upon His Throne is known, the how of it is unknown; belief in it is obligatory; and questioning about it is an innovation."[4] Any speculation about sacred things was considered an innovation. Every dogma was to be believed in without raising the question how or why (*bila kaifa*).

But such an attitude of blind faith could not be maintained for any length of time. Islam, as a universal religion and as a living force, had to adapt itself to new thoughts and to new surroundings. So, as time went on, there arose gradually a party, from amongst the orthodox section of the Muslims, who realized the necessity of putting Islam on a solid ground by advancing "reasons" for the traditional beliefs, of defending these beliefs against all sorts of attacks internal and external, and thus purging their faith of all the non-Islamic elements that had crept into it.

They founded the orthodox theology of Islam by using *Kalam* or the philosophical method in order to meet the dialectical reasoning of the Mu'tazilites. These theologians who employed *Kalam* for the defence of their faith were, therefore, known as the Mutakallimun (orthodox theologians).[5]

But, although these thinkers used philosophical method in their discussions, they obtained the primary materials from revelation. They developed a rival science of reasoning to meet the Mu'tazilites on their own ground. In the beginning this new orthodox theological movement developed privately and secretly. It was at first a gradual unconscious drift. It could not come to the open for fear of public criticism.

Al-Junaid, for instance, had to discuss the unity of God behind closed doors. Al-Shafi'i held that some trained people might defend and purify the faith but that should not be done in public. Al-Muhasibi and other contemporaries of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal incurred his displeasure for defending the faith with arguments or reason. But gradually the movement gathered strength and began to be openly preached almost at the same time in different places of the Muslim world-in Mesopotamia by Abu al-Hasan `Ali bin Isma`il al-Ashari (d. 330 or 334/941 or 945), in Egypt by al-Tahawi (d. 331/942), and in Samarqand

by Abu Mansnr al-Maturidi (d. 333/ 944).

But of these three, al-Ash'ari became the most popular hero, before whom the Mu'tazilite system (the rationalist *Kalam*) went down, and he came to be known as the founder of the orthodox philosophical theology, and the school founded by him was named after him as Ash`arism.

Al-Ash'ari was born at Basrah. Regarding his date of birth there is difference of opinion. Ibn Khallikan, in his discussion of the life of al-Ash'ari, mentions that he was born in 260 or 270/873 or 883 and died at Baghdad in 330/941 or some time after that.6

According to Shibli Nu'mani and Ibn `Asakir (the author of *Tabyin Kidhb al-Muftari*, on the life and teachings of al-Ash'ari), he was born in 270/873 and died in 330/941.7 He was buried between Karkh and Bab al-Basrah (the gate of Basrah). He was a descendant of Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, one, of the famous Companions of the Prophet.

Al-Ash'ari, in his early youth, came under the care of the great Mu'tazilite scholar of the Basrite school, Abu 'Ali Muhammad bin `Abd al-Wahhab al-Jubba'i, and, as a disciple of his, became an adherent of the Mu'tazilite school and continued to support its doctrines up to the age of forty. After that there happened a sudden change in his mind and one day he went to the Mosque of Basrah and declared: "He who knows me, knows who I am, and he who does not know me, let him know that I am Abu al-Hasan 'Ali al-Ash'ari, that I used to maintain that the Qur'an is created, that eyes of men shall not see God, and that the creatures create their actions. Lo! I repent that I have been a Mu'tazilite. I renounce these opinions and I take the engagement to refute the Mu'tazilites and expose their infamy and turpitude."

What brought about this sudden change in al-Aah'ari is not definitely known to us. Shibli in his *`Ilm al-Kalam* says that "the change came to him due to some directions which he had obtained in a dream...".8 Ibn Khallikan mentions in this connection the story of a public discussion in which al-Ashari met his old Mu'tazilite teacher, al-Jubba'i, on the problem of *salah wa'l aslah*, i. e., the problem whether God's actions are to be based on rational consideration and whether He is bound to do what is best for His creatures.

Al-Ash'ari came to al-Jubba'i and presented the case of three brothers, one being God-fearing, another godless, and a third having died as a child, and asked him as to what would be their positions in the next world. Al-Jubba'i could not give a satisfactory and consistent reply to that question and, on his having failed to justify rationally the Mu'tazilite doctrine of *salah wa'l aslah*, al-Ash'ari abandoned the Mu'tazilite camp.9

But whatever might have been the cause of this change, when he changed he was terribly in earnest. After the change he wrote a number of books and Ibn Furak says that the number amounted to three hundred. Ibn `Asakir Dimashqi has given the titles of ninety-three of them, but only a few have been preserved and are enumerated by Brockelmann.

His work *al-Ibanah `an Usul al-Diyanah* was printed at Hyderabad, Deccan (India), in 1321/1903 and a small treatise *Risalah fi Istihsan al-Khaud fi al-Kalam* was printed in 1323/1905 and reprinted at Hyderabad in 1344/1925. Al-Ash'ari's other famous works are *al-Maqalat al Islamiyyin* (published in Istanbul in 1348/1929), *Kitab al-Sharh wal-Tafsil*, *al-Luma`*, *Mu'jaz*, *I'adah al-Burhan*, and *Tab'in*.

Of these books the *Maqalat al Islamiyyin wa Ikhtilaf al Musalliyyin* is the most authentic book on the views of different schools about religious dogmas and doctrines. *Al-Maqalat* was written much earlier than the other books on the same subject, such as Shahrastani's *Kitab al-Milal wal-Nihal,* or Ibn Hazm's *al-Fasl fi al-Milal wal-Ahwa' wal Nihal*.

Ibn Taimiyyah said in his *Minhaj al-Sunnah* that the most comprehensive of the books he went through on the views of different people on the basic principles of Islam was al-Ash'ari's *al-Maqalat al-Islamiyyin* and that he (al-Ash'ari) discussed many of such views in details as were not even mentioned by others. Ibn al-Qayyim also spoke very highly of this work. In his *Hadi al-Arwah* and *Ijtima` al-Juyush al-Islamiyyah*, he said, "Shahrastani, `Abd al-Qahir Baghdadi, and other later writers on the subject simply copied from al-Ash'ari's book and did not discuss the views in details."

Al-Ash'ari's other famous book *al- Ibanah `an Usul al-Diyanah* seems to have been written by him just after his abandoning the Mu'tazilite views. In this book we find he is almost a Zahirite. The reaction against the Mu'tazilite speculation might have been very strong in his mind at that period. *Al-Maqalat* seems to be a later work. The *Risalah fi Istihsan al-Khaud* deals with the objections raised by the extremely orthodox against the use of *Kalam*, and the replies given by al-Ash'ari, justifying its use in matters of faith.

Al-Ash'ari's theology has been discussed mainly in these books. He had a good number of pupils who passed as famous theologians and who spread and developed his doctrines and dogmas. Some of those older Ash'arites were abu Sahl Saluqi, Abu Quffal, Abu Zaid Maruzi, Zahir bin Ahmad, Hafiz Abu Bakr Jurjani, Shaikh Abu Muhammad Tabari, and Abu al-Hasan Bahili. Some of the pupils of these older Ash'arites became still more famous and the best known among them are Qadi Abu Bakr Baqillani, Abu Bakr bin Furak, Abu al-Qasim al-Qushairi and abu Ishaq Isfra'ini and his pupil Abu al-Ma'ali al-Juwaini, known as Imam al-Haramain.[10]

Ash'arite Theology

Al-Ash'ari maintains an intermediary position between the two diametrically opposed schools of thought prevailing at the time. He had to fight against both the opposing parties. At the one extreme were the Mu'tazilites who made reason in preference to revelation the sole criterion of truth and reality and, thus, passed slowly into comparatively innocuous heretics. At the other extreme were the orthodox groups, particularly the Zahirites, the Mujassimites (anthropomorphists), the Muhaddithin (Traditionists), and the Jurists, all of which were wholly opposed to the use of reason or *Kalam* in defending or explaining religious dogmas and condemned any discussion about them as innovation. Al-Ash'ari wrote his

Istihsan al-Khaud mainly to meet the objections raised by the orthodox school against the use of reason in matters of faith.

In that treatise he says: “A section of the people (i.e., the Zahirites and other orthodox people) made capital out of their own ignorance; discussions and rational thinking about matters of faith became a heavy burden for them, and, therefore, they became inclined to blind faith and blind following (*taqlid*). They condemned those who tried to rationalize the principles of religion as `innovators.'

They considered discussion about motion, rest, body, accident, colour, space, atom, the leaping of atoms, and attributes of God, to be an innovation and a sin. They said that had such discussions been the right thing, the Prophet and his Companions would have definitely done so; they further pointed out that the Prophet, before his death, discussed and fully explained all those matters which were necessary from the religious point of view, leaving none of them to be discussed by his followers; and since he did not discuss the problems mentioned above, it was evident that to discuss them must be regarded as an innovation.”

They further contended that these so-called theological problems were either known to the Prophet and his Companions and yet they kept silent and did not discuss them or they were not known to them. If they knew them and yet did not discuss them, we are also to follow them in keeping silent, and if they could remain unaware of them we can also do so. In both cases discussion about them would be an “innovation.” These were, in brief, their objections against the use of *Kalam* in matters of faith.

Al-Ash'ari, then, proceeds to justify theological discussions about matters of faith. He tries to meet these objections in three ways. First, by turning the objections of the orthodox against themselves by pointing out to them that the Prophet had not said that those who would discuss these problems were to be condemned and charged as innovators. Hence, their charging or condemning others as innovators was itself an innovation, for it amounted to discussion about matters which the Prophet did not discuss, and condemn the action of those whom the Prophet did not condemn.

Secondly, “the Prophet was not unaware of all these problems of body, accident, motion, rest, atoms, etc., though he did not discuss each of them separately. The general principles (*usul*) underlying these problems are present in general, not in details, in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.” Al-Ash'ari then proceeds to prove his contention by citing verses from the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet, and thereby showing that the principles underlying the problems of *harakah*, *sukun*, *tawhid*, etc., are, as a matter of fact, present in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.[11]

Thirdly, “the Prophet was not unaware of these matters and knew them in detail, but as problems about them did not arise during his life-time, there was no question of his discussing or not discussing them.” The Companions of the Prophet discussed and argued about many religious matters which appeared during their life-time, although there was no direct and explicit “saying” of the Prophet about them, and because of the absence of any explicit injunction from the Prophet they differed in their judgments about

them.

Had the question, for instance, of the creation of the Qur'an, or of atoms or substance, been raised in so many words in the life of the Prophet, he would have definitely discussed and explained it as he did in the case of all those problems which were then raised. “There is no direct verdict (*nass*) from the Prophet, for instance, as to whether the Qur'an is created or uncreated. If to call the Qur'an created is an `innovation,' then, on the same ground, to call it uncreated must also be an `innovation.”' Al-Ash'ari then concludes that Islam is not opposed to the use of reason; on the other hand, rationalization of faith is a necessity in Islam.

Al-Ash'ari discussed the main theological problems in his *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin* and *al-Ibanah `an Usul al-Diyanah*.In these books al-Ash’ari selects a few principles which distinguish the Ash'arites from the Mu'tazilite school of thought. Later on al-Ghazali put them in a consolidated form in his *Ihya* 12 as the “Principles of Faith” or *Qawa'id al-`Aqa'id*, and Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi explained them more elaborately. The main problems about which the Ash'arites differed from the Mu'tazilites are:

(1) The conception of God and the nature of His attributes.

(2) Freedom of the human will.

(3) The criterion of truth and the standard of good and evil.

(4) The vision (*ru’yah*) of God.

(5) Createdness of the Qur'an.

(6) Possibility of burdening the creatures with impossible tasks.

(7) Promise of reward and threat of punishment.

(8) The rational or non-rational basis of God's actions.

(9) Whether God is bound to do what is best for His creatures.13

The problems discussed by the Ash'arites in their system may be broadly classified into two categories: (i) theological, and (ii) metaphysical.

Fundamental Principles Of The Ash'arite Theology

1. Conception of God and the Nature of His Attributes

According to the Ash'arites, God is one, unique, eternal, existent Being; He is not a substance, not a body, not an accident, not limited to any direction, and not in any space. He possesses attributes such as knowledge, power, life, will; He is hearing and seeing and has speech.

About the nature of divine attributes two extreme views were held before the Ash'arites. On the one hand, there were the extreme Attributists (*Sifatis*), the Anthropomorphists (*Mujassimin*), and the Comparers (*Mushabbihin*), who maintained that God possesses all the attributes mentioned in the Qur'an and that all such attributes as God's having hands, legs, ears, eyes, and His sitting firmly (*istiwa*) on His Throne must be taken in their literal sense.

Such a view of the attributes of God is pure anthropomorphism, implying God's bodily existence. On the other hand, there were the Mu'tazilites who held that God is one, eternal, unique, absolute Being, having no touch of dualism in Him. His essence is self-contained. He does not possess any attributes apart from His essence. His essence is, for instance, knowing, powerful, seeing, willing, etc. They denied the attributes of God as anything other than and addition to His essence.

The Ash'arites maintained a view which was, so to say, a reconciliation between the two extreme views. In agreement with the Sifatis and in opposition to the Mu'tazilites and the "philosophers" (those who were under Greek influence), the Ash'arites held that God possesses attributes in general. They classified the attributes of God into two main groups: (i) *sifat-i salbiyyah*, or negative attributes, and (ii) *sifat-i wujudiyyah* or existential or positive attributes. According to them, the *sifat-i wujudiyyah*, which they also called *sifat-i `aqliyyah* or rational attributes, were seven: knowledge, power, will, life, hearing, seeing, and speech.

The extreme Sifatis asserted that even those attributes of God which imply His bodily existence are also to be taken in their true literal sense. As against them, the Ash'arites maintained that God possesses the apparently anthropomorphic attributes no doubt, but these should be understood not in their literal sense. They are to be believed in *bila kaifa*, without asking "how," and *bila tashbih*, without drawing any comparison.[14]

The Ash'arites here introduced a principle that the attributes of God are unique and fundamentally different from those of the created beings and as such should not be compared to them. This is known as the doctrine of *mukhalafah*, or absolute difference. This doctrine signifies that if any quality or term is applied to God, it must be understood in a unique sense and never taken in the sense in which it is normally used when applied to created beings. Because of the doctrine of *mukhalafah*, the Ash'arites held that we are not allowed to ascribe any attribute to God unless it is expressly so applied in the Qur'an. God's attributes differ from those of the creatures, not in degree but in kind, i. e., in their whole nature.

The Ash'arites, as against the Mu'tazilites, held that "God has attributes which inhere eternally in Him and are in addition to His essence."[15] These attributes are eternal, but they are neither identical with His essence, nor are they quite different from or other than His essence. God is knowing, for instance, means that God possesses knowledge as an attribute, which is inherent in God, and although it is not exactly the same as His essence, yet it is not something quite different from and other than His essence. The Ash'arites, here, maintained a very difficult position. They were between the two horns of a dilemma.

They could neither assert the eternal attributes of God to be identical with nor wholly different from the essence of God.

They could not agree to the Mu'tazilite view and assert the identity of the attributes with the essence of God, because that would be a virtual denial of the attributes. They could not also assert that these eternal attributes are something absolutely different, or other than and separate, from God, as that would lead to multiplicity of eternals, and go against divine unity.

They, therefore, maintained that these attributes are, in one sense, included in and, in another sense, excluded from, the essence of God.[16] It is common knowledge that the Asharites contended that essence (*mahiyyah*), and attributes (*sifat*) are two different things and they cannot be otherwise in the case of God, the Supreme Being.

The Ash'arites made a distinction between the meaning or connotation (*mafhum*) of a thing and its reality (*haqiqah*). So far as their meaning is concerned, the attributes and the essence of God are not the same and as such the attributes are in addition to the essence of God, i.e., they have different meanings. The meaning of *dhat* (essence) is different from the meanings of different attributes.

God's essence, for instance, is not knowing or powerful or wise, but so far as their ultimate *haqiqah* (reality or application) is concerned, the attributes are inherent in the divine essence, and hence are not something quite different from or other than the essence of God.[17]

In support of the above view of theirs, the Ash'arites advanced the following arguments:

The analogical argument of the Ash'arites of the older generation: God's actions prove that He is knowing, powerful, and willing; so they also prove that He possesses knowledge, power, will, etc., because the ground of inference cannot differ in different things. What is true in the case of a created being must also be true in the case of the Divine Being.[18] In the case of a human being, by "knowing" we mean one who possesses knowledge and even common sense and draws a line of demarcation between an essence and its attributes.

On the same analogy, distinction must be drawn between the essence of God and His attributes. The essence and the attributes should not be supposed to be blended in the Divine Being. Hence the attributes of God cannot be identical with His essence, as the Mu'tazilites held. But this analogical reasoning is very weak, for what is true of a finite being need not necessarily be true of an infinite being. But, according to the doctrine of *mukhalafah*, God's knowledge or power or will and, as a matter of fact, all His rational attributes signify quite different meanings when applied to created beings.

Secondly, they argued that if all the attributes of God are identical with His essence, the divine essence must be a homogeneous combination of contradictory qualities. For instance, God is merciful (*rahim*) and also revengeful (*qahhar*); both the contradictory attributes would constitute the essence of God, which is one, unique, and indivisible (*ahad*), and that is absurd.

Further, if the attributes are identical with God's essence, and if, for instance, His being knowing, powerful, and living is His essence itself, no useful purpose will be served by ascribing them to Him, for that would ultimately be the virtual application of His essence to itself, which is useless. Hence the divine attributes cannot be identical with the divine essence.

Thirdly, if the attributes of God are not distinct from His essence, the meanings of the different attributes will be exactly the same, for God's essence is a simple and indivisible unity. The meanings of knowing, willing, and living, for instance, will be exactly the same, and thus knowledge will mean power, or power will mean life, and so on.[19]

This also is an absurdity. These different attributes imply different meanings and hence they cannot be identical with God's essence. His essence is one and He possesses many attributes which eternally inhere in Him and, though not identical with His essence, yet they are not absolutely different from His essence.

2. Free will

On the question of free-will or on the ability of man to choose and produce actions, the Ash'arites took up again an intermediary position between the libertarian and fatalistic views, held by the Mu'tazilites and the Jabrites respectively. The orthodox people and the Jabrites maintained a pure fatalistic view. They held that human actions are predetermined and predestined by God.

Man has no power to produce any action. "Everything," they contended, "is from God." God has absolute power over everything including human will and human actions. The Mu'tazilites and the Qadarites, on the other hand, held that man has full power to produce an action and has complete freedom in his choice, though the power was created in him by God.

The Ash'arites struck a middle path. They made a distinction between creation (*khalq*) and acquisition (*kasb*) of an action. God, according to the Ash'arites, is the creator (*khaliq*) of human actions and man is the acquisitor (*muktasib*). "Actions of human beings are created (*makhluq*) by God, the creatures are not capable of creating any action."[20] "There is no creator except God and the actions of man are, therefore, His creation."[21] Power (*qudrah*), according to them, is either (i) original (*qadamah*) or (ii) derived (*hadithah*). The original power alone is effective. Derived power can create nothing. The power possessed by man is given by God and as such it is derived.[22]

Al Ash'ari said, "The true meaning of acquisition is the occurrence of a thing or event due to derived power, and it is an acquisition for the person by whose derived power it takes place."[23] God is, thus, the creator of human actions and man is the acquisitor. Man cannot create anything; he cannot initiate work. God alone can create, because absolute creation is His prerogative. God creates in man the power and the ability to perform an act. He also creates in him the power to make a free choice (*ikhtiyar*) between two alternatives – between right and wrong.

This free choice of man is not effective in producing the action. It is the habit or nature of God to create the action corresponding to the choice and power created by Himself in man. Thus, the action of man is created by God, both as to initiative and as to production or completion. Man is free only in making the choice between alternatives and also in intending to do the particular action freely chosen: Man, in making this choice and intending to do the act, acquires (*iktisab*) either the merit of appreciation and reward from God if he makes the right choice, or the demerit of condemnation and punishment if he makes the wrong choice.

The Ash`arites, thus, in order to avoid the fatalistic position, introduced the doctrine of acquisition by which, they thought, they could account for man's free-will and lay responsibility upon him. Man has no free-will in the Mu'tazilite sense; he has no real and effective power, but has some derived power by which he acquires a share in the production of the act: In the case of voluntary actions of human beings, there are, so to say, two causes.

The action is the combined effect of the real cause, God, and the choice and intention of man, the acquisitor, the possessor of ineffective power because of its being derived power. God creates in two ways: either with a locus (*mahall*) or without a locus. Human actions are His creation with a locus.[24]

"God creates, in man, the power, ability, choice, and will to perform an act, and man, endowed with this derived power, chooses freely one of the alternatives and intends or wills to do the action and, corresponding to this intention, God creates and completes the action."[25]

It is this intention on the part of man which makes him responsible for his deeds. Man cannot take the initiative in any matter, nor can he originate any action. But the completion of the act is partially due to his intention: He, thus, acquires the merit or demerit of the action because of his intending to do a good or bad action. Man's free choice is, so to say, an occasion for God's causing the action corresponding to that choice.

In this the Ash`arites come very close to the occasionalism of Malebranche which was expounded in Europe eight centuries and a half later. This correspondence and harmony between the choice of man and God's creation, according to the Ash'arites, is not due to a harmony established by God previously, but because of His habit or nature to create the harmony whenever human action is done.

This, in short, is the solution of the problem of free-will offered by the Ash'arites. The Ashh'arite view on this problem is not free from logical and ethical difficulties. It was really very difficult for them to reconcile the absolute determination of all events by God with man's accountability and responsibility for his deeds. Some, of the later Ash'arites, particularly Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, discarded the veil of acquisition in order to escape the charge of fatalism, and advocated naked determinism.[26]

3. The Problem of Reason and Revelation and the Criterion of Good and Evil

The Ash`arites differ from the Mu'tazilites on the question whether reason or revelation should be the

basis or source of truth and reality: Both the schools admit the necessity of reason for the rational understanding of faith, but they differ with regard to the question whether revelation or reason is more fundamental and, in case of a conflict, whether reason or revelation is to get preference.

The Mu'tazilites held that reason is more fundamental than revelation and is to be preferred to revelation. Revelation merely confirms what is accepted by reason and, if there be a conflict between the two, reason is to be preferred and revelation must be so interpreted as to be in conformity with the dictates of reason.

The Ash`arites, on the other hand, held that revelation is more fundamental as the source of ultimate truth and reality, and reason should merely confirm what is given by revelation. The Ash`arites prefer revelation to reason in case of a conflict between the two. As a matter of fact, this is one of the fundamental principles in which the rational *Kalam* of the Mu'tazilites differs from the orthodox *Kalam* of the Ash'arites.

If pure reason is made the sole basis or source of truth and reality, including the truth and reality of the most fundamental principles or concepts on which Islam is based, it would be a pure speculative philosophy or at best a rational theology in general and not a doctrinal theology of a particular historic religion, i. e., that of Islam in particular. Islam is based on certain fundamental principles or concepts which, being suprasensible in nature, are incapable of rational proof. These principles, first, must be believed in on the basis of revelation.

Revelation, thus, is the real basis of the truth and reality of these basic doctrines of Islam. This faith, based on revelation, must be rationalized. Islam as a religion, no doubt, admits the necessity of rationalizing its faith. But to admit the necessity of rationalizing faith is not to admit pure reason or analytic thought to be the sole source or basis of Islam as a religion. Reason, no doubt, has the right to judge Islam and its basic principles, but what is to be judged is of such a nature that it cannot submit to the judgment of reason except on its own terms.

Reason must, therefore, be subordinated to revelation. Its function is to rationalize faith in the basic principles of Islam and not to question the validity or truth of the principles established on the basis of revelation as embodied in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The problem of the criterion of good and evil follows as a corollary to the problem of reason and revelation. The problem of good and evil is one of the most controversial problems of Islamic theology.

The Mu'tazilites held that reason, and not revelation, is the criterion or standard of moral judgment, i.e., of the goodness and badness of an action. The truth and moral value of things and human actions must be determined by reason. They contended that moral qualities of good and evil are objective; they are inherent in the very nature of things or actions and as such can be known by reason and decided to be good or bad.

The Ash'arites, as against the Mu'tazilites, held that revelation and not reason is the real authority or

criterion to determine what is good and what is bad. Goodness and badness of actions (*husn wa qubh*) are not qualities inhering in them; these are mere accidents (*a'rad*). Actions-in-themselves are neither good nor bad. Divine Law makes them good or bad.

In order to make the ground of controversy between the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites clearer, we may explain here the three different senses in which these two terms, good and evil, are used.[27]

(i) Good and evil are sometimes used in the sense of perfection and defect respectively. When we say that a certain thing or action is good or bad (for instance, knowledge is good and ignorance is bad), we mean that it is a quality which makes its possessor perfect or implies a defect in him.

(ii) These terms are also used in a utilitarian sense meaning gain and loss in worldly affairs. Whatever is useful or has utility in our experience is good, and the opposite of it is bad. So whatever is neither useful nor harmful is neither good nor bad.

Both the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites agree that in the two senses, mentioned above, reason is the criterion or standard of good and evil. There is no difference of opinion in the above two senses. But good and bad in the second sense may vary from time to time, from individual to individual, and from place to place.

In this sense there will be nothing permanently or universally good or bad; what is good to one may be bad to others and vice versa. This implies that good and evil are subjective and not objective and real. Hence actions are neither good nor bad, but experience or workability would make them so and, therefore, they can be known by reason without the help of revelation.

(iii) Good and evil are also used in a third sense of commendable and praiseworthy or condemnable in this world and rewardable or punishable, as the case may be, in the other world.

The Ash'arites maintained that good and evil in their third sense must be known through revelation, not by reason as the Mu'tazilites had held. According to the Ash'arites, revelation alone decides whether an action is good or bad. What is commanded by *Shar'* is good, and what is prohibited is bad. *Shar`* can convert previously declared good into bad and vice versa.

As actions by themselves are neither good nor bad, there is nothing in them which would make them rewardable (good) or punishable (bad). They are made rewardable or punishable by revelation or *Shar'*. As there is no quality of good or evil seated in the very nature of an act, there can be no question of knowing it by reason.

4. The Problem of the Eternity of the Qur'an

There was a great controversy over the question whether the Qur'an is created or uncreated and eternal. This question is bound up with another question whether speech is one of God's attributes or not. The

orthodox section of the Muslims, including the Ash'arites, held that God has it as one of His seven rational attributes, and as His attributes are eternal, divine speech, i.e., the Qur'an, is also eternal.

As regards the eternity of the Qur'an, the Ash'arites adopted again an intermediary position between the extreme views of the Zahirites and the Mu'tazilites. The Hanbalites and other Zahirites (extreme orthodox schools) held that the speech of God, i. e., the Qur'an, is composed of letters, words, and sounds which inhere in the essence of God and is, therefore, eternal. Some of the Hanbalites went to the extreme and asserted that even the cover and the binding of the Qur'an are eternal.[28]

The Mu'tazilites and a section of the Rafidites went to the other extreme and maintained that the Qur'an was created. They denied all attributes of God, including the attribute of speech, on the ground that if it be an eternal attribute of God, there would be multiplicity of eternals, to believe which is polytheism and contrary to the basic principles of Islam. They further argued that "the Qur'an is composed of parts, successively arranged parts, and whatever is composed of such parts must be temporal."[29]

Hence the Qur'an must be created. The Ash'arites maintained that the Qur'an is composed of words and sounds, but these do not inhere in the essence of God. They made a distinction between the outward and concrete expression of the Qur'an in language, and the real, self-subsistent meaning of it, and held that the Qur'an, as expressed in words and sounds, is, no doubt, temporal (*hadath*); but against the Mu'tazilites they asserted that the Qur'an in its meanings is uncreated and eternal.

The "self-subsisting meaning" eternally inheres in the essence of God. These meanings are expressed; their expression in language is temporal and created. It is so because the same meaning, while remaining the same, might be expressed differently at different times, in different places by different persons or nations. They further maintained that this meaning is an attribute other than knowledge and will and, as such, inheres eternally in the essence of God and is, therefore, eternal.[30]

In support of this contention the Ash`arites advanced the following arguments:[31]

(i) The Qur'an is "knowledge from God"; it is, therefore, inseparable from God's attribute of knowledge which is eternal and uncreated. Hence it is also eternal and uncreated.

(ii) God created everything by His word *kun* (be) and this word, which is in the Qur'an, could not have been a created one, otherwise a created word would be a creator, which is absurd. Hence God's word is uncreated, i. e.. eternal.

(iii) The Qur'an makes a distinction between creation (*khalq*) and command (*amr*) when it says, ***"Are not the creation and command His alone?"*** Hence God's Command, His word or *Kalam*, which is definitely something other than created things (*makhluq*), must be unereated and eternal.

(iv) Further, God says to Moses, ***"I have chosen thee over mankind with My apostolate and My word."*** This verse signifies that God has speech. Again, Moses is addressed by God with the words:

"Lo, I am thy Lord." Now, if the word which addresses Moses is a created thing, it would mean that a created thing asserts that it is Moses Lord (God), which is absurd. God's word, therefore, must be eternal.

The Ash'arites further pointed out that all the different arguments advanced by the Mu'tazilites (and in ***Sharh-i Mawaqif*** as many as eight such arguments have been mentioned), in support of their view that the Qur'an is created, would apply only to the expressed Qur'an and not to the real Qur'an, the latter being the "meanings of the Qur'an."[32]

5. The Problem of the Beatific Vision

On the question of the beatific vision, the Ash`arites, true to their attitude of reconciliation, again tried to adopt a course lying midway between the extreme anthropomorphic view of the Zahirites and other orthodox Muslims on the one hand and the view of the Mu'tazilites and the "philosophers" on the other.

The extreme orthodox Muslims and the Zahirites, in particular, held that it is possible to see God and the righteous persons would actually have His vision as the chief reward for their good actions. They further held that God is settled firmly on His Throne, He exists in different directions, and is capable of being pointed out. The Mu'tazilites and the "philosophers" denied the possibility of seeing God with eyes, as that would imply His bodily existence, which is absurd.

The Ash'arites, as against the Mu'tazilites and the "philosophers," and in agreement with the orthodox class, held that it is possible to see God;[33] but they could not agree to their view that God is extended and can be shown by pointing out. They accepted the philosophical principle that whatever is extended or spatial must be contingent and temporal, and God is not an extended and temporal being.

This admission landed them into a difficulty, for if God is not extended and only extended things can be seen, God cannot be seen;[34] but this conclusion conflicts with their position that beatific vision is possible. So, in order to get out of this difficulty, they asserted the possibility of seeing an object even if it is not present before the perceiver.[35] This was a very peculiar and untenable position, for it repudiated all the principles of optics.

It is possible to see God even though our sense of vision does not receive the corresponding "impression" of the object on it. Besides, it is possible for God to create in human beings the capacity to see Him without the necessary conditions of vision, such as the presence, in concrete form, of the object itself in space and time, normal condition of the appropriate sense-organ, absence of hindrance or obstruction to perception, and so on; and though God is unextended and does not exist in space and time, "yet He may make Himself visible to His creature like the full moon."

They further contended that the vision of God is possible without any impression on our sense-organ for another reason. There is practically no difference between a "sensation" and an "after image" except that the sensation possesses an additional quality over and above the common qualities present in both,

and this additional quality, i.e, impression on the sense-organ produced by the external object, does not make any difference in the perception of an object.

Hence, though this impression is missing in the case of seeing God, it may still be called “seeing.” The weakness of this argument is apparent to any student of psychology, because an after-image is possible only when it is preceded by an actual impression of the object on the sense-organ. The actual impression of the object is, therefore, a precondition of an after-image in the case of beatific vision too.

The Ash'arites were faced with another difficulty. The Mu'tazilites had pointed out that if seeing of God is possible, it must be possible under all circumstances and at all times, for this possibility is due either to His essence or to an inseparable attribute in Him. In either case, it should be possible at all times. And if it is possible at all times, it must be possible now; and if it is possible to see Him now, we must see Him now, for when all the conditions of “vision” are present, the actual seeing must take place. The Ash`arites met this objection in a very naive manner by saying, “We do not admit the necessity of actual seeing taking place, even when all its eight conditions are present.”

The Ash'arites supported their views on the basis of revelation. According to the Qur'an, Moses asked of God, ***“O, my Lord, show Thyself to me so that I can see Thee.”*** Had seeing been impossible, Moses would not have said so, for, otherwise, it must be assumed that either he knew its impossibility or did not, and both the alternatives are absurd, because an intelligent person like him could not have been ignorant of this impossibility and could not have asked for what he knew was impossible.

Again, according to the Qur'an, God said to Moses, ***“If the mountain remains fixed in its place, you can see Me,”*** and if the antecedent is possible the consequent must be possible. Here, evidently, the antecedent, fixity of the mountain, is in itself a possible thing. Therefore, the consequent, the vision of God, must also be possible. Some other verses also support the conclusion.[36]

There are a few more controversial problems of secondary importance, in which the Ash`arites differed from the Mu'tazilites. These are, for example, promise of reward and threat of punishment by God; whether God can make His creatures responsible for the actions for which they have no ability; whether God's actions are bound to be based on rational considerations and on purpose; whether He is bound to do what is best for His creatures; and whether the knowledge of God or recognition of His existence is based on reason or revelation.

These theological problems of secondary importance are more or less the corollaries of the main principles in which the Ash'arites and Mu'tazilites differed.

The Ash'arites held that God is the only real cause of everything; He alone possesses real and effective power and this power is unlimited; His will is absolutely free – not determined by anything. Whatever power human beings apparently possess is given by God. Man does not possess any real and effective power. God, being absolutely free in His action, is not bound to act on rational purpose. He does not act teleologically for, otherwise, His actions would be determined by something external to and other than

Himself and He would not remain absolutely free. External purpose would put a limit to God's omnipotence.

Like Spinoza, al-Ash'ari held that there is no purpose in the mind of God which would determine His activity. From thus anti-teleological view it follows that as God's action is not teleological, He is not bound to do what is best for His creatures. He does whatever He wills. But as He is an absolutely intelligent and just being, His actions, as a matter of fact, are all full of wisdom.37

As against the Mu'tazilites, the Ash'arites held that God can make us responsible for the actions which we have no power to do. The Mu'tazilites held that God cannot do so, because that would be an irrational and unjust act on His part. It is admitted by all schools of thought in Islam that power or ability of men to do a thing is given by God. But opinions differ on the question whether this power or ability is really effective in producing any action. The Mu`tazilites and the Qadarites held that man's power is fully effective and can produce an action. But the Ash'arites maintained that, being derivative, it can have no effective force. Similar are their respective positions with regard to the ability to act.

This ability is no doubt given by God as an accident, but the Mu'tazilites, particularly Abu al-Hudhail `Allaf, held that this ability is given to man simultaneously with the performance of the act. But the Ash'arites maintained that it is given before the actual performance of the act;38 but being a mere accident in man, it has only a momentary existence and is of no practical use to man in performing the act.

As a matter of fact, it ceases to exist when the actual action takes place. Man, therefore, does the act, practically without having the power and the ability to do so. He is held responsible for his actions because of his choosing freely one of the two alternative actions and intending to do the action so chosen. But neither his choice nor his intention can produce the action. It is God who creates the action and is thus its effective and real cause.39

There is an almost similar controversy over the question of God's promise of reward to the virtuous and His threat of punishment to the wrong-doer. This was one of the five main problems with which the Mu'tazilite movement started.40

The Mu'tazilites held that God is bound to fulfil His promises of reward and punishment. Every action, good or bad, must take its own course and be followed by its logical and normal consequence. A right action, therefore, must be followed by its reward and a wrong one by punishment. God has made promises in the Qur'an and He, being a just being, cannot do otherwise, i.e., He cannot punish the virtuous and forgive the wrong-doer.

On the other hand, the Ash'arites maintained that, being all-powerful and absolutely free in His will, God can punish His creatures even if they have not committed any sins or reward His creatures even though they have done no virtuous deeds. There is nothing binding on God; His will is not subject to teleological considerations.

It is by the inner necessity of His own nature that He fulfils His promises of reward to the virtuous and does not do otherwise. And it is in His infinite mercy that He may forgive any wrongdoer or vicious person, in spite of the threats of punishment for his vicious acts. This act of forgiveness will also be in accordance with His nature as the most generous and gracious being.

Ash’arite Metaphysics

Al–Ash'ari's interest was purely theological and his discussions did not contain much metaphysics.41 But the subsequent Ash'arites found it impossible to achieve their main object of defending the faith and harmonizing reason with revelation without making reference to the ultimate nature of reality.

Al–Ash'ari's theological system was, thus, considered to be incomplete without a support from metaphysics. The system was fully developed by the later Ash'arites, particularly by Qadi Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Tayyyib al–Baqillani who was one of the greatest among them. He was a Basrite, but he made Baghdad his permanent residence and died there in 403/1013. He was a great original thinker and wrote many valuable books on theology and various other subjects.

He made use of some purely metaphysical propositions in his theological investigations, such as substance is an individual unity, accident has only a momentary existence and cannot exist in quality, and perfect vacuum is possible, and thus gave the school a metaphysical foundation.

About him a Western scholar has remarked: “It is his glory to have contributed most important elements to, and put into fixed form what is, perhaps, the most daring metaphysical scheme, and almost certainly the most thorough theological scheme, ever thought out. On the one hand, the Lucretian atoms raining down through the empty void, the self–developing monads and pre–established harmony of Leibniz; and all the Kantian “things–in–themselves” are lame and impotent in their consistency beside the parallel Ash'arite doctrines; and, on the other, not even the rigours of Calvin; as developed in Dutch confessions, can compete with the unflinching exactitude of the Muslim conclusions”.42

The Ash'arites, being primarily interested in theological problems, kept their philosophical discussions mainly confined only to those questions which they thought had a direct or indirect bearing on these problems.43 Willingly or unwillingly, they had to philosophize “in order to meet the contemporary philosophers on their own ground.” But when they began philosophizing, they were very earnest and became great metaphysicians.

In dealing with the most important basic principles of Islam: (i) the existence of God, as the creator of the universe, and His unity and oneness, and (ii) the belief in the prophethood of Muhammad, they had to use certain proofs which necessitated some metaphysical and epistemological discussions. Hence they had to develop a theory of knowledge and a theory of reality, which were peculiarly their own. God, the ultimate principle, is, according to the Ash'arites, a necessary existent; His existence is identical with His essence.

In proving God's existence the Ash'arites used three arguments. Their argument from the contingent nature of motion is not of much importance to our discussion. The other two are:

(i) All bodies, they argued, are ultimately one in so far as their essence is concerned. But, in spite of this basic unity, their characteristics are different. Hence there must be an ultimate cause for these divergent characteristic, and that ultimate cause is God.

(ii) The world is contingent. Every contingent thing must have a cause; therefore, the world must have a cause, and as no contingent thing can be the cause, that cause must be God. The major premise (i.e., every event must have a cause) does not require a proof. The minor premise – the world is contingent – they proved in the following manner: Everything that exists in the world is either a substance or a quality. The contingent character of a quality is evident, and the contingence of substance follows from the fact that no substance could exist apart from qualities. The contingence of quality necessitates the contingence of substance; otherwise, the eternity of substance would necessitate the eternity of quality.44

The Ash'arites believed in miracles which were considered to be the basis of the proof of prophethood and, in order to defend this view, they had to deny the laws of nature. They also denied causality in nature and made God the only cause of everything.

Now, in order to explain the full implication of the above arguments, it was necessary for them to develop a theory of knowledge and a metaphysics.

The world consists of things. Now, the question arises: What is meant by a thing, what is its nature, and how far do we know it?

Al–Baqillani defined knowledge as the cognition of a thing as it is in itself.45 A thing is defined by the Ash'arites as "that which is existent." Everything is an existent and every existent is a thing.46 So, according to the Ash'arites, existence, whether necessary or contingent, is the thing or the essence of the thing–in–itself and not a quality in addition to it, as the Mu'tazilites held.

Al–Jahiz, al–Jubba'i, and some other Mu'tazilites of the Basrite school defined a "thing" as that which is known,47 and held that existence is a quality of it, added to its essence. The Ash'arites, as against these Mu'tazilites, contended that if existence is an additional quality, the essence–in–itself would be a non–existent and hence a non–entity and the subsequent–addition of the quality of "existence" to it would involve a clear contradiction in so far as it would make the non–existent existent.48

This is an absurdity. The thing–in–itself which is the object of knowledge according to the Ash'arites, is, therefore, an existent thing or a body. Everything that exists in the world has a contingent existence and is either substance or quality. In this sense God is not a thing.

The Aristotelian categories of thought were subjected by the Ash'arites to a searching criticism. Only two

of those categories, substance and quality, were retained by them. The other categories, quality, place, time, etc., are nothing but relative characteristics (*i'tibarat*) that exist subjectively in the mind of the knower, having no corresponding objective reality.

Like Berkeley, the Irish philosopher, they also did not make any distinction between the primary and secondary qualities of objects. The world, therefore, consists of substance, on which the mind reflects, and qualities, which are not in the thing-in-itself but only in the mind of the knower. The qualities are mere accidents which are fleeting, transitory, and subjective relations, having only a momentary existence. A quality or accident cannot exist in another accident but only in a substance. No substance could ever exist apart from a quality. The substance, being inseparable from its accidents, must also be transitory, having only a moment's duration, just as the accidents are. Everything that exists, therefore, consists of mere transitory units (subjective), having only a moment's duration.

The Ash'arites, thus, rejected the Aristotelian view of matter as "a permanent potentiality (*hayula*) of suffering the impress of form (*surah*)," because a possibility is neither an entity nor a non-entity but purely a subjectivity. With inert matter, the active form and all causes must also go. They, too, are mere subjectivities. This led them straight to the atomists and, as a matter of fact, they did become atomists after their own fashion.

In this connection we may observe that the object of the Ash'arites was, like that of Kant, to fix the relation of knowledge to the thing-in-itself; and they showed here a great originality in their thought. On this question they not only anticipated Kant but, in reaching the thing-in-itself, they were much more thorough than Kant. "In his examination of human knowledge regarded as a product and not merely a process, Kant stopped at the idea of 'Ding an sich' [thing-in-itself], but the Ash'arite endeavoured to penetrate further, and maintained, against the contemporary Agnostic-Realism, that the so-called underlying essence existed only so far as it was brought in relation to the knowing subject."[49]

Ash'arite Atomism

The substances perceived by us are atoms which come into existence from vacuity and drop out of existence again. The world is made up of such atoms. The Ash'arite atoms are fundamentally different from those of Democritus and Lucretius. The Ash`arite atoms are not material; they are not permanent; they have only a momentary existence; they are not eternal but every moment brought into being, and then allowed to go out of existence by the Supreme Being, God, the only cause of everything in the universe. These atoms are not only of space but of time also. They are non-material or ideal in character. They resemble the monads of Leibniz.

But the Ash'arite monads differ from those of Leibniz in having no possibility of self-development along certain lines. Each monad has certain qualities but has extension neither in space nor in time. They have simply position, not bulk, and are isolated from and independent of one another. There is absolute void between any two monads. Space and time are subjective. All changes in the world are produced by their

entering into existence and dropping out again, but not by any change in themselves.

The Ash'arite ontology necessitated the existence of God. Their monads must have a cause, without which they could not have come into being, nor could there be any harmony or connection between them. This cause must be a *cause sui*; otherwise there would be an infinite regress of the causal nexus. The Ash'arites found this cause in the free-will of God. It creates and annihilates the atoms and their qualities and, thus, brings to pass all motion and change in the world.

The Ash'arites were, thus, thoroughgoing metaphysicians. Being was all important in their ontology. The will of that Being or God must, therefore, be the ground of all things. Hence they did not find any difficulty, as Leibniz did, in explaining the harmony and coherence among the isolated, windowless, and independent monads, constituting the one orderly world.

Leibniz had to bring in, in his monadology, a Monad of monads or God, and fall back upon the Theory of Pre-established Harmony to bring his monads into harmonious and orderly relations with one another, and this he could do only at the cost of his monadology, and by abandoning his pluralistic and individualistic metaphysics.

But the Ash'arites, consistently with their ontology, fell straight back upon God, and found in His will the ground of orderliness and harmony in the universe. They were, thus, more thorough and consistent than Leibniz in their theory of monads. The Ash'arite atomism approaches that of Lotze's, who in spite of his desire to save external reality, ended in its Complete reduction to ideality. But, like Lotze, they could not believe their atoms to be the inner working of the infinite Primal Being.

The necessary consequence of their analysis is a thorough going idealism like that of Berkeley. Their theory of knowledge reduced the universe to a mere show of ordered subjectivities which, as they maintained like Berkeley, found their ultimate explanation in the will of God. Their interest, as we have already pointed out, was mainly theological. Interest in pure monotheism was very strong with them. Their metaphysical and epistemological discussions were actuated by a pious desire to defend the idea of divine creations, to drive men back to God and His revelation and compel them to see in Him the one grand fact of the universe.

The Ash'arites are here more consistent than Berkeley. God, according to them, is the only cause in the true sense of the term. No created thing, having created power, could be the cause of anything.

The attitude of the Ash'arites towards the law of causation was sceptical. They denied objective validity of causality in nature. No created thing or being can be the cause of anything. Things or beings in nature do not possess any power or quality which could produce any effect. The so-called power which men and objects of nature seem to possess is not an effective power, for it is a derived power, not an original power which alone can produce effect.[50] Whatever power the creatures might possess must have been given by God, who alone possesses all real power. Being (God) is the only Ultimate Reality.

The things of the world are composed of indivisible units monads which, every moment, are created and annihilated; and it is God who creates and annihilates them and their qualities, thereby bringing about all the motion and change in the world. There is, thus, no such thing as a law of nature and the world is sustained by a constant, ever repeated activity of God.

There is no such thing as a secondary cause; when there is the appearance of such a cause, it is only illusionary. God produces the appearance of the effect as well as the effect. Things of the world do not possess any permanent nature. Fire, for instance, does not possess the nature or quality of burning; it does not burn. God creates in a substance "a being burned" when fire touches it.

The Ash'arites thus denied power in the cause as well as the necessary connection between the so-called cause and effect. Shibli mentions that the Ash'arites rejected the idea of causation with a view to defending the possibility of miracles on the manifestation of which, according to them, prophethood depended. The orthodox school believed in miracles as well as in the universal law of causation; but they also maintained that, at the time of manifesting a miracle, God suspends the operation of this law and thus brings about an exception.

Asha`ari, however, maintained that a cause must have always the same effect (i.e., the effect of one and the cause cause could not be different at different times). Having accepted this principle as formulated by their leader, the Ash'arites could not agree to the orthodox view and, therefore, to prove the possibility of miracles they rejected the law of causation altogether, According to them, there is no power in the antecedent to produce the consequent. "We know nothing but floating impressions, the phenomenal order of which is determined by God."[51]

Objection might be raised against the Ash'arite metaphysics that it establishes in effect a relationship between God and the atoms, but relationships, according to the Ash'arites, are subjective illusions. In reply to this objection it may be pointed out that all relationship applies only to contingent beings or things perceived by the senses. It would not hold in the case of the Necessary Being, God, who is suprasensible. And according to their principle of *mukhalafah*, nothing which is applied to created things or beings can be applied to God in the same sense. God is not a natural cause but a free cause.

This is the Ash'arite system as completed by Qadi Abu Bakr al-Baqillani. It faced a strong opposition from the orthodox, particularly from the followers of Abmad bin Hanbal. Al-Ashari's opinions did not get much recognition outside the Shafi'ite group to which he belonged. The Hanafites preferred the doctrines of his contemporary al-Maturidi who differed from al-Ash'ari in certain minor controversial points. Shibli has mentioned nine such points.[52]

In Spain, Ibn Hazm (d. 456/1063) opposed the Ash'arite doctrines. The Saljuq Sultan Tughril Beg, who was an adherent of the Hanbalite school, treated the Ash'arites very badly, but his successor Sultan Alp Arsalan and especially his famous vizier, Nizam al-Mulk supported the Ash`arites and put an end to the persecution to which they had been exposed. Nizam al-Mulk founded the Nizamite Academy at

Baghdad in 459/1066 for the defence of Ash'arite doctrines. It is under his patronage that Abu al-Ma'ali `Abd al-Malik al-Juwaini got the chance of preaching the Ash'arite doctrine freely.[53]

The Ash'arite system could not obtain widespread acceptance until it was popularized by a1-Juwaini and al-Ghazali in the East and by Ibn Tumart in the West. It was al-Juwaini who could legitimately claim the credit of making the Ash'arites' doctrines popular. His vast learning and erudite scholarship brought him the title of Dia' al-Din (the light of religion).

Al-Juwaini received his early education from his father, Shaikh Abu Muhammad `Abd Allah, and after the death of his father, he got further education from his teacher, abu Ishaq al-Isfara'ini, a great Ash'arite scholar. Al-Juwaini, in course of time, was recognized by the scholars of the time to be Shaikh al-Islam (the chief leader of Islam) and Imam al Haramain (the religious leader of Makkah and Madinah). For thirty years, he continued teaching and preaching the Ash'arite doctrines.

Al-Juwaini was the teacher of al-Ghazali. He wrote many books on various subjects. Some of these are: *al-Shamil*, on the principles of religion; *al-Burhan*, on the principles of jurisprudence; *al-`Aqidat al-Nizamiyyah*; and *Irshad*, on theology. He was born in 419/1028 and died at Nishapur in 478/1085.53 Being the Shaikh al-Islam and the Imam of Makkah and Madinah, al-Juwaini's *Fatawa* (judgments on religious matters) used to be respected by people in general throughout the Muslim world; and for this reason, his writings got the widest circulation and, through these writings, Ash'arite doctrines became known everywhere.

One great theological result of the Ash'arite system was that it checked the growth of free thought which tended to dissolve the solidarity of the Islamic Shari'ah. The Ash`arite mode of thought had its intellectual results also.

It led to an independent criticism of Greek philosophy and prepared the ground for philosophies propounded by men like al-Ghazali and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. Al-Ghazali is generally included among the Ash'arites and it is he who maybe said to have completed the Ash'arite metaphysics. It was he who, by giving a systematic refutation of Greek philosophy in his famous work, *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, completely annihilated the dread of intellectualism which had characterized the minds of the orthodox. It was chiefly through his influence that people began to study dogma and metaphysics together.[54]

Strictly speaking, al-Ghazali was not an Ash'arite, though he admitted that the Ash'arite mode of thought was excellent for the masses. “He held that the secret of faith could not be revealed to the masses; for this reason he encouraged exposition of the Ash`arite theology, and took care in persuading his disciples not to publish the results of his private reflection.”[55]

Al-Ghazali made the Ash'arite theology so popular that it became practically the theology of the Muslim community in general and has continued to remain so up to the present time.

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Chapter 12: Tahawism

Tahawism by A.K.M Ayyub Ali, M.A, Ph.D, Principl Government Rajshahi Madrasah, Rajshahi (Pakistan)

Tahawi's Life and Works

Abu Ja'far Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Salamah al-Azdi, al-Hajri, al-Tahawi, was born at Taha, a village in Upper Egypt. His forefathers came from the Yemen to Egypt and settled there after it had come under the Muslim rule. There is a considerable difference of opinion as to the year of his birth. The years 229/843, 230/ 844, 238/852 and 239/853 are mentioned by different biographers. Al-Sam'ani asserts that he was born in 229/843 and this is correct. He died in Egypt in 321/933.1

Al-Tahawi was mainly interested in Hadith and Fiqh, and was regarded as one of the greatest *Muhaddithin* and *fuqaha'* of his time. According to Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi, he was the last leader of Hanafi Fiqh in Egypt.2

He began to study Shafi'i Law under his maternal uncle abu Ibrahim Ismail al-Muzani (d. 264/878), the most celebrated pupil of Imam al-Shafi'i, and then leaving his school he took up the study of Hanafi Law under al-Shaikh abu Jafar Ahmad b. abi ,`Imran (d. 285/898), who became the Chief Qadi of Egypt in 270/883. Different versions are given by his biographers of his conversion to Hanafi school, but the most probable reason seems to be that the system of Imam abu Hanifah appealed to his critical insight more than that of Imam Shafi`i.

Al-Tahawi went to Syria in 268/882 for further studies in Hanafi Law and became a pupil of Qadi abu Khazim `Abd al-Hamid b. Ja'far, the then Chief Justice of Syria.[3] He learnt hadith from a large number of Shaikhs especially from those who visited Egypt at his time, and had also many pupils of distinction.[4]

He is a distinguished author of many important works of which the following may be mentioned here: 1. *Sharh Ma'ani al-Athar*, 2. *Mushkil al Athar*, 3. *Ahkam al-Qur'an*, 4. *Ikhtilaf al-Ulama'*, 5. *al-Nawadir al-Fiqhiyyah*, 6. *Kitab al-Shurut al-Kabir*, 7. *al-Shurut al-Ausat*, 8. *Sharh al-Jami` al-Saghir*, 9. *Sharh al-Jami' al-Kabir*, 10. *al-Mukhtasar*, 11. *Manaqib Abi Hanifah*, 12. *Tarikh al-Kabir*, 13. *al-Radd `ala Kitab al-Mudallisin*, 14. *al-Radd `ala Abi `Ubaid*, 15. *al-Radd `ala `Isa b. Abban*, 16. *Hukm `Aradi Makkah*, etc.

His original contribution to Hadith literature, so far as we can estimate is that he introduced a new system of collecting legal traditions, developed a new method of interpreting and harmonizing the conflicting traditions, and adopted a new criterion for criticizing them. His predecessors and contemporaries, the authors of *al-Sihah al-Sittah* (the Six Canonical Compilations) collecting traditions according to their own standards and principles, left out a large number of genuine traditions.

Al-Tahawi made a strenuous effort to collect all the genuine legal traditions of the Prophet, narrated by different authorities on a particular subject, together with the opinions of the Companions of the Prophet, their Successors and the distinguished jurisprudents. He then scrutinized traditions (*ahadith*) and showed by evidence which of them were authentic, strong, weak, unknown, or such as might be supposed to have been repealed.

Thus, his collection provided for the scholars an unprecedented opportunity to judge for themselves the merits or demerits of a particular tradition. The criterion for judging the genuineness of a tradition, according to the Traditionists in general, was the *isnad* (chain of the narrators), and so they paid greater attention to the scrutiny of the *isnad* than to the scrutiny of the text (*matn*) of a tradition. But al-Tahawi, while scrutinizing a tradition, took into consideration the *matn* as well as the *isnad* of the tradition. He also aimed at a harmonizing interpretation in case of conflicting traditions.

Al-Tahawi, like al-Maturidi, was a follower of Imam Abu Hanifah (d. 150/ 767) in jurisprudence as well as in theology. He wrote a little treatise on theology named *Bayan al-Sunnah w-al-Jama'ah*, generally known as *al`Aqidat al-Tahawiyyah*.[5]

In the introduction to this treatise he says he will give therein an account of the beliefs of the *Ahl*

al-sunnah w'al-jama'ah according to the views of Imam Abu Hanifah, Abu Yusuf, and Muhammad al-Shaibani – the well-known jurisprudents of the community. So the importance of his creed lies in the fact that it corroborates the views of Imam Abu Hanifah, the founder of the school, that have come down to us from different sources. Al-Tahawi made no attempt to explain the views of the Imam or to solve the old theological problems by advancing any new arguments. His sole aim was to give a summary of the views of the Imam and to show indirectly that they were in conformity with the traditional views of the orthodox school.

The difference between him and al-Maturidi the two celebrated authorities on the views of the Imam is quite evident. Al-Maturidi was a thorough dialectician and his main endeavour was to find out a philosophical basis for the views of the leader and to support these views by scholastic reasoning, and thereby bring them closer to the views of the rationalists.

Al-Tahawi, as a true traditionist, did not favour, as will be seen, any rational discussion or speculative thinking on the articles of faith, but preferred to believe and accept them without questioning. There is no reference in his creed to the critical examination of the method, sources, and means of knowledge, or the foundation on which his theological system is built. So his system may be termed as dogmatic, while that of al-Maturidi as critical. The critical method followed by al-Tahawi in Hadith is quite lacking in theology. Thus, though both of them belong to the same school and uphold faithfully the doctrines of their master, they differ from each other in temperament, attitude, and trends of thought.

In order to indicate the characteristics of the system of al-Tahawi and to make an estimate of his contributions to theology, we propose to give in the following pages an outline of the views of Imam Abu Hanifah along with the views of both al-Tahawi and al-Maturidi on some of the most important theological problems that arose in Muslim theology.

Imam Abu Hanifah directed his movement against the Kharijites, Qadarites, Mu'tazilites, Shiites, Jabrites, the extreme Murji'ites, and the Hashwiyyah, the last being a group of the orthodox people who under the influence of the converted Jews, Christians, and Magians fell into gross anthropomorphism, and ascribed to God all the characteristics of a created being.[6]

He was the first theologian among the *fuqaha'* who adopted the principles and method of reasoning and applied them to a critical examination of the articles of faith and the laws of the Shariah. That is why he and his followers were called by the Traditionists the People of Reason and Opinion (*ashab al-ra'i w-al-qiyas*). This rational spirit and philosophical attitude were more consistently maintained by al-Maturidi than by al-Tahawi. Their views on the nature of faith, attributes of God, beatific vision, divine decree, and human freedom may be mentioned here to indicate the distinctive features of their methods.

Nature of Faith

Faith, according to the well-known view of Imam Abu Hanifah, consists of three elements: knowledge,

belief, and confession; knowledge alone or confession alone is not faith.[7] Al-Maturidi holds the same view and lays emphasis on knowledge (*ma'rifah*) and belief (*tasdiq*). But, according to his explanation, knowledge is the basis of faith and confession is not in reality an integral part of faith but only an indication (*`alamah*) of faith, a condition for enforcement of Islamic laws and enjoyment of the rights and privileges of the Muslim community. So the belief based on the knowledge of God is the basis of faith.[8]

Al-Tahawi excludes knowledge from his definition of faith and holds that it consists in believing by heart and confessing by tongue.[9]

As regards the relation between faith and action Imam Abu Hanifah maintains that Islam demands from its followers two things: belief and practice, and both are essential for a perfect Muslim. The two are very closely related like back and belly, but they are not identical. Practice is distinct from faith and faith is distinct from practice, but both are essential elements of Islam. "Allah has ordained practice for the faithful, faith for the infidel, and sincerity for the hypocrite." The term *al-din* (religion) includes both faith and action.[10]

Faith, according to him, is a living conviction of the heart – an absolute and indelible entity having its own existence independent of action. From this definition of faith he arrived at the following conclusions: (a) Faith is not liable to increase or decrease.[11] (b) Faith is impaired by doubt.[12] (c) The faithful are equal in faith but different in degree of superiority regarding practice.[13] (d) No Muslim should be declared devoid of faith on account of any sin, if he does not declare it to be lawful. One may be a man of faith with bad behaviour, but not an infidel.[14] (e) A believer who dies unrepentant, even though guilty of mortal sins, will not remain in hell for ever. Allah may grant him forgiveness or punish him in accordance with his sins.[15]

Pointing out the differences between himself and the Murji'ites, Imam Abu Hanifah says: "We do not say that sins do not harm the faithful, nor do we say that he will not enter hell, nor do we say that he will remain there for ever, although he should be a man of evil practice (*fasiq*), after having departed from this world as a man of faith. And we do not say that our good actions are accepted and our sins are forgiven, as the Murji'ites say.

But we say that no one who performs a good action, fulfilling all its conditions and keeping it free of all defects, without nullifying it by infidelity, apostasy, or bad conduct during any part of his life, shall be neglected by God. God may punish in hell or grant complete forgiveness to a person who commits an evil deed (polytheism and infidelity excluded) and dies without repenting.[16]

The Kharijites and Mu'tazilites laid so much emphasis on the doctrine of threats (*wa`id*) that they led the believers to despair and take a depressing view of life; while the Murji'ites emphasized the doctrine of promise (*wa'd*) so much that they quite endangered the ethical basis of Islam. Imam Abu Hanifah endeavoured to strike a middle course between these two extremes.

Sins, according to him, are not without consequences; a sinner is always liable to blame or punishment,

but to drive him out from the fold of Islam, to declare him an infidel, or to condemn him to eternal punishment is quite inconsistent with divine justice. His broad outlook and tolerant attitude were consistently continued by al-Maturidi and al-Tahawi. The latter has summarized the views of his master on these questions in the following words:

"We do not declare anyone of the people of *qiblah* an infidel on account of a sin, so long as he does not deem it lawful. And we do not say that sin with faith does no harm to him who commits it. We entertain hope for the righteous among the faithful, but we have no certainty about them, and we do not certify that they will be in paradise. We ask forgiveness for their evil actions and we have fear for them, but we do not drive them into despair. Sense of security and despair both turn a man away from religion. The true way for the people of *qiblah* lies midway between these two. A faithful servant does not go out of the field of faith except by renouncing what had brought him into it."[17]

Al-Tahawi substituted the phrase *ahl al-qiblah* for *mu'min* and Muslim, evidently to avoid the theological controversies regarding their identification, and to make the circle of the believers wider and at the same tune to give the question a practical bias. He also avoided the theoretical definition of a Muslim or *mu'min*, and instead described how one could be regarded as such. He says: "We give those who follow our *qiblah* the name Muslim or *mu'min*, so long as they acknowledge what the Prophet brought with him and believe in what he said and what he narrated."[18]

Knowledge of God and belief in Him may save those who are guilty of mortal sins from eternal punishment, and they may entertain hope of deliverance from hell through divine mercy and the intercession of the righteous. "Those who are guilty of grievous sins will not remain eternally in hell, if they died as unitarians, even if they were not repentant. They are left to God's will and judgment; if He wills He will forgive them out of His kindness, as He has said: ***'Surely Allah will not forgive the setting up of other gods with Himself; other sins He may forgive if He pleases;'*** [19] and if He wills He will punish them in hell in proportion to their sins as demanded by His justice. Then He will bring them out of it through His mercy and the intercession of His obedient people, and finally He will send them to paradise. This is because Allah is the Lord of those who know Him well, and He has not destined them in either world to be like those who denied Him, went astray from His guidance, and did not obtain His help and favour."[20]

It may be noticed here that, although al-Tahawi did not include knowledge in his definition of faith, he was fully conscious of the cognitive aspect of it.

As regards intercession, Imam Abu Hanifah seems to restrict it to the prophets in general and particularly to Prophet Muhammad,[21] but al-Tahawi extends this privilege to the righteous and the pious among the faithful.

As regards the independent character of faith and equality of the faithful, al-Tahawi says: "Faith is one and the faithful are equal; their comparative eminence lies in fear[22] (of Allah), in righteousness, in

disobeying lust, and in pursuing what is best. All the believers are friends of the Merciful. The most honourable among them before God are those who are the most obedient and the best followers of the Holy Qur'an."[23]

On the question whether it is obligatory for a man to know God before the advent of His messenger, and whether to follow precedence (*taqlid*)[24] is allowed in matters of faith, al-Tahawi does not express his opinion explicitly, though his master was quite outspoken on these questions. These questions pertain to the Mu'tazilites doctrine of promise and threat (*al-wa'd w'al-wa'id*), which gave rise to the discussion of the nature and value of reason and revelation.

They held that as God has endowed men with reason and they can easily perceive by proper use of this faculty that the world has a creator, it is obligatory on their part to know God even if the call of the Prophet does not reach them. But they were divided as to whether knowledge of God is acquired and a posteriori (*kasabi*) or necessary and a priori (*daruri*).[25]

Imam Abu Hanifah agreed with the Mu'tazilites on the original question and maintained that "no one can have any excuse for ignorance about his creator, as he sees the creation of the heaven and the earth of his own as well as of others. So even if Allah should not have sent any messenger to the people, it was obligatory on them to know Him by means of their intellect."

God's Essence and Attributes

As to the relation between God's essence and attributes Imam Abu Hanifah is stated to have advised his pupils not to enter into discussion on this question, but to be content with ascribing to God the qualities which He Himself ascribed to Himself.[26] He even once declined to discuss this problem with Jahm.[27] In order to avoid the difficulties involved in affirming attributes, he simply declared that "they are neither He, nor other than He" (*la huwa wa la ghairuhu*).[28] According to the explanation of al-Maturidi, this phrase means that the attributes of God are neither identical with nor separate from His essence.[29]

Al-Tahawi made no reference to the philosophical problem of the relation between God and His essence, nor did he make a clear distinction between the attributes of essence and those of actions. But he emphatically asserts the eternity of the attributes and says: "Allah has eternally been with His attributes before He created the world and nothing has been added to His qualities after the creation, and as He has been from eternity with His qualities, He will remain with these to eternity . . . ."[30]

Expressing his vigorous attitude against the Anthropomorphists he declared "Whosoever attributes to Allah any of the human senses (*ma'ani*), he becomes an infidel." The true path lies, he asserts, between *tashbih* and *ta'til*. "He who does not guard against denial (of attributes) and assimilation, slips and does not attain *tanzih*. Verily our Lord the High and Exalted has been attributed with the attribute of oneness and has been qualified with the quality of uniqueness. No one of the creation possesses His qualities. Allah is most high and praise be to Him. He is without limits, ends, elements, limbs, and instruments.

The six directions do not encompass Him as they do the created things."[31]

It may be inferred from the above statement and the similar one in the *`Aqidah*, that al-Tahawi is against the literal interpretations of the anthropomorphic expressions of the Qur'an, such as the face of Allah, His eyes and hands, etc. But he does not indicate what these terms signify. Abu Hanifah clearly states that these terms denote His qualities. Even then he also is not in favour of giving any rational interpretation of them, as he fears that this may lead to the denial of His qualities.

He says: "He has hand, face, and soul as mentioned in the Qur'an, and whatever Allah mentioned in the Qur'an as face, hand, or soul is unquestionably His quality. It should not be said with the Qadarites and the Mu'tazilites that by His hand is meant His power or His bounty, because this leads to the rejection of certain attributes. Nay, His hand is His attribute without description."[32]

The Imam had also adopted the principle of leaving the judgment to God (*tafwid*)[33] regarding the interpretation of the ambiguous verses of the Qur'an; al-Tahawi stuck to this principle very consistently.

He says: "The foot of Islam does not stand firm but on the back of submission and surrender. Whosoever wishes to attain that knowledge which was forbidden for him and whose intelligence does not remain content with submission, his desire certainly hinders him from access to pure concept of unity (*tawhid*), clear knowledge, and correct faith, and he then wavers between faith and infidelity, belief and disbelief, confession and denial as a sceptic, distracted, eccentric, and fugitive person without being a faithful believer or a faithless disbeliever."[34]

The attitude of al-Maturidi on this question is more rational and liberal than that of al-Tahawi. According to the former, leaving judgment to God and passing an interpretative judgment for oneself are both allowed; and he is in favour of interpreting them in the light of explicit verses of the Qur'an.[35]

Throne of Allah

Regarding the Throne of Allah (*'arsh*) as mentioned in the Qur'an,[36] Abu Hanifah maintains that the expression should not be taken in the literal sense to mean a particular place. God being the creator of place cannot be thought of to be limited by place. He is where He has been before the creation of place. Abu Muti` al-Balkhi, one of the disciples of the Imam, asked him, "What will you say if anyone asks: `Where is Allah the Exalted?'" He replied: "He should be told that Allah has been existing while there was no place before He created the universe; He has been existing while there was no `where (*aina*), no created being, nor anything else. He is the creator of everything."[37]

Refuting the idea of the Anthropomorphists that God is in a particular place, he declared: " We confess that Allah has seated Himself on the Throne without any necessity on His part, and without being fixed on it. If He had been under any necessity, He would not have been able to create the world and would have governed it like the created beings; and if He should feel any necessity to sit down and remain seated, where then was He before the creation of the Throne? God is exalted and high far above such

ideas."[38]

It is evident that, according to Abu Hanifah, God, being eternal and incorporeal, cannot be conceived as being encompassed by direction and place. Al-Tahawi, as has been quoted above, firmly holds this view. "God is without limits, ends, elements, limbs, and instruments. The six directions do not encompass Him as they encompass the created things."[39] Referring to the Throne and the Chair, he states: "The Throne and the Chair are realities as Allah described them in His honoured Book. But He is not in need of the Throne nor of what is besides the Throne. He encompasses everything and is above everything. [40]

Al-Maturidi went a step further to allow rational interpretation of those verses, the apparent sense of which created an impression of His being in a place. He refuted the view of those who thought that the Throne was a particular place and God was on it, in it, or encompassed by it, as well as the views of those who thought that He was in every place.

According to him, God being eternal, infinite, and incorporeal is free of time and space which imply rest, change, motion, and movement. Explaining the verses[41] which were interpreted to prove His being in a particular place or in every place by the champions of these views, he asserts that these verses refer to His creative function, controlling power, absolute authority, sovereignty, eternity, and infinitude and indirectly prove that He is above the limitations of time and space.[42]

Beatific Vision

This question was discussed with much fervour by the Companions of the Prophet. Besides their intense love of God and an ardent desire to enjoy the happiness of seeing their Lord in the next world, the accounts of Ascension (*mi'raj*), and the prayer of Moses to have a vision of his Lord as referred to in the Qur'an,[43] aroused in them fervent zeal for a discussion of this topic. It seems quite certain that as a result of this discussion they arrived at the following conclusions: (a) God is invisible in this world; no human being saw Him or will ever see Him in this world[44] except the Prophet Muhammad who, according to some of them, saw Him on the night of *mi'raj*; (b) God will be seen by the faithful in paradise.[45]

The eager inquiries of the Companions of the Prophet whether he saw his Lord[46] or whether believers will see Him in the next world[47] and the vehement opposition of a group of leading Companions, including `A'ishah, to the common belief that the Prophet saw his Lord,[48] all clearly indicate that the Companions were fully conscious of the difficulties involved in answering these questions.

Their standpoint on this question, like that on the problem of essence and attributes was just to believe and refrain from a detailed discussion of such matters as cannot be comprehended by human reason. The seeing of God in paradise was regarded by them as the highest blessing and happiness for the believers and the summum bonum of their life. They believed in it without description (*wasf*) or rational

explanation. (*ta'wil*).

The Anthropomorphists, in the subsequent period, found in this belief a strong basis for their gross and crude anthropomorphic conception of God. As God will be seen in paradise He must have body and form and may be seen in this world, nay, He may even assume the form of a beautiful man.[49]

It was Jahm who, in order to oppose *tashbih*, laid great emphasis on *tanzih* and quite consistently with his idea of abstract God denied for the first time, according to our present information, the vision of God in paradise.[50] The Mu'tazilites adopted this view and interpreted the beatific vision allegorically. Imam Abu Hanifah upheld the view of the Companions and discarded both anthropomorphic and allegorical interpretation of "seeing God."

God will be seen by the faithful in paradise, he maintains, with their bodily eyes, but without any idea of place, direction, distance, comparison, or modality and without any description.[51] Al-Tahawi maintains the same position and emphasizes that beatific vision is an article of faith and it must be accepted without any doubt, without any rational interpretation, and without any idea of anthropomorphism. Any attempt to interpret it by reason will amount, according to him, to the denial of this tenet.[52]

Al-Maturidi also supported this orthodox view and opposed *tashbih* and *ta'wil* and showed by elaborate discussion that the verses of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet on this question do not allow any allegorical interpretation. His main argument, as we have already seen, is that the conditions of seeing a physical object in this world should not be applied to seeing God who has no body and no form and is not limited by time and space, and that too in the next world where nature of things and state of affairs would be quite different from what prevails here.[53]

Speech of God and the Qur'an

Speech (*kalam*), according to Abu Hanifah, is an attribute of God pertaining to His essence and is eternal like all other divine attributes, and God speaks by virtue of this eternal speech.[54] As regards the relation between *kalam* of Allah and the Qur'an, he says: "We confess that the Qur'an is the uncreated speech of Allah; inspiration or revelation from Him is neither He nor other than He, but His quality in reality, written in the copies, recited by the tongues, and preserved in the breasts. The ink, the paper, the writing are created, for they are works of men.

The speech of Allah, on the other hand, is uncreated; the writings, the letters, the words, and the verses are signs (*dalalat*)[55] of the Qur'an for the sake of human needs. The speech of Allah is self-existing and its meaning is understood by means of these symbols. Whosoever says that the speech of Allah is created, he is an infidel: His speech, though recited, written, and retained in the hearts, is yet never dissociated from Him."[56]

Abu Hanifah thus refutes the ideas of the Mu'tazilah who denied the attribute of speech being identical with divine essence and declared the Qur'an to have been created, as well as the ideas of those

Mushabbihah and Hashwiyyah (extreme orthodox) who thought that divine speech, like human speech, consists of words and sounds and that the script in which the Qur'an was written was as eternal as the Qur'an itself.[57]

Kalam of Allah, according to him, is not identical with His Being, for this will make His Being complex and lead to the plurality of Godhead; nor can it be something other than Himself, for this will mean that He acquired a new quality and became what He was not before. This also implies imperfection and change in the divine nature; hence absurd. Divine speech, therefore, must be eternal, and as the Qur'an is universally accepted to be the speech of Allah, it is necessarily uncreated.

Al-Tahawi treated this subject with great caution and condemned controversies about the Qur'an and practically declined to enter into a philosophical discussion on the nature of divine speech. He says: "Verily the Qur'an – the *kalam* of Allah – originated (*bada`*) from Him as words without description (*bila kaifiyyah*) and He sent it down to His Prophet as revelation; and the faithful believed it to be truly as such, and they knew for certain that it was in reality the *kalam* of Allah, the Exalted, not created like the speech of the created beings. So whoever supposes it to be human speech is an infidel."[58]

The main point of controversy, it may be mentioned here, between the Jahmiyyah and Mu'tazilah, on the one hand, and the orthodox, on the other, was on the nature of the divine word and its relation to the Qur'an, after they had all agreed that the Qur'an was the revealed book of Allah. So al-Tahawi, in fact, bypassed the main point at issue. He also made no reference to the relation of the speeches of created beings or that of Allah's word addressed to them such as to the Prophet Moses, as mentioned in the Qur'an, with the eternal speech–a problem, which evidently bewildered the minds of Ja'd, Jahm, and their followers. Abu Hanifah sought to remove this doubt with reference to the eternal divine attributes of knowing and creating. "Allah had indeed been speaking before He spoke to Moses, as Allah had indeed been creating from eternity before creating any creatures.

So, when He spoke to Moses, He spoke to him with His speech which is one of His eternal attributes." Similarly, "whatever Allah mentions in the Qur'an, quoting from Moses and other prophets and from Pharaoh and Iblis, is the eternal speech of Allah about them. The speech of Allah is uncreated, but the speech of Moses and other created beings is created. The Qur'an is the speech of Allah and not their speech; therefore, it is eternal."[59]

Divine Will and Human Freedom

The all-pervading will of God, His eternal decree (*qadar*) and infinite power, on the one hand, and freedom of the human will and action, on the other, are equally stressed in the Qur'an.[60]

According to the Qur'an, divine will, decree, and power are not inconsistent with human freedom. These problems were discussed by the Prophet and his Companions. Belief in *qadar* was declared by the Prophet as an article of faith, but at the same time he asserted that *qadar* does not deprive a man of his

freedom in his limited sphere.

Thus, according to the Qur'an and the Tradition, God is the creator of all things including their nature, and nothing can go against this nature. He is the creator of the human soul and its nature and He has created in it freewill and bestowed upon it the faculty of knowing, thinking, and distinguishing and the power of judging, choosing, and selecting. God, being the omniscient creator, knows from eternity what His creatures will do in future – this is the "writing of the destiny" and "the eternal divine decree."[61]

That the Prophet laid stress both on *qadar* and human freedom and on the possibility of human action side by side with divine action, is also evident from his famous saying on natural religion (*din al-fitrah*): "Every child at birth is born in the *fitrah*, then it is his parents who make of him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian." This is testified by the Qur'anic verse, "The *fitrah* of Allah in which He hath created mankind, there is no change."[62]

The sayings of the Prophet that divine decree comprises all human care and precautions for life, that prayer can change destiny,[63] and that God has provided remedy for every disease,[64] and similar other traditions also clearly indicate that the divine decree is not despotic or tyrannical in its nature and that it does not imply any compulsion, nor is it inconsistent with freedom and responsibility.

The Companions of the Prophet also believed both in *qadar* and human freedom and emphatically denied the idea of compulsion (*jabr*). Some prominent Companions explained *qadar* as foreknowledge. Abu Musa al-Ash`ari said: "God decreed as He knew."[65] `Abd Allah b. `Amr (d. 63/682) used to say: "The Pen has dried up according to the knowledge of God."[66]

`Ali (d. 40/661) gave a clear exposition of his view on the problem and said: "Perhaps you think that the judgment (*qada'*) is binding and the decree (*qadar*) is final. Had it been so, then reward and punishment would be meaningless and the promise and threat null and void, and no reproach then should have come from Allah against a sinner and no promise for a righteous person. This is the view of the brethren of Satan .... Verily Allah has enjoined discretion, issued prohibitions, and given warnings. He has not burdened (men) with compulsion, nor has He sent the prophets in vain . . . ."[67]

Imam Abu Hanifah made a bold attempt to harmonize the contradictory views of the self-determinists and the predeterminists by explaining the nature of divine power, will, and decree and enunciating the doctrines of natural religion (*din al-fitrah*), divine help, and guidance (*taufiq*), abandoning (*khadhlan*) and acquisition (*kasb*). God had knowledge concerning things before they existed from eternity, and His will, decree, decision, and writing on the Preserved Tablet are in accordance with this foreknowledge. So the eternal decree is of a descriptive nature and not of a decisive nature. God created men with natural dispositions (*fitrah*), endowed them with intellect, then addressed them and commanded them through His messenger to believe and abstain from unbelief.

Thereupon some people deviated from this natural religion, disavowed truth, and turned to unbelief. This unbelief is their own act, their own acquisition, preferred by their free-will, which God created in them,

and is not due to any compulsion from Him, but due to His leaving them to themselves. Those who clung to their nature received divine help and guidance. “Allah did not compel any of His creatures to be infidel or faithful, and He did not create them either as faithful or infidel, but He created them as individuals, and faith and unbelief are acts of men .... All the acts of man, his moving as well as his resting, are truly his own acquisition, but Allah creates them and they are caused by His will, His knowledge, His decision, and His decree.” But while good actions are according to His desire, pleasure, judgment, command, and guidance, evil actions are not in accordance with these.68

Al-Maturidi, as we have already noticed, explained this view quite elaborately and laid emphasis on the freedom of acquisition and choice. Al-Tahawi discourages all speculative thought on the subtle and mysterious question of predestination (*taqdir*), because this may lead one to despair and disobedience.69 But he asserts that all human actions are creations in relation, to God and acquisition an relation to men, and God is never unjust to them so as to burden them beyond their power and capacity.70

Conclusion

It will be noticed from what has been said in the foregoing pages that al-Tahawi did not introduce any new doctrine or system in theology, but summarized faithfully and honestly the views of his master on important theological questions, in his own language. So “Tahawism,” in fact, does sot imply a new school of thought in Islamic theology; it is only another version of Imam Abu Hanifah's theological system. The importance of al-Tahawi’s creed, mainly consists in the fact that it makes the position of his master quite clear. Imam Abu Hanifah occupied so important a place in theology and law and his system exerted so much influence on the educated mind that the Mu'tazilites, the Murji'iites, and the orthodox equally claimed him for themselves. The Mu'tazilites for this reason even denied his authorship of any book in theology.71

Prominent pupils of Imam Abu Hanifah and his followers mainly engaged themselves in a close study of the problems of practical life, and generally it was they who occupied the posts of judges and legal advisers during the reign of the `Abbasids and even afterwards. By virtue of their work they could get little time for a detailed study of speculative theology.72

Their trends of mind also, it appears, were not in favour of pure speculation. Their time, energy, and genius were devoted to legal studies, and theological speculation was left for others. Thus, their contribution to theology is negligible in contrast to their contributions to law and jurisprudence. A few of them, like Hammad and Isma'il, the son and grandson of Abu Hanifah, Bishr al-Marisi, Hafs al-Fard, Bishr b. Walid, Muhammad b. Shuja', and others who took some interest in theology, could not quite consistently explain and expand the views of their leader.

During the reign of al-Mamun and his immediate successors, the Hanafi judges openly supported the Mu'tazilites' stand on some of the controversial questions and co-operated with the rulers in suppressing

the views of the extreme orthodox. Besides the Mu'tazilites and the Murji'ites, the followers of Imam Abu Hanifah themselves were divided in interpreting his views.

Al-Tahawi, like al-Maturidi, rendered valuable services in removing the doubts and confusions and making the position of the Imam quite clear. The influence of al-Tahawi on theology can easily be estimated from the numerous commentaries written on his creed. In short, al-Tahawi's credit lies in the fact that he very nicely and elegantly presented the summaries of the views of Imam Abu Hanifah, the first founder of the theological school of Ahl al-sunnah – summaries for which he must have relied, besides the latter's works, on other reliable sources which had already received recognition from a large number of orthodox people.

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1. Al-Sam'ani, al-Ansab, Leiden, 1912, fol. 368; Ibn Qutlubugha, Taj al-Tarajim, ed. G. Flugel, Leipzig, 1862, p. 6; Ibn al-Nadim, al-Fihrist, Cairo, 1348/1929, p. 292; `Abd al-Qadir al-Qarashi, al-Jawahir al-Mud'iyyah, Hyderabad, 1332/1913, Vol. I, pp. 102-05; Jalal al-Din, al-Suynti, Husn al-Muhaddrah,Vol. I, p. 147; Ibn Khallikan, Wafayat al-A'yan,Vol. I, p. 19; al-Dhahabi, Tadhkirat al-Huffaz, Hyderabad, 1334/1915, Vol. III, p. 28; `Abd al-Hayy Lakhnawi, al-Fawa'id al-Bahiyyah, Cairo, 1324/1906, pp. 31-34.
2. Al-Dhahabi, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 28; al-Suyuti, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 147.
3. Cf. authorities cited above.
4. Muhammad Zahid al-Kauthari, al-Hawi, Cairo, 1368/ 1948, pp. 6-11; al-Qarashi, op. cit.; Lisan al-Mizan.
5. The `Aqidah was published in Halab in 1344/1925. Several commentaries were written on this creed (cf. Kashf al-Zunun, Istanbul, II, 1143) one of which named Kitab Sharh al-Tahawiyyah fi al-`Aqidat al-Salafiyyah was published at Makkah in 1349/1930, and was ascribed to Sadr al-Din 'Ali b. Muhammad al-Adhra'yi.
6. It was `Abd Allah ibn Saba, a convert from Judaism, who introduced and propagated anthropomorphic ideas among the Muslims during the caliphate of 'Ali. The foreign influence is traceable at the background of all sorts of ideas of tashbih, tajsim, and hulul (cf., al. Shahrastani, al-Baghdadi). The anthropomorphic expressions in the Qur'an were never

understood by the Prophet or his Companions in the strict literal sense.

7. Abu Hanifah, Al-'alim w-al-Muta'allim, ed. Muhammad Zahid al-Kauthari, pp. 13, 29, idem, al-Wasiyyah, MS. Cairo, pp. 1, 2; al-Fiqh al-Akbar, Hyderabad, p. 11; al-Qari, Sharh Fiqh al-Akbar, pp. 76 et sqq.; Sharh Wasiyyah, Hyderabad, p. 75; ibn Abd al-Barr al-Intiqa, Cairo, 1350/1931, p. 168; al-Ash'ari, Maqalat, Cairo, 1950, Vol. I. p. 202.

8. Maturidi, Kitab al-Tauhid, MS. Cambridge, pp. 193 et sqq.; al-Makki, Manaqib Abi Hanifah, Vol. I, p. 148; Sharh al-Tahawiyyah, Makkah, 1349/1930, p. 261; al-Taftazani, Sharh al-`Aqa'id al-Nusafiyyah, Cawnpore, 1347/1928, p. 91.

9. Al-Tahawi, Bayan al-Sunnah w-al-Jama'ah, Halab, 1344/ 1925, p. 7.

10. Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, pp. 10-11; al-Wasiyyah, MS. Cairo, p. 2; Sharh al-Wasiyyah. p. 78 ; al-`Alim w-al Muta'allim, pp. 12 et sqq.; Risalat Abi Hanifah, ed. al-Kauthari, pp. 35 et sqq.

11. Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, p. 10; al-Wasiyyah, p. 2; al-`Alim w-al Muta'allim. pp. 14 et sqq.; Sharh al- Wasitiyyah, p. 76; al Qari, Sharh al-Fiqh al-Akbar, pp. 78 et sqq.; Abu al-Muntaha, Sharh al-Fiqh al-Akbar, Hyderabad, pp. 58 et sqq.

12. Al-Wasiyyah, p. 2; Sharh al-Wasiyyah, p. 77 ; al-Fiqh al-Absat ed. al-Kauthari, pp. 45 et sqq.; Musnad al-Imam al-A'zam, ed. Muhammad `Abid al-Sindhi, Lucknow, 1316/1898, p. 12.

13. Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, p. 10; al-`Alim w-al-Muta'allim, pp. 14, et sqq.; Sharh al-Wasiyyah, p. 76.

14. Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, p. 9; al-Fiqh al Absat, pp. 41 et sqq.; Risalat Abi Hanifah, p. 37; al-`Alim w-al-Muta'allim, pp. 25 et sqq.; al-Makki, op. cit.,Vol. I, pp. 78et a'qq.; Musnad al-Imam al A'zam, p. 10.

15. Musnad al-Imam al-A'zam. pp. 11 et sqq.

16. Abu Hanifah, al-Fiqh al-Akbar.

17. Al-Tahawi, al-'Aqidah, p. 7.

18. Ibid., p. 7 .

19. Qur'an, iv, 48.

20. Al-Tahawi, al-'Aqidah, p. 8.

21. Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, p. 11.

22. In the printed text the word is al-Haqiqah which most probably is al Khashiyyah, cf.Sharh al-Tahawiayah, p. 261.

23. Al-`Aqidah, pp. 7-8.

24. To act or believe on the authority of others.

25. Cf. the views of the Mu`tazilites, especially of `Allaf and al-Nazzam, in al-Badghadi's al-Farq and Usul al-Din, and al-Shahrastani's Milal. This question was discussed by the Mu'tazilites, by Ghailan al-Dimashqi (prosecuted by Hisham b. `Abd al-Malik [d. 125/743]),who taught that knowledge is of two kinds: natural or instinctive (fitri)and acquired (muktasab). Faith, according to him, is the rational knowledge, not the instinctive knowledge. (Milal,Vol. I, p. 274; al-Farq, p. 125; Maqalat,Vol. I, p. 200.)

26. Al-Biyadi, Isharat, p. 149.

27. Al-Makki, al-Manaqib, Vol. I, p. 145.

28. Al-Wasiyyah, p. 4; al-Biyadi, op. cit., p. 118.

29. Al-Isharat, p. 118; Sharh al-Fiqh al-Akbar, ascribed to al-Maturidi, Hyderabad, p. 19.

30. al-`Aqidah, p. 4.

31. Ibid., p. 5.

32. Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, p. 6.

33. Leaving the true meaning to the knowledge of Allah.

34. Al-`Aqidah, p. 4.

35. See the chapter on al-Maturidi.

36. Qur'an, vii, 54; xx, 5; xxx, 75; lix, 17, etc.

37. Al-Fiqh al-Absat, p. 57.

38. Al-Wasiyyah, pp. 3-4; Sharh al-Wasiyyah, p. 81; Isharat, p. 195.

39. al-`Aqidah, p. 5.

40. This translation is according to the text given in the Sharh al-Tahaiyyah, p. 213.

41. Such verses of the Qur'an as vii, 54; xx, 5; xliii, 84; lix,17; 1, 16; ivi, 58; lviii, 7.

42. Kitab al-Tawhid, pp. 32-37; Ta'wilat, Surah vii, 54; xx, 5.

43. Qur'an, vii, 143.
44. “None among you will ever see his Lord till he dies” is a saying of the Prophet, Isharat, p. 65.
45. Traditions on this point have been narrated by more or less thirty Companions: Sharh al-Tahawiyyah, p. 24; Isharat, p. 205.
46. Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, Vol. III, p. 9; al-Nawawi, Sharh Muslim, Cairo, 1929, Vol. III, p. 12.
47. Al-Nawawi, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 17 et sqq.
48. Ibid., pp. 8, et sqq.; Isharat, p. 317; Ibn Kathir, Tafsir,Vol. II, pp. 161 et sqq.; Vol. IV, pp. 247 et sqq.
49. Al-Ash'ari, Maqalat, Vol. I, p. 263.
50. Shahrastani, Milal, Vol. I, p. 137
51. Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, p. 10; al-Wasiyyah, p. 7 ; Sharh al-Wasiyyah, p. 97 ; Isharat, p. 201.
52. Al-'Aqidah, p. 4.
53. Cf. the chapter on Maturidism.
54. Al-Fiqh al-Akbar, p. 5.
55. In one MS. the word. is alah. (instrument).
56. Al-W'asiyyah, p. 4; Sharh al-W'asiyyah, pp. 82-83.
57. Al-Ash'ari, Al-Irshad, pp. 128-29.
58. Al-`Aqidah, p. 3; cf. p. 7.
59. Abu Hanifah, al-Fiqh al-Akbar, pp. 5-6.
60. Qur'an, vi, 39, 125, 149; xxii, 14; lxxxv, 16; lxxxvi, 30; liv, 49 and other verses referring to the divine will and decree. And the verses: iv, 111; x, 44, 108; xi, 101; xiii, 11; xvii, 15-17; 84; xviii, 29; xli. 46: x1v. 15, and many others refer to freedom.
61. Cf. also verses of the Qur'an, 1, 4, 16.
62. Bukhari and Muslim, “Kitab al-Qadar”; also Qur'an, xxx, 30.
63. Tirmidhi, “Kitab al-Qadar.”
64. Mishkat, “Kitab al-Tibb.”
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69. Al-`Aqidah, p. 5.
70. Ibid., p. 11.
71. Al-Bazzazi, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 107; Tash Kubrazadah, Miftah al Sa’adah, Hyderabad, 1328/1910, Vol. II, p. 29.
72. Some books on theology were written by Muhammad al-Shaibani, al-Hasan b. Ziyad and Zufar b. Hudhail-all pupils of Abu Hanifah.

Chapter 13: Maturidism

Maturidism by A.K.M Ayyub Ali, M.A, Ph.D, Principal Government Rajshahi Madrasah, Rajshahi (Pakistan)

A detailed discussion of the fundamental principles of Islam led Muslim scholars in the second and third/eighth and ninth centuries of Hijrah to philosophical reasonings on the nature and attributes of God

and His relation to man and the universe. As a result, a new science of Muslim scholasticism called *'Ilm al-Kalam* came into being.

As a matter of fact, it was the Mu'tazilites who laid the foundation of this new science and made lasting contributions for its development. They started their movement by adopting a rational attitude in respect of some theological questions, but when they reached the height of their power, they adopted an aggressive attitude towards their opponents. The orthodox Muslims opposed the Mu'tazilite movement from the very beginning and tried to refute their doctrines by the traditional method. A section of the orthodox people took recourse even to violent methods.

Conflicting ideas and antagonistic attitudes created chaos and confusion in Muslim thought and shook the foundation of old ideas and traditional beliefs. The need for reconciliation and solving the crisis by adopting a middle course and a tolerant attitude was keenly felt. At this critical period of the history of Muslim theology there appeared, in three parts of the Muslim world, three eminent scholars: al-Maturidi in Central Asia, al-Ash'ari in Iraq, and al-Tahawi in Egypt.

They all endeavoured to reconcile conflicting ideas and settle the theological problems of the time by adopting a system that would satisfy reason and conform to the general tenets of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. They exercised profound and lasting influence on the subsequent development of Muslim philosophy and theology and were considered to be the fathers of the three schools of thoughts named after them.

Ash'arism and Tahawism have been dealt with in separate chapters; here we are concerned with Maturidism.

Life and Works of Maturidi

Abu Mansur Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Mahmud, al-Maturidi, al-Ansari, al-Hanafi, was born at Maturid,[1] a village or quarter in the neighbourhood of Samarqand, one of the great cities of Central Asia. According to some writers, he came of the renowned family of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari of Madinah.[2]

This statement is also corroborated by the fact that some other Arab families of Madinah also settled in Samarqand[3] and that al-Maturidi's daughter was married to al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, the father of Imam Abu al-Hasan `Ali al Ash'ari and a descendant of Abu Ayyub al Ansari of Madinah.[4]

Almost all the biographers who give only short sketches of al-Maturidi's life in their works agree that he died in the year 333/944, but none of them mentions the date of his birth. One of the teachers of al-Maturidi, namely, Muhammad b. Muqatil al-Razi is stated to have died in 248/862, which proves that al-Maturidi was born before that year and possibly about the year 238/853. According to this assumption, al-Maturidi was born during the reign of the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 232-247/847-861) who combated the Mu'tazilite doctrines and supported the traditional faith[5].

Al–Maturidi flourished under the powerful rule of the Samanids, who ruled practically the whole of Persia from 261/874 to 389/999 actively patronized science and literature, and gathered around their Court as number of renowned scholars.[6] He was brought up in the peaceful academic atmosphere and cultural environment of his native land and received good education in different Islamic sciences under four eminent scholars of his time: Shaikh Abu Bakr Ahmad b. Ishaq, Abu Nasr Ahmad b. al–`Abbas known as al–Faqih al–Samarqandi, Nusair b. Yahya al–Balkhi (d. 268/881), and Muhammad b. Muqatil al–Razi (d. 248,/862), Qadi of Rayy. All of them were students of Imam Abu Hanifah (d. 150/767)[7]

In recognition of his scholarship and profound knowledge in theology (and his invaluable services to the cause of *Ahl al–sunnah w–al–jama'ah*) people conferred on him the title of *Imam al–Huda* and *Imam al–Mutakallimin*. Mahmud al–Kufawi mentioned him as “leader of guidance, the model of the Sunnite and the guided, the bearer of the standard of *Ahl al–sunnah w–al jama'ah*, the uprooter of misguidance arising from disorder and heresies, leader of the scholastics, and rectifier of the faith of the Muslims.[8]

Works – Al–Maturidi wrote a number of important books on *Tafsir*, *Kalam*, and *Usul*, a list of which is given below:

1. *Kitab Tawilat al–Qur'an* or *Tawilat Ahl al–Sunnah.*

2. *Kitab Ma'khadh al–Shari'ah*.

3. *Kitab al–Jadal*.

4. *Kitab al–Usul* (*Usul al–Din*).

5. *Kitab al–Maqalat*.

6. *Kitab al– Tauhid*.

7. *Kitab Bayan Wahm al–Mu'tazilah*.

8. *Kitab Radd Awa'il al–Adillah li al–Ka'bi*.

9. *Kitab Radd Tahdhib al–Jadal li al–Ka'bi*.

10. *Kitab Radd Wa'id al–Fussaq li al–Ka'bi.*

11. *Radd al Usul al–Khamsah li abi Muhammad al– Bahili*.

12. *Radd Kitab al–Imamah li ba'd al–Rawafid*.

13. *Kitab al–Radd `ala al–Qaramitah*[9]

Unfortunately, not a single work of al–Maturidi has so far been published. His *Tawilat al–Qur'an, Kitab al–Tauhid*, and *Kitab al–Maqalat* which are by far the most important and valuable of all his works, exist

only in manuscripts. The *Tawilat al-Qur'an* is a commentary on the Qur'an in the scholastic method in which he endeavoured to establish the liberal orthodox theology, both traditionally and rationally, and to provide for it a sound basis.[10] Commenting on this momentous work, Sheikh `Abd al-Qadir al-Qarashi says, "A unique book with which no book of the earlier authors on this subject can have any comparison."[11]

In his *Kitab al-Tauhid*, al-Maturidi gave an elaborate exposition of his system and sought to harmonize the extreme views of both the traditionists and the rationalists. The book bears testimony to his broad outlook, deep insight, and intimate acquaintance with the philosophical systems of his time.

The evidence at our disposal at present shows that al-Maturidi was the first *Mutakalim* to introduce the doctrine of the sources of human knowledge in a book on theology such as *Kitab al-Tauhid* and thereby made a thorough attempt to build up his system on a sound philosophical basis. This method was followed by other theologians and the subject was later on elaborately treated by the Ash'arite scholars, al-Baqillani (d. 403/1013), and al-Baghdadi (d. 429/1037).

Al-Maturidi is one of the pioneers amongst the Hanafite scholars who wrote on the principles of jurisprudence and his two works *Ma'khadh al-Shari'ah* and *Kitab al-Jadal* are considered to be authoritative on the subject.[12]

It is evident from the list of works written by al-Maturidi that he took great care to refute the views and ideas of the Qarmatians, the Shiites, and especially those of the Mu'tazilites. His contemporary abu al-Qasim `Abd Allah al-Ka'bi (d. 317/929) was the leader of the Mu'tazilite school of Baghdad.[13] Al-Maturidi combated the doctrines of al-Ka'bi in his *Kitab al-Tauhid* and wrote three books on criticism of al-Ka'bi's three books. It may be observed here that while al-Maturidi in the East engaged himself in fighting the Mu'tazilites in general and particularly the Baghdad group, his contemporary al-Ash'ari in Iraq took a prominent part in resisting the Mu'tazilites of Basrah. But it appears to us that al-Maturidi began his movement long before al-Ash'ari appeared on the scene and most probably while the latter was still in the Mu'tazilite camp.[14]

Method

Al-Maturidi in his *Kitab al-Tauhid* gave a short critical account of the different views regarding the matter and sources of human knowledge and the best method to be followed in order to acquire knowledge. Means of acquiring knowledge, according to him, are three: (1) Sense-organs (*al-a'yan*); (2) Reports (*al-akhbar*); (3) Reason (*al-nazr*).

He severely criticized the conflicting views of different groups who thought that knowledge is not attainable at all, or that senses cannot supply true knowledge, or that reason alone is sufficient to give us all knowledge. Refuting the views of those who deny or doubt the possibility of knowledge altogether or the possibility of acquiring knowledge through sense-organs, al-Maturidi says that even animals

perceive by their senses what may preserve or destroy them and what may be useful or harmful to them.

So theoretical arguments with those who pretend to deny the objective reality of things is useless. Yet he says, they may be humorously asked: “Do you know what you deny?” If they say “No,” their denial stands cancelled, but if they answer affirmatively, they admit the reality of their denial and thereby become opposers of their opposing. A more effective way than this is to make them subject to physical torture so that they may be compelled to admit what they deny of the reality of sensuous knowledge.

Reports are the means of acquiring knowledge concerning genealogy, past occurrences, remote countries, useful and harmful things, foodstuffs, medicine, etc. These are of two kinds, historical reports (*khabr al-mutawatir*) and reports of the prophets (*khabr al-rusul*), possessing sure signs to prove their honesty. Though both kinds of reports are proved to be sources of knowledge, we should be very critical in accepting reports of the prophets, because they are handed down through chains of narrators who are not infallible and who may commit mistakes in reporting.

Those who reject report as a source of knowledge are, al-Maturidi asserts, like those who reject sensuous knowledge. In order to convince them, they should be physically tortured and if they complain of pain, they should be told: Your words of complaint are nothing but reports which cannot give us any real knowledge.[15]

Reason, according to al-Maturidi, is the most important of all other sources of knowledge, because without its assistance sense and report can give no real knowledge. Knowledge of metaphysical realities and moral principles is derived through this source. It is reason which distinguishes men from animals. Al-Maturidi has pointed out many cases where nothing but reason can reveal the truth. This is why the Qur'an repeatedly enjoins man to think, to ponder, and to judge by reason in order to find out the truth. Refuting the ideas of those who think that reason cannot give true knowledge, he says that they cannot prove their doctrine without employing reason.[16]

Reason, no doubt, occupies a very eminent place in the system of al-Maturidi, but it cannot give, he holds, true knowledge concerning everything that we require to know. Like senses, it has a limit beyond which it cannot go. Sometimes the true nature of the human intellect is obscured and influenced by internal and external factors such as desire, motive, habit, environment, and association, and, as a result, it even fails to give us true knowledge of things that are within its own sphere. Divergent views and conflicting ideas of the learned concerning many a problem are mentioned by al-Maturidi as one of the proofs in support of his statement.

Hence, reason often requires, he asserts, the service of a guide and helper who will protect it from straying, lead it to the right path, help it understand delicate and mysterious affairs, and know the truth. This guide, according to him, is the divine revelation received by a prophet. If anyone will deny the necessity of this divine guidance through revelation and claim that reason alone is capable of giving us all the knowledge we need, then he will certainly overburden his reason and oppress it quite

unreasonably.[17]

The necessity of the divine revelation is not restricted, according to al-Maturidi, to religious affairs only, but its guidance is required in many worldly affairs too. The discovery of the different kinds of foodstuffs, medicine, invention of arts and crafts, etc., are the results of this divine guidance. Human intellect cannot give any knowledge in respect of many of these matters, and if man had to rely solely on individual experience for the knowledge of all these things, then human civilization could not have made such rapid progress.[18]

Al-Maturidi refutes the idea of those who think that the individual mind is the basis of knowledge and criterion of truth. He also does not regard inspiration (*ilham*) as a source of knowledge. Inspiration, he argues, creates chaos and conflicts in the domain of knowledge, makes true knowledge impossible, and is ultimately liable to lead humanity to disintegration and destruction for want of a common standard of judgment and universal basis for agreement.[19]

It is evident from this brief account that reason and revelation both occupy a prominent place in the system of al-Maturidi. The articles of religious belief are derived, according to him, from revelation, and the function of reason is to understand them correctly. There can be no conflict between reason and revelation if the real purport of the latter be correctly understood. His method of interpreting the Scriptures may be outlined in the following words: The passages of the Holy Qur'an which appear to be ambiguous or the meanings of which are obscure or uncertain (*mubham* and *mushtabah*) must be taken in the light of the verses that are self-explaining and precise (*muhkam*).

Where the apparent sense of a verse contradicts what has been established by the "precise" (*muhkam*) verses, it must then be believed that the apparent sense was never intended, because there cannot be contradiction in the verses of the Holy Qur'an, as God has repeatedly declared. In such cases, it is permissible to interpret the particular verse in the light of the established truth (*tawil*) or to leave its true meaning to the knowledge of God (*tafwid*).[20]

The difference between the attitude of al-Maturidi and that of the Mu'tazilites in this respect is quite fundamental. The latter formulated certain doctrines on rational grounds and then tried to support their views by the verses of the Holy Qur'an, interpreting them in the light of their doctrines. As regards the traditions of the Prophet, their attitude was to accept those which supported their views and to reject those which opposed them.[21]

Criticism of the Mu'taziltes

Al-Maturidi always tried to adopt a middle course between the extreme Rationalists and the Traditionists. He would agree with the Mu'tazilites on many points, but would never accept the Aristotelian philosophy as a basis of religious doctrines. Similarly, he is in accord with the Traditionists on fundamentals, but is not ready to take the Qur'an and the Hadith always in their literal sense and

thereby to fall into gross anthropomorphism.

He agrees with the Mu'tazilites that it is obligatory on the part of every rational being to acquire knowledge of the existence of God through his reason even if no messenger were sent by Aim for this purpose; that things are intrinsically good or bad and the *Shari'* (God) takes into consideration these values in His *amr* (command) and *nahi* (prohibition); that God has endowed man with reason through which he can often distinguish right from wrong.

But, contrary to the Mu'tazilites, he maintains that reason cannot be the final authority for human obligation and religious law. The basis of religious obligation, according to him, is revelation, not reason.[22] It seems that al-Maturidi's view on this question and on the authorship of human action, as will be seen, is mainly guided by the Qur'anic verses such as ***"To Him belong creation and command."***[23]

Al-Maturidi bitterly criticized the Mu'tazilite doctrine of divine justice and unity. Their interpretation of divine justice led them to deny the all-pervading will and power of God, His authorship of human action, and made Him quite helpless and subject to external compulsion. Divine grace and mercy find no place in their system as is evident from their view on grave sins. Their doctrine of *al-aslah* (salutary) cannot explain satisfactorily the existence of evil, natural calamities, and sufferings of innocent children and animals.

According to their doctrine, man enjoys more power and freedom than the Creator of the universe. They did not follow, al-Maturidi tried to prove, the explicit decisions of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, nor the dictates of sound reason.[24] Their interpretation of *tauhid* reduced God to an unknown and unknowable non-entity (*ta'til*).[25]

Their view that Non-Being is a thing (*al-ma'dumu shai'un*) only supports the atheists' doctrine of the eternity of the world, makes an eternal partner with God, and thereby contradicts the Qur'anic doctrines of creation and *tauhid*. They made God quite imperfect and subject to changes by denying His eternally creative function.[26]

Maturidi's System

Al-Maturidi built up his own system mainly on two principles: freedom from similitude (*tanzih*) and divine wisdom (*hikmah*). On the principle of freedom from similitude he opposes similitude (*tashbih*) and anthropomorphism (*tajsim*) in all their forms, without denying divine attributes. The anthropomorphic expressions used in the Qur'an like the hands, the face, the eyes of God, and His sitting on the Throne should not be taken in their apparent sense, because the literal interpretation of these expressions contradicts the explicit verses of the Qur'an.

These passages, therefore, should be interpreted in the light of the clear passages of *tanzih* in a manner

consistent with, the doctrine of *tauhid*, and permissible according to the usage and idiom of the Arabic language, or their true meanings should be left to the knowledge of God.[27]

On the principle of divine widom (*hikmah*) al-Maturidi tried to reconcile the conflicting views of the Determinists (Jabrites) and the Mu'tazilites and prove for man certain amount of freedom, without denying the all-pervading divine will, power, and decree. Wisdom means placing a thing in its own place; so divine wisdom comprises both justice (*'adl*) and grace and kindness (*fadl*). God possesses absolute power and His absoluteness is not subject to any external laws but His own wisdom.[28]

Al-Maturidi applied this principle also to combat the Mu'tazilites' doctrine of *al-aslah* (best) on the one hand, and the orthodox view that God may overburden his servants (*taklif ma la yutaq*) on the other. It is inconsistent with divine wisdom, which includes both justice and kindness, to demand from man performance of an act which is beyond his power, such as to command a blind man: "See," or to command one who has no hands: "Stretch your hands."[29]

Similarly, it would be an act of injustice if God would punish the believers in hell for ever or reward the infidels in paradise for ever.[30] He agreed with the Mu'tazilites on these questions in opposition to the orthodox,[31] but he strongly opposed the former's doctrine that God must do what is best for man.

This Mu'tazilite doctrine, he argues, places God under compulsion to do a particular act at a fixed time for the benefit of an individual and denies His freedom of action. It only proves the right of a man on Him and not the intrinsic value and merit of an action which the divine wisdom keeps in view. Moreover, this doctrine cannot solve the problem of evil. Al-Maturidi, therefore, maintains that divine justice consists not in doing what is salutary to an individual, but in doing an action on its own merit and in giving a thing its own place.[32]

After this brief outline, we give below a somewhat detailed account of al-Maturidi's view on the most important theological problems of his time, viz., the relation between God and human action, divine attributes, and beatific vision.

Relation between God and Man

Al-Maturidi in his *Kitab al-Tauhid* and *Tawilat al-Qur'an* has dealt at length with different aspects of this broad problem, the will, the power, the eternal decree, and the creative function of God; His wisdom and existence of evil in this world; freedom of man; and the basis of religious obligation and responsibility, etc.

Al-Maturidi combated the views of the Jabrites and the Mu'tazilites on the above questions and he also disagreed with al-Ash'ari on certain points. Refuting the absolute determinism of the Jabrites, he says that the relation between God and man should not be considered to be the same as that between God and the physical world. God has endowed man with reason, with the power of distinguishing between right and wrong, and with the faculties of thinking, feeling, willing, and judging, and has sent messengers

and revealed books for his guidance.

Man inclines and directs his mind towards something which he thinks may benefit him, restrains himself from what he thinks will harm him, chooses one of the alternative courses of action by the exercise of his own reason, and thinks himself responsible for the merits or demerits of his actions.

Now, while he thinks, desires, inclines, chooses, and acts, he always considers himself quite free, and never thinks or feels that any outside agency compels him to do any of his actions. This consciousness of freedom, al-Maturidi asserts, is a reality, the denial of which will lead to the denial of all human knowledge and sciences. Quoting passages from the Qur'an[33] he also shows that the actions enjoined or prohibited by God are ascribed to men, and that they will be accountable for their "own" actions.

All this clearly proves that God has granted men freedom of choice and necessary power to perform an action. The denial of this freedom will mean that God is wholly responsible for all human actions and is liable to blame or punishment for sins committed by men, yet on the Day of Judgment He will punish them for His own actions. This is quite absurd, as God has described Himself in the Qur'an as the Most wise, just, and compassionate.[34]

But how can human freedom be reconciled with the Qur'anic conception of the all-embracing divine will, power, eternal decree, and God's authorship of all human actions? Al-Maturidi's explanations may be summed up as follows.

Creation belongs to God alone and all human actions, good or bad, are willed, decreed, and created by Him. Creation means bringing forth of an action from non-existence into existence by one who possesses absolute power and complete knowledge in respect of that action. As man does not know all the circumstances, causes, conditions, or the results of his action, and does not possess within himself the requisite power for producing an action, he cannot be regarded as the creator (*khaliq*) of his action.

Now, when it is proved that God is the creator of all human actions, it will necessarily follow that He also wills these actions, because divine action must be preceded by divine will. So nothing can happen in the world against or without the will of God. But, though God wills and creates human actions, He is not liable to blame or accountable for their actions, because divine will is determined by divine knowledge and He creates the action when a man in the free exercise of his reason chooses and intends to perform an action.

Thus, God wills an action good or evil, which He knows a man will choose, and when ultimately he chooses and intends to acquire it God creates that act as a good or evil act for him. From this, it will be clear that God's willing or creating an evil action is not inconsistent with His wisdom and goodness.

Because, God wills the happening of the evil because He desires the individual to exercise free choice, but being wise and just He always prohibits the choice of evil. So, though sins are in accordance with His will, they are never in accordance with His command, pleasure, desire, or guidance. Sin, then,

according to al-Maturidi, consists not in going against the divine will, but in violating the divine law, command, guidance, pleasure, or desire.

The basis of man's obligation and responsibility (*taklif*), al-Maturidi maintains, does not consist in his possessing the power to create an action, but it is the freedom to choose (*ikhtiyar*) and the freedom to acquire an action (*iktisab*), conferred on man as a rational being, which make him responsible and accountable.[35]

As regards eternal divine decree (qada' and *qadar*) al-Maturidi holds that it is not inconsistent with human freedom, nor does it imply any compulsion on the part of man, because it is an eternal record based on foreknowledge. God decrees the act He knows from eternity that a man will choose and acquire freely.

Man cannot deny his own responsibilities on the ground of the divine decree, al-Maturidi adds; he cannot do so on account of time and space within which actions must be done. So, though man is not absolutely free, God has granted him necessary freedom consistent with his obligation and, therefore, the divine decree relating to human actions should not be regarded the same as in relation to the physical world.[36]

It may not be out of place to note here the points of difference between al-Maturidi and al-Ash'ari on this question. In order to make a man responsible for his action al-Maturidi laid great stress, as we have just noticed, on the freedom of choice (*ikhtiyar*) and freedom of acquisition (*iktisab*). Divine will, decree, and foreknowledge do not deprive a man of this freedom.

An action is a man's own action, though created by God, because it is the result of his own choice and it has been acquired by him without any compulsion. God provided for him all the means and facilities for acquiring an action, endowed him with the power of judgment and self-control, and granted him freedom to choose whatever means and course he prefers to adopt.

Al-Ash'ari also used the term acquisition (*kasb*)[37] but interpreted it differently. It seems that he did not favour the idea of the freedom of choice. According to him, God being omnipotent, all objects of power fall under His power, as God being omniscient all objects of knowledge fall under His knowledge. So a man's will has no effect or influence at all on his action; it is always determined by the divine will. Even the desire and power of acquisition fall under divine power and are the creation of God.[38] Acquisition then; according to al-Ash'ari, means only a general coincidence of the divine power anal human actions.

It is God who in reality creates as well as acquires the action through man. This view, as is evident, does not differ in essence from that of the Determinists and hence he was regarded by some writers as being one of them.[39] Even most of the prominent Ash'arites like Qadi Abu Bakr al-Baqillani (d. 403/1013), Shaikh Abu Ishaq al-Isfara'ini, and Imam al-Haramain al-Juwaini (d. 478/ 1085) could not agree with him on this question and gave different interpretations of the term *kasb*.[40]

Divine Attributes

Human languages do not possess any term, al-Maturidi says, to explain the nature and attributes of God in a way that will not imply any idea of resemblance or comparison. Yet it is a necessity for human understanding to ascribe some names and attributes to the Creator of the world. Giving a critical account of the views of the philosophers, the pluralists, the dualists, and the atheists, al-Maturidi asserts that the belief in one Supreme Power and Ultimate Reality is universal, but the people differ greatly from one another in giving names and attributing qualities to this Supreme Being. Among the people of *tauhid*, it is only the Mu'tazilites, he says, who by denying the divine attributes and their eternity endangered this universal belief in the existence of one God.

Refuting the views of the Mu'tazilites on this question, he says that it is agreed that God has beautiful names and it will be quite futile to apply these names to Him divested of the meanings and contents which they imply; for otherwise it will not be unreasonable to ascribe to Him any name whatsoever. So, when, for example, it is said that God is wise, it must mean that He possesses the quality of wisdom. The denial of the divine attributes (*ta'til*) only creates confusions, makes the knowledge of God impossible, and ultimately reduces Him to an unknown and unknowable Non Being. The denial of the eternity of the attributes makes God imperfect in the beginning and subject to changes, and, thus, it shakes the very basis of *tauhid*.

The idea of pluralism or anthropomorphism that may arise due to affirmation of the eternal attributes can easily be eradicated by firm belief in the absolute unity of God together with the idea of *tanzih* (denial of likeness and similitude) and *mukhlafah* (difference from the created being). Thus when we say that "God is knowing," we also add to this (as a safeguard against any blasphemous idea concerning Him), "but not like the learned, and His knowledge is not like our knowledge." The consequences of the denial of the divine attributes or their eternity are far more dangerous than those of their affirmation.

As regards the relation between divine essence and attributes, al-Maturidi says that the problem is so complicated that no human reason can hope to solve it satisfactorily. So we should believe that God is one, has attributes which He ascribes to Himself, without similitude, comparison, and asking how. We should not go further than asserting that "the attributes are not identical with nor separated from His essence" (*la huwa wa la ghairuhu*).41

Al-Maturidi also maintains that all the attributes of God whether belonging to His essence or action are eternal. The word *takwin* has been used to denote all the attributes pertaining to action such as creating, sustaining, etc. *Takwin*, according to al-Maturidi, is an eternal attribute distinct from power (*qudrah*).

So God is the creator before and after the creation. This does not indicate in any way the eternity of the world, because as knowledge and power are eternal attributes, though the objects of knowledge and power are created, *takwin* is an eternal attribute, though the object of *takwin* (*mukawwan*) is created. The non-existence of the world at the beginning does not imply God's inability, as He created it at the

appropriate time in accordance with His eternal knowledge and will.[42]

Al-Ash'ari on this question is in agreement with the Mu'tazilites and holds that the attributes of action are originated.[43] It seems to us that he agreed with them in order to evade the Aristotelian argument which aims at proving the eternity of the world by the eternal, creative power of God. Al-Maturidi's main argument is that the idea of the createdness of any of the divine attributes is fundamentally opposed to the conception of God as a perfect, self-subsistent, eternal Ultimate Reality and is, therefore, in conflict with the doctrine of *tauhid*.

As regards the Word of God (*Kalam Allah*), al-Maturidi maintains that like all other attributes His attribute of speaking as well as His speech is eternal without similitude and comparison. The exact nature of this eternal speech or the attribute of speaking is not known, but it is certain that the divine speech cannot be composed of sounds and letters like human speech, because sounds and letters are created.

So, in reality, he asserts, only the "meaning" of which the words are an expression can be termed as the *kalam* of Allah. This "meaning" which existed with God from eternity can be heard and understood only through the medium of created sound.

Accordingly, Moses did not hear the eternal speech, but God made him hear and understand the eternal speech through created words and sounds. Now, what is heard by or revealed to the prophets is called the *kalam* of Allah figuratively (*majazan*) for three reasons: (1) They heard (understood) the purport (*al-ma'na*) of the *kalam*, that is, divine command, prohibition, forbidding, sanctioning, etc., which belong to God alone. (2) God Himself composed it (*allafa wa nazama*); hence it was inimitable by any human being. (3) It explains the eternal speech and proves His attribute of speech.[44]

It is evident from the above account that al-Maturidi refutes the idea of the orthodox section who identified the revealed Qur'an with the eternal speech, and he agrees in principle with the Mu'tazilites who held it to be a creation of God. So the subject of contention between him and the Mu'tazilites is not whether the recited Qur'an is created, but whether God has eternal speech and the attribute of speaking.

Al-Ash'ari, like al-Maturidi, maintains that God has eternal speech and the attribute of speaking,[45] but it is not clear from his lengthy discourses in *Kitab al-Luma* and *al-Ibanah* what he exactly meant by *kalam* of Allah and what, according to him, was eternal in the Qur'an-words or meanings? He maintained that the eternal speech could be heard directly without the medium of created sound.[46]

This statement, together with general trends of his ideas and his mode of reasonings as reflected in his printed books, corroborates a statement according to which both words and meanings were regarded by him as eterna1.[47] But al-Shahrastani asserts that, according to al-Ash'ari, the words are created and the "mental" meaning (*al-ma'na al-nafsi*) is eternal;[48] this last is the view of all the eminent Ash'arites.[49] If so, there is not much difference on this question between the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites.

Beatific Vision

It has been noticed that al-Maturidi, like the Mu'tazilites, strongly opposed the anthropomorphic idea of God and interpreted metaphorically those passages of the Qur'an which appear to create such an impression. But on the question of seeing God in paradise by the believers, he is wholly in agreement with the orthodox, and firmly holds that the passages of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet on this subject must be taken in their literal sense.

By scholastic reasonings he shows that the letter and spirit of these verses and traditions do not allow us to take them allegorically and to interpret seeing God as "seeing His signs and rewards or knowing Him by the heart." This latter type of seeing is common for believers and nonbelievers in the next world and may even happen in this world. The texts must always be taken in their literal and real sense, he argues, except where that is impossible.

The vision of God in the next world is not impossible and it does not necessarily prove His corporeality, and hence if the literal sense were rejected, its consequences would be dangerous and it might ultimately lead to the denial of the existence of God. As God is knowing and doing; for example, without His being a body or accident or without His being limited by time and space, so will He be an object of vision in the next world. Some people were misled because, as they had no experience of seeing what is not a body or an accident, they compared the vision of God in paradise with the vision of a material object in this world.

Thus, the Corporealists (*Mujassimin*) erred in saying that God is a body, because He will be seen, and the Mu'tazilites erred in saying that He cannot be seen because He is not a body. Conditions of vision, al-Maturidi says, differ from stage to stage, person to person, and genus to genus. Many things exist, but we do not see them. Angels who are not corporeal beings see us, though we do not see them. Conditions of seeing: rays of light, darkness, and shadow, are not the same as those of seeing solid material objects.

So it is quite unreasonable to apply the conditions of seeing a physical object in this world to the seeing of the Being which is not a body in the next world, where conditions will be totally different from those in this world. Seeing God, therefore, may be impossible in this world, but not in the next world.

He also argues that vision may not happen sometimes for some reason or other, although the conditions of vision exist; in the same way, vision may happen in the absence of those conditions. Another argument of his is that, according to our sense-experience, only the knowledge of matter and accidents can be acquired by a man, yet we assert the possibility of acquiring knowledge of the realities beyond experience. This principle is also applicable to beatific vision.

In short, al-Maturidi asserts that the vision of God in paradise is the highest spiritual and intellectual delight and the most coveted reward of the believers; it is an article of faith based on the Qur'an and the

Sunnah and supported by reason. So we must accept this as such, without going into details.[50]

Conclusion

The theological systems of al-Maturidi and al-Ash'ari have long since been accepted by the general populace of the Muslim world. Though ascribed to them, neither al-Maturidi nor al-Ash`ari was, in fact, the author of his system, nor was either of them a pioneer in this field. Imam Abu Hanifah (d. 150/767) was the first renowned scholar among the Ahl al-sunnah wa'l Jama'ah, who studied theology for long before he had taken up the study of Fiqh, combated the heretical sects of his time, and founded the first orthodox school in theology.[51]

Al-Maturidi followed his system, explained it in the light of the philosophy of his time, tried to defend it by argument and reason, and this provided for it a firm foundation. Hence this school is ascribed to its founder as well as to its interpreter who fixed its ultimate form and brought victory to it.

The difference between the attitude of al-Maturidi and of al-Ash'ari may be judged from this: If al-Ash'ari's attempt during the later period was to strike a middle path between rationalism and traditionalism, al-Maturidi certainly took a position between what may be called Ash'arism and Mu'tazilism. The important points of difference between these two leaders of orthodox *Kalam*, more strictly, between the two schools, have been reckoned by some writers as fifty in number.[52] (References have already been made in the foregoing pages to some of the most important of them and we need not enter here into a discussion of the rest.)

As a result of these differences, there was once a tendency of bitter rivalry between the followers of these two schools but happily in course of time this tendency subsided and both the schools were regarded as orthodox. But how profoundly the educated Muslims of today are influenced by the system of al-Maturidi may easily be realized from the fact that the *`Aqa'id* of al-Nasafi (d. 537/1142), which gives the substance of the former's *Kitab al-Tauhid*, has been recognized as an authority and prescribed as a text-book on theology in many educational institutions of the Muslim world.

A comparative study of the arguments employed by al-Maturidi and by the great Ash'arite scholars like `Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdadi (d. 429/1031) and Imam al-Haramain al-Juwaini (d. 478/1085) to prove the non-eternity of the world, the existence of God, His unity and attributes, the value of human reason, the necessity of the divine revelation, and the prophethood of Muhammad, will show how deep and enormous his influence was on the orthodox dialecticians who came after him, and what a lasting contribution he made towards the development of orthodox Kalam.

That Shaikh Muhammad `Abduh (d. 1323/1905), one of the leaders of the modern reform movement in Islam, in his endeavour to reconstruct Islamic theology, closely followed the system of al-Maturidi, is evident from his *Risalat al-Tauhid* and his observations on several controversial questions in his note on the *Sharh `Aqa'id al-`Adudiyyah*.

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1. The word is also pronounced as Maturid and Maturit. Cf, al-Sam'ani, al-Ansab, fol. 498b; Ibn al-Athir, al-Lubab, vol. III, p. 76; Ahmad Amin, Zuhr al-Islam. vol. I, p. 365. It was wrongly transcribed by some writers as Matarid.
2. Al-Maturidi, Kitab al-Tauhid, MS. Cambridge, fol. 1, footnote al Sayyid Murtada, Sharh Ihya' of al-Ghazali, Cairo, 1893, V ol. II, p. 5.
3. Imam Abu Nasr al-'Ayadi, al-Samarqandi, one of al-Maturidi's teachers, was a descendant of Sa'd b. `Ubadah, vide 'Abd al-Hay Lakhnawi, al-Fawa'id al Bahiyyah, Cairo, 1324/1906, p. 23.
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6. For Samanids see al-Maqdisi, Ahsan al-Taqasim, p. 294; Ahmad Amin, op. cit. vol. I, pp. 261 et sqq.
7. Kamal al-Din al-Biyadi, Zaharat at-Maram, Cairo, 1949, p. 23; Sharh Ihya' vol. II, p. 5, and books on Hanafi ,Tabaqat.
8. Kata'ib A'lam al-Akhyar, p. 129.
9. Three other works, viz., Sharh Fiqh al-Akbar of Imam Abu Hanifah, 'Aqidah abi Mansur and Sharh al-Ibanah of Imam al-Ash'ari are erroneously ascribed to him.
10. MSS. of this book are found at the Cairo, Istanbul, and Berlin Libraries. Sheikh 'Ala al-Din Abu Bakr Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Samarqandi wrote a commentary on this book in eight volumes, an incomplete copy of which can be found at the Patna Library.
11. Al-Jawahir al-Mud'iyyah, MS. Cairo, p. 251.
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13. For al-Ka'bi, see al-Shahrastani, Milal, al-Azhar ed., vol. I, pp. 116-17; al-Baghdadi, Kitab al-Fariq, Cairo, pp. 108-09.
14. Al-Ash'ari was born in 260/873 or 2701883 and remained in the Mu'tazilites' camp up to the fortieth year of his age, so

he must have begun his movement after the end of the third century of Hijrah. Al-Maturidi was born before 248/862, and supposing that he spent about thirty years in acquiring knowledge, then his movement seems to have begun before the end of the third century A.H.

15. Al-Maturidi, op. cit., pp. 3, 13.

16. Ibid., pp. 4-5, 68-69.

17. Ibid., pp. 92-95; Tawilat, Surah vii, 54.

18. Ibid., pp- 91 et sqq.

19. Ibid., pp- 2-4.

20. Ibid., p. 116; Tawilat, MSS. Istanbul & Hyderabad, Preface; 'Ali al-Qari, Sharh al-Fiqh al-Akbar, Cairo, 1323/1905, p. 75.

21. Zuhdi Hasan, al-Mu'tazilah, Cairo, 1947, pp. 247-48; Ahmad Amin, Duha al-Ialam, Cairo, vol. III, p. 32.

22. Kitab al-Tauhid pp. 48-49, 91-92; Sharh al-`Aqa'id al-`Adudiyyah with commentaries of Sialkuti and Shaikh Muhammad `Abduh, Cairo, 1322/1904, p. 180, Nazm al-Fara'id Cairo, 1317/1899, pp. 32-37; al-Raudat al-Bahiyyah, Cairo, 1322/1904, pp. 34-39.

23. Qur'an, vii, 56.

24. Kitab al-Tauhid, pp. 41-42, 48, 144-69, 178; Tawilat, Surah vii, 10.

25. Kitab al-Tauhid, pp. 13, 21, 46.

26. Ibid., p. 59; Tawilat, Surah xxxix, 62.

27. Tawilat, Surah vii, 54; v, 64; iv, 27; xi, 37; Kitab al-Tauhid, pp. 12, 32.

28. Kitab al-Tauhid, pp. 46-47, 61-62.

29. Ibid., pp. 134-35; Tawilat, Surah ii, 286.

30. Ibid., pp. 186 et sqq.

31. For al-Ash'ari's views on these questions, see his Kitab al-Luma`, Cairo, 1955, pp. 113 et sqq.; al-Ibanah, Hyderabad, 1948, p. 59:

32. Kitab al-Tauhid, pp. 48, 61, 112.

33. Qur'an, ii, 77, 167; xxliii, 17; xli, 40; xcix, 7, etc.

34. Kitab al-Tauhid, pp. 115 et sqq., 165.

35. Ibid., pp. 117 et sqq.

36. Ibid., p. 161.

37. The evidence at our disposal does not clearly indicate when and by whom the doctrine of kasb was first formulated. But it is quite evident that neither al-Maturidi nor al-Ash'ari was the originator of this doctrine. The term kasb or iktisab had been used long before them by Imam Abu Hanifah and his contemporaries: Jahm b. Safwan (d. 128/745), Hafs, al-Fard, and Dirar b. `Amar. Cf. al-Ash'ari, al-Maqalat, Cairo, vol. I, pp. 110, 313; al-Baghdadi, op. cit., pp. 129 et sqq.; Muhammad b. al-Murtada al-Yamani, Ithar al-Haqq, pp. 312, 316.

38. al-Ash'ari, Kitab al-Luma`, Cairo, 1955, pp. 72 et sqq.

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42. Kitab al-Tauhid, pp. 23 et sqq.; Tawilat, Surahs i, 3; ii, 117.

43. The three schools differ from one another in defining the attribute of an action. Cf. Ali al-Qari, Sharh Fiqh al-Akbar, Cairo, 1323/1905, p. 19.

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45. Kitab al-Luma`, pp. 33 et sqq.; al-Ibanah, pp. 19 et aqq.

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47. Sharh al-`Aqa'id al-`Adudiyyah, p. 188.

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52. Al-Biyadi, op. cit., pp. 53-56; Shaikhzadah, Nazm al-Fara'id, Cairo, 1317/1899; Sayyid Murtada, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 8 et sqq.; Abu 'Udhbah, op. cit.; `Abd Allah b. `Uthman, Risalah fi al-Khilaf bain al Ash'ariyyah wa'l-Maturidiyyah. MS. Cairo.

Chapter 14: Zahirism

Zaharism by Omar A. Farrukh, Ph.D, Member of the Arab Academy, Damascus (Syria)

Background

Since the second/eighth century, an interminable dispute dragged on between those who upheld the authority of Tradition (*ahl al-hadith*) in all matters of theology and jurisprudence, and those who advocated opinion (*ashab al-ra'i*).

It was expected, as pointed out by Ibn Khaldun in his Muqaddimah (p. 805) that the people of the Hijaz, particularly those of Madinah, should be versed in the science of Tradition (the sayings and doings of the Prophet Muhammad). With the rise of the `Abbasid Caliphate and the shifting of the political power and the religious leadership completely to Iraq, where the people had had less access to the sayings of the Prophet, and where the aspects of life, the agrarian problems, for instance, were more diverse and complicated through the intermingling of the successive civilizations since times immemorial, a new school, that of opinion, made its inevitable appearance.

The upholders of opinion, however, did not neglect Tradition, but they found it necessary to supplement Tradition with additions drawn from older codes and prevalent usages or framed by considerations of the actual situation in their new environment. At the same time an esoteric movement also began among the Shiites under a variety of names, the most current of which was the Batiniyyah1 (seekers after the inner or spiritual interpretation of revelation). The forming of this sect is attributed to a certain Maimun of whose descent we are completely in the dark.

The Batiniyyah movement took its name from the belief of its followers that every *zahir* (apparent state of things) has a *batin* (an inner, allegorical. hidden, or secret meaning), especially in connection with revelation.2 Since this movement adopted some aspects of Greek philosophy, such as emanationism,3 its followers were considered by Sunni authors to be heretics and outside the pale of faith.4

During the Caliphate of al-Mamun (198/813-281/833) the Batiniyyah movement was quite strong;5

some half a century later it was widely spread in Iraq, Persia, Sind (western India), and Oman (south-east Arabia), as well as in North Africa, but it did not enjoy an enduring influence.[6] It is to be remarked, however, that while a number of individuals in Muslim Spain had shared ideas with the Batiniyyah, no sectarian or heretical doctrine ever struck roots or succeeded in winning over communities of any dimensions there.

So, the second/eighth century had witnessed a heavy atmosphere of esotericism weighing on some fundamentals of Islam such as the essence of God, the understanding of the Qur'an, and the attitude towards the Caliphate. Added to this there was a trend of upholding opinion as a valid source of jurisprudence at the same level with the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet. At the same time there was also the Mu'tazilite school which assumed reason as a more deciding factor than revelation in all matters of religion.

Since all these movements had chosen Iraq as their principal battle-field, another school, contrary to all of them and as extremist as any of them appeared in Iraq itself and insisted on the verbal understanding of the Qur'an and of the sayings of the Prophet Mubammad as the sole guiding line to their real meanings clothed in the words of God and of His Apostle. This school was founded by a jurist Dawud ibn 'Ali, and it received its name the Literalists' (*Zahiriyyah*) school from the clinging of its followers to the wording of the revelation and not to the interpretation of it.

Dawid ibn ‘Ali, His Doctrine and His School

The family of Dawud ibn 'Ali belonged to Kashan, a town in the neighbourhood of Isfahan. His father was a secretary (*katib*) to `Abd Allah ibn Khalid, judge of Isfahan, in the days of the Caliph al-Mamun.[7] Dawud[8] himself was born in Kufah in 202/817. His family moved later to Baghdad where he was brought up, educated, and afterwards laid the foundation of his school of jurisprudence which bore his name *al-madhhab al-Dawudi*,[9] but which was better known as the Zahirite school (*al-madhhab al-zahiri*).

In Baghdad, Dawud ibn 'Ali attended the lectures of many eminent jurists, the most prominent of whom was Abu Thaur (d. 246/860); a friend and follower of Shafi'i. The trend of education he received from them made him shift from the Hanafite rite to that to which his father belonged,[10] the Shafi'ite, apparently because most of his professors (*shuyukh*) were more inclined to the Traditionists (*ahl al-hadith*) school to which Shafi'is belonged than to the school of the upholders of opinion (*ashab al-ra'i*) who were the followers of Abu Hanifah *par excellence*. Dawud perfected his education by an academic trip to Nishapur to meet Ishaq ibn Rahawaih (d. 237/851 or 238/852),[11] who also was a friend and follower of Shafi`i. Afterwards, he returned to Baghdad where he wrote his books.

Perhaps it is not very strange that a close and profound study of the Shafi'ite school of jurisprudence led Dawud ibn 'Ali finally to be dissatisfied with it. He forsook it and founded a new school, the Zahirite school, which recognized the Qur'an and the Hadith as the only sources of jurisprudence. He accepted, at any rate, consensus (*ijma`*) of the Companions of the Prophet, but he rejected analogy (*qiyas*),

opinion (*ra'i*), personal approval (*istihsan*), and decisions on the authority of older generations (*taqlid*) altogether.[12]

Dawud ibn 'Ali was accomplished, trustworthy, learned, God-fearing, pious, and ascetic; he was also versed in logic and proficient in the art of disputation.[13] It was said that he believed that the Qur'an was created and not eternal, but it seems that this was only an accusation.[14] He died in 270/884 in Baghdad.

Dawud ibn 'Ali was a prolific writer. Ibn al-Nadim enumerates about one hundred and fifty titles from him.[15] It seems that many of these titles were only chapters of some of his books. But there are also titles which represent bulky works of two thousand, three thousand, and even four thousand folios[16] each. A few of these books touched the fundamentals of religion, e. g., "On the Usul," "On the Caliphate," "Consensus and the Refutation of Qiyas," and "On the Refutation of Taqlid."[17] Most of his other books treated of branches (*furu`*) or minor aspects of *Fiqh* concerning worship and legal transactions Unfortunately no book has reached us from him. Ibn Hazm, nevertheless refers to him frequently. Muhammad al-Shatti (d. Damascus 1307/1889) made a collection of Dawud's *Fiqh* gleaned from the various works of his followers.'[18]

It was related that Dawud ibn 'Ali admitted analogy where the cases in question were obvious,[19] but it is more probable that he rejected analogy wholly, whether the cases were ambiguous or obvious.[20] As for consensus (*ijma'*), his position was totally different: he admitted the *ijma`* of the Companions of the Prophet only,[21] on the ground that these Companions were in constant contact with the Prophet and fully aware of his intentions.

In his theology in particular he maintains, for example, that God is hearing, seeing, etc. But he says: "I do not say that He is seeing with the agency of sight ..."[22]

Dawud ibn 'Ali re-examined all aspects of *Fiqh* on the basis of his Zahirite attitude. The following are three examples illustrating his trend of thought and argumentation in this respect.

1. *Prayer on a Journey* - God has said in the Qur'an: "And when you journey in the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten the prayer."[23]

This led the Muslims to reduce prayer on a journey from four *rak`ahs* to only two.[24] Muslim jurists generally assert that this verse envisages cutting the prayer short on a journey of some duration.[25] Dawud, on the other hand, maintained that since there is no mention of the duration of the journey in the Qur'an,[26] prayer should be cut short on any journey whatever, even though it is a journey from one encampment to another.

2. *Fasting on a Journey* - Muslims fast in Ramadan, the ninth month of the lunar year. In this connection we read in the Qur'an: "But he among you who shall be sick, or on a journey, shall (not observe the days on which he travels but he shall) fast the same number of other days (when he returns home)."[27] It is agreed upon by all Sunni jurists that a Muslim may not observe Ramadan fasts on a journey which

involves certain hardship, either on account of its long duration or its difficult nature, on hot days for example.[28]

Dawud and his followers assert that a Muslim should not observe fasts on a journey because the wording of the verse does not stipulate any condition. If a Muslim, according to Dawud, did observe fasts for some days on a journey, even then he should keep fast for the same number of days when he returns home, for his fasting while journeying was not valid.[29]

3. *The Question of Usury* (*Riba*) – Usury is forbidden in Islam.[30] But a difficulty arose from a tradition concerning it. It is related that the Prophet Muhammad said: "(You may barter) gold for gold, silver for silver, wheat for wheat, barley for barley, dates for dates, and salt for salt, only in equivalent quantities and on the spot. In all other commodities you may deal as you like, provided (the barter is transacted) on the spot."[31]

Early Muslim jurists concluded from this tradition that a quantity of any commodity should not be bartered for a larger quantity of the same commodity; otherwise, the surplus taken would be usury (*riba*). But if, for instance, a quantity of wrought gold was bartered for a larger quantity of unwrought gold, the surplus would be a gain or, better, a wage for craftsmanship.

Furthermore, they considered the six commodities named by the Prophet to be examples only; thus bartering copper, coffee, leather, apples, or wool for a larger quantity of these commodities respectively is also regarded – by analogy – as a form of usury.

Dawud ibn `Ali, on the other hand, believed that the Prophet Muhammad had named these commodities on purpose. Had he intended to prolong the list, nothing would have prevented him from doing so. Accordingly, if a man bartered a quantity, say of iron, maize, apples, or pepper for a larger quantity of the same commodity, the surplus would not be usury but gain.

The jurists contemporary with Dawud ibn 'Ali took a very critical attitude regarding him and his school.[32] The Shafi'ites in general criticized him severely and considered the Zahirite school to be worthless. Al-Isfara'ini (d. 418/1027) maintained that no account should be taken of the Zahirites. Since they rejected analogy (*qiyas*), he asserted, they could not have been able to exercise judgment and, therefore, no one of them should be elevated to the position of a judge.

Some others presumed that Dawud ibn `Ali was ignorant; others considered him to be a disbeliever. Abmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241/855), the famous founder of the Hanbalite school, did not hold him in estimation.[33] Abu `Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Zaid al-Wasiti (d. 306/918-919), an eminent Mu'tazilite of Baghdad, looked down upon the Zahirite school as ridiculous.[34] The followers of Dawud ibn `Ali, nevertheless, were not only numerous but some of them were also prominent.[35]

Dawud ibn `Ali was succeeded, as the head of the Zahirite school, by his son, Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Dawud (c. 255/869-297/910). But the latter was more of a poet, litterateur, and historian than an

enthusiastic scholar of jurisprudence.[36] At any rate, he propagated the tenets of his father's school and bestowed on it so much prestige that the Zahirite rite was in his own days the fourth of the four rites prevailing in the East, the other three being the Shafi'i, Maliki, and Hanafi rites. Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Dawud owes his real fame, however, to an anthology of love-poetry known as Kitab al-Zahrah[37] The first and only extant half of this anthology was edited by A.R. Nykl[38] and Ibrahim Tukan. Abu Bakr Mubammad ibn Dawud had some inclination towards philosophy, but philosophy did not constitute a component part of Zahirism before Ibn Hazm.

In the fourth/tenth century the Zahirite school had enjoyed its widest expansion and the climax of its prestige. The `Abbasid poet Ibn al-Rumi (d. 283/896) praised Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Dawud in a poem which opens with the words: "O son of Dawud! O jurist of Iraq!"[39]

The famous historian, Tabari (d. 310/923), though not a Zahirite, paid close attention to Zahiri jurisprudence and studied it with Dawud ibn `Ali himself.[40] The foremost jurist of the Zahirite school in the fourth/tenth century was Abd Allah ibn Ahmad ibn al-Mughallis (d. 324/936), through whom the Fiqh of Dawud ibn `Ali became popular in the Muslim world.[41]

In the following century the Zahirite school was already losing ground in the East; and before the middle of the century, in the days of the Hanbalite judge Abu Ya'la (d. 459,/1066), the Hanbalite rite took its place.[42] The Zahirite school, at any rate, continued to enjoy in Syria some prestige until 788/1386.[43] In Egypt the school lived longer and had deeper roots. Al-Maqrizi (d. 845/ 1442), the famous historian of the Mamluk age in Egypt, was not a follower of the Zahirite school, but he had a favourable attitude towards Zahirism.[44]

The Zahirite School in Muslim Spain

1. Al-Balluti

The first representative of Zahirism in Spain was Mudhir ibn Said al-Balluti who was born at al-Nashsharin, a suburb of Cordova, in 273/886. After completing his studies at Cordova, he travelled to Egypt and the Hijaz for a little over three years.

On his return, he was appointed as judge (*Qadi*) in the city of Merida, then transferred to the Northern Frontiers and finally made the Chief Justice of Cordova, which post he held until his death towards the end of 355/965. He upheld Dawud's doctrines and defended his views, though, in practice, he administered justice according to the established law of the country based on the Malikite school of jurisprudence. He was also a man of letters, poet, theologian, physiographer, and eloquent speaker. In fact, he was the real forerunner of Ibn Hazm.

2. Ibn Hazm

Life and Works

Ibn Hazm was the real founder of the Zahirite school in Muslim Spain and the most famous and prominent of the Zahiri jurists. With him the school reached its zenith, and with his death it died away. In reality, the Zahirite rite never recruited a community in Muslim Spain. It came on the stage as a philosophy supported by a single man who failed to use his genius in the right way.

Ibn Hazm was the descendant of a non-Arab, an Iberian in all probability, but he preferred to link his genealogy with a Persian freedman of Yazid ibn Sufyan, a brother of Mu'awiyah, the founder of the Umayyad Caliphate in the East.

The family did not attain any fame before Ahmad ibn Said, the father of Ibn Hazm, who became a minister to the Hajib al-Mansur ibn Abi Amir,45 the Prime Minister of Hisham II, in 381/991. Ibn Hazm, who was born in 384/994 during the long ministerial term of his father, was brought up in a luxurious environment. He was fortunate enough to have been given a good education. The teacher who had the greatest influence on him was Ibn Muflit (d.426/1035), a Zahirite and a follower of Dawud ibn 'Ali; he chose to be eclectic in matters of worship and jurisprudence and did not agree that one should confine oneself to a particular school.

Ibn Hazm did not continue to enjoy prosperity and peace for long. With the outburst of the disturbances in 400/1009 and the death of his father only two years later, misfortunes began to overcome him and his family; and when he preferred, on this account, to withdraw from public life, his life became very obscure. A few years later, however, he decided to enter public life again. As a result, he experienced all ups and downs of life, from forming the cabinet to frequent imprisonments.

Six years after the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate in Cordova (422/1031) and the assassination of the fugitive Hisham III, life became unbearable for Ibn Hazm in the whole peninsula, not only because he was a client and partisan of the falling dynasty, but because he entertained also a religious doctrine which the rulers and the ruled in the peninsula did not share.

The only respite which Ibn Hazm had was during his stay on the island of Majorca, from 430/1039 to 440/1049. The local Governor of Majorca was Abu al-`Abbas Ahmad ibn Rashiq, an able statesman and a man of letters. For reasons inexplicable, he invited Ibn Hazm for a sojourn on the island. Ibn Hazm took refuge there and began, as soon as he could breathe freely, to propagate Zahirism.

Since he was supported by the Governor, some Majorcans followed him perhaps out of conviction, perhaps out of political tact – but it seems certain that the majority of the islanders were not in favour of the intruding doctrine. In 439/1047, the famous Maliki jurist, Abu al-Walid al Baji (403/1013–474/1081) returned from a journey in the East.

He held debates with Ibn Hazm and caused his disgrace. In the following year, Ibn Hazm was obliged to leave the island and go back on the mainland, but he was chased out of every town and village in which he tried to secure a footing. Finally, after fifteen years of complete oblivion, he found asylum on the estate of his own family in Manta Lisham where he passed away in 456/1063.

Ibn Hazm was a very prolific writer on different subjects ranging from genealogical tables to epistemology. It is believed that his books were four hundred comprising 80,000 folios of some twenty million words. The most important of these books are *Tauq al–Hamamah* (the Dove's Neck–Ring – on confidence and confidents), *Al–Milal wa'l–Nihal* (Religions and Sects), *Al–Ihkam fi Usul al–Ahkam* (Precision Concerning the Principles of Religious Matters) and *Al–Muhalla bi al–Athar* (the Gilded or Ornamented with Revelation and Tradition). This last is a comprehensive book on the aspects of worship and jurisprudence in Islam. Ibn Hazm was also a man of letters, poet, and statesman, but he is more famous as a rationalist and theologian.

Ibn Hazm's Rationalism

In his book *Al–Milal wa'l–Nihal*, ibn Hazm appears to be a rationalist. The problems of *a priori*, of time and space which confronted Kant (d. 1804) so often in his Critique of Pure Reason, had busied Ibn Hazm in the same way. It is really astonishing that the Muslim theologian had tackled these problems in the same spirit of objectivity seven and a half centuries before the German philosopher. Let us take up the theory of knowledge as discussed by Ibn Hazm. Knowledge arises, according to him, from the following

(a) Sensory perception (*shahadat al–hawas*), that is, observation or sensory evidence.

(b) Primary reason (*badihat al–`aql or awwal al–`aql*), that is, *a priori* reason without the use of the five senses.

(c) Proof (*burhan*), which goes back, either closely or remotely, to the evidence of the senses or to primary reason.

Ibn Hazm holds definitely that man has six senses, and that the soul grasps perceptible objects (material objects) by the five senses; thus a pleasant odour is accepted by reason . . . thus also the soul is aware that red is different from green, yellow, etc., or that there is a distinction between rough and smooth, hot and cold, etc.

The sixth sense, ibn Hazm holds, is the soul's knowledge of primary things; that is, there are some things which man can know through his reason as being axiomatic, without requiring any proof for them. "Such is the soul's knowledge that the part is less than the whole; thus the young child, who is only just able to discriminate, cries when he is given only two dates, but is satisfied when you give him another.

This is because the whole is greater than a part, even though the child cannot define the limits of his

knowledge .... The same sense gives the child the knowledge that two things cannot occupy the same spot; you will see him fight for a place where he wants to sit, knowing that that place is not big enough for another person, and that so long as another person occupies the place there is no room for him also ...

“This is a form of primary intelligence which is common to all except those whose reason is distorted ... or whose bodies are diseased or impotent in certain respects .... These truths of primary reason are truly axiomatic; they are beyond doubt and stand in no need of proof except to a madman . . . or to a scornful sophist.”

Ibn Hazm's argument for the view that these things require no proof is this: “To demand proof of anything requires time; primary reason cannot possibly avoid that fact .... Yet between the soul's first learning to discriminate phenomena and its knowing the complete truth of all that we have mentioned, there is not a single minute, nor can there be.”

But Ibn Hazm did not deny absolutely the necessity of proof to these things; rather, he held that such proof is a matter for personal acquisition which one may achieve, while another may not, and that it may carry weight only for such as have reached a high level of intellectual training.

Other means of acquiring knowledge, according to Ibn Hazm, are God's naming of things and men's convention as represented by the languages of the different nations. These two means, however, belong to theology and are discussed under that topic.

Philosophy and Science

Like all Muslim thinkers prior to his days, Ibn Hazm had no access to Greek originals. He had a predisposition towards argumentation, and was versed in the science of dialectics (*Kalam*). He claimed to have read (evidently through translations) the works of the Milesian and Eleatic schools, of Euclid and Ptolemy, of Plato and Aristotle, and of Alexander of Aphrodisias, and to have had a general knowledge of astronomy, astrology, and medicine. He also stated that he was well versed in mathematics in general and geometry in particular.

Ibn Hazm does not agree with Heraclitus that the world is in constant flow nor with the Eleatics that motion is non‑existent. On Being and NonBeing, he agrees with the Eleatics: Non‑Being is not. In keeping with his general trend of thought, he affirms that space and time are limited and that they are, like all other things, created by God. In the same way he maintains that atoms are divisible because it is in the power of God to do everything, and to this power of His, infinite divisibility of an atom is no exception.

In physiography, he holds that the world is limited and the earth is spherical and that the sun is larger than the earth, but he agrees with Anaximenes that the sky is like a vault over the earth. He disagrees, however, with Pythagoras that there is a sister earth which helps the earth keep itself in the correct

position.[46] The world, at any rate, is created, but it has existed for a very long time.

In ethics, he touches lightly on Greek philosophy and maintains with Prodicus of Ceos that death has no pain and that it should not be feared. He also holds with Epicurus and his contemporaries that the desire for pleasure and the repulsion from care are the criteria of happiness. But building up and improvement of character cannot be achieved by philosophy alone; the help of the prophets is necessary.

In his theory of knowledge, Ibn Hazm emphasizes, in addition to sensory perception and primary reason, three means of acquiring religious knowledge which are particularly fundamental in Islam. These are: the literal sense of the Qur'an, the sayings and doings of the Prophet Mubammad, and consensus (*ijma'*).

The first and foremost source of knowledge is the literal sense of the text of the Qur'an. This must follow from the context of the fifty-ninth verse of the fourth Surah, ***"O ye who believe! obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those of you who are in authority, and if ye have a dispute concerning any matter refer it to Allah and to the Messenger . . . ."***

The text of the Qur'an must be understood literally unless the words in question are used metaphorically and in a way current among the early Arabs. No divergence is allowed from the text of the Qur'an except where one verse is modified or abrogated by another.[47] A total dependence on the Qur'an is made possible by the fact that every aspect of life and every need of men, material or spiritual, is treated in the Qur'an or provided for in it. God says, ***"We have neglected nothing in the Book."*** (***6:38***) This implicit meaning was reiterated explicitly in this verse: ***"This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour to you and chosen for you Islam as a religion."*** (***5:3***)

The second source of knowledge is the Tradition, the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad. Ibn Hazm accepts the true hadith or the Sunnah when related in a sure way and by reliable men in a connected chain which reaches the Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet is certainly trustworthy, and Ibn Hazm quotes in this connection from the Qur'an: ***"Nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed."*** (***53:3-4***) [48]

Ibn Hazm accepts, as a third source of knowledge, consensus (*ijma`*) or general agreement of the Companions of the Prophet but on a further condition that all of them should have been aware of the matter agreed upon and that no one of them should have shown any disagreement or hesitation about it.

In contradistinction to the other schools of jurisprudence in Islam, the Hanafite school in particular, ibn Hazm rejects all other sources of jurisprudence such as intuition (*ilham*), hearsay (*khabar*), interpretation (*ta'wil*), deduction (*istinbat*), personal approval (*istihsan*), refraining from the unseemly (*ihtiyat*), legitimating a matter passed over in silence (*dalil alkhitab*), looking for a reason in matters other than, mentioned in the Qur'an (*ta'lil*), and holding a belief on the ground that it has been held by one's predecessors or some prominent contemporaries (*taqlid*).

Only the Prophet Muhammad must be taken as a model in all matters of belief and behaviour. He

equally rejected, and more forcibly, analogy (*qiyas*) and opinion (*ra'i*) or that which a man conceives as true but without a proof, or that which a man chooses out of mere desire. The Muslims should not abide by the beliefs and laws preached by prophets prior to Muhammad unless they are accepted by Islam as well.

Ibn Hazm's views about God, His essence and His attributes, are: God is one and unique; He is incorporeal; so nothing resembles Him nor does He take the shape of anything He has created. He is the creator of everything, of time, of space, and even of His own Throne. He is eternal, all-powerful and all-knowing. His power and knowledge as well as all His other names are eternal.

God cannot be conceived of as ruled by space and time, since He existed before there was space and time, for these were also created by Him. The verses in which God says of Himself: ***"The God of mercy sitteth on His Throne"***[49] and ***"Then He directed Himself to the heaven,"***[50], Ibn Hazm affirms with the Ash'arites that God's sitting or settling Himself on the Throne is known; but how it is done is unknown.

God has no attributes which modify His essence: His qualities are names and not adjectives, nor are they derived from adjectives. He says of Himself: ***"God's are the fairest names. Invoke Him by them."***[51]

Thus, only these names, ninety-nine in number, by which God has named Himself, may be said to be His; we are not allowed to call Him by names which He has not mentioned as His, for example, the happy, the healthy, the beloved, the noble, or the brave, although these titles are, in themselves, true of Him and cherished by us. We are also not allowed to call Him by names, derived from the verbs with which He predicated Himself. God says: ***"And when they*** (***the disbelievers***) ***meet the faithful they say, `We believe'; but when they are apart with their satans*** (***comrades***), ***they say, `Verily we hold with you and at them we only mock.' God shall mock at them."*** [52]

God says further: ***"And they*** (***the Jews***) ***plotted, and God plotted: but of those who plot, God is the best."***[53] He also says: ***"And the heaven - with our hands have We built it up."*** [54] In spite of all that, says Ibn Hazm, we cannot call God the mocker, plotter, or builder, simply because He did not call Himself by these name. Moreover, we do not interpret His names to know how or why He is called thus: He called Himself, for instance, the hearer, the One who sees, but we cannot say that He has the sense of hearing or of sight.

Furthermore, God speaks in the Qur'an of His (one) hand, of His two hands, and of His hands; so we may ascribe to Him one hand, two hands, or many hands. In the Qur'an He speaks also of His eye and of His eyes, but not of two eyes of His. According to Ibn Hazm, we may ascribe to God either one eye or ascribe to Him eyes, but not two eyes. When we speak of God's eye, hand, or face, we do not mean, at any rate, that He has members similar to ours. On the contrary, the words: face, eye, and hand are used as free metaphors to mean simply God.

And though God is incorporeal, Ibn Hazm asserts that the Muslims would see Him on the Day of

Judgment.[55] They cannot see Him, for certain, with the power of sight in their eyes but perhaps with the power which is called by some thinkers “the sixth sense.”

Regarding our knowledge of God, Ibn Hazm says, we do not maintain that we come to know Him by primary reason, for we do not want to run the risk of being refuted by somebody asserting that his primary reason does not lead him to the knowledge of God. Nor may we allow that the knowledge of God can be acquired by the art of reasoning, by argumentation or proof; since the masses are not capable of such dialecticism.

Failing to attain knowledge of God through these channels, some come to the conclusion that He does not exist. Nor may we allow authority or hearsay to be the criteria of the knowledge of God, because these cannot lead to real conviction. We know God only through revelation to the Prophet who is trustworthy and whose word should be accepted on its face value.

Ibn Hazm does not believe in the absolute free-will of man. Predestination, according to him, is nothing but the command of God that a thing should follow a definite course. Allah has created in man aptitudes, and every man behaves in compliance with his aptitudes. Accordingly, we may say that all actions of men, good and bad, are ultimately created by God.

Ibn Hazm was a polemicist by nature, and often right in his contentions. As Hitti says, “In this work [*Al-Milal wa'l-Nihal*] he pointed out difficulties in the biblical narratives which disturbed no other minds till the rise of higher criticism in the sixteenth century.” Yet he is to blame for the harsh language he used in his attacks on all religions and sects indiscriminately. On some occasions he attacked even some of those who shared with him the same doctrine.

Faith and Islam, says Ibn Hazm, are one and the same thing. Islam had abrogated all anterior religions. Therefore, no religion precedent to Islam should be followed, because every religion except Islam is obsolete and, consequently, annulled. Muhammad is the Prophet to all nations; he preached religion according to the prescription of God to him; and when he died revelation ceased. Islam was made complete; it is impossible either to add anything to it, or deduct anything from it, or make any change in it in any way.

The best people are the messengers of God; next are the prophets not entrusted with any mission to any people. After them are the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad. These last differ in their prestige in accordance with their efforts in the service of Islam and their personal character and behaviour, determined by the truth and ideals established by the Qur'an and the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad.

Zahirism after Ibn Hazm

For a certain period Zahirism constituted in the East a school of jurisprudence, but in Muslim Spain it

never grew beyond a persecuted philosophy. Even as a philosophy it began to decline there after the death of Ibn Hazm. It is true that Ibn Hazm built a Zahirite system of dogma and revised Muslim law from that standpoint, but his views enjoyed only a restricted acceptance in the Muslim West. In the East they found practically no echo. This is due to the uncompromising attitude he had taken in all matters of creed, worship, and legal transactions as well as to the harsh language he used while speaking of all those who did not share with him the views he entertained.

The Zahirites in the East, and the Hanbalites too, have always preferred to follow Dawud ibn 'Ali, though very little Fiqh has reached us from him. The few attempts to introduce Zahirism into North Africa were due largely to political considerations. On the Andalusian soil Zahirism found support or acceptance with individuals here and there. Ibn `Abd al-Barr (368-463/978-1071), the famous traditionist and biographer, had some leaning towards it.

A young contemporary of Ibn Hazm and of Ibn `Abd al-Barr, al-Humaidi was a historian and biographer of established fame. He was a declared Zahirite. When the persecution of the followers of the Zahirite school reached a high pitch in Muslim Spain, he left his native land, went to the East, and settled down in Baghdad where he died forty years later. Al-Humaidi was the first man to introduce Ibn Hazm's works into the East, but there they made no impression.

One would expect, despite all persecution, that Zahirism should have had numerous followers for a certain period at least, as has been the case with most other movements. Ibn al-Athir says:[56]

There was in the Muslim West a multitude of them (of the Zahirites) called the Hazmiyyah or followers of Ibn Hazm." Asin Palacios tried to draw a complete list of them.[57] Some of these were, to be sure, Zahirites or with Zahirite leanings. But a number of those who were considered by him to be such were certainly not. That al-Ghazali was antagnostic to the Batinites[58] and was one who advocated a strict religious behaviour and showed a dislike for all innovations, as we see clearly in all his works, does not make him a Zahirite, and less so a follower of Ibn Hazm, as Asin Palacios tried to show.[59]

Nor can we agree with Asin Palacios that Ibn Rushd (Averroes) wars a Zahirite on the mere fact that he quoted Ibn Hazm three times[60] in his *Tahafut al-Tahafut*. Ibn Rushd mentioned also the Zahirites once with disdaine[61] and twice with indifference.[62]

Moreover, his theme in his two small but worthy epistles, *Fasl al-Maqal* and *Manahij al-Adillah*, is that the masses cannot rise or be raised above the literal meaning of the Law, while the thinkers are called upon to ponder on the intentions of religion.

With the advance of the sixth/twelfth century, Zahirism became a problem in the Muslim West, in Spain, and in North Africa: while the masses behaved on the narrowest Zahirite lines, Zahirism itself was being fought on every side. Philosophy was equally combated. The rationalist thinker Ibn Tufail[63] furnishes us with a very clear picture of the situation there; a few enlightened individuals were living in the midst of a multitude of common people unwilling and incapable of thinking for themselves.

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1. Shahrastani, vol. II, p. 29; cf. p. 5.
2. Ibid., p. 29, cf. pp. 31 f.
3. Ibid., pp. 29f.
4. Farq, pp. 14, 142; cf. pp. 152, 169, 17 7 , 182, 216; cf. Shahrastani, vol. II, pp. 31 f.
5. Nubadh, Introd., p. 4.
6. GAL, I, p. 194; Suppl., I, p. 312.
7. Sam'ani, p. 226.
8. His full name was Abu Sulaiman Dawud ibn 'Ali ibn Khalaf.
9. Sam'ani, pp. 224, 255ff.
10. Goldziher, p. 28 n.
11. Tarikh Baghdad, vol. VIII, p. 369.
12. Fihrist, p. 216; Subki, vol. II, pp. 46; cf. p. 44.
13. Fihrist, p. 216; Subki, vol. II, pp. 42; 44, 46.
14. Subki, vol. II, pp. 43 f.
15. Fihrist, pp. 38, 216f.
16. A folio comprises about twenty lines (cf. Fihrist, p. 159).
17. Fihrist, pp. 216, 217; Sub ki, vol. II, p. 46.
18. Risalah fi Masa'il al-Imam Dawud al-Zahiri, an epistle containing the questions decided by Dawud the Zahirite (publ. Damascus 1330/1912), erroneously thought by Brockelmann (GAL, Suppl., I, p. 312) to be by Dawud ibn 'Ali himself. He states the date of its publication as 1930 which is also a mistake, perhaps a misprint for 1330 A.H.
19. Subki, vol. II, p. 46, line 1; vgl. Goldziher, p. 36.
20. Subki, vol. II, p. 46, line 7.
21. Al-Ihkam, vol. IV, p. 147.
22. Al-Milal, vol. II, p. 140.
23. Qur'an, ii, 184, 185.
24. Muslims perform five prayers per day: one of two rak'ahs (units of movements), one of three rak'ahs and three of four rak'ahs each. To cut, a prayer short is to reduce a prayer of four rak`ahs to only two.
25. Cf. Malik, pp. 146-48, etc.
26. Mafatih, vol. III, p. 444, quoted by Goldziher, p. 47; cf. Shatli, p. 12.
27. Qur'an, iv, 101.
28. Cf. Malik, p. 294 (No. 22).
29. Shatti, p. 13 bottom.
30. Qur'an, ii, 275, 276, 278; iii, 130; iv, 159; xxx, 39.
31. Sahih Muslim, Cairo, 1331;1912, vol. V, p. 44, lines 8ff., cf. 44ff.
32. Subki, vol. II, pp. 43, 46.

33. Ibid., cf. p. 43. Cf. ibn Khallikan, Cairo, Bulaq, 1299 A.H., vol. I, p. 4; GAL, Suppl., I, 66f; Nubadh, Introd., p. 4.
34. Fihrist, p. 172.
35. Sam'ani, pp. 224–26.
36. Fihrist, p. 216.
37. Kitab al–Zahrah (The Book of the Flower), the first half (published by the University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois), printed at the Catholic Press, Beirut, 1932.
38. An Arabist Orientalist, born in Bohemia 13133/1885 whose academic activities since 1340/1921 belong to his sojourn in the United States. He is versed in very many languages, old and new, eastern and western. He is the representative of the Arabic theory in the rise of troubadour poetry in southern France.
39. Ibn Khallikan, vol. II, pp. 140–41.
40. Fihrist, p. 234.
41. Sam'ani, p. 227.
42. Nubadh, loc. Cit.
43. Fihrist, p. 217.
44. Goldziher, pp. 194–96.
45. Al–Mansur ibn Abi `Amir was Prime Minister to Hisham II who was a weakling. He usurped the power and ruled Muslim Spain virtually for fifty years and as Prime Minister for twenty–six years. He died in 392/1002.
46. See Al–Milal, vol. V, p. 58; cf. Ueberweg, vol. I, p. 68 line 34
47. Al–Muhalla, vol. I, p. 52; Ihkam, vol. IV, p. 107, of.. pp. 59ff.; Nubadh, p. 28.
48. Al–Ihkam, vol. IV, p. 147
49. Qur'an, vii, 53; x, 3; xiii, 2; xxv, 59; xxxii, 4; lvii, 4.
50. Ibid., x1i, 11.
51. Ibid., vii, 180
52. Ibid., ii, 15.
53. Ibid., iii, 54.
54. Ibid., li, 47.
55. Ibid., lxxv, 23
56. Ibn al–Athir, vol. XII, p. 61; cf. Taj, vol. VIII, p. 245: cf. Asin. p. 280.
57. Asin, pp. 280–329.
58. Al–Munqidh min al–Dalal, Damascus. Ist ed., 1352/1934, pp. 5, 16, 44–47.
59. Asin, p. 299; cf. pp. 297–300.
60. Ibid., pp. 208, 542, 580.
61. Tahafut al–Tahafut, pp. 3111 f.
62. Ibid., pp. 12, 429.
63. Ibn Tufail, .pp. 126f., 136ff. (second ed., pp. 178f., 188ff.) Translation by Ockley, pp. 101 (157f.), 116–19 (171–76). See also Ibn Tufail and His Philosophical Romance (1st ed.), pp. 58f., 77–83 (second ed.), pp. 37f., 57–61.

Chapter 15: Ikhwan al–Safa

Ikhwan al–Safa by Omar A. Farrukh, Ph.D, Member of the Arab Academy, Damascus (Syria)

Introduction

The name Ikhwan al-Safa was assumed by a group of *libres penseum* who cultivated science and philosophy not for the sake of science and philosophy, but in the hope of forming a kind of an ethico-spiritual community in which the elites of the heterogeneous Muslim Empire could find a refuge from the struggle that was raging among religious congregations, national societies, and Muslim sects themselves.

External evidence concerning the Ikhwan al-Safa is so scanty that no clear historical picture of them is in any way possible. Were it not for Abu Hayyan al-Tauhidi (d. after 400/1009), a famous author and a friend of some members of the group, no facts about them would have come down to us.

The group of the Ikhwan al-Safa originated in Basrah. In about 373/983, the group was already famous and its "Epistles," which contain its spiritual doctrines and philosophical system, were in wide circulation.[1]

The complete name of the group was *Ikhwan al-Safa wa Khullan al-Wafa wa Ahl al-Hamd wa Abna' al-Majd*[2] a name which was suggested to them by the chapter of the "Ring-Necked Dove" in *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, a book which they very highly esteemed.[3]

The Ikhwan al-Safa succeeded in keeping complete secrecy about their names. But when Abu Hayyan was asked in about 373/983, about them, he named, perhaps at random, five of them: Abu Sulaiman Muhammad b. Ma'shar ad-Busti, known as al-Muqaddisi, Abu al-Hasan 'Ali b. Harun al-Zanjani, Abu Ahmad Muhammad al-Mihrajani, a certain al-'Aufi, and the famous Zaid b. Rifa'ah.[4]

The Ikhwan al-Safa produced numerous works the most famous and important of which is the encyclopedic compilation entitled *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa* (Epistles of the Ikhwan al-Safa), which will henceforth be referred to as *Rasa'il* or "Epistles." These "Epistles" are definitely the result of a collaboration of various writers many of whom may not have been members of the group.

The compilation must have dragged over a long period, but by 373/983 the "Epistles" must have been already complete in the first recension at least. It is, moreover, practically certain that the Ikhwan al-Safa embarked upon the compilation of the "Epistles" with the number fifty in their mind. The current edition, however, has fifty-three epistles.

Closely connected with the "Epistles" is *al-Risalat al-Jami'ah* (the Comprehensive Epistle) which was a summarium and summa of the original "Epistles." It was also intended for private circulation among the more advanced members of the group. The *Jami'ah* discards much of the scientific information originally the backbone of the "Epistles," and expounds more fully and frankly the ideas which the Ikhwan al-Safa intended to inoculate into their followers.[5]

The *Jami'ah* was further summarized in *Risalat al-Jami'at al-Jami'ah au al-Zubdah min Rasa'il Ikhwan*

al-Safa (the Condensation of the Comprehensive Epistle or the Cream of the Epistles of Ikhwan al-Safa), called also *al-Risalat al-Jami'ah*.[6] The scientific information as well as chapters of the "Epistles" are eliminated, while the symbolic and esoteric interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an are brought out vigorously.

The Ikhwan al-Safa made arrangements for holding meetings everywhere they had followers. In these meetings, which were held once every twelve days and were restricted to the members and followers of the group, subjects of metaphysical and esoteric nature were discussed.[7] There were also occasional meetings for the initiation of young people.[8]

Apparently, some of the followers were given, during these meetings, to singing, drinking, and other indulgences for which the Ikhwan al-Safa rebuked them indirectly.[9]

The Ikhwan al-Safa were a secret group. They were recruited through personal and confidential contacts. The emissaries were advised to work among the youth, as old people are usually rigid and unfit for any movement.[10]

The group had four grades in which its members were placed generally according to their age. The first and most inferior grade was that of those who had attained their fifteenth year; the second of those between thirty and forty years of age; the third of those between forty and-fifty. The fourth, last and highest grade, was that of those who were already fifty years of age.[11].

The Ikhwan al-Safa were Muslims. But they had a special interpretation of religion in general, and of Islam in particular. The Shi`ite colouring, which is very conspicuous in their missionary work, is only dramatic because it helped them to play cleverly upon the emotions of the masses.

In the strict historical sense, the Ikhwan al-Safa did not belong to any sect. In fact, they sought, with the aid of Islam and Greek philosophy, to work out a spiritual doctrine which would take the place of the historical religions and which would, at the same time, suit everyone and insult nobody.

As far as we can gather from the "Epistles," the Ikhwan al-Safa had no political programme. It seems, however, that some of their followers had pressed for political action to take the reins of government into their hands. The Ikhwan al-Safa themselves, the magnates among them, were not of this opinion; they reiterated in this connection that their sole aim was to uphold the faith and attain the bliss in the hereafter. In the meantime they tried to acquire knowledge and be versed in theoretical sciences.[12] They declared, further, that they intended to build up a spiritual city, a Utopia, which was not of this world, neither on the continent; nor on the high seas, nor in the air.[13]

The sections, in the "Epistles," referring to *daulatu ahl al-khairi and daulatu ahl al-sharri* (literally, the State of the people of good and the State of the people of evil) contain only a brief and general discussion on, the terms of governments or dynasties and on their succession.[14] The Ikhwan al-Safa referred once[15] to the coming of *daulatu ahl al-khairi*; but they meant simply "the time when the

adherents to their group would form the bulk of the nation."

System and Theories

1. Classification of the Sciences

Sciences may be classified in different ways. The Ikhwan al-Safa mentioned a few classifications and adopted that which divided all branches of knowledge roughly into three major classes:[16] mathematics, physics, and metaphysics, a classification which was current since Aristotle's days. Mathematics included, in the "Epistle," the theory of numbers, geometry, astronomy, geography, music, theoretical and practical arts, ethics, and logic.[17] Physics included matter, form, motion, time, space, the sky, generation, corruption, minerals, the essence of nature, plants, animals, the human body, the senses, life and death, microcosm, pleasure, pain, and language.[18]

Metaphysics was subdivided, as should be expected, into psycho-rationalism and theology. The first subdivision included psychics, rationalistics, being, macrocosm, mind, great years, love, resurrection, and causality.[19] Theology included the beliefs of the Ikhwan al-Safa, friendship, faith, divine Law, prophethood, call unto God, the incorporeals, polities, the structure of the world, and magic.[20]

2. Theory of Knowledge

The Ikhwan al-Safa were very much interested in epistemology or the theory of knowledge. General knowledge, they said; may be acquired in three ways:[21]

(1) The way of the five senses is the natural and the most common way of acquiring knowledge. But through our senses we acquire only the material changes immediately apprehended by us and occurring in space and time.[22]

(2) Man acquires knowledge also by means of primary reason, by pure or mere thinking. But reason, if unaided by sound senses, cannot acquire knowledge. Moreover, concepts having no connection with our senses, like those of God and the First Matter, cannot be acquired thus.[23] Akin to the two previous ways is the way of proof,[24] the way of the trained dialecticians.

(3) The way of acquiring knowledge which agrees best with the esoteric doctrine of the Ikhwan al-Safa is the way of initiation and authority, i.e., receiving knowledge personally from an authorized elder, a teacher in the broadest and deepest sense. This teacher receives his knowledge from the Imam (religious leader) who, in turn, receives it, through other Imams, from the Prophet whose ultimate source of knowledge is God.[25]

Philosophy, wisdom or philosophical wisdom, according to the Ikhwan al-Safa, is to behave Godlike as best as a human being can.[26] A more detailed definition would be "love for science added to knowledge of the essence of all beings, gained" as best as one can, together with profession and public behaviour

in harmony with that."[27]

In the "Epistles" of the Ikhwan al-Safa metaphysics proper is quite meagre.

3. Metaphysics

If metaphysics did not include theology, it would have interested them very little.

Form and Matter

The views of the Ikhwan al-Safa regarding form and matter are Aristotelian: every body consists of matter and form which are inseparable, since pure forms are only concepts like the soul and the intellect.[28] Matter and form are both simple essences. The form is more important, since bodies are different because of their forms, their matter being in many cases the same; but matter is theoretically older.[29] In keeping with their disposition towards compilation, they show some leaning to Plato when they say[30] that the images, figures, frames, and characteristics which we see in the world of (sublunary) bodies and in the essences of the heavenly bodies are examples, likenesses, and colourings of those forms which are in the world of spirits.

Space and Time

As regards space and time, their view was that both are not realities; space is more objective, since it is related to bodies which have dimensions: it is the vessel which holds the contained.[31]

Time has no independent existence. It cannot be conceived of except in connection with moving bodies. Note, if space is the outer surface of the world and time is the reckoning of the rotations of the spheres, space and time would be unthinkable prior to the spheres themselves.[32] These views led some to think that they believed in the eternity of the world. They were aware of this accusation and tried to defend themselves against it.[33]

Motion

There are six general kinds of motion grouped in three pairs: generation and corruption, increase and decrease, change and displacement. The particular kinds are numerous. The continuous and perfect motion is spherical; the straight motion is also continuous but not perfect. The arrow when passing through the air forms, from the bowstring to its falling place, one continuous course.[34] Here they disagree, in the example of the arrow, with Zeno of Elea (d. 430 B.C.) who argued that if a line was made up of points, there must be always space among these points. And so, an arrow in any given moment of its flight must be at rest in some particular point.[35]

Causality

In the field of causality the Ikhwan al-Safa depended on Aristotle. *`Ilal* (pl. of *`illah*,, fem.) or major

causes are four:[36]. the *hayulaniyyah* (material, the matter or substance of which a thing is made), *suriyyah* (formal, the form which is given to a certain substance to produce that thing), *fa'iliyyah* (active, the agent which gives that substance its form) and *tamamiyyah* (fulfilling, the end which that produced thing serves).

The answer to a question concerning any of the causes, and especially the fourth cause, is always difficult because it is a question about the essence of things. These four causes should act together, otherwise the intended thing would not come into existence, and they should hold on, so that the produced thing might persist. It is needless to say that God is the ultimate cause of all beings.[37]

Number

Numbers are the vehicle of the doctrine of the Ikhwan al-Safa. The Pythagorean theory of numbers (their properties: proportion, progression, etc.) and their linking mystically to the life and after-life of man captured their imagination.

The Ikhwan al-Safa divided the numbers into two classes: a factor which is the "one" and a "series from two ad infinitum." The one is an absolute unity, indivisible, undiminishable, and unincreasable. All the numbers originate from the one: the two by the repetition of the "one" twice; the other numbers by adding the "one"; whence its character as a factor to every subsequent number.[38] This dexterous acrobatism was necessary to arrive at the following, half-theological and half-metaphysical statement: Just as "the one is of a different nature from the numbers which originate from it, so the One (God) is unlike all the beings emanating from Him."[39]

Being and Emanation

This leads us to Being and Emanation, the coming of the universe into existence, or its creation.

The universe is not eternal but created by God through emanation. Emanation was a compromise between the strict religious notion of creation and the Aristotelian view of the eternity of the world. Theoretically, creation was accomplished in two steps: first, God willed, in one thought, that the universe should come into existence *ex nihilo*; then, immediately emanation began and proceeded gradually, until the universe took its present shape.

The order and character of emanation were as follows:[40]

(i) *Al-Bari* (The Maker, Creator, or God). *Al-Bari* is the First and only Eternal Being, the One, Unique, and One in every respect. He has no partner and no peer. No anthropomorphic attribute or action should be ascribed to Him. Only the will to create pertains to Him.[41]

(ii) *Al-`Aql* (Intellect or Gr. Nous). *Al-`aql* was the first being to emanate from *al-Bari*. God created it directly, necessarily, without break, and with no need for movement or effort. From God's eternity it acquires its own eternity; and through His perpetuance it receives its continuity and perfection. It is one

in number as God Himself is One. But since God does not condescend to deal with material bodies, He created in the intellect all the forms of subsequent beings and instituted in it the office of re-emanation: from it emanated the world-soul and the first matter. It is clear, then, that the office attributed usually to God belongs, in the opinion of the Ikhwan al-Safa, to the intellect, a counterpart, duplicate, or image of God.[42]

(iii) *Al-Nafs al-Kulliyyah* (The Absolute Soul, the World-Soul) - The world-soul is the soul of the whole universe, a simple essence which emanated from the intellect. It receives its energy from the intellect. It manifests itself in the sun through which it animates the whole sublunary (material) world. What we call creation, in our world, pertains actually to the world-soul.[43]

(iv) *Al-Hayula* (Arabicized from Gr. *hyle*: substance, matter, stuff), First Matter - First matter is a simple and spiritual essence already substance without bulk, and yet without conceivable dimensions. Because the first matter was passive, having no proper energy; it could not emanate by itself. It was caused by the intellect to proceed from the world-soul which had to exert effort and show great care to facilitate for it to gush forth and become subsequently susceptible to accepting different forms."[44]

(v) *Al-Tabi'ah* (Nature) - Nature is one of the powers of the world-soul, the energy diffused throughout the sublunary world and effecting all bodies therein, organic and inorganic. It is the cause of motion, life, and change. It works wisely and uniformly. In this sense, it is the philosophical term for the religious concepts of divine will and Providence."[45]

Here, with nature, ceases the influence of the intellect, since all subsequent emanations will tend to be more and more material, defective, and, consequently, unworthy of its care.[46]

(vi) *Al-Jism al-Mutlaq* (The Absolute Body) - When the world-soul began, with the help of the intellect, to move the first matter in three directions, the first matter acquired the three dimensions (length, width, and depth) and became the absolute body or second matter. The second matter is no more a concept, an essence, or a quality denoting pure existence, as was the first matter, but a quantum, spherical in shape. This absolute body, or second matter, is the substance of which our world, as such, is made[47]

(vii) *The Spheres or the World of the Spheres* - In the seventh stage of emanation appeared the spheres which are not imaginary but spiritual, spherical, hollow, transparent, and concentric bodies. These spheres, which are eleven in number, vary in the thickness of their shells, in proportion to the magnitude of the planets with which they are inset. These spheres are: the spheres of the fixed stars, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon. All the heavenly bodies are made up of a fifth element, ether,[48] and are not liable to generation and corruption.[49]

(viii) *The Four Elements* - With the emanation of the four elements: fire, air, water, and earth, we come to the beings immediately under the sphere of the moon (within its orbit), to the sublunary world where the process of generation and corruption begins to take place.

Fire, air, water, and earth – supposed to be elements by the Ikhwan al-Safa like many Greek thinkers – exist, free in nature, in minor spheres about the centre of the earth. Further, they espoused the view of the Ionians, and Thales (d. c. 545 B.C.) in particular, as against the Eleatics, that the four "elements" change into one another, water becomes air and fire; fire becomes air, water, earth, etc.[50]

(ix) *The Three Kingdoms* – In the closing stage of emanation appeared the three kingdoms: mineral, plant, and animal, which originated from the absolute interchange and proportional intermixture of the four elements.[51]

Macrocosm and Microcosm

The early Greek thinkers conceived of the universe as one living being in which the phenomena and powers are correlated and governed hierarchically by a single general law. Democritus of Abdera (d. c. 370 B.C.) developed from that concept the Theory of Macrocosm and Microcosm which treated of man as a reduced model of the universe, and of the universe as the enlarged copy of man.[52] His theory was accepted by the Ikhwan al-Safa.

The Individual Soul (al-Nafs al-Juz'iyyah) and Its Fall

As soon as the world-soul was called upon to care for individual beings, beginning with the spheres, its innumerable powers became distinct and independent but not detached, since detachability is a property of matter. In this sense individual souls, representing the infinite powers of the world-soul, began to form. During a very long time these souls filled the world of the spheres and constituted the angels who animated the heavenly bodies.

At first, they were aware of the grace which is bestowed by the intellect upon the world-soul, of which they are the powers. They contemplated the intellect and performed the worship due to God. By and by, some of these individual souls began to forget much about their origin and office.

This sin caused them to get farther and farther (though not in the sense of space and time) from God. The punishment was the fall of the sinful souls to our earth, to be tied to individual bodies in order to atone, by undergoing hardships, pain, and sorrow, for the sin they had committed in their heavenly abode. This was the metaphysical origin of life on earth.[53]

The fall was described and explained symbolically by the Ikhwan al-Safa. When God created the universe, He peopled it with spiritual incorporeal beings whose office was to praise and glorify God. These were cognitive beings; they could witness fully the corporeal and the absolute and could conceive of every form and thought anywhere in the universe. The period during which this condition prevailed, since the creation, was called *daur al-kashfi* or the period of exposition, as every being was exposed to every other being in every respect.[54]

Towards the end of this period, God willed that *daur al-sitri*, the period of concealment, should succeed

and that the Absolute be hidden in a corporeal body which the faculties of the spiritual beings cannot penetrate. So, He created Adam in His own image and breathed in him the world-soul and settled him in His paradise. Then God enjoined that all the spiritual beings, save a few archangels, should prostrate before him, worship him, and be at his command in the management of the world.[55]

At the same time God warned Adam against eating from a certain tree. On the other hand, Satan (*Iblis*), one of the lesser leaders of the jinn who had aspired to be in place of Adam, was vexed by the honour bestowed on Adam. He refused to prostrate before Adam and be subordinate to him.[56] Then he accosted God with the pretension: ***"I am better than he. Thou didst create me from fire and him from clay."***[57] Afterwards he turned to Adam to avenge himself on him.

Knowing Adam's reality and frailty, *Iblis* could convince him that eating from the forbidden tree would disclose to him the names and grades of the archangels who were exempted from prostrating before him, would give him knowledge of the hereafter, and would render him immortal.[58]

When Adam realized what he had become, he was filled with boastfulness. At times he overshot himself and disclosed a part of the secret with him to some of those who were around him but were unworthy of this secret before the time assigned for such disclosure. This was Adam's crime - curiosity and lust for power.[59]

Now, it was no more possible for Adam to stay with the angels who disavowed him because he showed a knowledge inconsistent with his physical appearance and which was even new and startling to them who, as spiritual beings, were supposed to know more than he. Even the animals and the other inhabitants of paradise were scared by his behaviour and abhorred him. Therefore, he was caused to fall to earth to lead on it the life of flesh, deprived of all the supernatural faculties accorded to him in the heavenly abode. With him also fell his wife and *Iblis*, so that the struggle may continue and be decided openly, and in a fair manner.[60]

The fall of Adam represents, in the metaphysical system of the Ikhwan al- Safa, the union of the individual souls with sublunary bodies. When an individual soul is caused to fall, it may be lucky enough to realize its mistake and repent readily. In this case its downward journey is interrupted and it is caused to turn back and regain its former place.[61]

The unlucky souls continue their fall towards the centre of the earth to be tied to an inorganic body, plant, beast, or man. We are concerned with the soul assigned to a man which is the least unlucky of all the falling souls.

When a soul falls, it enters the ovum which happens to be impregnated at the time of its fall. This soul in the ovum comes soon under the regimen of the planets. All planets, beginning with the farthest one, Saturn, influence the incubation of the soul turn by turn for a whole lunar month. After the completion of the third month the foetus comes under the influence of the sun, the king, of the planets, and life is breathed into it. The period of pregnancy is accepted by the Ikhwan al-Safa to be (at least) seven

complete lunar months, the number of the spheres of the then known planets.62

The soul is prepared in this world through the medium of the body for the hereafter. Life in this world is only a means to an end: here the soul is enabled to attain perfection in order to be allowed to regain its former celestial life. The body is only the workshop of the soul, a temporary house, a shell, a mount necessary for a journey. Once the body is forsaken by the soul it becomes again a heap of solid matter akin to the constituent elements of the earth. But the body is as necessary for the soul as is the womb for the development of the foetus.63

Death is welcome to the purified soul, since death means to it nothing more than that it has stopped using the body. With the death of the body the real life of the soul begins. Moreover, the soul cannot benefit by the knowledge acquired during its terrestial life except after the death of the body.64

Lesser and Greater Resurrections, Paradise and Hell

With the death of the body occurs the first or lesser resurrection of the soul. All human souls are immortal: those which have attained perfection during their earthly life would be able to enjoy again the absolute being and happiness; those which have remained imperfect would be barred from entering heaven and remain suspended between heaven and earth with the devils dragging them on every side until they are forced back to the hollows of gloomy-bodies and the bounds of physical nature.65

In leaving the body, the soul leaves simultaneously the lesser hell which is the transient life on earth subject to generation and corruption, change and putrefaction. Greater hell is the eternal condemnation of the wretched soul to roam in the underworld, burdened with the accumulated ignorance and fettered with depression and pain. Paradise, on the other hand, is the vast space of heaven, where the righteous souls float in an infinite spread of light in perpetuance and immortality, in a state of happiness and grace.66

When all the individual souls have left their bodies and are reunited with the world-soul, the world-soul would lose the reason for its independent existence: so it would return to God. The universe would cease, and there would remain one being: God. This is the greater resurrection: the closing of a manifestation of God.67

4. Nature and the Sciences

The Ikhwan al-Safa happened to compile in their “Epistles” the scientific materials available to them and, at the same time, support their esoteric doctrine. They tried to arrange these materials, the scientific legacy of Greece since the earliest Ionian thinker, Thales of Miletus, in independent chapters.

The picture which resulted was that of accumulation rather than of exposition, and never that of exhaustiveness and systematization. We do not know, however, what additions they made; but we are sure that they did give us a general account of the scientific life of the Muslims in the Middle Ages, with

its bright and dark sides. Further, the “Epistles” supply us with a picture, though imperfect, of the ancient world of science.

(1) In arithmetic, the Ikhwan al-Safa depended in the main, as they say,[68] on Pythagoras and Nicomachus. “Pythagoras” must mean the Pythagorean school; Nicomachus was a late neo-Pythagorean of Gerasa (present Jarash in Jordan) who flourished about the middle of the second Christian century.[69]

He elaborated the Pythagorean mathematics and wrote a book entitled *Arithmatike eisagoge* or “Introduction to Arithmetic,” in which he maintained that “numbers had a pre-existence in the spirit of the Creator before the formation of the universe. He wrote another book which the Ikhwan al-Safa must have known and used: *Arithmatika theologoumena* or “Theology of Numbers,”[70] They also knew a book by Euclid on arithmetic called *al-Usul*.[71]

(2) Geometry has for its aim the training of the soul, by which it realizes promotion in knowledge from perception to conception, from the physical to the spiritual and from the concrete to the abstract. Geometry (Ar. *handasah*) is of two kinds: *hissiyyah*, tangible, sensible, or common plane and solid geometry which helps man to acquire skill in crafts; and *`aqliyyah*, intellectual or rational, namely: analytic and descriptive, which enables man to be versed in theoretical sciences.[72] The Ikhwan al-Safa knew Euclid and other writers on geometry[73] from whom they drew their information on the subject.

To geometry belong the mysterious or magical figures, the smallest of which is composed of nine squares in three rows. In these squares are inserted the numbers 1 to 9 in a manner that any row, horizontal, perpendicular, or diagonal, must give the uniform sum of 15.[74]

(3) The aim of the “Epistle” on music is to stimulate the souls, already instructed in mathematics, physics, psychics, and theology, to join the immortals in the vast space of heaven. Music itself is a spiritual art founded by wise men. It has a strong and varied effect on all souls. It is either soothing or exciting, gratifying or grieving. On this account, music is played to calm the sick and insane, to tranquillize a weeping child or to lull him to sleep. Even animals are subject to the effect of music. Music is also played in temples because of the touch of awe it possesses.[75]

Pythagoras was said to have heard the sound of the moving spheres and planets. Since the motions of these spheres have regularity and ratios to one another, their sounds must have tunes which are of highest perfection and harmony. These tunes are intended for the inhabitants of the heaven. Pythagoras discovered the scale and essentials of music as a result of hearing the sounds of the heavenly bodies.[76]

(4) The universe, say the Ikhwan al-Safa, is made up of all the bodies in existence. It is finite and spherical in shape. Being is one solid body; it stuffs the whole space: it is the universe. Outside the universe there is neither Being nor Non-Being, neither emptiness (vacuum) nor fullness, since the universe has no outside.[77]

On this they agree with the Eleatic Parmenides and his disciple Zeno;78 but they disagree with them fully on the question of motion. Parmenides and Zeno presumed that since the universe is completely replete, the movement of individual bodies is impossible. The view of the Ikhwan al-Safa was: since the mass of the universe is not of the same density, the more dense may move through the less dense, as the fish swim in water and the birds fly in air.79

The earth stands in the centre of the world; then come seven concentric spheres in which revolve the planets: the moon, Mercury, Venus, the sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Finally comes the sphere of the fixed stars. The number of the stars which were determined by astronomical observation, including the seven planets, was one thousand and twenty-nine. All the stars are luminous except the moon which receives its light from the sun.80

The movement of the planets was explained by the rotation of the outer sphere clockwise: from east to west above the earth, and from west to east under the earth, once every day. The outer sphere carries the other spheres along with it. From this it follows that these spheres with their planets too should complete a revolution around the earth in one day.81

But the ancients noted that the planets have complicated movements: sometimes they appear to overtake the sun and continue their courses ahead of it; and sometimes the sun appears to overtake them. With the planets nearer the earth – –the moon, Mercury, and Venus – this phenomenon was more conspicuous and gave rise to the theory of epicycles. This means that the orbits within the outer sphere are not homocentric with it, concentric or having one common centre, but eccentric, i. e., having independent centres.

Aristotle was in favour of homocentrieity; Claudius Ptolemy (d. 168 A.D), the Alexandrian astronomer, upheld the theory of epicycles. Unfortunately, the Ikhwan al-Safa sided with Ptolemy and rejected, at the same time, the view that the heavenly bodies revolve from west to east,82 a view which seems to have had some upholders among the Pythagoreans.83

Regarding the magnitudes of the stars, they showed some boldness. The earth, they said, is but a point in a large circle. The smallest planet has a size eighteen times that of the earth; the largest is one hundred and seven times.84

They maintained, further, that the celestial bodies are neither heavy nor light. If any body, they argue, is in its specially assigned place in the spheres, it does not exert weight. It acquires weight, on the contrary, when it comes into the neighbourhood of other strange bodies, not of the same material (water in water or air in air, for example, has no weight). Weight, they say, is nothing but the mutual attraction and mutual repulsion in the face of resistance.85

We are reminded in this case of the artificial satellites and of the fact that they lose all weight as soon as they leave the zone of the gravity of the earth. In the same spirit, they declared also that the sun and the stars are neither hot nor cold.86

The Ikhwan al-Safa accepted the solar year to be of 365 1/4 days. On this basis they computed the revolutions of the planets around the earth: Saturn completes a revolution of its orbits in 29 years, 5 months and 6 days; Jupiter in 11 years, 10 months and 26 days; Mars in about 23 months; Venus in 584 days, and Mercury in 124 days only.87

The Ikhwan al-Safa supplied us with data which enable us to construct formulae for the extension of the universe and for its volume which may be computed roughly at: 1,300,000,000 and 150,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 km., respectively or 13 x 108 and 15 x 1025. This is nothing to be compared with the real measurements, but it serves to give us an idea of the boldness of the Ikhwan al-Safa in their age.

(5) The earth, say the Ikhwan al-Safa is a sphere. Their proof is that any line on the surface of the earth or on the face of a river is an arch, and any portion of the sea is a part of the shell of a spherical body.88 George Sarton, the historian of science, holds that the idea of the sphericity of the earth is as old as Pythagoras; but he wonders how Pythagoras could arrive at a proof. He declares that Pythagoras must have postulated the sphericity of the earth out of wild boldness.89

They believe also that the earth stands in the centre of the universe, suspended in the midst of the air, because it is in its special place within a space free from the attraction and repulsion of every other heavenly body.90 Although the Ikhwan al-Safa were essentially Pythagorean, they rejected the Pythagorean view that the earth has two motions: a revolution around a central fire and a rotation on its axis.91 They believed, however, that it had a sway (forwards and backwards) on its axis, and that when it was created it was in motion; but afterwards it came to a standstill.92 It seems that they followed, in this view, Democritus who held that the earth had in the beginning a motion, but afterwards it came gradually to a standstill.93

The earth is not solid or massive, but it is full of cavities. The solid parts of its interior are also of different densities.94

Further, it has no bottom, in the common meaning of the word; its bottom is its centre. So, wherever a man stands on the earth, his head is always towards the sky (above the earth) and his feet are always towards the bottom or centre of the earth.95 In spite of all this genial explanation, they believed that we live on one side of the earth only.96

(6) In the two chapters on geography and meteorology, based principally on *Meteorologica*97 and other Greek works, the Ikhwan al-Safa speak of the equator, of the polar zones where the winter is a night of six continuous months and the summer is a day of six continuous months, of the four seasons of longitude and time, of the mountains and their nature as reservoirs of water, and cognate topics.98 Their explanation of the eclipses is noteworthy,99 but their interpretation of the ebb and flow of tides is false: they believed that the rays of the moon heat the waters of the sea and cause their rise.100

(7) In physics and chemistry the Ikhwan al-Safa held, with Aristotle, the Theory of the Four Elements

and rejected the atomic theory.[101] They maintained also with the Ionian physicists that the so-called four elements: fire, air, water, and earth, change into one another.

Furthermore, when those four elements undergo intense heat and strong pressure inside the earth, they change into mercury and sulphur. If aerial moisture mixes with earth, it becomes mercury, a masculine element; if oily moisture mixes with earth, it changes into sulphur, a feminine element. From the further intermixture of sulphur and mercury, in different proportions, are formed all the mineral bodies: clay, glass, iron, copper, ruby, silver, gold, etc.

(8) The natural world is made up of three kingdoms: the mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms. Evolution rests on the view that every kingdom constitute the primary matter and nourishing material for the next higher kingdom. Accordingly, the mineral kingdom must have come into existence long before that of plants. The plants came into existence before the animals; sea animals before the animals on land; the less developed before the more developed; and all animals were in existence ages before man.[102] At the top of the animal kingdom appeared the *qird* (monkey, or ape) which bears so much resemblance to man in shape and behaviour.[103]

There is also a spiritual evolution by which the human soul evolves from the soul of a child to that of an angel. At the age of fifty, the wise and cultivated man may attain the degree which enables him to receive inspiration, to become a messenger between the Intellect and his fellow-men, to found doctrines, and to make laws. At this stage, he is a proxy of God on earth; he attains divinity and so worship is due to him.[104]

5. Psychology

(1) *The Soul* –The soul has three major faculties or powers, every one of which is called equally a soul.

(i) The vegetative or nutritive soul common to all living beings: plants, beast, and man alike. It is subdivided into three powers: that of nutritive proper, that of growth, and that of reproduction.[105]

(ii) The animal, beastly, or sensitive soul belongs to beasts and men only. It is subdivided into two powers: locomotion and sensation. Sensation falls in turn in two categories: perception (sight, touch, etc.) and emotion. Emotion is either primitive (laughter, anger, etc.) or evolved (good food, social and political prestige, etc.).[106]

(iii) The human (rational, thinking, or talkative) soul is restricted to man.

These three faculties, together with their powers, work together and are united in man and likened to a tree with three boughs, every bough of which has several branches, and every branch many-leaves and fruit. Comparison may also be made with a person who is a blacksmith, carpenter, and builder or who can read, write, and teach:[107] he is one man with three faculties.

(2) *The Brain, and the Heart* – The prevailing belief in ancient times was that the heart constituted the most important organ of the body: the centre of sensation, the seat of intelligence, and the house of life. Aristotle was also of this opinion. The Ikhwan al-Safa decided in favour of the brain and held that it is the brain where the processes of perception, emotion, and conception develop.[108]

(3) *The Process of Thinking* – It begins in the five senses and continues in the brain. Fine nerves extend from the sense-organs to different parts of the mass of the brain, where they form a net similar to a spider's web. Whenever the senses come in touch with sensible bodies, their temperament undergoes a change which is communicated soon, together with the abstract forms of those sensible bodies, to the imaginative zone in the front part of the brain. Next, the imaginative faculty passes the traces which the abstract forms have left on it to the reflective faculty, in the middle part of the brain, to ponder upon them and verify their indications; then, the indications are transmitted in turn to the retentive faculty (or memory) in the back part of the brain to be stored there until a recollection of them is needed. At the right time the relevant data are referred to the expressive or talkative faculty by which they are abstracted, generalized, and given the form expressible by the tongue to be received intelligibly by the ear.[109]

6. Politics

(1) The Ikhwan al-Safa had no interest in the theory of State or in the forms of government. Nor could they be influenced, in this respect, by Greek writers. The two worlds were totally different: Plato and Aristotle lived in City-States; the Ikhwan al-Safa lived in the great cities of an empire. At any rate, the Ikhwan al-Safa believed that the State rests on two foundations: religion and kingship. A king is indispensable, though he may be a tyrant, if the State is to lead a secure and prosperous life. A group of wise men, however may do without a king.[110]

(2) The indifference of the Ikhwan al-Safa about the State was counterbalanced by their keen interest in *al-siyasat al-madaniyyah*, a blend of civics and domestic economy, which bears more on the personal and communal behaviour of man.

As a rule, the Ikhwan al-Safa preferred that their followers should practise celibacy. But since that was impracticable, marriage was enjoined to serve two purposes: first, that the race may continue – a reason which was given by Aristotle too; and second, because there are people who cannot remain celibate.[111]

A man of standing should be a kind of a ruler in his community. He should first exercise self-control in the different situations through which he passes, because he who can control himself may be able to control others.[112] Regarding his children and brothers, he should give them a fair, uniform but firm treatment from which he should allow no deviation except in circumstances not under his control.

People are governed easier and better if they have been accustomed to a certain way of government. As for other relatives of his servants, and dependants, he should be bounteous in their maintenance and

meek in their treatment. But it is of no use to disclose to them any trouble or want of his. This would impair his authority in their eyes without helping him in the least. If he was ever short of means, and consequently obliged to lay a restriction on his favours to them, he should try, to make them believe that he has done so on purpose and not because he has yielded to a certain pressure.[113]

A man should choose his friends carefully and treat them with tact: know them well and betray none of his secrets to them. Further, he should appear always, before them, consistent in his opinion and behaviour, because they are expected to share with him his doctrines and way of life (the ultimate aim of the Ikhwan al-Safa in making friends is to propagate their doctrines among these friends). It is very important that the relatives of a leading personality should follow his doctrines and adopt his views, otherwise his friends would lose their enthusiasm for him. He should disclaim publicly any relative who proves to be at variance with him in the matter of doctrine.[114]

7. Ethics

Muslims have always been more interested in morals and matters of conduct than in ethical theories, because Islam insists on good or righteous deeds as well as on good intentions. The Ikhwan al-Safa's interest in ethics was confined to its bearing on their doctrine: acquiring theoretical knowledge and doing good in this life so that their souls may enjoy eternity and happiness in the hereafter.

They start from the assertion that characters are either inborn or acquired. Inborn characters begin with the formation of the foetus in the womb, and they develop therein gradually under the influence of the planets. Innate characters, or virtues, are specialized aptitudes assigned to different organs. They enable the soul to act through every organ and produce the sensation, action, or craft particular to that organ without need for deliberation or choice.

At one place the Ikhwan al-Safa assume that inborn characters are uniformly good.[115] At another, they maintain that they are bad, and, consequently, all religions were revealed to resist the innate characters of man and to reform them if possible.[116]

After birth man begins to acquire virtues. He continues to do so until his death. There is in man an aptitude to do good, and with the same aptitude he can do evil. Character and behaviour are teachable.[117]

Anything which should be done, if done as it should, to the extent to which it should, in the place where it should, at the time when it should, and in view of the end for which it should, is called good. And he who does that thin deliberately and with choice is called a wise man, a philosopher, and a perfect man. Good, for the masses, is that which religion has enjoined, and evil, that which religion has prohibited.[118]

Acquired characters are determined and modified by the disposition of the body, climate of the land, and the contact of the children with their parents, tutors, comrades, and with the people in prominence. The different circumstances through which man usually passes are important factors in making people

change from one character into another.[119]

The Ikhwan al-Safa urge their followers to be idealistic in their behaviour. The good they seek should be final and self-sufficient. One should do good not because one expects from doing it, or for doing it, a benefit, nor because one expects to avoid some loss.[120]

8. Education

As soon as a child is born, he comes under the influence of social factors for four complete years, during which he reaches a certain stage of intelligence and comprehension. After the fourth year the child begins to acquire his habits, knowledge, doctrines, crafts, and hobbies by imitation, as a result of his contact with those who happen to be around him. The masses copy the external behaviour of the dominant class.[121]

Children are apt to use an analogy characteristic of them. They believe that their parents are perfect and that the conditions prevailing in their own homes are models for all the conditions elsewhere. On the practical side, children are more apt to master the arts, sciences, and crafts of their parents than those of strangers.[122]

Knowledge is the abstraction of the knowable in the soul of the knower through the aid of a teacher. The aptitude to learn belongs to the soul alone. The end of teaching is to purify the souls of the taught and give them correct behaviour in order to prepare them for immortality and happiness in the hereafter. A science which does not lead to happiness in the hereafter is useless.[123]

Every soul is potentially learned; the parents and tutors polish its aptitude and help it to become learned in action. A teacher is absolutely necessary, especially to common people.[124]

The brain is able to store simultaneously all kinds of information, however diverse and contradictory they may be, since it stores their abstractions only. And in spite of the fact that the data stored in the brain fade gradually, and that some of them are sometimes totally forgotten, they do not annul one another.[125]

Essentially, knowledge is never spontaneous; it must be taught and learnt. A teacher is simply a guide for the soul to knowledge. Knowledge is handed down traditionally through religious leaders, the Imams, whose ultimate source of knowledge is the Prophet, who acquires his knowledge from God by inspiration.[126]

The Ikhwan al-Safa touch at a thorny problem in education. They believe that neither the pupil may benefit from the tutor, nor the tutor may benefit from the pupil, unless there is a kind of intimacy between them. We know for certain that some kind of a reserved friendship is very useful in this respect. But the Ikhwan al-Safa overshoot themselves and speak frankly of “the desire of grown-up men for boys” as an incentive for effecting real education. Furthermore, they mention explicitly that such manners belong

only to nations which esteem science, art, literature, and mathematics, like the Persians, the peoples of Mesopotamia and Syria as well as the Greeks. Nomads, who as a rule have no interest in science, art, etc., lack this desire.[127]

The idea of Platonic love contaminated the Ikhwan al-Safa as a result of their readings in Greek history in general and in the philosophy of Plato in particular. Plato advocated it especially in his Symposium. Sarton blames Plato and says of him: "Platonic love for him was the sublimation of paederasty; true love is called in the Symposium[128] the right method of boy-loving".[129] The Ikhwan al-Safa condemn this desire, however, in all fields other than education.[130] Plato too seems to have condemned it in a later work of his, *Nomoi* (The Laws), at least twice.[131]

9. Religion

On the practical side of belief, the Ikhwan al-Safa speak of religion and laws. The word for religion in Arabic is *din*, i. e., custom or obedience to one acknowledged head.[132] Religion is a necessity as a social sanction for the government of the masses, for the purification of the soul, and also because all people are predisposed to religiousness and piety. In this sense, religion is one for all people and for all nations.[133]

By Law (Ar. *Shari'ah* or *namus*, from the Greek word: *nomos*, law) the Ikhwan al-Safa meant what we mean today by religion. Laws (religious) are different to suit different communities, groups, and even individuals. These laws are dictated by the wise men of every people for the benefit of their respective nations.[134]

On this basis the Ikhwan al-Safa declare that all metaphysical themes in the sacred books such as creation, Adam, Satan, the tree of knowledge, resurrection, the Day of Judgment, hell, and paradise should be taken as symbols and understood allegorically. Only the masses, who cannot think adequately for themselves, understand these themes in their literal and physical sense. Themes of a lesser magnitude, as ***"He sendeth down water from the sky,"***[135] should also be treated symbolically: water in this context being the Qur'an![136]

The Ikhwan al-Safa were not satisfied with any of the existing religions; they, nevertheless, urged everybody to select one of them. To have a defective religion is better than to be a disbeliever, since there is an element of truth in every religion. Everybody should be left free to embrace the religion he chooses; he may also change his religion, perhaps often too, though he is expected to look for the best religion in his time. He should refrain, however, from contradictory opinions and false doctrines: a wise man does not embrace two contradictory religions at the same time.[137]

There should be no compulsion in religion;[138] compulsion should be affected only through the laws. This is so because religion is a self-conviction felt in the heart. The laws of religions, on the contrary, are social orders, to abide by which is necessary for the maintenance of security and welfare of the

community.[139]

The Ikhwan al-Safa formulated a definite attitude towards all existing religions, sects, and schools of theology.[140] We shall content ourselves with their attitude towards Islam.

Islam is considered by them to be the religion par excellence: the best and most perfect of all religions. The Qur'an overruled all earlier revealed books. It, being the last, confirmed in them that which resembled its contents and abrogated that which was contrary to its precepts. Muhammad, peace be upon him, is the head of all the prophets and the last of them. He is the governor of all governors; in him has God united the elements of kingship and prophethood, so that his followers may enjoy the worldly as well as the spiritual glories.[141]

Final Note

The numbering of the verses of the Qur'an followed in this chapter is according to *Tafsir al-Jalalain*, Cairo, 1346/1927. There is sometimes in the long Surahs a slight difference in the numbering of verses (resulting from the division of a few long verses). In Rodwell (q.v.) this difference, when it occurs, varies from three to six; in Muhammad 'Ali and Pickthall (q.v.) the difference is only that of one.

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29. Rasa'il, p. 322; ii, pp. 4, 5f.; iii, pp. 186, 360.
30. Ibid., ii, p. 232.
31. Ibid., ii, pp. 9, 10, 336; iii, p. 361.
32. Ibid., ii, pp. 10, 13; iii, pp. 334f., 361.
33. Ibid., iii, p. 336.
34. Ibid., ii, pp. 10, 11, 13, 238–47; iii, p. 306; Jami'ah, ii, p. 237.
35. Ueberweg, Vol. I, p. 87; Sarton, History p. 276.
36. Rasa'il i, p. 201; ii, pp. 78, 132f.; iii, p. 233; Jami'ah, ii, p. 79; cf. Aristotle, pp. 122ff., 132f., 249ff
37. Rasa'il, i, pp. 201, 354; iii, pp. 185, 233, 325, 327; iv, pp. 8f., 178; Jami'ah, ii, pp. 79, 278.
38. Sarton, History, p. 217.
39. Rasa'il, i, pp. 24f., 28f., 31f.; cf. Jami'ah i, p. 43.
40. Rasa'il, i, pp. 28f.; iii, pp. 184f., 200ff.; Jami'ah, i, pp. 27ff.; ii, pp. 284ff.
41. Rasa'il, i, p. 189; ii, pp. 107, 108ff.; Jami'ah, i, p. 593; ii, p. 83.
42. Rasa'il, ii, pp. 4, 9, 83, 244, 293, 392; iii, pp. 187, 189, 197, 228f., 328, 332, 260f,; Jami'ah, ii, pp. 33, 36.
43. Rasa'il, p. 28; ii, pp. 55f., 112ff.; iii, pp. 19, 191, 192, 193, 203, 214f., 235, 361; Jami'ah, i, p. 529.
44. Rasa'il, iii, pp. 5, 187ff., 230; iv, pp. 4ff.; Jami'ah, ii, pp. 4ff., 37.
45. Rasa'il, i, p. 331; ii, pp. 55f., 112f.: iii, pp. 124ff.; Jami'ah, i, pp. 331ff.; ii, p. 36.
46. Rasa'il, ii, p. 36; iii, p. 198.
47. Ibid., ii, pp. 4, 5; iii, pp. 8, 189, 198, 203, 204; iv, p. 4; Jami'ah., i, p. 276; n, pp. 6, 37
48. Cf. infra viii.
49. Rasa'il, ii, pp. 2, 3, 22, 25ff., 29ff., 39–42, 123; iii, pp. 190, 219, 221, 361; Jami'ah, i, p. 306.
50. Rasa'il, ii, pp. 5, 22, 45–50, 7 7, 78, 200, 337, 403; iii, pp. 79, 183, 190; Jami'ah, i, pp. 306, 311; ii; 37, 362; iv, pp. 268ff., 313.
51. Rasa'il, i, pp. 311, 315, 331, 350f.; ii, pp. 45 50ff.; Jami'ah, ii, p. 37.
52. Rasa'il, i, p. 17; ii, pp. 20f., 25f., 243ff., 318, 320f.; iii, pp. 3ff. 9f., 12ff., 211–14; iv, p. 277; Jami'ah, i, pp. 240, 563–68, 581–95, 635; ii, pp. 24–38, 123; cf. Ueberweg, Vol. 1, pp. 51, 110; Sarton, History, pp. 177, 216, 421.
53. Rasa'il, i pp. 96, 98; ii, pp. 111 288; iii, pp. 25, 26, 28, 59, 102, 279, 332, 362; iv, pp. 29, 230, 231, 238; Jami'ah, i, pp. 383, 514, 515; ii, 28, 247, 298.
54. Rasa'il, i, pp. 155f. The definitions of the periods of "Exposition and Concealment" as used in the "Epistles" are different from those accepted by the Druzes and the Isma`ilis.
55. Rasa'il, ii, p. 227; Jami'ah, i, pp. lllf., 114, 145ff., 156f.; ii, p. 143.
56. Rasa'il, i, pp. lllff., 145ff., 157f.
57. Qur'an, vii, 11; xxxviii; 76 cf. Jami'ah, i, p. 126.
58. Jami'ah, i. pp. 113ff., 124–28. 146; ii, p. 144.
59. Ibid., i; pp. 111, 112, 115f., 155, 158, 163; ii, p. 144.
60. Rasa'il, i, p. 62; ii, p. 17; iii, p. 216; iv, p. 138; Jami'ah, i, pp. 116f., 129, 164, 295, 437, 439ff.; ii, pp. 145, 247, 298.
61. Rasa'il, iv, p. 232; Jami'ah, i, p. 382; ii, p. 298.
62. Rasa'il, i, pp. 169, 241; ii, pp. 250ff., 357ff.; iv, p. 413; Jami'ah, i, pp. 513f.,, 554, 559.
63. Rasa'il, i, p. 62; ii, pp. 17, 145, 247, 298, 323ff.; iii, pp. 25ff., 29, 51, 62, 73, 116; iv, p. 138; Jami'ah, i, pp. 116ff., 129, 164, 295, 437, 439ff., 498.
64. Rasa'il, i, pp. 169, 226, 255, 277, 337; ii, pp. 43, 277; iii, pp. 51, 56£, 59f.; iv, p. 82; Jami'ah, i, pp. 509, 663, 667; ii, pp. 28, 87.
65. Rasa'il, i, p. 260; iii, pp. 26f., 29, 36, 93f., 105f., 279 289.
66. Ibid., ii, p. 52; iii, pp. 64, 189, 279, 282, 284, 240, 243, 344, 346; iv, p. 82.
67. Ibid., iii, pp. 315f., 320.
68. Ibid., i, p. 35.
69. Ueberweg, Vol. I, p. 513. Sarton (History, pp. 205, 214, n.15) sets his flourishing in the second half of the first Christian century.

70. Ueberweg, Vol. I, pp. 514, 519; Sarton, Introduction to the History of Science, Vol. III, p. 1511; History, p. 214, n. 32.

71. “Principles” or “Essentials” (Rasa’il, i, pp. 44f.). Certainly, this is not the book of Euclid on geometry which was later called the Elements (Ibid., p. 280; cf. also pp. 171, 442).

72. Rasa’il, i, pp. 50ff., 63ff., 68–71; Jami’ah, i, pp. 175f.

73. Rasa’il, i, p. 68; cf. pp. 103.

74. Ibid., i, pp. 71 f.; cf. p. 69.

75. Ibid., i, pp. 132ff.. 134, 136, 154, 158. 175, 179f.; Jami’ah, pp. 185–88, 190ff

76. Rasa’il, i, pp. 152f., 158M, 168.

77. Rasa’il, ii, pp. 10, 24, 25; iii, pp. 374; Jami’ah, ii, p. 24.

78. Cf. Ueberweg, Vol. II, pp. 80 ff., 87, 38.

79. Rasa’il, ii, p.24.

80. Ibid., i, pp. 73ff., 86, 88; ii, pp. 21, 22, 25, 26f., 28, 37; iii, pp. 189f.; iv, p. 321.

81. Ibid., i, pp. 100, 244; ii, pp. 21, 74f.; iii, p. 314.

82. Ibid., ii, pp. 32ff.

83. Ibid., ii, p. 33, cf. pp. 29–37, 86ff.; cf. Sarton, History, p. 289, lines 30ff.

84. Rasa’il, i, p. 117; cf. pp. 27f.

85. Ibid, ii, pp. 40ff.

86. Ibid., ii, p. 42.

87. Ibid., i, pp. 84, 86–88; ii, p. 31; iii, pp. 255–57.

88. Ibid., i, p. 111; ii, pp. 22, 49, 57, 219; iii, pp. 210, 219, 310; iv, p. 312; Jami’ah, i, p. 149.

89. Sarton, History, p. 212, cf. p. 287.

90. Rasa’il, i, pp–. 111, 113; ii, pp. 22, 40, 49, 79, 118, 307, 310; Jami’ah, i, pp. 149f.

91. Ueberweg, Vol. I, p. 68 unten.

92. Rasa’il. iii, pp. 309f.

93. Ueberweg, Vol. I, p. 108.

94. Rasa’il, iii, pp. 309, 310.

95. Ibid., i, p. 112.

96. Ibid., iv, p. 436.

97. Ascribed to Aristotle; cf. Sarton, History, p. 517.

98. Rasa’il, i, pp. 110–31, cf. pp. 84ff.; pp. 54–75.

99. Ibid., i, pp. 79f., 88f.;–ii, p. 21.

100. Ibid., ii, p. 83.

101. Ibid., ii, p. 10; iv, p. 7.

102. Ibid., ii, pp. 123, 141ff., 152, 154f., 221f., 223, 318; iii, pp. 64, 138.

103. Rasa’il, iv, p. 317.

104. Ibid., I, pp. 224ff.; ii, p. 287 ; iii, p. 44; iv, pp. 101, 118, 143, 176, 178; Jami’ah, 344, 701.

105. Rasa’il, i, pp. 241f.; ii, pp. 325ff.; Jami’ah, ii, p. 164.

106. Rasa’il, i, pp. 241f.; ii, pp. 325ff.; Jami’ah, ii, pp. 164f.; cf. pp. 168–86.

107. Rasa’il, ii, pp. 325f., 347.

108. Ibid., ii, p. 162; iii, p. 23 bottom.

109. Ibid., ii, pp. 324, 328, 341, 347; ii:, pp. 17f., 29, 376ff., 386, 388, 392; Jami’ah, i, pp. 507, 602f., 60,5.

110. Rasa’il, ii, p. 308; iv, pp. 32f., 189.

111. Ibid., iii, p. 424.

112. Ibid., iv, p. 68.

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116. Ibid., i, pp. 259, 260; of. iv, p. 144.

117. Ibid., iii, pp. 421 f.
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119. Rasa'il, i, pp, 229–38, 246; ii, p. 372; iii, pp. 268L, 395; iv, pp. 109, 111, 141, 342; Jami'ah, i, p. 237.
120. Rasa'il, iv, pp. 118, 141 f., 297 f.
121. Ibid., i, pp. 153, 360f.; ii, pp. 129, 379ff.; iii, pp. 147f.
122. Ibid., i, pp. 153, 213, 225, 229, 360; iii, pp. 106, 107f.
123. Ibid., i, pp. 195, 198, 211, 225, 271, 273, 317; iii; p. 33.
124. Ibid., i, pp. 198, 211, 225, 317; ii, p. 352; iii, pp. 90, 426; iv, pp. 18, 127.
125. Ibid., iii, pp. 236ff.; iv, p. 114.
126. Ibid., i, pp. 211, 225, 317; iv, p. 18; Jami'ah, i, p. 413.
127. Rasa'il, iii, pp. 267ff.
128. 211B, quoted by Sarton, History, p. 425.
129. Ibid., p. 425; cf. pp. 423ff.
130. Rasa'il, iv, pp. 170ff.
131. 636c, 836c, cited in Sarton, History, p. 425.
132. Rasa'il, iii, p. 424; iv, p. 24.
133. Ibid., iv, pp. 24, 25f.
134. Ibid., i, pp. 135, 247; iii, pp. 48, 49, 241, 374; iv, pp. 24, 25f.,100,138,168, 186ff.
135. Qur'an, xiii,19 (cf. Muhammad 'Ali, p.487; Pickthall, p.250; Rodwell, p. 235).
136. Rasa'il, iv, p. 137.
137. Ibid., iii, pp. 86–90; iv, pp. 22, 3 7, 54–`65; Farrukh, Ikhwan al Safa, pp.108–13.
138. Rasa'il, iv, p. 476, in ref. to Qur'an, ii, 256 (Muhammad 'Ali, p. 111, Pickthall, p. 59, Rodwell, p. 367).
139. Rasa'il, iv, p. 476.
140. Farrukh, op. cit., pp. 108–13.
141. Rasa'il, ii, p. 201; iii, pp. 92, 353; iv, pp. 33, 59, 172, 242; Jami'ah, ii, p. 365.

Part 2: The Sufis

Chapter 16: Early Sufis Doctrine

Chapter 16: Early Sufis[1] Doctrine

(by M. Hamiduddin)

A

Sufism like many other institutions became, early in its history, a fertile ground for imitators, impostors, and charlatans. The corrupting influence of these charlatans was regarded as a source of great confusion to all those who either wanted to follow the Path of Sufism; or wanted honestly to understand

it, one reason why this was so was that Sufism by its very nature was a discipline meant not for the average but for those who always felt ambitious for something above the average.

Besides these charlatans and impostors who put on the garb of Sufism and exploited the credulous and the unwary, there was another group of men who unwillingly became the source of corruption and confusion. Since a Sufi more often than not was a man significantly different from the average, it was but natural that some among the Sufis went so far away from the norms of their societies and communities that they created doubts in the minds of their followers regarding the legitimacy of the commonly accepted norms.

Such doubts, if not properly tackled, could lead to the corruption of vast segments of the communities concerned, an inevitable result of which would have been either a widespread scepticism regarding the erstwhile universally accepted norms, or a universal condemnation of that which such exceptions among the Sufis stood for. Neither of these two courses was considered to be healthy, for, whereas the first would have resulted in the complete demoralization of all Muslim communities, the latter could have resulted in the condemnation not only of the exceptional Sufis, but of all Sufis without exception, as deviants from the accepted norms.

Most of the early treatises on Sufism, like the one that will be referred to in this chapter, were written with two main aims in view: (1) to point out to all those who cared to read these works what Sufism really meant; and (2) to raise as strong a note of protest as possible against the current malpractices of the charlatans and impostors so that even those who may not have the time and the will to follow the path of true Sufism may at least escape the clutches of these charlatans.

The extent to which this two-fold desire of the early writers shaped their works is worth noting, because it is a measure of the dependability of these works. This is how the author of *Kitab al-Luma'*, one of the earliest, if not the earliest, Sufi texts now available, Sarraj (d. 456/1063), felt: "It is necessary for the intelligent among us that they understand something of the principles, aims, and ways of those who are the people of rectitude and eminence among this group (Sufis) so that we can distinguish them (genuine Sufis) from those who just imitate them, put on their garb, and advertise themselves as Sufis."2

"There are to be found (in our days)," he adds, "many of those who just parade as Sufis, point to themselves as genuine Sufis, and set themselves to the job of answering all sorts of questions and queries regarding Sufism. Everyone of these impostors claims to have written a book or two on Sufism which in reality he has filled with nothing but utter trash and absurdly nonsensical material in answer to equally meaningless and silly questions. Such impostors do not realize that it is not only not good but is a positive evil to do all this....

The early masters discussed the Sufistic problems honestly and earnestly only to point out through their wise word the true answers to them. They turned to handle them only when they had severed their connection with the materialistic world, had chastened themselves through long and austere prayers,

practices, and discipline, and had arrived at the clearest knowledge of reality, which knowledge found its full and necessary expression in their honest, sincere, and truthful actions. Such early masters used to be models of men who having burnt their boats of worldly affairs lived in constant contact with the Almighty."[3]

In his *Kitab al-Ta`arruf*, another very early work, Kalabadhi (d. 378/988) wrote: "Finally the meaning departed and the name remained, the substance vanished and the shadow took its place: realization became an ornament, and verification a decoration. He who knew not (the truth) pretended to possess it, he who had never so much as described it, adorned himself with it; he who had it much upon his tongue, denied it by his acts, and he who displayed it in his exposition, concealed it by his actual conduct."[4]

In his *Risalah*, al-Qushairi (d.465/1072) too talks in the same vein: `There set in decadence in this Path (Sufism) to such an extent that both reality and the path were lost to men. Neither were the old teachers to be found who could guide the young seekers of the true path, nor were the young stalwarts to be seen anywhere whose life one could take as a model. Piety left us bag and baggage. Greed and avarice became the rule of the day. And all hearts lost genuine respect for the Shari'ah. "[5]

Later on, the author of *Kashf al-Mahjub*, 'Ali Hujwiri (d. c. 456/1063), came out even in stronger terms against what was prevalent in his days : "God has created us among men who give the name of *Shari`ah* to all that their base selves crave for, and who give the name of honour and science to all those tricks with which they seek worldly power and glory, and who call double-dealing the fear of God, and who label the art of concealing hatred of men in their hearts the virtue of tolerance."[6]

`Attar, who came much later, is perhaps, just because of that, more explicit than his predecessors: "Ours is the period in which this mode of talking (the truth) has taken on the veil of complete concealment. It has become fashionable with the charlatans to parade as the wise and the virtuous, and the genuine men of love and insight have become rare like anything. We are living in such times that the evil-doers have pushed the good and the virtuous into complete oblivion."[7]

The great concern for truth that all those writers felt comes out indirectly also in the special mode of recording and reporting statements from great Sufis which all of them generally (and al-Qushairi especially) adopt. Practically every point that al-Qushairi makes, regarding every feature, major or minor, of Sufi way of life, is supported by him with three types of evidence. (1) Some statement from the Qur'an, better than which there is no basis for any principle governing the life of the faithful. (2) Some *hadith* or some incident in the life of the Holy Prophet. (3) Some comment or some incident in the life of a great Sufi.

So far as the first of these is concerned, we know, the matter is very simple. Nobody can afford to misquote the Qur'an, for the danger of discovery is always there. As to the second and third types of evidence, the risks of misquoting are always there. It was to avoid these risks that scholars of Hadith had devised the special techniques which came later on to be known as techniques of *isnad* (the method

of basing traditions on the authority of narrators), and *Asma' al-Rijal* (the chain of narrators supporting a tradition). The care that the Hadith-writers took regarding their *isnad* and its various links was so great that it became the model of authentic reporting in all historical writings. Al-Qushairi follows this technique of Hadith-writing in practically everything he reports and every point regarding the practices of the Sufis he makes, to such an extent that nearly half of his long treatise consists of nothing but the *isnad*.

B

Although none of our sources goes beyond the fifth/eleventh century, we have evidence, in these very sources, that people had started taking interest in Sufism, and in using the words *al-tasawwuf* and *sufi*.

Sarraj starts by repudiating the view that the word *sufi* is of recent (relative to Sarraj's days) origin and that the people of Baghdad were the first to use it. He thinks, on the other hand, that the word was current in the days of the *Tabi`in* (the Successors of the Companions of the Prophet) as well as the *Tab' Tabi`in* (the Successors of these Successors). By implication, he would say, although he does not verbalize it, that the word was current even in the days of the Prophet and his Companions, because, as he states explicitly, it was current in pre-Islamic days.

To show that the word *sufi* was current in the days of *Tab' Tabi'in*, Sarraj quotes a comment from Sufyan of Thaur: "If it were not for Abu Hashim the Sufi I would not have understood the true meaning of ..."[8]

It is easy to identify Sufyan of Thaur's period if one were to recall the well-known story of Qadi Shuraib's appointment as the Qadi of Baghdad by the Caliph Abu Ja'far Mansur. Sufyan, according to Hujwiri, was one of the original four great saints and scholars of the day whom the Caliph had called up to select from among them the one who was really fit to administer justice to the people of his vast empires. [9]

To show that the word *sufi* was current in the days of *Tabi'in*, Sarraj quotes a comment from Hasan of Basrah: "I saw a Sufi going round the Ka'bah; I offered him something, but he did not accept it saying..."[10]

That Hasan of Basrah belonged to the period of *Tabi'in* is borne out by Hujwiri who includes him among the eminent Sufis of this period.[11] The exact part of this period to which Hasan of Basrah belonged is brought out by 'Attar who mentions that Hasan was a child when the Prophet was still alive, and on growing he took 'Ali bin abi Talib or his son Hasan as his preceptor. Hasan had met, according to 'Attar, a hundred and thirty Companions of the Prophet of whom seventy had fought at Badr. Hasan died in 110/728.[12]

Sarraj anticipates the question why none of the Companions of the Holy Prophet was ever called a Sufi if this word was current during his time. He answers this question by emphasizing that since the honour of having the Prophet as one's preceptor in person and. having worked with the Prophet for the glory of God was in the eyes of every true believer the highest honour, nobody ever thought of calling the

Companions of the Prophet by any other name. It was for this reason that he whom God gave this distinction was considered to be the embodiment of all that was the noblest in a Sufi without his being called so.[13]

To show that the word Sufi was current in the pre-Islamic days Sarraj quotes from the "History of Mecca" by Muhammad bin Ishaq bin Yasar, and from others, that there was a period in the history of Mecca when everybody had gone away from Mecca so that nobody was left there to pay homage to the Ka'bah and to go round it. During these days a Sufi used to come from a distant place in order to go round the Ka'bah in the prescribed manner. If this story is true, Sarraj points out, then it is evident that the word *sufi* was current in the pre-Islamic days, and was used for men of excellence and virtue.[14]

Having brought out that the word *sufi* was current even in pre-Islamic days, Sarraj argues that it is derived from *suf* which stands for coarse woolen clothes which had come to be accepted as the conventional dress of the pious, even of the prophets, among the Semitic people. And to show that it was an established custom among the Arabs to refer to men by their specific conventional garb rather than by their specific attributes and traits, Sarraj quotes from the Qur'an: ***wa qal al-hawariyyun***, emphasizing that the Companions of Jesus Christ were referred to by their white garb rather than their virtuous traits.[15]

The two comments from Sufyan of Thaur and Hasan of Basrah quoted by Sarraj as evidence of the fact that the word *sufi* was used by *Tab' Tabi'in* as well as *Tabi'in*, have been quoted by several later authors too. Dr. Zaki Mubarak, author of *al-Tasawwuf al-Islami fi al-Adab wa'l-Akhlaq* (second edition, 1954), quotes the comment attributed to Hasan of Basrah from 'Afif al-Din 'Abd Allah bin Asad of Yafa'i's book *Nashr al-Mahasin al-Ghaliyah fi Fadl al-Aslah al-Maqamat al-'Aliyyah*, and the comment attributed to Sufyan of Thaur from Zahr al -Adab of Abu Ishaq al-Husri (who must not be confused with Abu al-Hasan 'Ali son of Ibrahim al-Husri al-Basri, a pupil of Shibli, who died in the year 371/981 and from whom Sarraj himself quotes quite a few comments). Even if these later authors had ultimately taken these comments from Sarraj, which is not improbable, their quoting them at least points to the fact that they did not regard Sarraj's point of view altogether unacceptable."[16]

Sarraj's view that the word *sufi* was current in pre-Islamic days is supported similarly by Abi al-Farab ibn al-Jauzi, Zamakhshari, and Firuzabadi. Dr. Zaki Mubarak quotes the following extract from ibn al-Jauzi's book *Talbis Iblis*: "Mubammad ibn Nasir related to us from Abi Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Said al-Hibal who said: 'Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Ghani ibn Said al-Hafiz said: I asked Walid ibn al-Qasim: What is it on account of which a person is called a Sufi? And he answered: There were a people in the pre-Islamic days known as al-Sufiyyah; they had given up every worldly thing for the sake of God Almighty, and had made Ka'bah their permanent abode, and place of worship.' Those who lived like them came to be known as al-Sufiyyah."[17]

Kalabadhi mentions that there had been seventeen Sufi writers before him who had published the sciences of allusion in books and treatises, and eleven Sufis who had written on conduct.

Al-Qushairi states explicitly in one place that the word *tasawwuf* had been used by people before the second/eighth century: “Those among the Sunnites who took extreme care in keeping their contact with God alive and saving themselves from the paths of negligence came to be known by the special name of *ahl al-tasawwuf*. And this name for these leaders of the pious became well known among people before 200/815.”[18]

Men who followed the Path of Sufism had started using the word *sufi* as part of their titles and names long before *Risalat al-Qushairiyyah* was composed.

Hujwiri traces back the use of the word *sufi* even to the Holy Prophet; for example he remarks in one place: “And the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said, `He who hears the voice of the people of *tasawwuf* and yet does not take their words to heart is listed in the eyes of God as one of the negligent ones.”'[19]

C

Sufism went through considerable development and modification as the Muslims came into contact with peoples of other races and cultures in the course of their history. Consequently, what came to be known as Sufism later on must be distinguished from what Sufism was in its early days. For, in spite of a great deal of what in later Sufism may be recognized as nothing but an elaboration of what was there earlier, it would be instructive to find out at least what the earlier form was. The ideal thing from this point of view would be to go back to the writers of the first and second/seventh and eighth centuries. But unfortunately the sources available to us do not go so far back. We will have, therefore, to be content with whatever can be culled from the sources available.

Qushairi makes a large number of statements about the characteristics of a true Sufi of his own days or of two or three generations earlier. Hujwiri holds practically the same view; only his account is more detailed.

One of the first things that Qushairi emphasizes regarding a Sufi is that he is absolutely convinced that of all the paths of life open to a man his path is the best. This is how Qushairi expresses it: “And the grounds on which their path was built were stronger than the grounds on which the paths of others were established, be they men of tradition and culture, or men of thought and intellect “[20]

Having felt convinced that Sufism is the best of all the paths, the Sufi has to take a few decisions regarding his relation to God, man, and the world. For it is in the light of these relations that he can be distinguished from others. In a way these relations constitute the criteria on the basis of which a genuine Sufi could be distinguished from those who just pretended to be so.

Out of these three types of relations the Sufi's relation to God is the most important, because the other two, strictly speaking, are derived from and based on it. Qushairi makes the following significant

statements in connection with the Sufi's relation to God.

1. The first and foremost thing is that one's belief in God should contain no element of doubt. It should not be contaminated with new-fangled notions and misguiding concepts, and should be firmly rooted in self-evident facts.[21]

Doubt in this context means vagueness about the attributes of God and scepticism regarding His existence. Obviously for the Sufi to avoid this vagueness and scepticism is possible only if he relies on whatever has come down to him by way of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. That this is so is pointed out by the warning against "new-fangled" notions and "misguiding concepts." What these notions and concepts were, one can easily find out from what both Qushairi and Hujwiri bring under the heading of Malahidah and Qaramitah, etc. But what is most remarkable in this connection is the emphasis the Sufi lays on factual evidence, for he believes that the purely conceptual is not the only relation man can have with God; this relation can be experiential too.

2. A person's relation to God should be so thorough, comprehensive, and intimate that it would lead him to feel as if he lives and does everything not because he is doing it all, but because God is doing it all. In identifying himself with God he would go through the double process of losing his mortal self in Him and experiencing Him in every act of his own self. As a consequence of this the Sufi, from the very beginning, endeavours to have a life about which it may be truly said that it is a life with and in Him.[22]

3. Another way of putting the point stressed above is that the Sufi not only stops referring all his acts to his mortal self, but he builds up the positive attitude that it is the divine will which must be accepted by the Sufi as supreme, not on this or that occasion, nor in such and such particular situation, but always, and in every situation of which his life is composed.[23]

4. The Sufi's relation to God is a pure relation in the sense that it is a relation just between him and his God without any material link.[24]

5. This relation rids man of all occupation with affairs worldly and mundane.[25]

6. The Sufi must regard himself as having been created for nobody and nothing except God.[26]

Regarding their relations to their fellow-beings and the world at large, the early Sufis were quite explicit in emphasizing that the *Shari'ah* is the framework within which these relations have to be built and maintained. With this in view they enjoined on every Sufi to pursue all the sciences on which the *Shari'ah* is based;[27] it was enjoined especially that he should seek enlightenment about the way the Holy Prophet lived his life so that the Sunnah might become the guiding light for him in everything he does and every relationship he builds.[28]

While the different schools of Sufis had each its own unique pattern of Sufi techniques, they were all agreed on one common framework of ultimate reference, and that was the framework of the *Shari`ah*.[29]

Apart from emphasizing that for a Sufi it is necessary at every stage to keep the *Shari`*ah in view as the ultimate criterion, the early Sufis seldom missed to point out that those who did not care much for the *Shari'ah* got themselves involved in confusion and contradiction. The early Sufis were always anxious that their fundamental position must be clearly distinguished from that of the orthodox scholars and the theologians, as well as the innovators and the sophists.

The distinction between the Sufi's position and that of the orthodox theologian lies in the fact that the theologian regards the Law (*Shari'ah*) and Reality (*Haqiqah*) as one and the same, while the Sufi maintains that the two are so different from each other that unless one explicitly recognizes the difference, one is apt to commit a fundamental error.[30] Reality from this point of view is a special aspect of God, such that man can never completely comprehend it, whereas the *Shari'ah* is a code of human conduct which man can and must aspire to understand and act upon as completely as possible.

The identity of reality and the *Shari'ah* which the Sufi attributes to the theologian does not appear to be easy to understand. Going by what one finds in the writings of the leaders of the four schools of *Fiqh*, one would say that the theologian is very logical and cautious in his views regarding the attributes of God. He would be the last person to identify the *Shari'ah* and the *Haqiqah*, for whereas the understanding of *Shari'ah* requires no special faculty other than the one which an average mortal requires for solving the problems of his daily life, the understanding of *Haqiqah* requires a special capacity with which the prophets alone are endowed.

Regarding the distinction between the Sufis and the innovators and sophists, it is pointed out that while the Sufis hold that the *Shari'ah* and *Haqiqah*, in spite of their theoretical distinction, always operate in intimate relation, the innovators maintain that the *Shari'ah* is operative only so long as a man has not established contact with reality; for whenever he does establish this contact, the *Shari'ah* stops being operative and becomes altogether useless and futile.[31]

The broad significance of this distinction is that the early Sufi never regarded himself as completely free from the bonds of the *Shari'ah*. He never dared claim himself, as some of Carmathians and others did, as law unto himself, or as a lawgiver to others.

Apart from these distinctions between the position taken up by the Sufis on the one hand and theologians, Carmathians, etc., on the other, the early Sufi felt the need of another distinction; and that was the distinction between his attitude towards the *Shari'ah* and that of the average Muslim.
He held that, while for the average man of religion a large number of conveniences and concessions are permissible within the framework of the *Shari`*ah, there are no such concessions and conveniences for the Sufi. The latter does not believe in sparing himself so far as the rules and regulations of the *Shari'ah* are concerned. For him there is no “take it easy” in the *Shari'ah.* The early Sufi believed in an extremely high level of conformity with the Law. As there is no transgression for the Sufi, there is no relaxation for him. Even the relaxation permissible to others is a threat to him.[32]

This unsparing attitude of the Sufi is not the result of his belief in asceticism *per se*. It is rather the logical result of his basic attitude towards God which is his starting point, and by virtue of which alone he is justified in calling himself a Sufi. The concessions given by the *Shari'ah* to an average Muslim are determined by his station in life in so far as he accepts the rights and obligations conferred or enjoined on him by the various groups of which he willingly accepts the membership. For the Sufi there is no such membership of social groups, to begin with; and, therefore, he can claim no special rights and obligations for the fulfilment of which concessions and conveniences within the Shari'ah may be necessary.

This point becomes clear when one compares the attitude of the Sufi with that of the ascetic. Whereas the ascetic believes in the strategy of now sacrificing this asset or resource, now that in his search for goodness, the Sufi believes in an all-out bid to reach God. There is nothing too precious, too dear, or too delicate to be spent and expended in the Sufi's endeavour at reaching the fountain which alone can quench his thirst.33

It would be easier to understand this attitude still further if we bear in mind why the early Sufi regarded the *jihad* with the self as the bigger and the more difficult and worthwhile form of *jihad* than the *jihad* against the political enemy with the help of the sword. For the Sufi engaged in the *jihad* against himself, all actions stemming from his narrow personal considerations lead to evil directly or indirectly.

This belief, that everything that is narrowly selfish and personal must directly or indirectly lead to evil, is closely related, in the mind of the early Sufi, to his attitude towards God as the only reality, which in technical language is known as *tawhid*. It is the Sufi's acceptance of *tawhid* as basic and fundamental that helps him build the right type of relation with God without which there is nothing in his life because of which he may be called a Sufi. It would be necessary, therefore, to state clearly what *tawhid* meant to the early Sufis.

A Sufi like Junaid of Baghdad believed that *tawhid* means that a man has the knowledge, as sure as any scientific knowledge today would be, that God is unique in His timelessness, and that there is none like Him, and, further, that nothing and nobody can carry out the actions which He, and He alone, is capable of carrying out.34 On another occasion Junaid puts his ideas about *tawhid* thus: It is the maximum of certainty with which you believe that all motion as well as lack of motion of things created is the act of God.35

Ja`far al-Sadiq explained *tawhid* by saying: He who thinks that Allah is in some thing, or of something, or on something, commits the sin of making things other than God His equals, because if God be on something it would mean He is being supported or carried by that something, and if God be in some thing it would mean that He is encircled by that something, and if He is of something it means that He is in time and in space.36

Abu 'Ali Rudhbari expressed what *tawhid* meant to him by saying: God is other than that which man's

thinking and imagining makes Him out to be, because He Himself says in the Qur'an, “There is nothing like Him and He hears all and sees all.”[37]

Abu `Ali al-Daqqaq, the teacher of Qushairi, puts his ideas about *tawhid* in one pithy comment: Somebody asked a Sufi where is God, and he replied, “Woe be to you, you wish to see with your physical eyes where God is.”[38]

Husain ibn Mansur thought the first step in *tawhid* means denying the possibility of there being an equal of God as completely as possible.[39] Husri regarded that *tawhid* is based on five principles: (1) absolute negation of God's temporality, (2) complete assertion of the eternity of God, (3) relinquishing of lands and abodes, (4) separation from brethren, and (5) complete disregard of that which one knows and that which one does not know.

Explaining the third principle, Hujwiri says: It means the forsaking by the disciple of the established ways of seeking comfort and convenience for one's own self.

While explaining the last one of the principles, he says: Man's knowledge of things is built upon the answers to his own hows and whys provided by his own intellect, imagination, or observation; all that such man-made knowledge asserts about *tawhid* is contradicted by the true notion of *tawhid*, and that which man's ignorance regards as *tawhid* is contradicted by man-made knowledge itself. Hence *tawhid* is neither encompassed by that which man knows, nor by that which man does not know.[40]

Offering a positive comment of his own, this is how Hujwiri expresses what *tawhid* means: It is the sifting and absolute distinguishing of the eternal from that which is in time, in the sense that you must not regard the eternal as subject to the laws which govern that which is in time. You must not regard being in time as in any way similar to not being in time. You must accept God to be eternal and yourself to be in time. Nothing that is yours, or is like you, can be attributed to Him, and nothing which is an attribute of His can qualify you, because there is no mixing of the eternal and that which is in time; the eternal was there even before the birth of the possibility of the becoming of that which is in time.[41]

Keeping in mind the simple, almost naive, formulations of *tawhid* in the comments given above, one cannot help thinking that the men responsible for these formulations were not so much experts in philosophical polemics, as they were practical men concerned primarily with the guidance of their disciples. None of these formulations can stand the rigour of logical analysis, and yet every one of the formulations can provide a framework of practical conduct.

It is in view of this that, in spite of discerning traces of syllogistic pattern here and there, one must regard the efforts of the early Sufis as primarily the result of their training in the traditions of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, rather than the influences, Greek or Manichaean, of philosophical thought, to which men like Qushairi and Hujwiri, and their predecessors like Junaid, must have been exposed. It took several centuries more for these philosophical influences to become practically the core of Sufi thinking. But during the period with which we are concerned Sufi thinking was mostly free of such influences.

The early Sufi believed that once he had set the pattern of his life in the mould of the attitudes and relations, described somewhat in detail above, he was ready to make a start in realizing his ultimate ambition, namely, the ambition of experiencing God in such a way that he might be able to say, like every Sufi: "What for others is just a matter of conjecture and vague hypothesis is for him there like the most certain entity, and what for others is a matter of conceptual understanding of God is for him something to be experienced as an existent about the reality of which there can be no possible doubt, so that he can sing with the poet:

"My night is aglow with the beauteous grandeur of the face,
While the darkness of night envelops everyone else,
While others are enshrouded in the pitch darkness of night,
I am experiencing the brilliant light of the day."42

But how he should make a start, and what exactly he should do after having made a start, are matters of controversy among the Sufis. These controversies are more keen and intense among the later Sufis than among the early ones. The intensity of these controversies among the later Sufis can be judged from the simple fact that, as we come out of the period of early Sufism and get into the later period we find no Sufi who is not anxious to link himself to one of the orders like Qadriyyah, Chishtiyyah, Naqshbandiyyah, Qalandriyyah, Shattariyyah, Uwaisiyyah, Suhrawardiyyah, Malamtiyyah, etc.

Among the early Sufis, on the other hand, we find practically no trace of such anxiety. For example, one finds little mention of such orders in Qushairi, though Hujwiri, who came after Qushairi, shows a good deal of order-consciousness. This order-consciousness of Hujwiri, which most probably reflects the order-consciousness of his contemporary Sufis, finds expression in a discussion of such orders as: al-Muhasibiyyah, al-Taifuriyyah, al-Junaidiyyah, al-Qassariyyah, al-Saiyariyyah, al-Suhailiyyah, al-Kharraziyyah, al-Nuriyyah, etc.

Without going into a detailed discussion of what among the early as well as the later Sufis constituted the basis of inter-order distinctions, one can safely say that at least one basis of such distinctions was just this matter of how one should make a start, and what one should do after having made a start. It seems every one of these orders, more the later ones than the earlier, had its own prescribed technique.

That in Kalabadhi and Qushairi there is little mention of Sufi orders – and Hujwiri discusses them with a good deal of keenness – indicates only that whereas the specific techniques of the respective orders might have been introduced in their rudimentary form in the days of the masters after whom the orders came to be known, it took several generations of followers and practitioners to recognize the merits of these techniques and give them their adequate and more or less perfected forms.

If one could, therefore, overlook the rudiments of techniques which some of the early Sufis might have introduced for the benefit of their respective groups of disciples, one could discover a large body of precepts which constituted the universally accepted techniques which all early Sufis regarded as

indispensable. It is such techniques that Qushairi emphasizes in his chapter: “The Last Words to the Disciples,” and it is to some of these that we must now turn.

The first step which is regarded absolutely necessary by Qushairi in this connection is that the disciple should seek a preceptor and put himself entirely under his guidance. For, if the disciple does not do that and relies entirely on his own initiative and efforts, he is never going to succeed.[43]
The disciple who has no preceptor finds Satan himself acting as one.[44] Without a preceptor no disciple can achieve more than the mastering of industrious techniques of piety which by themselves never lead to his seeing the light and achieving an experiential contact with the Creator.[45]

The early Sufis regarded reliance on just one's own initiative as misleading, perhaps because they considered the experiences of a beginner to be mostly theoretical, for when he thinks he is in contact with reality, he may actually be just imagining things; or he may be a victim of illusions and hallucinations. If it is just the disciple's own insight, limited as it is in the beginning, and nothing else, on which he has to depend, he will find it almost impossible to distinguish between the genuine Sufi experiences and what he is at the time experiencing.

If, on the other hand, he is under the guidance of an established master and preceptor and observes the discipline, he is in no danger of falling a victim to illusions and hallucinations; and in case he does fall victim to such confusions, he has, in his preceptor, one who can bring him back to the right path. The preceptor can do it because he is in actual living contact with reality, and his first-hand experience of reality can help the disciple verify whether his own experiences are genuine or otherwise.

This prerequisite, that every disciple must take a preceptor or else he is doomed, raises several issues which were discussed in detail by most of the early Sufis. One of these issues was: Is not the *Shari’ah* enough for a Muslim? Must the disciple accept the position that the framework of the *Shari’ah* is of necessity inadequate?

The most popular answer to such a question among the early Sufis was that in the *Shari’ah* there is room for the average, below average, as well as the above average. That which is for the above average in it is rooted in that segment of the *Shari’ah* which the Holy Prophet bequeathed only to the chosen few of his Companions, for it was meant only for them, and not for the common man.

What distinguished this segment of the *Shari`ah* from the other segments was that an average man's code of conduct could be complete without it, and yet it did not clash with it. To the average man it was something within the *Shari`ah* and, at the same time, over and above the *Shari’ah*, in so far as he needed it.

The discussion of who the chosen few were, for whom this segment of the *Shari’ah* was meant, and what their distinguishing characteristics were, will be too detailed for us to enter into here. Suffice it to say that they were the ones who, on the one hand, had the laudable ambition of shaping their whole lives, and not just parts of it, on the model of the Holy Prophet, and who, on the other hand, were

regarded by the Prophet as adequate and competent personalities for carrying the extra load of intimate insight into the nature of Reality, that is, God.

It was from this point of view that the early Sufis regarded the *Shari'ah* of the average Muslim as just not enough for him. And it was to make up for the deficiencies of the average man's *Shari`ah* that he sought the help, guidance, and discipline of a preceptor, belonging to a line of preceptors ultimately ending up with the Holy Prophet from whom the first man in the line got his unique insight.

One additional reason which is sometimes offered by some early Sufis as an explanation for the necessity of a preceptor is that every genuine insight into God's being is an experience of a magnitude altogether beyond the capacity of an average mortal. The collapsing of the Prophet Moses at getting just a glimpse of His being is cited by them as an extreme example of it. If a disciple is lucky enough, through just his own endeavours, to get such an intimate insight into the being of God, then left just to his own personal resources he may collapse and find further progress altogether impossible.

The early Sufis' insistence on every disciple taking a preceptor raises some other issues altogether different from the ones we have discussed so far. The pre-Islamic Arab tribes insisted on certain groups of their members specializing in their genealogical trees, customs, war-records, naturally under some teachers. Likewise the early Islamic period saw schools of *Tafsir*, *Fiqh*, etc., coming into existence.

The pattern of pupil-teacher relationship was, therefore, not altogether unknown to the early Sufis. But what the pupil in all these fields learnt from the teacher fell under the heading of knowledge in the usual sense of the term. He who had more knowledge and information could impart it to him who was prepared to sweat for it. The question arises: Was this type of pupil-teacher relationship the model of the disciple-preceptor relationship in the Sufis' special field?

There is no simple answer to this question. That the Arabs were familiar with the possibility of one's having knowledge of the phenomena other than the natural ones goes without saying. That the Jews and the Christians among them were familiar with the knowledge of the divine, distinct from the mundane, is also well known. But what is not clear is whether in the days immediately preceding Islam the disciple-preceptor type of relation was developed and cultivated in an institutionalized form or not.

For, on the one hand, we have the Semitic institution of the Prophet who by virtue, not of any ascetic practices of his own, but by virtue merely of divine blessing, is chosen to have living contact with the Almighty and, thus, become His agent for leading the Semitic people to the righteous path; and, on the other, we have the institutions of the Rabbi and the *Rahib*, who by virtue of the ascetic practices to which they devote their entire lives can acquire some sort of contact with the Almighty which puts them above the average mortal. The Rabbi and the *Rahib* in this sense are in the same category as the *Kahins* of the pagan Arabs, i.e. men who through the practices they learnt from their masters were thought to have achieved a contact with reality which could not have been achieved by those who did not have the benefit of those practices. Of course, the reality with which the Rabbi and the *Rahib* establish contact

must be distinguished from the reality with which the pagan *Kahin* established contact.

If one looks at the disciple–preceptor relation of the early Sufi against this cultural background of the Semitic peoples, it is easy to see how much of it is influenced by the Jewish and Christian practices. But that is not tantamount to calling Sufism un–Islamic. Strictly speaking, the Sufi disciple–preceptor relationship is as different from its Jewish and Christian models as Islam is different from Judaism and Christianity, for the roots of such models of relations go into the over–all systems from which they spring.

The Sufi disciple–preceptor relation would be un–Islamic if it could be demonstrated that the features which distinguish it from its Jewish and Christian models are not derived from Islam but are, rather, derived from sources other than Islamic. One could say, without going into further discussion; that these extra–Jewish and extra–Christian elements in the systems of the early Sufis were not derived from sources other than the Qur'an and the Sunnah. And one could cite, in support, cases like that of Shibli, the preceptor, and Husri, the disciple. Shibli told Husri in the very beginning of their relationship that if between one Friday and the next, when he had to come to Shibli, i, e., for one whole week, any thought of anything, or any being other than God entered his mind, his coming to Shibli was altogether forbidden.[46]

The case of Shibli and Husri is instructive from another point too. It illustrates in a simple and concrete form what exactly the Sufi preceptor does for his disciple. To think of nothing and to live a life involved in nothing but God, not only for one whole week, but week after week, is the least that is expected of a beginner. Such a way of life is easier described than actually lived. Life as an average mortal lives presents no parallel to this kind of involvement.

For the Sufi, especially the beginner, in spite of his having selected the Path of Sufism, is still a member of a living society which does not stop making demands on him; and he needs attending to so many other things just to survive and remain strong enough to carry out the task that the Shari`ah prescribes for him even in the context in which he has put himself. To carry out adequately all this and yet let no thought other than that of God enter his mind even for the fraction of a moment seems, at the face of it, quite an impossibility.

The only parallel one finds in ordinary life is that of a lover. The lover is seldom forgetful of his love in spite of all his activities of daily life; rather, he does everything ultimately for the sake of his beloved. Even so the Sufi does everything for the sake of his beloved, God. Once this becomes possible, acts not only like those of the prescribed five prayers a day, but even those remotely connected with praying, become acts carried out by him with God constituting the constant frame of reference.

The case of an ordinary lover is easier to understand for the simple reason that, as we all know, there is a lot within us which can never find expression or satisfaction without one's being in love. The person with whom one is in love offers a living answer to so many of the problems of the lover's personality that, without being in love with just such and such a person, the lover might have remained incomplete

himself.

In so far as there is this personal, specific, and concrete element in every lover–beloved relation, it falls below the Sufi–God relation. But in so far as every genuine lover–beloved relation means the living by the lover a life which, even when it does not appear to be lived for the sake of the beloved, is actually coloured by the tender thoughts of the beloved deep in the heart of the lover, the lover–beloved relation offers the only parallel in ordinary life for the Sufi–God relation of the type Shibli demanded of Husri.

How the Sufi comes to fall in love with God, the unseen, is one of the greatest mysteries of Sufism. One may, however, safely infer that unless there is a preceptor this would be impossible for a beginner. The conceptual unseen somehow must be made experiential, for otherwise the Sufi can never have a more personalized and intimate understanding of Him than just an intellectual grasp of that which His logically defined nature can provide.

One may say that the preceptor helps his disciple fall in love with God first by turning the intellectual acceptance of God by him into an emotional acceptance. Once the disciple has worked through this stage, and succeeded in converting his own intellectual acceptance of his Creator into an emotional acceptance, he is ready for the next stage, the stage of finding this emotional acceptance of the Creator so overwhelming that every other reality, social, biological, etc., is completely subordinated to it. And if one were to go into it one may find that these are just the first stages in the Sufi's long, life–long, career in God.

Since our purpose at present is not so much the detailed description of the various stages in the Sufi's development as the finding out of how the preceptor helps his disciple in falling in love with God, we will stop at this point. But before we pass on to the next point we must stress one thing: it is all very well to try to explain the preceptor–disciple relation in terms of modem psychology, but we must not overlook the fact that this in itself is no more than a conjecture.

Instead of relying on such explanations the best thing would be to go back to the accounts of the Sufis themselves with an open mind. If and when they open their lips to describe how they came to fall in love with God and what happened to them from that point on, we must lend credence to their word, for otherwise we shall be left with no data on which to build our own explanations. Unfortunately, there is very little in the literature concerning the early Sufis which could throw light on the actual experiences of the disciple in his progress and development, and we have, consequently, to be content with just the hints we find here and there.

Even the most intimate emotional involvement of the Sufi with the Creator does not result in his losing the perspective of his material surroundings. Account after account of a genuine Sufi's life will convince even the most sceptical that, if at all, the over–all perspective of a Sufi is more realistic than the perspective of even the most realistic of the ordinary mortals among whom he has to live. Keeping this in mind it would not be very difficult for any student of Sufism to reject the charge usually levelled against

the Sufis that they are mostly unrealistic persons wrapped up most of the time in the pseudo-universe of which God, a distorted father image, is the centre.

For the early Sufi, who was lucky to have met many of those who had the privilege of seeing the Holy Prophet and learning the Islamic way of life through their personal contact with him, God was the Being not of mere conceptual nature, but rather a Being who was responsible for the Heavenly Journey of the Prophet; the Being to whom in their hour of distress they could turn and call aloud: "When is Allah going to help us!" and the Being from whom they expected to get the response in concrete terms which their anguished hearts desired. For such early Sufis God was not a pseudo-father image;. He was rather the most real and living Being, and the ultimate refuge of those lost in delusions and hallucinations.

But when all is said and done we must admit that the techniques the preceptor employs to emotionalize the disciple's intellectual grasp of God are mystery to all save those who are lucky enough to enter into such a relation with a preceptor. All that we can do by way of making an effort at an intellectual and theoretical understanding of these techniques is to describe and discuss briefly such of the hints as Qushairi gives in the chapter mentioned above.

One of the first things which the disciple learns to do in order to establish his relation on a firm and operative footing is to put himself completely into the preceptor's hands. This attitude of complete faith in and reliance on the preceptor may lead the disciple sometimes into actions which, to all intents and purposes, go against the most explicit injunctions of the *Shari'ah*. But the disciple, in spite of his awareness of what the *Shari'ah* demands of him, must obey the preceptor. This aspect of the preceptor-disciple relations has been emphasized by the early Sufis as much as by the later ones. And it came in for very strong criticism from the orthodox theologians.

But, in spite of the emphasis the early Sufis laid on the role of the *Shari'ah* in their lives, they justified this attitude of blind obedience of the preceptor, on the ground that it was just a passing phase in the development of the beginner, and a necessary phase because, without it, it was impossible for the beginner to get out of the personal and self-centred frame of reference which throughout his life up to the point he took a preceptor had been his only operative frame of reference. The way Qushairi puts the whole idea is: when the disciple has rid himself completely of the influence of his worldly position, status, and wealth, it becomes incumbent on him to set right his relation with God by deciding never to say no to his *Shaikh*.[47]

Once the disciple has put himself completely in the hands of his preceptor, the chances are that he will soon start having experiences of reality which till then were altogether unknown to him. This first contact with reality might not always be conducive to happy results. Sometimes the novitiate feels the urge of communicating these novel and marvellous experiences of his to anybody and everybody just to test whether he still is in possession of his senses; sometimes he communicates with others to share his delight as well as his agony with them and seek strength from such a sharing of experiences; and sometimes he communicates with others because of some other emotional urges. All this is forbidden.

He should keep his experiences of reality as his most precious personal secrets to himself and divulge them to nobody except his preceptor. 48

Although the early Sufi writers have given no explicit reason for this injunction, their general tone suggests that the first experiences of reality of a Sufi are based on such a delicate relation between him and his Creator that unless extreme care is taken the Sufi runs the risk of losing all capacity for such experiences. It was felt that until the newly developed relationship between the beginner's personality and his Creator is properly stabilized he should be as watchful and jealous of this unique achievement as possible. And there is no way of doing that better than sharing all such experiences with the preceptor, for he can, through his identification with the disciple, lend him his own strength and stability.

Having worked with the disciple through these early experiences, the Shaikh finds out the strength as well the weaknesses of the disciple. In the light of this understanding the preceptor then selects one of the various names of the Almighty and takes him through an involvement with it in such a way that, by the time he finishes this period of training, he is completely influenced by it in everything he does.

There are several stages in this which the disciple must pass through under the watchful supervision of the Shaikh. He first repeats this name of the Almighty with just his tongue. Then he puts his heart and soul into it to such an extent that it is not just the tongue which utters the name of the Almighty, but even his heart and soul utter nothing but this name. Then the disciple is told to keep engaged in the uttering of the name all the time and continue thus till he feels actually as if he is with his heart and soul occupied with and engaged in nothing but his Creator. 49

It is at this last stage that the disciple achieves for the first time that involvement with the Almighty which alone makes it possible for him to go on in his endeavour to achieve an infinitely progressive type of involvement with Him.

The beginner's ability to achieve a view of the universe around him as nothing but that aspect of Being which is signified by the particular name of the Almighty, on which the master trained him, depends a great deal on the influence exerted on him by the master's personality. But apart from this there is a considerable amount of hard work which has to be done by the beginner himself by way of long prayers, series of night-long vigils, self-denial in food, sleep, rest, etc. This hard work which is planned and prescribed by the master has to be carried out by the disciple, however arduous and inconvenient it may be. To this hard work the early Sufis gave the name of *mujahadah*.

The true significance of *mujahadah* is realized only when one finds in the accounts of the early Sufis how much of the first experiencing of reality depends on it. Hujwiri holds, for example, that *mushahadah* (i, e., the first seeing of the Almighty with the mind's eye) can never occur without *mujahadah*.50

One explanation of the significance of the beginner's hard work (*mujahadah*), in so far as it is a necessary condition for his first contact with reality (*mushahadah*), is that it is a process of disciplined prayers and ascetic practices which ultimately results in such a refinement of the Sufi's personality as to

rid it of all that is base and low in it. This disciplined and refined personality is more ready to receive the first vision of reality than the original personality of the beginner which basically is self-centred and crude.

But even the most stringent discipline of this type (*mujahadah*) is not considered by the early Sufis to be the sole and necessary means for the first contact with reality (*mushahadah*). As Hujwiri puts it, all such discipline is the Sufi's own work, but this work brings the proper reward in its wake only when the Creator wills it.[51]

Why the early Sufis, in spite of rating the Sufi's labour so high, did not recognize it as the necessary means for the first contact with reality, was perhaps due to the fact that they had at the back of their minds the possibility that this very hard labour could produce in the Sufis a sense of self-righteousness verging on conceit. And this conceit was the one thing which, they thought, had been the cause of Satan's downfall, about whom the Qur'an is very explicit: he refused and felt conceited.[52] It was with this in mind that the early Sufis regarded the first contact with reality always a matter of grace rather than something earned by the Sufi just because of his having worked so hard.

The first contact with reality is regarded by the Sufis as just the beginning to which there is no end, because reality is infinite. But the beginning has a unique importance. Without it there would be, as one might say, no series of contacts to follow. Although there is not much explicit mention of it in the accounts of early Sufis, scores of accounts of later Sufis bear out the fact that sometimes a beginner may toil year after year in fruitless vigils and fasts and may find his labours completely unrewarded.

There is a kind of a barrier between the mortal self of the Sufi, on the one hand, and the glorious Being of the Creator, on the other, which must be broken for the infinite series of evermore-intimate contacts between the two to follow. It is the first crack in this barrier, which, in spite of its being just a crack, gives it its unique significance. For without it there is no possibility of the more adequate removal of the barrier which has yet to come.

What happens after the first contact between the beginner and his Creator is a secret which nobody has ever completely revealed, for the simple reason, among others, that the experiences of the Sufi from this point on are on a plane altogether different from the plane of the average mortal. Communication between the Sufi and the average mortal is consequently extremely hazardous, if not altogether impossible. If the Sufi uses the language of the average mortal, he may mean one thing and actually say another; and if he uses the language he creates in order to give expression to his unique experiences, he may not be understood at all.

All that we are in possession of, therefore, in the writings of the early Sufis regarding the states and relations through which they pass after the first crack in the barrier between them and their Creator, is a collection of carefully coined and scrupulously selected terms which some of them employ to convey something at least of what they see in the course of their journey into the Infinite.

Two such terms are station (*maqam*) and state (*hal*). Each one stands for a specific type of development the Sufi goes through. The basis of distinction between them is the same as the one between *mujahadah* and *mushahadah*. Station is the general term which covers all those stages which after the initial contact with reality are considered achievable through the Sufi's own toil and labour. State, on the other hand, covers all those states which are the result of the ceaseless flow of grace of which the Sufi remains the recipient as long as he does not falter and remains steadfast in his pursuit of reality. This is expressed by Hujwiri in the following words: *Maqam* is consequent upon one's own actions, *hal* is one of the blessings; *maqam* is one of the rewards which are earned by the Sufi, while *hal* is one of the blessings conferred on him independently of his actual actions 53

That of the almost infinite series of stations a perfect Sufi may achieve only a few, is explicitly mentioned by the early Sufis. But we know which the first is and which the last, for Hujwiri sums up the whole thing in two sentences:

(1) *Tawbah* (renunciation of all that had been evil in the Sufi's life up-to-date) is the beginning of the series of *maqamat*;54 (2) *rida'* (absolute satisfaction with the state in which God keeps the Sufi) is the last of the series. 55

Hujwiri indicates what he believes to be the true relation between *maqam* and *hal* by adding: *Rida'* is the last of the series of *maqamat* but the first of the series of *ahwal*. This shows that in spite of the earlier impression that the two lines which intersect at many points, the correct theoretical position is that *ahwal* begin where *maqamat* end. This is in keeping with the basic attitude of the Sufi that in whatever he achieves he is in the last resort indebted more to his Creator than to his own personal endeavours. This point of view looks more logical too.

If *maqamat* are achieved by the Sufi through his personal endeavour, the series cannot be infinite merely because his personal endeavour must have a limit. *Ahwal*, on the other hand, since they are based on acts of the grace of the Infinite, must of necessity be infinite as a series. The two series could not run parallel; and if one has to end before the other begins, it must be the finite, for the infinite will never come to an end.

The discussion of the *maqamat* being a finite series of states, and *ahwal* being an infinite series of states, through which a Sufi may travel, raises an interesting issue. Are we really justified in believing that the Sufi's *ahwal* constitute an infinite series of states of development to which there is no end? Whatever else one might say in answer to the question, within the framework of the *Shari'ah*, the answer in the affirmative is completely ruled out. There must be a point at which the development of the Sufi must stop in order to remain short of the status of a *nabi* or a *rasul* (a prophet without a book, or the one with a book).

Another interesting point that comes out of the discussion of the early Sufi's concept of *maqam* and *hal* is related to his attitude towards the problem of free-will. One can infer from the early Sufi's attitude,

regarding *maqam* and *hal*, that with regard to the former he believes in individual freedom and initiative as well as responsibility, and regarding the latter he believes that individual freedom and initiative can take him only up to a point and no further.

Another pair of terms that was common among the early Sufis was that of knowledge (*'ilm*) and gnosis (*ma'rifah*). The difference between the two is brought out first by pointing out that, whereas the theologians (*'ulama'*) make no distinction between them, the Sufis believe that the one must never be confused with the other. For the theologian all sure and certain knowledge is *'ilm*; therefore, *ma'rifah*, in the sense in which the Sufis use it, is also *'ilm* and nothing else. They consequently think that "the possessor of knowledge" (*'alim*) and "the possessor of gnosis" (*'arif*) mean one and the same thing. But, as Hujwiri points out, the theologians contradict themselves when they assert that whereas *'alim* is a descriptive term and can be used for God, the term *arif* cannot be used thus.[56]

The Sufis think that between knowledge and gnosis there is a basic distinction which should never be lost sight of. Knowledge, in their eyes, is that which in the last resort, when analysed, never takes us beyond empty verbal form; gnosis, on the other hand, is that awareness which when analysed ends up in direct experience of concrete facts, processes, and things. Knowledge, therefore, seldom influences one's real conduct, while gnosis can seldom remain without influencing it. From their point of view, knowledge is a rudimentary form of gnosis. Consequently, the possessor of knowledge may not at the same time possess gnosis, whereas the possessor of gnosis must have at one stage possessed knowledge.[57]

Apart from this way of distinguishing gnosis from knowledge, the early Sufis tried to bring out the distinction in yet another way. This they did by emphasizing that, whereas in the case of one's knowledge regarding something communication is both possible and desirable, in the case of one's gnosis it is neither possible, nor desirable. In order fully to appreciate this distinction between the two modes of knowledge which the early Sufis regarded basic and fundamental one must keep in mind the fact that in their eyes it is only the knowledge of the ultimately Real which can develop from knowledge into gnosis; apprehension of other facts, things, or processes can never develop beyond knowledge and, therefore, must remain short of gnosis.

Theoretically, this implies the impossibility of gnosis and the possibility only of knowledge of one's own self.[58] From this point of view, the attitude of the early Sufi so far as knowledge of reality is concerned is as different from that of the positivist as of any traditional metaphysician.

Another way in which Hujwiri tries to bring out the distinction between knowledge and gnosis is that knowledge can be acquired, while gnosis is a gift of God;[59] therefore, it can never be a substitute for gnosis.

All these distinctions between knowledge and gnosis are summed up by Qushairi in what he relates from his preceptor, Abu 'Ali al-Daqqaq: Gnosis is achieved by one who has knowledge of the Real in all the

various aspects and then carries out his dealings with everybody within the constant framework of reference to God, gets rid of his own base features ... and does not permit even a single thought to enter his mind which attracts him to anything but God ... he who has achieved all this is known as a gnostic and his state is known as that of gnosis. Such a person achieves gnosis of his Creator in proportion to his estrangement from his own self.[60]

Keeping this statement in mind, one could say that the involvement of the gnostic with his Creator is an involvement as concrete and actual as one can think of; it is not mere conceiving of this or that virtue and just imposing on oneself the intellectual framework thus evolved.

Another pair of terms popular among the early Sufis is that of *fana'* and *baqa'*. As to the definition of these terms there is considerable agreement between the early Sufis. But when they come to interpret these definitions in detail, differences crop up. This is illustrated even in the attitudes of Qushairi and Hujwiri. Qushairi maintains, he whom the glory of reality overwhelms to such an extent that he observes neither in itself, nor in its effects, nor in the form of its traces and tracks, anything other than reality, is described as one who has achieved *fana'*, in respect of things created, and *baqa'* in respect of the Creator.[61]

Hujwiri, on the other hand, maintains: *Fana'* is the complete loss by the mortal self of the conditions of his being, and *baqa'* is his being lost in the vision of the Real. He achieves *fana'* through the vision of his own actions and *baqa'* through the vision of the acts of God. His dealings with others are coloured by reference to Him and not to his own mortal self. Hence, he who loses all that is mortal and finite in his mortal self achieves permanence proportionately in the vision of divineness of the Real. [62]

This withdrawing from one's own self, and everything else, into the Creator is easier to understand if we. take into consideration an explanatory comment of Qushairi: So far as his evil actions and conditions are concerned, *fana'* of the mortal self means his getting rid of all traces of these as completely as possible; while in respect of his own self and other persons and things, *fana'* means just the loss by him of his consciousness of his own self and that of other persons and things as the frame of reference for his actions ... for when he is said to have achieved *fana'* with regard to his self and other persons and things, it is still recognized that his self exists and other persons and things exist too; only he has lost consciousness of his self, on the one hand, and of other persons and things, on the other. [63]

Summing up all this one could say *fana'* means the complete disappearance of three things: (1) the bad actions, tendencies, and conduct, (2) the low and base self, and (3) the world at large. So far as the first form of *fana'* is concerned, the disappearance means their disappearing altogether from existence; so far as the second and third forms of *fana'* are concerned it means that, in spite of the self and others still being in existence, the Sufi has become oblivious of their existence.

Hujwiri interprets *fana'* and *baqa'* still in another way by connecting the two with the unity of God (*tawhid*). Both *fana'* and *baqa'* are rooted in one's being sincere in accepting unity, for, when one accepts

unity one must also accept as being completely in the hands of God. One who is, thus, in the hands of Another has the status of one who has achieved *fana'*. Such a person must accept his complete helplessness.

For him there is no other status than that of a person who has been made what he is by the Lord. So he must build up the permanent attitude of total submission (*rida'*) towards his Creator. Anybody who interprets *fana'* and *baqa'* in any other way than this, i, e., regards *fana'* as the actual disappearing of the mortal self, and *baqa'* as the actual permanence in the Real, is no other than a sophist. 64

That which distinguishes this comment of Hujwiri's from Qushairi's comments in general, and the one that follows in particular, is the consciousness of the corrupting influences that the Carmathians, Malahad, etc., had started exercising in his days. He wished to keep the definitions of *fana'* and *baqa'* as precise as possible, lest they should become tools in the hands of those who were interested in getting Sufism rid of its roots in the *Shari'ah* and *Tawhid*.

This is how Qushairi describes *fana'* and *baqa'* in the comment particularly pointed out above: "When a person has achieved *fana'* of his self, as described so far, he goes from the vision of his *fana'* into the higher stage of his actual *fana'*.... The first stage in this ascent is the *fana'* of his self and all its attributes through his permanence in the attributes of the Real. Then comes the second stage of his losing his status in the attributes of the Real and achieving a vision of God Himself. And last of all he loses his status in the vision of the reality by merging himself completely in the being of the Real.65

One thing that, in all fairness to Qushairi, must be pointed out regarding this last comment of his is that in spite of his mode of expression being very much like that of the Malahad, the Carmathians, etc., against whom Hujwiri wishes to warn his readers, Qushairi does not mean to maintain that *fana'* is the actual *fana'* of the mortal self and *baqa'* is its actual *baqa'* in the Real as the Carmathians, etc., maintained. Qushairi, on the other hand, maintains, as would be clear from the comments from him quoted earlier, what in substance is maintained by Hujwiri himself.

Although there are scores of such pairs and groups of terms as have been discussed above, what has been said so far should be enough to give us some idea at least of what type of men the early Sufis were, and what went into making them what they were. If, on the other hand, we were to go into a detailed study of their mode of life we will not be able to do justice to it without taking into consideration not only their basic attitudes, as has been done so far, but even the specific applications of these to each and every little detail of their daily lives.

The early Sufi was involved in his Creator in a relationship, an extremely pale example of which is the relation of the maddest love between two human beings. As the lover thinks of nothing, dreams of nothing, sees nothing, and feels nothing but his beloved and of his beloved all the time, a Sufi thinks of nothing, dreams of nothing, sees nothing, and feels nothing but his beloved and of his beloved, that is, his Creator.

The result is that when one studies the lives of these Sufis, one finds that they take not even a single step in their lives without feeling sure within themselves that this and nothing else will please Him. How they should walk when they tread the earth, how they should talk when they mix with their fellow–men, how they should dress, what they should eat, what they should drink, what they should do when they get up in the morning if they go to sleep at all –– each and every little detail of everything relating to these matters is prescribed for them. And the basic principle underlying all such prescriptions is that even the maximum of obedience, service, sacrifice, devotion, and love is not enough; so they should always regard the maximum as the minimum, and constantly strive for a devotion more thorough and a love more intense.

It is this burning desire to lose oneself in the Creator on an ever–increasing scale in everything, major or minor, over the whole period of one's life, which distinguishes the early Sufi from everybody else.

1. This chapter is based mainly on the following source books : (i) Abu Nasr 'Abd Allah b. 'Ali al–Sarraj al–Tusi, al–Kitab al–Luma' fi al–Tasawwuf; (ii) Khwajah Farid al–Din 'Attar, Tadhkirat al–Auliya'; (iii) Makhdum 'All Hujwiri, Kashf al–Mahjub; (iv) Abu Bakr al–Kalabadhi i, Kitab al–Ta'rruf li Madhhab Ahl at–Tasawwuf translated from Arabic by A. J. Arberry: The Doctrine of the Sufis, Cambridge University Press, London 1935 (v) Abu al–Qasim al–Qushairi, al–Risalat al–Qushairiyyah, Dar al–Kutub al–'Arabiyyah al–Kubra, Misr, 1330 A.H.

The Kitab al–Luma' is regarded as one of the oldest, if not the oldest, Sufi texts available. Its author is 'Abd Allah ibn 'Ali ibn Muhanunad ibn Yahya Abu Nasr al–Sarraj al–Tusi who died in 378/988. He is quoted by Abu 'Abd al–Rahman al–Sulami (d. 412/1021), the author of Tabaqat al–Sufiyyah (itself one of the oldest texts), Abu al–Qasim al–Qushairi, Makhdum 'Ali Hujwiri, Farid al Din 'Attar, al–Ghazali, and scores of early as well as later writers on Sufism. He is considered to have written several books, but Kitab al–Luma' is the only one which has come down to us.

According to Nicholson, Sarraj quotes from such well–known Sufis and scholars as Abu Dawud Sijistani, Abu Said al–Kharraz,Abu Said al–'Arabi, Ibrahim al–Khawwas, Amr bin 'Uthman al–Makki, Junaid, and through him Abu Yazid al–Bistami.

2. Abu Nasr 'Abd Allah bin 'Ali al–Sarraj al–Tusi, Kitab al–Luma' fi al–Tasawwuf, ed. R. A. Nicholson, Luzac & Co., London, 1914, p. 2.
3. Ibid. pp. 3–4.
4. Abu Bakr al–Kalabadhi, Kitab al–Ta`arruf li Madhhab Ahl al–Tasawwuf, translated under the title The Doctrine of the Sufis by A. J. Arberry, Cambridge University Press, London, 1935, p.3.
5. Abu al–Qasim al–Qushairi, al–Risalat al–Qushiariyyah, Dar al–Kutub al–'Arabiyyah al–Kubra, Misr, 1330 A.H., p.2.
6. Makhdum 'Ali Hujwiri, Kashf al–Mahjub, Silyanov Press, Samarqand, 1330 A.H., p.12.
7. Khwajah Farid al–Din 'Attar, Tadhkirat al–Auliya', Karimi Press, Bombay, 1321 A.H., pp.5–6.
8. Al–Sarraj, op.cit., p.22.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Hujwiri, op.cit., pp. 108–10.
12. 'Attar, op.cit., p.18.
13. Al–Sarraj, op.cit., pp.21–22.
14. Ibid., p.22.
15. Ibid., p.21.
16. Zaki Mubarak, al–Tasawwuf al–Islami fi al–Adab wa'l Akhlaq, Dar al–Kutub al–'Arabi, Cairo, 1954, Vol. 1, p.63.
17. Ibid., pp.49–50.

18. Al–Qushairi, op.cit., p.8.
19. Hujwiri, op.cit., p.34.
20. Al–Qushairi, op.cit., p.180.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., p. 126.
23. Ibid., p. 127.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid. p.181.
28. Ibid., p. 8.
29. Hujwiri, op. cit., p. 217.
30. Ibid., pp. 446–47..
31. Ibid. p.446.
32. Al–Qushairi, op.cit., p.181.
33. Ibid., pp.182, 186.
34. Ibid., p. 4.
35. Ibid., p.5.
36. Ibid., p.6.
37. Ibid., p.5.
38. Ibid., p.6.
39. Hujwiri, op.cit., p.335.
40. Ibid., pp.335–6.
41. Ibid., p.334.
42. A1–Qushairi, op. cit., p.180.
43. Ibid., p. 181.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid
46. Ibid. p.182.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Hujwiri, op. cit., p. 250.
51. Ibid., p.252.
52. Qur'an, ii, 34.
53. Hujwiri, op.cit., p.223.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., p.224.
56. Ibid. p.445.
57. Ibid. p.320.
58. Ibid., p. 329.
59. Ibid., p. 322.
60. Al–Qushairi, op cit., p. 141.
61. Ibid., p.37.
62. Ibid., p.299.
63. Ibid., p.37.
64. Hujwiri, op.cit., p.299.
65. Al–Qushairi, op.cit., p.37.

Chapter 17: Early Sufis (Continued)

Although space does not allow us to go into the detailed study of the lives of the early Sufis we may yet give a brief biographical account of some of them who made a definite contribution towards the general doctrine which we have described in the preceding chapter.

Sufis Before Al Hallaj

By B.A. Dar

1. Hasan of Basrah (21/642–110/728)

Hasan of Basrah belonged to the class of those who did not see the Prophet but his Companions (*Sahabah*) and the Companions of his Companions (*Tabi`in*). Although he took no active part in politics, yet in his fight against the Umayyads, he was sympathetic towards Imam Husain.

Hasan represented a tendency towards otherworldliness, piety, and asceticism in which the element of fear of God predominated. In a letter to 'Umar b. 'Abd al–'Aziz, the Umayyad Caliph, he said, “Beware of this world, for it is like a snake, smooth to the touch, but its venom is deadly .... Beware of this world, for its hopes are lies, its expectations false.” Later on, in the same letter, he praised hunger and poverty as symbols of the righteous and looked upon wealth as an evil which distracts people from their rightful goal. 1

He regarded piety as the quintessence of true religion.2 According to him, it has three grades. The first is that a man should speak the truth even though he is excited through anger. The second grade of piety demands that he should control his bodily organs and refrain from things which God has forbidden. The third and last stage of piety is that he should desire only those things which lead to God's pleasure (*rida'*). A little of piety is better than prayer and fasting of a thousand years.3 It is the lust for this world and avarice that destroy piety.4

Hasan was so much overpowered by fear and was seldom seen laughing that when he sat he appeared as if he were sitting before an executioner.5 He was ever conscious of his sins and the fear of hell. He thought he would consider himself fortunate if he would be delivered from hell after tribulations of a thousand years.6 Somebody asked him how he felt himself in this world. He replied: Imagine a people in a boat which has capsized and everybody is trying save himself by clinging to broken pieces of wood. Such is the real position of man in this world.7

2. Abu Hashim of Kufah (d. 160/776)

Abu Hashim belonged to Kufah. There were people before Abu Hashim who were famous for their

asceticism (*zuhd*), piety (*war`*), engagement in the science of practical religion, trust in God, and love; but it was Abu Hashim who first of all came to be called by the name of Sufi. The first monastery where the Sufis began to gather for exchange of ideas, and mutual discussion about their mystic experiences was established by some wealthy Christian in Ramlah in Syria where he had observed some Muslim saints engaged in mystic exercises in the open.

According to Sufyan Thauri, Abu Hashim knew the subtlety of *riya'* (showing off) more than anybody else. Abu Hashim once said that it was far easier to pull down a mountain with the help of a needle than to remove vanity and arrogance from one's heart. On seeing a judge coming out of the house of a minister, he remarked: May God protect people from knowledge that does not lead to the benefit of the heart.[8]

All these incidents point to the fact that, according to Abu Hashim, inner transformation of the heart was the essence of Sufism.

3. Ibrahim b. Adham (d. 160/777)

Ibrahim b. Adham, whom Junaid of Baghdad called the key to Sufism, also advocated asceticism which, according to him, involved otherworldliness, celibacy, and poverty. For him a true saint is one who covets nothing of this world, nothing of the next, and devotes himself exclusively to God.[9] In the same strain he told a questioner who had asked him about his occupation that he had left the world to the seekers of the world and the hereafter to the seekers of the hereafter, and had chosen for himself the remembrance of God in this world and the beatific vision in the next.[10] He advocated celibacy and poverty as the prerequisites of true asceticism.

According to him, he who adopts poverty cannot think of marriage, for it becomes impossible for him to fulfil the needs of his wife. When a Sufi marries, he enters, so to say, a boat, but when he gets a child, his boat sinks and his asceticism disappears.[11] A certain man was bewailing of his poverty. Ibrahim b. Adham remarked that he had paid nothing for this poverty of his. The man was surprised and asked: Is poverty a thing to be bought? Ibrahim said: Yes, I chose it of my own free-will and bought itt at the price of worldly sovereignty and I am ready to exchange one instant of it with a hundred worlds.[12]

In Ibrahim b. Adham we meet with the practice of courting blame (*malamah*) for the purpose of self-discipline. Once he was asked if he was ever happy in his life by attaining his heart's desire. He replied: Yes, twice. He related two different events when people not knowing him mocked and jested at his cost.'[13]

He referred to the principle of *tawakkul* (trust in God), but in his case it was a moral principle as enunciated in the Qur'an, which does not exclude earning one's livelihood by one's own efforts.

4. Shaqiq of Balkh (d. 194/810)

Shaqiq of Balkh was a pupil of Abu bin Adham. He developed and perfected the doctrine of *tawakkul*.[14] The story of his conversion to Sufism is revealing, Once in the course of his trade he went to Turkestan and visited a temple of idol-worshippers. Shaqiq told the people there that their Creator is omnipotent and omniscient and they should, therefore, be ashamed of worshipping idols which are powerless in providing them anything. The idol-worshippers told him: If your Creator is omnipotent and all-knowing, why have you come into this distant land for seeking livelihood? Can He not provide you in your own town? On hearing this Shaqiq gave up the world, went to Khurasan and became an ascetic.[15]

Shaqiq interpreted *tawakkul* as negation of earning one's living. He once remarked that the efforts put in by man in seeking livelihood are the result of his ignorance of God's ways of dealing with men and, therefore, to work hard in order to win bread is unlawful (*haram*). [16]

5. Harith Muhasibi (165/781-243/857)

Harith Muhasibi started his life as a theologian and belonged to the school of Shafi`i. He advocated the use of reason and employed the technique of the Mu'tazilites in controversies with them and was thus a precursor of the Ash`arites. His career resembled that of Ghazali's in some respects. Both had a complete theological education, were well versed in philosophical and religious problems of their day, and were later on converted to the Sufistic Path, partly under the stress of circumstances and partly as a result of their inner moral strain.

Muhasibi's book *Wasaya* which again served as a prototype for Ghazali's *Munqidh*, relates the events which revolutionized his life. The first thing that struck him was the division of the Muslim community into numerous sects and sub-sects each claiming the monopoly of salvation. He devoted a great part of his life to discovering the clear way and the true path amid these divergences. He met all kinds of people who claimed to know and follow the truth, but in almost every case he failed to be convinced; most of them were busy in worldly gains.

“I looked to knowledge for guidance, thinking deeply and considering long. Then it was made clear to me, from God's Book and the Prophet's practice and the consensus of believers, that the pursuit of desire blinds a man and so prevents him from seeking the right path, and leads him astray from truth.” This conviction led him to self-examination (*muhasibah*, which brought him the title Muhasibi),[17] self-discipline, and moral transformation.

He realized that the path of salvation consists in the fear of God, compliance with His ordinances, sincere obedience to Him, and the imitation of His Prophet. When he tried to search for the ordinances in the life and conduct of the saints, he was again struck by differences. Of this much, however, he was assured that only those people can be sure guides who, knowing God, labour to win His pleasure. But at first it proved almost impossible for him to find such men and yet he continued his quest, for it was a

matter of life and death for him:

Finally, through God's grace he was successful in his search and came across people who were models of piety: God opened unto me a knowledge in which proof was clear and decision shone, and I had hopes that whoever should draw near to this knowledge and make it his own would be saved. When this enlightenment dawned upon him, the course of future action was clear. "I believed in it in my heart and embraced it in my mind and made it the foundation of my faith."[18]

In spite of his conversion, his attitude towards mysticism was marked by his intellectual approach. His famous disciple Junaid of Baghdad relates how he used to discourse with him on different topics of mysticism. Muhasibi would come to Junaid's house and ask him to come out with him. Junaid would protest at being dragged from solitude into the world of allurement. But Muhasibi would press him to ask whatever question came to his mind. This questioning and answering proved very stimulating to him and when he returned home he would put the entire discussion in a notebook.[19] Here we see the picture of a great Sufi teacher who approached his subject in the intellectual spirit of a great scholar.

An important contribution of Muhasibi to the science of mysticism is his definitions of station (*maqam*) and state (*hal*) and his inclusion of satisfaction (*rida'*) among the states. Station, according to him, is the particular position which a seeker attains after making necessary efforts to reach it; it involves all the obligations pertaining to the stage. State (*hal*), on the other hand, is something that man receives through God's grace without involving any effort on his part. In short, station belongs to the category of acts, while state belongs to the category of gifts,[20] as stated in the preceding chapter.

Satisfaction (*rida'*) is an attitude of mind which also, according to Muhasibi, a man is able to attain through divine grace and not through his own efforts. He says, "Satisfaction is the quintessence of the heart under the events which flow from the divine decree."[21]

With regard to the problem whether an attitude of poverty (*faqr*) or wealth (*ghina*) is preferable for a mystic, Muhasibi holds that the latter attitude is better. He argues that wealth is an attribute of God, whereas poverty cannot be ascribed to Him and, therefore, an attribute common to God and man is superior to an attribute that is not applicable to God.[22]

Similarly, his attitude in the controversy as to whether presence (*hudur*) or absence (*ghaibah*) is preferable for the mystic, is that presence is superior to absence, because all excellences are bound up with presence. He says that absence from one's self is a preliminary stage on the mystic Path which gradually leads to presence before God, and the Path becomes for him an imperfection after he has arrived at the goal.[23]

6. Rabi`ah al-`Adawiyyah of Basrah (95 or 99/713 or 717-185/801)

Rabi`ah al-`Adawiyyah of Basrah was a famous woman mystic, well known for her advocacy of disinterested love for God. She was born into a poor home, stolen as a child, and sold into slavery. But

her devotion to a life of piety and prayer enabled her to win her freedom. She decided to adopt a life of celibacy in spite of many offers of marriage by renowned mystics of her time. Once her companion suggested to her in the spring season to come out of the house to behold the works and beauties of God. She replied: Come you inside that you may behold their Maker. Contemplation of the Maker has turned me away from the contemplation of what He has made.[24]

Rabi'ah's main contribution to mysticism was her doctrine of disinterested love of God which served both as a motive and a goal for her. With most of her contemporary mystics the guiding motive for asceticism and otherworldliness was the fear of hell or the reward of paradise. Rabi`ah, on the other hand, tried to emphasize that a man who claims to attain union with God should be oblivious of both.

`Attar relates that once some mystics came to Rabi`ah. She asked: Why do you worship God? One said: There are seven stages in hell, and everybody has to pass through them; therefore, in fear and dread of them I worship. Another replied: The eight stages of paradise are places of great delight and a worshipper is promised complete rest there. Rabi`ah replied: He is a bad servant who worships God for fear of punishment or desire of reward. They asked her: Why do you worship if you have no desire for paradise? She replied: I prefer the Neighbour to the neighbour's house (i,e. paradise). She added that God is worthy of worship even if there is no motive of fear or reward.[25]

It is related that one day Rabi'ah was running with fire in one hand and water in the other. People asked her the meaning of her action. She replied: I am going to light fire in paradise and to pour water on hell so that both veils may completely disappear from the pilgrims and their purpose may be sure, and the servants of God may see Him without any object of hope or motive of fear.[26] In the following verses, she distinguishes the two kinds of love, selfish and disinterested:

In two ways have I loved Thee: selfishly,
And with a love that worthy is of Thee.
In selfish love my joy in Thee I find,
While to all else, and others, I am blind.
But in that love which seeks Thee worthily,
The veil is raised that I may look an Thee.
Yet is the praise in that or this not mine,
In this and that the praise is wholly Thine. [27]

The object of this disinterested love, according to Rabi`ah, was union with God. She says: My hope is for union with Thee, for that is the goal of my desire.

7. Dhu al-Nun Misri (180/706-245/859)

Dhu al-Nun Misri is regarded by most biographers as a renowned mystic. He was the first to give expression publicly to his mystic experiences.[28] Like other early mystics, he practised asceticism of

extreme type,29 regarded the temptations of self as the greatest veil,30 and looked upon seclusion as indispensable for the promotion of sincerity in a Sufi.31 According to him, there are two different paths for the mystic to follow. The first path, lesser in degree, is to avoid sin, to leave the world, and to control passion; the second path, higher in degree, is to leave all besides God and to empty the heart of every thing.32

Dhu al-Nun interprets *tawakkul* (trust in God) as opposed to reliance on intermediate causes and the use of planning.33 It demands solitude and complete break with the world and its people, and total and full reliance on God.34 Repentance, according to him, is essential for everybody; the common people repent of their sins, while the elect repent of their heedlessness. Repentance is of two kinds: repentance of return (*inabah*) and repentance of shame (*istihya'*). The former is repentance through fear of divine punishment; the latter is repentance through shame of divine clemency. 35

Dhu al-Nun distinguishes knowledge from certitude (*yaqin*). Knowledge is the result of sensory perception, i, e., what we receive through bodily organs, while certitude is, the result of what we see through intuition.36

In another context he says that knowledge is of three kinds: first, knowledge of the unity of God and this is common to all believers; second, knowledge gained by proof and demonstration and this belongs to the wise, the eloquent and the learned; the third, knowledge of the attributes of Unity and this belongs to the saints, those who contemplate the face of God within their hearts, so that God reveals Himself to them in a way in which He is not, revealed to anyone else in the world.37 It is this knowledge which is called gnosis (*ma'rifah*), the idea of which, it is claimed, was first introduced into Sufism by Dhu al-Nun.

The core of gnosis, according to him, is God's providential communication of the spiritual light to one's heart.38 The gnostics see with direct knowledge, without sight, without information received, without observation, without description, without veiling, and without veils. They are not in themselves; but in so far as they exist at all, they exist in God. Their movements are caused by God and their words are the words of God which are uttered by their tongues, and their sight is the sight of God which has entered into their eyes.39

Thus, with Dhu al-Nun the highest achievement of the mystic is to get super-intellectual knowledge known as gnosis which involves complete unconsciousness on the part of man. In one of his statements quoted by `Attar, he says, that "the more a man knows God, the more is he lost in Him." It appears that he had in his mind the mystic state which his contemporary, Bayazid of Bistam, designated as *fana'*.

8. Bayazid Bistami (d. 260/874)

Bayazid Bistami was a Persian Muslim whose ancestors were Zoroastrians.40 In his early life he was a jurist and was reckoned among *ashab al-ra'i*, the followers of Abu Hanifah, but later on he turned to Sufism.41 His teacher in mysticism was a Kurd. It is related that he associated with a mystic Abu `Ali of

Sind, who taught him the doctrine of annihilation in unity (*fana' fi al-tawhid*) and in return Abu Yazid taught him the doctrine of monotheism as embodied in the Qur'anic chapters, *Fatihah* and *Ikhlas*.[42] He was familiar with the Indian practice of "watching the breaths" which he described as the gnostic's worship of God [43]

For thirty years Bayazid wandered in the deserts of Syria, leading a life of extreme asceticism–with scanty sleep, food, and drink. He once said that a mystic can reach his goal only through blindness, deafness, and dumbness.[44] He seemed to be very scrupulous in the observation of Islamic injunctions and would not tolerate any deviation, however small or insignificant it might be.[45]

In Bayazid's utterances we notice a distinct tendency towards monism. He tries to reach the divine unity by the process of abstraction (*tajrid*) till he is devoid of all personal attributes and feels himself as well as others submerged in the One. In this state of unity he gave expression to his experiences which remind one of the *ana al-Haq*, of Hallaj. "I went from God to God, until He cried from me in me, `O thou I.'" "Glory to me! How great is my majesty." "When I came out of my 'self,' I found the lover and the beloved as one, for in the world of thought, all is one."[46]

"For twelve years I treated the self (*nafs*) in me as a smith does with his material, heating and beating alternately in the fire of penance and with the hammer of blame (*malamah*) till it became a mirror. For five years I was busy in polishing this mirror with different kinds of religious practices. For one year I looked within myself, and discovered a girdle of infidelity (*zunnar*) round my waist. For another five years I tried to remove that girdle till I recovered my true faith. Then I found everything dead before my eyes and God alone living."[47]

"What is *arsh*? It is I. What is Chair (*kursi*)? It is I. What is the Tablet or the Pen? It is I. What are prophets like Abraham, Moses and Muhammad? They are I." Explaining it further, he remarked that whoever becomes annihilated in God finds that whatever is, is God.[48] His negativism (*tajrid*) is illustrated by the following quotation: "Nothing is better for man than to be without aught: having no asceticism, no theory, no practice. When he is without all, he is with all."[49]

A mystic should be in a domain where neither good nor evil exists; both good and evil belong to the phenomenal world; in the presence of unity there is neither command (*amr*) nor prohibition (*nahi*). [50]

Bayazid is the first Sufi who gives a detailed description of his mystic experience and calls it by the name of ascension (*mi`raj*), a practice which was later followed by Ibn 'Arabi and others. We give below a few passages from the account as given by 'Attar in his *Tadhkirah*: [51]

"When I attained the stage of indifference (*istighna*) towards the things of this world and was lighted up by the light of God, several mysteries were revealed to me. I looked from God towards myself and found that my light was utter darkness in comparison with God's light, my loftiness was utter lowliness; it was all purity there and all darkness here. But when again I looked, I found my light in His light, my loftiness in His loftiness, and that whatever I did I did through His power.

His light shone in my heart and I discovered that in truth all worship was from God and not from me, though all the time I had thought that it was I who worshipped. I felt perplexed and received the explanation: All that is, is I and not not-I... I looked from God towards God and saw Him as the only reality. I remained in this stage for long, left all efforts and all acquired knowledge. Grace from God began to flow and I got eternal (*azali*) knowledge. I saw that all things abide in God.

"Then I was given wings, and I began to fly in the air and saw strange and wonderful things. When He noticed my weakness, He strengthened me by His strength and put the crown of honour on my head. He opened the gate of the avenue of divine unity (*tawhid*) before me. Then I stayed in the stage of *malakut* till the apparent and hidden aspects of I-ness vanished. A door was opened into the darkness of my heart and I got an eloquent tongue to express *tawhid* and *tajrid* (abstract unity).

Now, my tongue came from God, my heart felt the effulgence of His light, and my eyes reflected His creativity. I spoke through Him and talked through His power. As I lived through Him I became eternal and immortal. When I reached this stage, my gestures and my worship became eternal; my tongue became the tongue of unity (*tawhid*) and my soul the soul of abstraction (*tajrid*). It is He who moves my tongue and my role is only that of an interpreter: talker in reality is He, and not I.

"My soul passed through all the world of the unseen. Paradise and hell were shown to it but it paid no attention to them. It traversed the different spheres where it met the souls of prophets. When it reached the sphere of the soul of Muhammad, it saw millions of rivers of fire without end and a thousand veils of light. If I had put my foot into them, I would have been burnt. I lost my senses through awe and fear. I tried hard to see the ropes of Muhammad's tent, but could not till I reached God. Everybody can reach God according to his light, for God is with all; but Muhammad occupies a prominent position, and so unless one traverses the valley of *tawhid*, one cannot reach the valley of Muhammad, though as a matter of fact both valleys are one."

9. Junaid of Baghdad (d. 298/910)

Junaid of Baghdad was well versed in theology, jurisprudence, and ethics and was acclaimed as a leader in the science of Sufism by the Sufis of all schools.[52] He was perhaps the first mystic who explicitly expressed his indebtedness to `Ali for his mystic knowledge, for `Ali, according to him, possessed an abundance of both exoteric and esoteric knowledge (`*ilm* and *hikmah*).[53] He studied law under Abu Thaur and associated with Harith Muhasibi and discussed different problems of Sufism during walks with him.[54]

Junaid advocated the principle of sobriety (*sabr*) as opposed to that of intoxication (*sukr*).[55] According to him, intoxication is an evil, because it disturbs the normal state of a mystic and leads to the loss of sanity and self-control.[56] In this connection, the conversation between Junaid and Hallaj, when the latter after leaving the society of `All b. `Uthman al-Makki came to Junaid seeking his company, is illuminating.

Junaid refused to accept him as his disciple because, as he said, association demands sanity which was lacking in .him. Hallaj replied: O Shaikh, sobriety and intoxication are two attributes of man, and man is veiled from his Lord until his attributes are annihilated. Junaid replied: You are in error. Sobriety denotes soundness of one's spiritual state in relation to God, while intoxication denotes excess of longing and extreme of love, and neither of them can be acquired by human effort.57

This advocacy of the doctrine of sobriety made Junaid a model Sufi who was acceptable both to the mystics and the theologians, and it is for this reason that we find in him an advocate of religious Law. Nobody could raise any objection against him with regard to his apparent behaviour (*zahir*) which was in perfect consonance with the Shari'ah, or with regard to his inner state (*batin*) which was in perfect harmony with the principles of mysticism.58

According to him, only he can truly traverse the Path (*tariqah*) who walks with the Book of God (al-Qur'an) in his right hand and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet in his left hand.59 He preferred to wear the dress of the *`ulama'* rather than mystics and in spite of constant requests by his disciples and others he would not like to change it for the woollen garb (*khirqah*) of the mystics. 60

According to him, the only safe path open to the people is the path laid down by Muhammad, for true and sure knowledge is the knowledge revealed by God in the Qur'an and enunciated by the Holy Prophet, as embodied in the Sunnah. 61

Tawhid, according to Junaid, is the separation of the eternal from that which was originated in time,62 for, as he puts it, God cannot be comprehended by any of the categories of our phenomenal existence.63

Explaining it further, he says that true belief in unification is “that one should be a figure in the hands of God, a figure over which His decrees pass according as His omnipotence determines, and that one should be sunk in the sea of His unity, self-annihilated and dead alike to the call of mankind to him and his response to them, absorbed by the reality of the divine unity in true proximity, and lost to sense and action, because God fulfils in him what He has willed of him, namely, that his state should be as it was before he existed.64

According to Junaid, the efforts of man in search of truth throughout human history have been directed towards fulfilment of the covenant entered by man in the presence of God65 and to return to the state in which he was before he was born.66

Most of the pantheistic Sufis look upon Iblis as their teacher in unification and regard his refusal to bow down before Adam as a testimony of his strict unitarianism. In his conversation with Iblis, Junaid asked him the reason for his refusal and received the same reply. But Junaid does not become an “advocate of the devil” like other pantheistic mystics, and points out his (the devil's) mistake in taking cover under God's will (*mashiyyah*) in order to violate his command (*amr*).

Junaid said, “You lie. Had you been an obedient servant, you would not have transgressed His command”, thus stressing the strictly monotheistic position that moral behaviour is the *sine qua non* of a truly religious life which consists in total obedience to God's command (*`ubudiyyah*). He defines *`ubudiyyah* as the state in which a man realizes that all things belong to God, that He is the cause of their being and existence, and to Him alone they will all return.[67]

Trust in God (*tawakkul*), according to Junaid, is to maintain your relation with God now, as you had before you came into existence; it consists neither in acquisition (*kasb*) nor in non-acquisition, but in putting your heart in tune with God's promise.[68] Repentance involves three stages: first, the expression of regret at the wrong done; secondly, the resolve to avoid doing that wrong for ever; and, thirdly, to purify oneself of all dross, evils, and impurities.[69]

Al-Hallaj

By Louis Massignon

Al-Hallaj (Abu al-Mughith al-Husain bin Mansur bin Mahamma al-Baidawi, in Persian and Turkish literature abridged as Mansur) was a Muslim mystic and thinker who taught in Arabic. He was born in Persia, at al-Tur,' near Baida to the north-east of Shiraz in 244/857. Baida was deeply arabicized; the great grammarian Sibawaihi was born there, among Harithiyyah Yamani clients.

Hallaj's father, a wool-carder by profession, took the boy, a wool-carder by name (for in Arabic word *hallaj* means a wool-carder), with him to Wasit, an Arab city of the Hanbalites with a minority of the Shi`ahs. Wasit had a good school in which teaching of the Qur'an was undertaken. At this school, al-Hallaj became a *hafiz*, trying to “interiorize” his recitation of the Qur'an, so that his “*bismillah*” could become his “*kun*”, i. e., his invocation of the name of God might unite him with God's creative will. So did he begin the mystic quest.

He became a disciple of Sahl bin 'Abd Allah of Tustar (the founder of the Salamiyyah school) whom he left in order to settle down in Basrah, where he received the Sufi gown (*khirqah*) from 'Amr bin 'Uthman Makki's hands. He was married to Umm al-Husain. It was a monogamic wedding, unshaken during his whole life. From her he had three sons. She already had a daughter from another Sufi, Abu Ya'qub Aqta' Karnaba'i. The Karnaba'iyyah, Banu al-'Amm of Nahr Tirah, were clients of the Banu Mujashi (Tamim clan) and political supporters of the rebellion of the Zanj, which raised the slaves of Basrah against the 'Abbasid Caliphate under a supposed 'Alid (Zaidi) leader.

Such was the beginning of al-Hallaj's contacts with the revolutionary Shi'ahs, contacts perceptible in the technical terms of his apologetics. Al-Hallaj, in fact, remained always a Sunni, with a strong leaning towards hard asceticism in observing the Ramadan fasts and, when in Mecca, in performing *'umrah*,[70] in complete silence (cf. Qur'an xix, 27) so as to listen to God from inside.

When he came back to Tustar, he threw off the *khirqah* to deliver God's message to laymen, scribes, and publicans, most of them case-hardened and sceptical. Some of them, of vizierial families, listened to him, becoming his friends (Sunnis: Qunna'iyah: Ibn Wahab and Ibn Jarrah), or his enemies (Imamis: Ibn al-Furat and Ibn Naubakht), denouncing him either as a miracleworker or as a trickster. Friends from Basrah induced him to carry on his apologetical mission among the Arabs colonizing Khurasan, and among the ribat of the *mujahidin*.

After five years al- Hallaj came back to Tustar and, with the help of Hamd Qunna'i, settled among workers of the imperial *Dar al-Tiraz* (fashion-house) of Tustar (for the *kiswah* [covering] of the Ka'bah) in a suburb of Baghdad. Then took place a second *hajj*, and a second mission to Khurasan and Turkestan (as far as Masin-Turfan), with a kind of apocalyptical goal (seeking the hiding-place of the Talaqaniyyin, the future *Ansar al-Mahdi*). Then he performed his last *hajj*; on the Yaum 'Arafat, he dedicated himself, at the Waqfah, as a substitute for the *dhabihah* (just as some Shi'ahs think of the Martyr of Karbala as *dhabiah 'azim*).'

Back in Baghdad, he began an extraordinary, way of talking in the streets, about his desire of dying as sacrificed by the Law for the sake of the Law (*kunu antum mujahidun, wa ana shahid*). It was in the last days of Mu`tadid's Caliphate that a decree (*fatwa*) was given against al-Hallaj for his queer way of proving his love for God by offering his life, by a Zahiri lawyer Ibn Dawud (d. 297/909), the author of a charming anthology about pure love (*Kitab al-Zahrah*). But another lawyer, Ibn Suraij, a Shafi`i, saved him by pleading that mystical utterances were not to be judged on juridical grounds.

It is said that one day al-Hallaj uttered the famous words *ana al-Haqq* (I am the Creative Truth), a kind of eschatological cry (named *siyah bi al-Haqq*) in the Holy Qur'an. “Blasphemy,” said the lawyers. Al-Hallaj himself explained it in verses: “Oh! the secret of my heart is so fine that it is hidden from all living beings....” Involved in the Sunni plot of the Caliph ibn al-Mu`tazz, al-Hallaj was prosecuted; he remained hidden in Susa near the tomb of Prophet Daniel, the “announcer of the Last Day,” but was arrested in 301/913.

The first trial under 'All bin 'Isa, the “good vizier,” was suspended through the influence of Ibn Suraij, and al-Hallaj was merely kept as a prisoner in the royal palace for nearly eight years and eight months. Afraid of Hallaj's influence on the Court of the Caliph Muqtadir, two Shi'ah leaders, the *wakil* Ibn Rauh Naubakhti and his rival Shalmaghani, succeeded in persuading the vizier Ahmed bin al-'Abbas, through his Shi'ah financial supporters, to reopen the trial on two charges.

The first of these charges was that he was a Qarmatian agent of the Fatimids. It is true that al-Hallaj on grounds not political but spiritual did share with the Fatimids belief in the apocalyptical significance of the year 290 of the Hijrah, for in the esoteric alphabet 290 means “Maryam” or “Fatir.” The second charge was that with the Qarmatian rebels he advocated the destruction of the Ka'bah and Mecca. It is also a fact that, while in Mecca, Hallaj did write to his disciple Shakir, “Destroy your Ka'bah,” meaning in esoteric language “Do sacrifice your life for the sake of Islam as I do.”

The Qadi Abu 'Umar Hammadi, a Maliki, insisted on taking this allegorical letter in an unjustifiable literal sense. And al-Hallaj was condemned to death, and "crucified" (*maslub*, cf. Qur'an, vii, 124) on 24th of Dhu al-Qa`dah 309/26th of March 922. Curiously enough, this year 309 is the Qur'anic year of the "Awakening of the Seven Sleepers" (Qur'an, xviii, 25), celebrated by the Isma'elite Fatimid propagandists as the year of the coming out of the Mahdi from the cave of concealment (but al-Hallaj's disciples explained it mystically).

Al-Hallaj's crucifixion has been looked at by the Sunni Sufis as the height (*mi'raj*) of saintship; and many beautiful utterances are ascribed to al-Hallaj while on the stake. Nasr Qushuri, the high chamberlain, put on mourning clothes publicly with the approval of the Queen-Mother, Shaghab. And some Sufi witnesses, Qannad and Shibli, acknowledged his death as the seal of a most saintly vocation.

Though it was proclaimed after the year 309/922 that al-Hallaj had been executed in compliance with the unanimity (*ijma'*) of the jurists (*fuqaha'*), yet a respected lawyer, his friend Ibn `Ata, had objected to this verdict and was killed for that. Ibn `Ata's death nullifies this so-called *ijma`*. The memory of al-Hallaj slowly spread aflame with beauty. Among the Shafi`iyyah, Ibn al-Muslimah, the very day he was appointed as vizier (437/l045), was seen coming to al-Hallaj's place of crucifixion (*maslib* al-Hallaj) and praying – a silent act of rehabilitation.

Sufis have kept his creed (*aqidah*); as a motto in their exoterical books (e.g., Kalabadhi, and Qushairi); and they have his name "understood" in their esoterical *isnad* (with his friends Shibli and Nasrabadhi). Farid al-Din `Attar celebrated al-Hallaj's martyrdom as the "apex" of Sufism, and the great painter Behzad painted it for Baiqara in Herat.. Independent Muslim philosophers, Balkhi, Mantiqi, Abu Hayyan Tauhidi, and Abu al-Hasan Dailami, set off the metaphysical originality of al-Hallaj'a spiritual experiences.

In spite of his adversaries classifying him among the adepts of existential unity (*wahdat al-wujud*), al-Hallaj has been proved to be a vindicator of cognitive unity (*wahdat al-shuhud*). 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani, Ruzbehan Baqili, and Fakhr al-Din Farisi have given convincing explanations of and commentaries on the doctrine of Unity, in spite of the subtleties of Ibn 'Arabi's school. Jalal al-Din Rumi, and after him the great mystics of India, Semnani, 'Ali Hamadani, Makhdum-i Jahaniyan, Gisudaraz, Ahmad Sirhindi, and Bedil have considered al-Hallaj to be a believer in cognitive unity (*shuhudi*). In his Javid Nameh, the great poet-philosopher of Pakistan, Iqbal, stated that al-Hallaj was a kind of "Promethean" personality. L. Massignon also heard him say this when Iqbal gave him the privilege of a visit to him in Paris in 1351/1932.

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Chapter 18: ’Abd Al–Qadir Jilani and Shihab Al–Din Suhrawardi

By B.A. Dar

Abd Al–Qadir Jilani

Shaikh 'Abd al–Qadir Jilani (470–561/1077–1166) was born at a period when Malikshah the Saljuq (465––485/1072–1091) ruled over a vast Muslim Empire. This period is famous for great patronage of learning. It was during this period that the great Nizamiyyah University was founded in Baghdad by Nizam al–Mulk. But after Malikshah's death in 485/1092, fight for succession started which brought about anarchy and disorder in the country. In 513/1119 Sanjar succeeded in securing the throne and was crowned at Baghdad. But after his death in 552/1157, there was once again the same anarchy and disorder. Constant wars between the different factions of the Saljuqs destroyed the peace and security of the Empire.

But there are two events which stand out prominently. They contributed much towards the disintegration of the social and political structure of the Muslims of this period. The first was the rise and gradual spread of the group of people called Assassins under the leadership of Hasan bin Sabbah. Thousands of people, great and small, fell to the dagger of these fanatics. The second was the starting of the Crusades.

The first Crusade lasted from 488–489/1095 to 493/1099. The Christian hordes succeeded in occupying

Jerusalem in 492/1099, and putting to death thousands of innocent Muslims and Jews. News of the disaster and huge processions of refugees entered Baghdad where people clamoured for revenge. But the Saljuq rulers were too busy in their wars to take up the challenge. The Christian invaders were allowed, for a long time, to rob and destroy the country. Life became unsettled and there was no peace or security.

It was amid such circumstances that Shaikh 'Abd al-Qadir lived at Baghdad where he had come from far off Jilan. Being a man of great intelligence he was soon able to acquire what the usual system of education had to offer. He then became a pupil of a Sufi saint Hammad under whose spiritual care he acquired great proficiency in the mystic lore. For eleven years he spent his life in total seclusion from worldly affairs. After this period of retirement and spiritual discipline he came back to Baghdad and adopted the career of a preacher to the people in response to what he calls the "inner command."

The students and the people in large numbers began to gather round him and within a short time the premises where he had started lecturing had to be enlarged and expanded. At the age of 51, he got married, and died at the ripe age of 91. He was a man of charming personality and by his eloquent speech exerted great influence on the people. He stands in the forefront of the Muslim mystics of all ages, and is the founder of the Qadirivyah school of Sufism which includes within its fold many renowned Sufis of the Muslim world.

Futuh al-Ghaib (Revelations of the Unseen), a collection of eighty sermons which he delivered on different occasions, reflects the unstable condition of the times. He emphasizes in almost every sermon that social ruin and instability is the result of excessive materialistic outlook on life; true well-being is the result of a harmonious development of an individual's personality whose material as well as spiritual demands are being properly looked after. But as a reaction against the prevalent materialism he emphasizes religious values to an extent which seems to be exaggerated.

In the fifty-fourth Discourse, for instance, he advises people in general to adopt an attitude of total and complete indifference towards the world, to kill desires and ambitions of all kinds. In order that his indifference in worldly life may become complete and unalloyed, it is proper for an individual to remove all things from his heart and cultivate pleasure in annihilation, abiding poverty, and want, so that there may not remain in his heart even so much pleasure as that of sucking the stone of a date.[1]

With regard to the question of free-will he adopts an attitude of determinism, though sometimes he tries to avoid the extremes of deterministic position by resort to what has come to be known in Muslim scholastic circles as acquisition (*kasb*). He says, "Do not forget the position of human efforts so as not to fall a victim to the creed of the determinists (Jabriyyah) and believe that no action attains its fulfilment but in God. Nor should you say that actions of man proceed from anything but from God, because if you say so you will become an unbeliever and belong to the category of people known as the indeterminists (Qadariyyah). You should rather say that actions belong to God in point of creation and to man in point of acquisition (*kasb*)[2].

But in a later Discourse (sixteenth), he points out that to rely on *kasb* is *shirk*, i.e., association of partners with God. There is a verse in the Qur'an[3] which refers to a particular episode in the life of Abraham. While denouncing idol-worship, he says that it is God who created you as well your handiwork (*ta`malun*).

Muslim pantheists and determinists have always used this verse in support of their contention, rendering *ta`malun* as "what you do," instead of correct rendering, "what you make." Shaikh Jilani here follows the same line, arguing for total determinism, though he does not advocate cessation of all activities.[4]

There is another verse of the Qur'an in which God says, ***"Enter the garden of paradise because of what you have been doing."***[5] Here, the text unequivocally points out that paradise is the reward of actions. But this being incompatible with the creed of determinism, Shaikh Jilani hastens to add, "Glory be to Him, how generous and merciful of Him! He ascribes the actions to the people and says that their entry into paradise is on account of their deeds, whereas their deeds owe their existence to His help and mercy."[6]

Good and evil are the twin fruits of a tree; all is the creation of God,[7] though we should ascribe all evil to ourselves[8]. There is, however, the question of undeserved suffering which a man of conscience has to undergo. Shaikh Jilani thinks that the spiritual peace which is indispensable for a mystic cannot be said to be complete unless he is trained in the school of adversity. The degree of the undeserved suffering, according to him, determines his spiritual rank.

He quotes a tradition of the Holy Prophet in this respect: "We prophets are beset with the greatest number of trials and so on according to rank."[9] What is essential is to hold fast to faith for the ultimate victory of good over evil. This victory is possible not only in the hereafter but also in this world. If a man has faith and is grateful, these things will put out the fire of calamity in this life.

Men can be divided, according to the Shaikh, into four categories. The first category includes those who have neither tongue nor heart. They are the majority of the ordinary people, who do not care for truth and virtue and lead a life of subservience to the senses. Such people should be avoided except when they are approached and invited to the path of righteousness and godliness. In that case you shall be following in the honourable footsteps of the prophets.[10]

The second category includes people who have tongue but no heart. They are people of great learning and knowledge and possess eloquent tongue with which they exhort people to live a life of piety and righteousness. But, they themselves lead a life of sensuality and rebellion. Their speech is charming but their hearts are black.

To the third category belong people who have a heart but no tongue. They are the faithful and true believers. They are aware of their own shortcomings and blemishes and are constantly engaged in purifying themselves of all dross. To them silence and solitude are far safer for spiritual health than talking to and mixing with people.

To the last category belong people who have heart as well as tongue. They are in possession of the true knowledge of God and His attributes and are able to reach and understand the ultimate truth. Equipped with this wisdom and truth they invite people to the path of virtue and righteousness and, thus, become true representatives of the prophets. They are at the highest stage, next only to prophethood, in the spiritual progress of mankind.[11]

With reference to mystical states, he gives us four stages of spiritual development. The first is the state of piety when man leads a life of obedience to the religious Law, totally reliant on God and without any recourse to the help of other people.

The second in the state of reality which is identical with the state of saintliness (*wilayah*). While in this state, man obeys God's commandment (*amr*). This obedience is of two kinds. The first is that an individual strives to satisfy his basic needs, but abstains totally from any luxurious indulgence in life and protects himself against all open and hidden sins. The second obedience is to the inner voice, to what is directly revealed to him. All his movements and even his rest become dedicated to God.

The third is the state of resignation when the individual submits completely to God. The fourth and last is the state of annihilation (*fana'*) which is peculiar to *Abdal* who are pure unitarians and Gnostics. [12]

The state of annihilation is the unitive state in which the individual attains nearness[13] to God, which implies discarding one's own desires and purposes and identifying oneself with the cosmic purpose of God. In this state man comes to realize that there is nothing in existence except God[14] – a position which is characteristic of pantheistic mysticism, though we do not find in the *Futuh al-Ghaib* this statement associated with the usual metaphysical implications that we find, for instance, in Ibn 'Arabi and his followers. It is only an expression of psychological experience of the individual traversing the mystic Path. A man who reaches this stage acquires the creative power (*takwin*) like God's, and his ordering a thing to be (*kun*) becomes as effective as God's.[15]

Shaikh Jilani holds that mystic intuition gives the recipient knowledge of reality that is not possible to gain through reason. Not only that, vision (*kashf*) and experience (*mushahadah*) overwhelm the reasoning power of man. This manifestation reveals two aspects of God: (a) His majesty (*jalal*) and (b) His beauty (*jamal*), both of which are revealed to one at different times.[16]

But in another Discourse he approaches the problem in a truly empirical way. He says that the only way to know Reality is to look to the self (*nafs*) as well as to observe nature (*afaq*). It is only through this approach that we can arrive at a true conception of God. He quotes with approval the following statement of Ibn al-'Abbas, the famous Companion of the Holy Prophet:

"Everything reflects one or other of the attributes of God and every name signifies one of His names. So surely you are surrounded by His names, His attributes, and His works. He is manifest in His attributes and concealed in His person. His person is concealed in His attributes and His attributes are concealed in His actions. He has revealed His knowledge through His will and His will is manifest in His continuous

creative activity. He has concealed His skill or workmanship and has expressed it only when He has so willed. So He is hidden is His aspect of *ghaib* (unseen) and He is manifest in His wisdom and power. 17

Mysticism, according to the Shaikh, is not the result of discussion and talk but of hunger and privation. It consists of generosity, cheerful submission, patience, constant communion with God through prayer, solitude, wearing of woollen dress, globe-trotting, and *faqr*,18 and also of humility, sincerity, and truthfulness.19

Shihab Al-Din Suhrawardi

Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi (539-632/1144-1234) was born at a time when the fate of the whole Muslim world was hanging in the balance. The last king of the Saliuqs, Sultan Sanjar, died in 552/1157. Soon after the Ghuzz came on the scene, and carried fire and sword wherever they went; peace was, however, restored by the Khwarizm Shahs. But in 615/1218 started the Mongol invasion under Chingiz Khan. One town after another was ravaged and people were indiscriminately massacred. There was nobody to check this advance. The people had lost all morale.

It was during this period of insecurity and fear that Shaikh. Suhrawardi lived. He died in 624/1226, eight years after the death of Chingiz Khan. These events must have influenced the mind of the Shaikh; hence the note of pessimism often met with in his work *Awarif al-Ma'rif*, in which he expresses with a sad heart the decline in moral character of his contemporaries. He passed the major part of his life at Baghdad where he now lies buried. He founded the school of mysticism which is known as Suhrawardiyyah - after his name. His work *'Awarif al-Ma'rif* is a standard treatise on mysticism exten-sively used in all mystic circles.

Origin of Sufism

According to him, the word *sufi* is etymologically derived from "*suf*," the coarse woollen cloth which, as he says, was worn by the Holy Prophet.20 He enumerates several other views: (i) The Sufis are those who stand in the first rank (*saff*) before God; (ii) the word was originally *safawi* and was later on changed into *sufi*; (iii) it was derived from *suffah*, the mound where a group of Muslims used to spend their time in religious learning and ascetic ways of life.

According to Suhrawardi, these derivations are etymologically incorrect, though with regard to the third it may be said that the life led by the people of the *suffah* resembled the pattern of life adopted by the Sufis. He also refers to a particular group of the people of Khurasan21 who used to live in caves far off from inhabited places. They were called *Shaguftiyyah*, from *Shaguft*, the name of the cave. The people of Syria used to call them *Jau'iyyah*.

A detailed discussion about the origin of the word *sufi* has already been given in Chapter XVI, where, on the authority of Sarraj, it has been maintained that the word *sufi* was in use in Arabia even in pre-Islamic

days. Suhrawardi, however, thinks that this word was not used in the time of the Holy Prophet. According to some people, it became current during the third generation after the Prophet (*Taba` Tabi'in*).

According to others, it came into use in the third century of the Hijrah. The titles of *Sahabah* (Companions of the Prophet) and *Tabi'in* (their Successors) were held in great esteem and, therefore, the word *sufi* – a title of honour, no doubt – did not make its appearance during their times. But when these peaceful times disappeared and gave place to turbulent periods of unrest and political intrigue, pious people found it convenient for their peace of mind to shun society and live in seclusion and pass their time in meditation and spiritual exercises.22

What is Sufism?

Suhrawardi tries to establish a very intimate relationship between Sufism and knowledge. According to him, knowledge that is followed by moral behaviour is the main characteristic of Sufi life. Such knowledge is called by him *Fiqh* which is not used in the usual legal sense but for spiritual insight as it is used in the Qur'an. He refers to several Qur'anic verses to prove this point. First, he quotes the verse; ***"He* (*God*) *taught man what he did not know,"***23 and concludes that the spiritual status of man is based solely on knowledge. 24

Secondly, he holds that Sufis are the people who acquire spiritual insight into religion and this helps them lead people to the right path. This spiritual perception, according to him, pertains to the sphere of the heart and not to the sphere of the head 25 He argues that, according to the Qur'an, knowledge and moral uprightness are the characteristics of the truly learned persons. He holds that knowledge is the consequence of *taqwa*, i, e., piety and moral integrity. In a verse it is said that "those of His servants only who are possessed of knowledge have *taqwa*."26 This verse is very significant in establishing the relationship between knowledge and moral behaviour, for, as Suhrawardi puts it,27 it excludes knowledge from those who are not characterized by moral integrity (*taqwa*).

But to what kind of knowledge does Suhrawardi refer? In this connection he enumerates different views. According to some, it is the knowledge of the psychological states of an individual, for, without this kind of knowledge, it is contended, it is not possible for a person to distinguish between different types of revelations and experiences.28

According to others, it is the knowledge concerning worldly matters, for, without proper information in this respect, a person is liable to be misled in his religious pursuits. According to Abu Talib of Mecca, it is the knowledge of the five religious duties of a Muslim.

But, according to Suhrawardi himself, the knowledge which is incumbent on all Muslims is the knowledge of religious commandments. and prohibitions. And yet true knowledge, which manifests itself in practice and moulds and informs the life of the individual possessing that knowledge, is not formal

knowledge that is imparted in schools and colleges but a state of the heart that grasps the truth of things without thereby becoming the master of details.

Such a person is called in the Qur'an the one firmly rooted in knowledge (*rasikh fi al-'ilm*).29 He calls it the knowledge which one receives as a legacy (*'ilm al-wirathah*) from the prophets and saints. He distinguishes it from the knowledge gained through formal education (*'ilm al-dirasah*).30 Their relation, according to him, is like the relation of butter and milk. It is not milk but butter that is the object of man. We take milk only because it yields butter and fat.

This type of knowledge is usually divided into three stages: knowledge by inference, knowledge by perception (or observation), and knowledge by personal experience or intuition (*'ilm al-yaqin, 'ain al-yaqin*, and *haqq al-yaqin*). A person who attains to the stage of intuition, though less careful in observing ritualistic formalities, is far superior to a man who has many ritualistic practices to his credit but whose knowledge is not of the highest type.31

Sufism, according to Suhrawardi, is characterized by two things. It consists in following the practice of the Holy Prophet (*Sunnah*) and in inculcating purity of motives and attaining the highest integrity of character. There are two different categories of Sufis.

The first includes those persons in whom mystic illumination (*kashf*) is followed by exercise of personal effort (*ijtihad*). He quotes the example of Pharoah's magicians. When they realized the spiritual stature of Moses in comparison with their petty tricks, they were overwhelmed by the effulgence of spiritual illumination as a result of which they decided there and then to break with the Pharaoh in favour of Moses. This decision of theirs for which they willingly bore all the terrible consequences with which the Pharoah threatened them came to them with an ease that follows spiritual illumination.

To the second category belong those people who lead a hard ascetic life spending their days in prayers and nights in meditation. It is only after a long struggle spread over days, months, and years that they receive divine illumination. Here illumination is the fruit and crown of personal efforts and hard ascetic life. He quotes a saying of Junaid: “We did not gain access to the domain of Sufism through discursive reasoning or intellectual discussion but through hunger, abdication of worldly lust and prestige, and discarding of even lawful things.”

There are two other kinds of people usually called Sufis but, according to Suhrawardi, they cannot be included among mystics at all. The first are the *majdhubs*, i.e., those who receive spiritual illumination through divine grace but cannot reap the full fruit of their illumination because they are not able to supplement it with their personal efforts. The others are the ascetics who spend their whole life in self-mortification and meditation but whose efforts are not crowned with illumination.32

In another place, discussing the qualities of a spiritual guide, he divides persons into four categories: (1) Pure or absolute ascetic (*salik*). (2) Pure or absolute *majdhub*. People belonging to these two categories do not deserve to be adopted as spiritual guides. The absolute ascetic retains the

consciousness of self to the last. He starts with ascetic practices but, unfortunately, he is not able to ascend to the stage of *kashf*. The absolute *majdhub*, on the other hand, receives through divine grace a little illumination, and some veils from the face of Reality (God) are removed for him, but he does not put in the requisite labour that forms an indispensable part of mystic discipline.

(3) First *salik* and afterwards *majdhub*. Such a person is fit for becoming a guide. He starts with ascetic practices and reaches the goal of his endeavour, viz., spiritual illumination, which relieves him of the severity of his earlier discipline. He becomes the repository of divine wisdom.

(4) But the most perfect stage, according to him, is the fourth, viz., first *majdhub* and afterwards *salik*. Such a person receives divine illumination in the beginning and veils are removed from his heart. His interest in the material world vanishes and he looks towards the spiritual world with eagerness and joyful expectations. This inner transformation affects his outward life and the antagonism between love and Law ceases for him. His outward and inward life, this world and the other world, wisdom and power, all become one. His faith is so deep that even if all the veils that hide the face of the Real were removed, he will gain nothing thereby.[33]

Suhrawardi makes a distinction between a person of the third rank and a person of the fourth rank. The former who follows the path of a lover (*muhibb*) is freed from the bonds of the lower self (*nafs*) but is tied down in the bondage of the heart. The latter who traverses the way of the Beloved (*Mahbub*) is freed both from the lower self and the heart.[34]

Again, the former follows the forms of action (*suwar al-a'mal*) and thinks that just as a man cannot do without a body so long as he is alive, so action of one sort or other is indispensable for him. But the man belonging to the fourth category passes beyond all these. He leaves behind everything – lower self (*nafs*), heart, states, and actions – and achieves complete unity with God to the extent that God be-comes his ears and eyes so that he hears with God's ears and sees with God's eyes.[35]

Sufism covers both poverty (*faqr*) and continence (*zuhd*), but is identical with neither. *Faqr* is a difficult term to translate. Usually it means poverty, but in mystic morality it signifies the positive attitude of total independence from worldly needs. Suhrawardi quotes different definitions and descriptions of *faqr* in Sufism given by several eminent mystics.

Ruyam says that Sufism is based on three principles, the first of which is attachment to poverty. Ma'ruf of Karkh says that he who does not possess *faqr* is not a Sufi. *Faqr*, according to Shibli, is indifference towards all except God. [36] According to usage of the terms in Syria,[37] there is no difference between Sufism and *faqr*. They argue on the basis of the Qur'anic verse that ***"(alms are for) the poor (fuqara') who have devoted themselves to the way of God,"***[38] which, according to them, is the description of the Sufis.

But Suhrawardi disagrees with this view. He thinks that a person's constant attachment to poverty and fear of riches is a sign of weakness; it amounts to reliance on external causes and conditions and

dependence on expected reward. But a true Sufi is above all these things. He is motivated neither by fear nor by rewards; he is above all such limitations. Again, adoption of poverty and avoidance of riches imply exercise of personal will and freedom of choice which is contrary to the spirit of Sufism. A true Sufi has subjected his will to the will of God and, therefore, he sees no difference in poverty or riches.

Sufism is, thus, distinct from *faqr*, though the latter forms the basis of the former – in the sense that the way to Sufism passes through *faqr*, not in the sense that both are identical or indispensable to each other. The same is the case with asceticism (*zuhd*), which may be a preparatory stage for Sufism but cannot be identified with it at all. There is a Qur'anic verse which says to the believers, to be ***"upright (qawwamin) for Allah and bearer of witness with justice."***[39] This uprightness (*qawwamiyyah*), according to Suhrawardi, is the essence of Sufism.

There are three stages in the mystic process; first, faith (*iman*); secondly, knowledge (*'ilm*); and lastly, intuition (*dhauq*). When a person is at the first stage, he is called "one who is like a true Sufi in appearance and dress (*mutashabih*)." When he attains to the second stage, he is called "one who pretends to be a Sufi (*mutasawwif*)." Only he who reaches the last stage derserves to be called a true Sufi.[40]

Suhrawardi again refers to a Qur'anic verse[41] where three different kinds of persons are mentioned who have been chosen by God as the repositories (*warith*) of the knowledge of the Book: ***"Of them is he who makes his soul suffer a loss, of them is he who takes a middle course, and of them is he who is foremost in deeds of goodness."***

The Qur'an uses the word *zalim* for the first, *muqtasid* for the second, and *sabiq* for the third. According to some, *zalim* is the ascetic (*zahid*), *muqtasid* is a gnostic (*`arif*), and *sabiq* is the lover (*muhibb*). According to others, the first is one who cries when any calamity befalls him, the second is one who patiently bears it, while the third feels positive pleasure in it. According to another version, the first are those who worship God carelessly and as a matter of routine, the second do it with hope and fear, while the third are those who do not forget God at any time. These three categories of people according to Suhrawardi are identical with the three types of mystics: *Mutashabih*, *Mutasawwif* and the Sufi, respectively.[42]

He refers to two other groups. The first are *Malamitiyyah* who do not manifest good deeds and do not hide evil. But they are inferior to a true Sufi who is so engrossed in his experiences and illumination that he does not know what to hide and what to manifest.[43] The second are *Qalandariyyah* who are people of integrity but who do not subject themselves to full ascetic discipline. They have no ambition for further spiritual progress and lead a life of happiness and contentment.[44]

He mentions a group of people who claim that *Shari`ah* (the religious Law) is binding only up to a certain stage. When reality manifests itself to a gnostic, the bonds of the Law disappear. Suhrawardi holds that these are misguided people, for Law and reality (*Shari'ah* and *haqiqah*) are not antagonistic but

interdependent. He who enters the sphere of reality (*Haqiqah*) becomes bound to the rank of slavehood (*'ubudiyyah*). Those who subscribe to the doctrine of incarnation (*hulul*) and employ the Christian terms *lahut* and *nasut* [45] without understanding their real significance are all misguided people.

He holds that the saying attributed to Bayazid, viz., *subhani, ma a'zamu sha'ni* (all praise to me, how exalted is my position!), if spoken by him at all must have been said about God and not about himself as is commonly held. The *ana al-Haq* (I am the Truth) of Hallaj must be similarly interpreted according to the true intention of the statement. Suhrawardi adds that if it were known that Hallaj by this statement implied incarnation (*hulul*), he would condemn him outright.

There are some people who think that they receive words from God and often converse with Him; and, as a result of this conversation, they claim to receive messages which they attribute to God. Such people, according to Suhrawardi, are either ignorant of the true nature of their experience or are deceived by their intellectual conceit. The words they hear are mere words which appear in their mind and in no way can be attributed to God. Such things appear when a man due to excessive ascetic practices is morally uplifted. Their attribution to God should be like attribution of everything to the Creator and not as a result of any kind of conversation with Him.

He mentions another group of people who claim to be submerged in the sea of Unity and deny man's free-will and look upon each human action as the direct consequence of God's will or act. It seems that the Shaikh is referring to those mystics who were later called pantheists, for they were the people who claimed to be the followers of the true doctrine of *tawhid*, interpreted by them as the denial not only of any gods besides God but the denial of any existence besides His.[46]

Suhrawardi thinks that mystics must live in monasteries (*khanqahs*) quite unconcerned with the problem of earning their bread. Without complete break with the world, it is not possible for them to turn their attention to God and to the purification of their hearts. As this seems to be incompatible with the generally held view, he tries to justify his stand by reference to certain Qur'anic verses and the Prophet's traditions.

There is a verse which says: ***"Be patient and vie you in patience and be steadfast* (*rabitu*).*"***[47] Suhrawardi interprets the word *rabitu* in his own way. He says that *ribat* was originally a place where horses were tied, then it came to be used for a fortress the residents of which gave protection to the people. Later on, it came to be employed for monasteries, for the people of monasteries by their godliness are able to protect people from the influence of evil.

So the word *rabitu* in this verse stands, according to Suhrawardi, not for struggle against the enemies but for struggle against the self, not for smaller *jihad* but for greater *jihad*, as a tradition puts it.[48] But the Qur'anic verse[49] that he quotes in the beginning of the chapter conclusively disproves the whole tenor of his stand. It is clear that the Qur'an refers to the houses, the inmates of which have not turned their back upon the world but are engaged in full worldly pursuits, and these pursuits never stand in the way of their

remembrance of God.

If monastic life is accepted as an ideal for the mystic, as Suhrawardi does, it follows naturally that begging and celibacy should be adopted as the basic principles governing the life of the mystics. Naturally, therefore, we find him defending both these principles in spite of his view that they are not in complete accord with the Islamic way of life, as enunciated by the Qur'an and sanctioned by the Holy Prophet. While discussing begging, he refers to several traditions which prohibit a man from begging and yet he insists that a Sufi who is engaged in a life of total dedication to *dhikr–Allah* (remembrance of God) is compelled to satisfy his minimum physical needs of hunger and thirst by resort to begging. For justifying his point of view he misinterprets the traditions.

There is a saying of the Prophet that the most lawful of foods for a Muslim is what he earns by his own hands. Many mystics tried to explain it away by holding that "earning by hand" means stretching hand in prayers to God for sending them food through other persons. He refers to Abu Talib of Mecca who rejected this misinterpretation and still clings to it.50 There is another tradition according to which the upper hand (of the giver) is better than the lower hand (of the beggar). But Suhrawardi, following Hujwiri, interprets it again in his own way. According to him, the upper hand is the hand of the beggar who by receiving alms gives blessing to the alms–giver.51

Similarly, discussing the question of celibacy, he wavers between the two positions. On the one hand, he feels inclined towards celibacy as a logical consequence of the conception of mysticism that he holds. On the other hand, there are many traditions to the effect that he who does not marry does not belong to the Muslim community. Ultimately, he leaves the question to the discretion of the individual mystic or to the advice of the spiritual guide.52

On the question of listening to music, again, his attitude is non–committal. On the one hand, he quotes several eminent Sufis who were fond of music and who referred to several traditions in their support. On the other, there were several eminent persons who did not like it because, according to them, there was no scriptural support for it.

While discussing the question of musical assemblies, he points out that some people look upon these assemblies as innovations. But he adds that not all innovations are religiously blameworthy and, therefore, the question under discussion cannot be decided on this ground.53 Again, he quotes a tradition in support of the mystic dance (*wajd*) and tearing of the mystic robe (*khirqah*) in these assemblies and yet adds that traditions invariably reject them as unlawful,54 and, therefore, the matter stands where it is. But on the whole he seems to be in favour of music.55

With regard to travel, Suhrawardi thinks that a Sufi cannot be expected to conform to any particular pattern of life. He divides Sufis into four classes in this respect:

First those who start their mystic career as travellers but then change into stays–at–home. Their travelling is for several purposes for acquiring knowledge, which,: as the Shaikh quotes different

traditions, is incumbent on all Muslims; for visiting people versed in knowledge (*rasikhun fi al-'ilm*) and benefiting from their company; for observing the various forms of natural phenomena, for, according to the Qur'an, God shows ***"His signs in the objective world and in the subjective world of the self till the truth is clear to them"***[56]; for moral and spiritual discipline which will season them and train them to achieve self-control and other virtues.

The second are those who start their mystic life with a retreat to solitude and end up with travelling. Such persons happen to enjoy the company of a perfect saint and under his guidance cover several stages of the mystic discipline and then after maturity try to consolidate their position by travelling from place to place.

To the third category belong people who start their mystic life in solitude and retirement and end with it. "Such people keep their heads on the knees and find therein the Mount of Sinai." In other words, they enjoy the nearness and see the light of divine illumination. It is said that water if stationary begins to stink. To this the mystics reply that one should become as vast as an ocean and thereby become protected from stagnation and nasty smell.

To the fourth category belong people who are always on the move and with them travelling is the beginning and end of mystic discipline.

Psychology: Soul, Appetitive Self, Heart

The Shaikh bases his account of the soul (*ruh*) on two verses of the Qur'an. In the first it is held[57] that man was created by God from fine clay, then it successively changed into a moist germ, a clot of blood and flesh, till all of a sudden this compound of apparently chemical changes assumed a form beyond the material plane, acquired the new spiritual dimension and became a new creation (*khalqan akhar*). Beginning as a piece of matter, man acquires at a certain stage of development characteristics which as if push him out of this plane into the plane of life. This stage, according to Suhrawardi, was reached when soul was breathed into him. But what is this soul which changes a piece of clay and matter into a being of a different dimension? He refers to the second verse: ***"They ask you of the soul*** (***ruh***)***. Say, the soul is from the command*** (***amr***) ***of my Lord."***[58]

On the basis of this verse, some mystics regard the soul as eternal – as being an emanation of God's *amr*, which, as an attribute of God, is eternal. Suhrawardi, however, thinks that the soul is not eternal but created (*hadith*), though it is the most subtle of all things and purer and lighter than all else.

The next question is to determine whether it is an attribute (*`ard*) or a substance (*jauhar*). In a tradition it is mentioned that the souls have the capacity to move here and there, fly to different places, etc. On this basis some mystics are inclined to the view that soul is a substance characterized by some definite attributes. But Suhrawardi does not accept this interpretation.

He holds that the account of the soul in the traditions is only symbolical and, therefore, cannot be taken

in a literal sense. Soul is neither eternal nor is it a substance but created (*hadith*) and is an attribute (*`ard*). It is a created thing which acts according to its nature; it keeps the body alive as long as it is associated with it; it is nobler than the body; it tastes death when it is separated from the body; just as the body meets death when it is separated from the soul.

There are, according to him, two stages of the soul. The first is that of the animal soul (*ruh al-hayawan*i) which is a subtle body. It is the source of movement in the human body and produces in it the capacity of receiving sensations from the outside world. This soul is common to all animals and is intimately connected with the digestive organism of the body.

The other grade of the soul is what Suhrawardi calls the heavenly soul of man. It belongs to the world of command (*`alam al-amr*). When it descends upon the animal soul, the animal soul is totally transformed. Now it acquires the characteristic of rationality and becomes capable of receiving inspiration (*ilham*).59

The appetitive self (*nafs*) is the source of all undesirable activities. It has two dominant impulses, rage and avarice. When in rage, it is like a circular substance which is by its nature always on the move. When avaricious, it is like the moth which, being not satisfied with a little light, throws itself headlong into the flame of the candle and burns itself to death.. A man is able to attain true rank of manliness when he tries to purify his self (*nafs*) of these gross characteristics by bringing into play reason and patience.

The self passes through three different stages of development. The first stage of the Self is evil-prompting (*ammarah*), the second is repentant (*lawwamah*), while the third is satisfied (*mutma'innah*).60

Heart (*qalb*) is a spiritual principle (*latifah*) and has its locus in the heart of flesh. It comes into being as a result of mutual attraction between the human soul and the appetitive self. According to a tradition of the Holy Prophet (narrated by Hudhaifah), there are four kinds of hearts. The first is like a pure soil free from all kinds of vegetation. It is illumined as if by a shining lamp. It is the heart of a true believer (*mu'min*). The second is a dark, inverted heart which belongs to an unbeliever. The third belongs to a hypocrite and is enveloped in a veil. The last is a pure but many-faceted heart, with an inclination towards good as well as evil.61

Mystery (Sirr)

There is difference of opinion among the mystics with regard to the exact place which the secret occupies in the psychological makeup of man. According to some, it is prior to the soul (*ruh*) and posterior to the heart (*qalb*) as a spiritual principle. To others it is posterior to the soul, though higher and subtler than it. According to these mystics, *sirr* is the locus of spiritual observation (*mushahadah*), soul is the locus of love, and heart is the locus of gnosis (*ma`rifah*).62

Suhrawardi, however, thinks that secret (*sirr*) has no independent being like the soul and heart. It refers to a particular stage in the spiritual development of man. When man is able to free himself from the dark prison of the appetitive self, and looks towards the spiritual soul, his heart acquires a new characteristic

which is called mystery (*sirr*). Similarly, at this stage his soul also attains a special position which again is called mystery. At this stage, man acquires the satisfied self and he acts and wills what God wishes him to do or will; he loses his individual power of action and freedom of choice and becomes a perfect servant (`*abd*).

Reason ('Aql)

It is the essence of the heavenly soul, its tongue, and its guide. The Shaikh quotes the usual traditional account that reason was the first creation of God. God asked it to come forward, to turn back, to sit, to speak, to become silent in turn, and it obeyed God's orders to the very letter. At this God said, "I swear by My majesty and power that I did not create a being dearer and more honourable than you. I shall be known, praised, and obeyed through you. I shall give as well as take through you. My pleasure and wrath shall follow deeds through you. People shall be rewarded or punished in accordance with you."

Some people think that reason develops from the study of sciences (`*ulum*), especially those which are necessary and axiomatic. But Suhrawardi does not seem to agree to this, for, as he argues, there are many people who are not versed in any art or science and yet possess abundance of reason and common sense. It is the inborn capacity of man which helps him in acquiring different kinds of arts and sciences. There is placed in man a natural power which prompts him to acquire different kinds of knowledge. It is thus truly established that reason is the tongue of the soul which is the Word of God (*amr Allah*). From this flows the light of reason which then leads to the discovery of knowledge, science, and art.

Some people think that reason is of two kinds. By the one, man looks to the affairs of this world, and its seat is brain. The other reason has its place in the heart (*qalb*) with which a man looks to the affairs of the other world. But, according to Suhrawardi, this division is meaningless and unnecessary. Reason as the vehicle of the soul (*ruh*) is one. When it is supported and supplemented by the light of the *Shari'ah* and spiritual perception (*basirah*), it helps a man traverse the straight path of guidance and tread the middle course of the golden mean.

Such a person gets knowledge of the heavenly spheres (*malakut*) which is the innermost secret (*batin*) of the universe. This illumination is the peculiar characteristic of the elect. Such men are capable of looking to the affairs of both the worlds, the world of matter and space and. the world of spirit, the present world and the next world. When reason is not supplemented and supported by the *Shari'ah* and *basirah*, a man may be able to do well in this world, but he shall be deprived of the blessings of the world of spirit.[63]

As the goal of the mystics is thoroughly practical, their excursion as novices into the psychological field is really for the purpose of securing a good ground on which to build an edifice of moral and spiritual development. Their aim is to attain a vision of God and enjoy communion with Him. This involves the necessity of the destruction of vices and elimination of imperfections, which often raise their head

imperceptibly.

The main cause is the wrong interpretation which a man puts on the revelations (*ilhamat*) he receives after undergoing mortification. A true mystic is one who is able to discriminate between the sources of these experiences (*khawatir*). With regard to the sources, he divides these experiences into four kinds: (1) those that flow from the appetitive self (*nafs*), (2) from God (*Haq*), (3) from Satan, and (4) from the angels. There must be one of the following causes why a person cannot discriminate between the sources of experiences: (a) weakness in faith, (b) lack of proper knowledge with regard to the appetitive self and morals, (c) following the dictates of the appetitive self, and, lastly, (d) love of the world and material goals.

Anyone who protects himself from all these causes will surely be able to distinguish between revelations from God and those from Satan. It is an established fact, according to Suhrawardi, that he whose source of livelihood is not pure cannot be safe from evil influences. An attitude of balanced detachment from the material world, mortification of flesh, and constancy in ascetic practices are essential for a true mystic, and it is only then that a mystic can hope to achieve the beatific vlsion.64

State and Station (Hal wa Maqam)

Suhrawardi thinks that most mystics confuse state with station because there is a great similarity between the two, and yet these must be distinguished, for otherwise there is a possibility of a misunderstanding the true nature of the mystic experience.

State (*hal*) as a technical term is indicative of a psychological condition which is implied in its etymology, viz., its liability to change and progress, while station (*maqam*) implies a psychological condition which is relatively permanent. A psychological attitude that a mystic adopts at a particular stage of his mystic experience may be called state because the mystic is not yet used to it, but when later on through practice it becomes a permanent feature of his mystic life, it becomes a station.

Take, for instance, the attitude of critical examination (*muhasabah*) of one's self from a moral point of view. When a mystic adopts this attitude first, it is a state which recurs at different periods; it comes and goes at intervals. By constant practice, however, he is able later on to make it a permanent feature of his normal life. Then it is a station.

Again, the mystic tries to adopt the attitude of meditation or contemplation (*muraqabah*) which becomes his state. Sometimes he is able to contemplate but, due to negligence and other distractions, he cannot find it possible to make it a permanent feature of his life. But steadily and gradually he gains his desired end and a day comes when contemplation becomes a station.

Then he advances to the third stage, of observation (*mushahadah*), where he perceives with his own eyes the secrets of the spiritual world. This, again, is first a state and only gradually by personal effort passes into a station. Thus it follows that “station” is a psychological state which is the result of personal

effort, while “state” is the result of divine grace. Every moral attitude is characterized by both.

Continence (*zuhd*), complete reliance on God (*tawakkul*), and submission to God's pleasure (*rida'*), for instance, have both these aspects – at one stage, they are acquired after a constant and toilsome effort and, at another stage they become a permanent feature of the life of a mystic due to divine grace.65

Among the states Suhrawardi discusses love, feeling of nearness to God (*qurb*), bashfulness, reverence, union (*ittisal*), contraction (*qabd*) and expansion (*bast*), annihilation (*fana'*) and abiding (*baqa'*), etc.

Love

There is an instinctive love in man for wife, wealth, and children, but the love at which the mystics aim is not instinctive. It flows from the heart of an individual after he has reached a particular level of moral development where all his capacities and tendencies are directed towards the realization of union with God. It is then that the sentiment of love appears in him and all inclinations are subordinated to it. He begins to feel love for God with the full force of instinctive impulse as well as conscious purpose. There are four kinds of love, according to Suhrawardi: (1) love of appetitive soul (*nafs*), (2) love of reason, (3) love of heart as a symbol of spiritual perception, and (4) love of soul (*ruh*). The love for God which is the ideal of the mystics combines all these loves.

When love appears in a mystic on the basis of the first three sources, it is called general love which is the result of direct apprehension (*mushahadah*) of God's attributes. But when he passes from attributes to God's essence (*dhat*), his love assumes a new dimension; it flows from his soul, and he is thus enabled to attain his goal. At this stage the mystic acquires and appropriates all the divine attributes. His position becomes what God says: “When I love a person I become his eyes and ears, etc. “

Nearness (Qurb)

This is not physical nearness but only a psychological state in which the mystic feels a profound consciousness of intimacy with the Ultimate Reality. The Qur'an says: ***“And prostrate and draw near (to Him).”***66 On this basis Suhrawardi thinks that attainment of nearness depends upon concentration on God which enables the individual to surpass levels of normal consciousness. There are two stages in this process. In the first place, the mystic falls as if into a trance and is overcome by intoxication (*sukr*); his consciousness of self (*nafs*) disappears in the spiritual light of his soul (*ruh*). The next phase begins when both *nafs* and *ruh* regain their separate identities and the individual feels the consciousness of nearness intimately and yet, in spite of it, the consciousness of otherness, which is involved in his relation of slavehood (*'ubudiyyah*) to God, is also conspicuously present. He quotes a mystic as saying: “By following the Sunnah one attains gnosis (*ma`rifah*), by observing the obligatory duties (*fara'id*) one reaches nearness, while by practising daily ‘extra’ prayers (*nawafil*), one attains love.”.

Bashfulness (Haya')

There is a saying of the Holy Prophet: "Be modest with God as it is due to Him." Suhrawardi explained it as follows: "He alone can be called modest in relation to God who is careful of his daily behaviour towards Him and remembers his death and the hereafter, with the result that his heart cools off towards this world and its entanglements."

But this modesty or bashfulness, being acquired, is a station (*maqam*), while bashfulness of a special quality is a state. In order to define it, Suhrawardi quotes certain sayings of some mystics. One says: "Bashfulness and attachment (*uns*) hover about the heart, and when they find that it is possessed of continence (*zuhd*) and piety (*war'*), they descend into it, otherwise they move away."

This bashfulness is the submission of one's soul to God for maintaining the grandeur of His majesty (*jalal*), while attachment is the soul's experience of pleasure in the perfection of His beauty (*jamal*). When both bashfulness and attachment combine, it is the end of a mystic's ambition. According to Abu Sulaiman, there are four different motives of action: fear, hope, awe, and bashfulness, and that action is the best which is motivated by the last.

Union (Ittisal)

As Nuri says, union is the revelation of the heart and the observation of secrets. There is a person who attains union through his personal efforts but loses this position as soon as there is slackness in his efforts. This is all but natural, for human efforts cannot be kept up at the same degree of intensity for a long time. Such a person is called *mufassal*. But the union that Suhrawardi commends is one which is the result not of personal effort but of divine grace. A person who receives it is called united (*wasil*). But there are several grades of this union.

There is a person who receives illumination from divine actions. To such a person, actions, his own as well as those of others, cannot be attributed, for his role is only passive. It is God who does all actions through him and he loses all freedom of choice or independence of action. Secondly, there is illumination from divine attributes. Here the recipient through revelation of divine attributes of majesty and beauty stays at the stations of awe (*haibah*) and attachment (*uns*).

Then there is the illumination of divine essence (*dhat*) which is a stage towards annihilation (*fana'*). A person at this stage is illumined with the divine light of faith and in the observation of God's face loses his individuality. This is a further stage in union (*ittisal*). It is open only to a few, the *muqarrabin*, who enjoy nearness to God.

Above it is the stage of spiritual perception (*haqq al-yaqin*) which is vouchsafed to very few persons and that only for the twinkling of an eye. It is the complete permeation of divine light in the recipient, so much so that his self (*nafs*) and heart both feel overpowered by it. And, in spite of its being a very rare experience attainable by a few select persons, the recipient feels that he is perhaps at some preliminary

stage of his journey towards union. It is a long and toilsome journey for which perhaps a life of eternity may not suffice.

Contraction and Expansion (Qabd wa Bast)

These two emotional states are dependent for their appearance on certain preliminary conditions. They are usually experienced by a mystic when he is traversing the early stages of what Suhrawardi calls the states of special love.[67] They appear neither at the stage of general love, nor at the termination of the stage of special love.

There are some emotional experiences in the state of general love which seem to correspond to contraction and expansion, but which in reality are nothing more than fear (*khauf*) and hope (*raja'*), while at other times they are what he calls grief (*hamm*) and pleasure (*nishat*) which the experient confuses with contraction and expansion. Grief and pleasure emanate from the self (*nafs*) which is yet at the appetitive stage (*nafs–i ammarah*), a stage susceptible to the promptings of evil. *Hamm* is the feeling of dissatisfaction experienced at the failure of attaining the object of self–love while *nishat* is the crest of the wave when the sea of self–indulgence is all astorm.

It is only when the mystic enters the next stage which is connected with the stage of special love and when his appetitive self becomes the repentant self (*nafs–i lawwamah*) that the true moods of contraction and expansion make their appearance. The mood of contraction is the result of a psychological state when the self (*nafs*) is in ascendance, while the mood of expansion follows when the heart (as an organ of spiritual perception) is in ascendance.

When the appetitive self becomes repentant (*lawwamah*), there is a constant up and down in the urges towards evil; sometimes the urge towards good has the upper hand, while at others there is a tendency towards the other pole. The appearance of contraction and expansion corresponds to these two poles of the life of the self. *Nafs* is the veil of darkness and heart is the veil of light, and as long as an individual is in the sphere of these veils, he continues to experience these two moods of contraction and expansion. But as soon as he passes beyond these veils, these moods also disappear. In the experience of annihilation (*fana'*) and abiding (*baqa'*), there is neither contraction nor expansion; they are intimately connected with the consciousness of selfhood.

According to some Sufis, the mystic first experiences contraction in his spiritual development and then it is followed by expansion. Suhrawardi also holds the same opinion. But there are certain situations where this order is reversed. Under the mood of expansion, the experient feels overjoyed and happy. This happiness then filters down to the self (*nafs*) which is by nature inclined to interpret it appetitively so that this mood of expansion degenerates into an attitude of pleasure. At this stage the mood of contraction of necessity makes its appearance to bring the self to the state of sanity and equilibrium. If the self were to be free from a tendency towards the extremes, the mystic would be in a perpetual state of expansion (*bast*) and blessedness.

When the self passes into the last stage and becomes the satisfied soul, it attains complete harmony and passes beyond the bi–polar strife of good and evil. For such a person the moods of contraction and expansion are nonexistent.

Annihilation and Abiding (Fana' wa Baqa')

According to Suhrawardi, what most mystics describe as the state of annihilation (*fana'*) is in reality not *fana'* but something else. According to some, *fana'* is the annihilation of all attachment, absence of all urges towards satisfaction of worldly desires, etc. This state, according to Suhrawardi, is what is implied in repentance of a true type (*taubat al–nasuh*).

To some *fana'* is the annihilation of evil attributes and *baqa'*, the abiding of good attributes. This, again, according to Suhrawardi, is not true *fana'* and *baqa'* but the result of moral transformation and purification (*tazkiyah*). There are many phases of *fana'*, but the state of absolute *fana'* is one where the Being of God is so overpowering and overwhelming that the consciousness of the finite self is totally obliterated.

He quotes with approval the following event as a true representation of the state of annihilation (*fana'*). A person greeted 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar while he was engaged in circumambulation (*tawaf*) of the Ka'bah to which he made no response. Later on he heard that the man had complained to someone at the absence of his response. At this 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar replied that in that state he was in communion with God and, therefore, did not have any consciousness of himself, not to speak of others.

There are two kinds of *fana'*. The first is the apparent annihilation (*fana' al–zahir*). Here the mystic receives illumination through divine action with the result that freedom of action and choice disappears from him. He sees all actions, his as well as those of others, emanating directly from God. At the stage of the real annihilation (*fana' al–batin*), the mystic receives illumination from God's attributes and His essence (*dhat*) with the result that he is overwhelmed by the divine *amr* so much so that he becomes totally immune from evil promptings of all kinds.

Some people in the state of annihilation lose all consciousness but, according to Suhrawardi, it is not an essential phase of this state.

In the state of abiding (*baqa'*), the mystic is restored the power of action which had been annihilated previously. God allows him full freedom to act as he likes and as the situation demands. In this state he is conscious of the obligations both to the world and to God and none of these becomes a hindrance to the other. His duty to the world does not make him oblivious of his duty to God, nor does his communion with God debar him from turning his attention to the worldly matters.

The apparent annihilation (*fana' al–zahir*) is for those who are at the station of heart and are busy with emotional states, while the real annihilation (*fana' al–batin*) is for those who have passed beyond that station and attained union with God and who are what he calls *bi–Allah* (with God).[68]

Union and Separation (Jam' wa Tafriqah)

According to Junaid, nearness to God in ecstasy (*wajd*) is union while the sense of selfhood (*bashriyyah*) and absence from God (*ghaibah*), i.e., awareness of self, is separation (*tafriqah*). Suhrawardi accepts this position and says that the state where the mystic feels himself united with God (*tauhid al-tajrid*) is denoted by union (*jam'*), while ordinary and normal state of consciousness, where the mystic feels the separate individuality of his own self as well as of other things, is called separation (*tafriqah*).

He adds that both these states are complementary; if we ignore union, we are landed in negation of the divine attributes (*ta`til*) and if we ignore separation, it leads to heresy (*ilhad*) and denial of God (*zandaqah*). Union is annihilation in God (*fana' bi-Allah*), while separation (*tafriqah*) is relationship of an obedient servant to God (*`ubudiyyah*). Union is the result of man's possession of a soul, while separation is due to his possession of a body, and as long as the combination of the soul and the body persists, these two states must equally be emphasized in the life of the mystic.

There is another state which is called by mystics the union of the union (*jam' al-jam'*). When a mystic looks towards God's action, he is in the state of separation; when he looks towards God's attributes, he is in the state of union; and when he looks towards God's essence, he is in the state of union of the union.[69]

Process of Self-Purification

The ideal life, according to Suhrawardi, is the life of a perfect man who, in spite of the highest spiritual attainments, is yet conscious of his subservience to the Law of *Shari`ah*. But this stage of purification cannot be attained without a long process of self-mortification which demands self-examination, introversion, contemplation, patience, submission to God's will, and an attitude of complete detachment.

The spark of life that is kindled within the heart of the mystic has a charm of its own, but it cannot be kept burning unless it is fed constantly on the oil that flows from continuous efforts towards asceticism. He receives wayward glimpses of the Infinite Beauty and is charmed, but they prove fleeting; he wants this experience to be broadened in extensity and deepened in intensity; be wants this experience to be stabilized and enriched – hence the necessity of the whole process of self-purification. The result is second birth out of the womb of spirit into the kingdom of the re-awakened spirit.

Suhrawardi gives the details of this process of gradual enlightenment. There are four preliminary stages: Faith, repentance (*taubah*), continence, constancy in unblemished virtuous actions. These four must be supplemented by four other things which are essentials of asceticism, viz., minimum conversation, minimum food, minimum stay-at-home, and minimum contact with people.

Repentance (*taubah*) over past shortcomings and determination to avoid them in future are effective only when a person keeps a constant check over his thoughts and actions and is fully awake to all situations.[70] But to maintain this psychological state of repentance there are certain essential

requirements. The first is self-examination (*muhasabah*) and the other is introversion or meditation (*muraqabah*.). A person asked Wasti, "Which is the best virtuous action?" He said, "Outwardly self-examination and inwardly meditation; both are perfected by each other and help to maintain the attitude of repentance in the mystic which leads to concentration on and communion with God (*inabah*) "

The other thing that is essential for a mystic is patience (*sabr*) without which it is not possible for him to continue his life. This moral quality enables him to endure the vicissitudes of life. It is far more easy for an individual to show his mettle in adversity than in prosperity and hence the mystics have emphasized the importance of patience in a state of affluence which is regarded superior to patience shown in a state of want.

The next state is that of *rida'* which is in a way the fruit of conversion (*taubah*) where the mystic enters the sphere of fear and hope. He feels shocked at the tendency towards evil and, being morally at a higher stage of development, he fears succumbing to these temptations. This feeling of fear, therefore, serves to keep him aware and make him watchful of any fall towards the satisfaction of his baser self. He is repentant and feels hopeful of ultimate victory over these evil forces. Thus, the life of the mystic moves between these two poles of fear and hope and gradually attains the stage of what Suhrawardi calls continence (*zuhd*), which in a way sums up all that he has achieved so far.

The stage of continence, in other words, is the stage where the fruits of conversion (*taubah*) with its constituents of self-examination and meditation, patience and voluntary submission to God, piety, hope, and fear, all converge and make the mystic into a perfect ascetic who lives, moves, and has his being in complete communion with God and in total reliance (*tawakkul*) upon Him. This second stage of continence is distinct from poverty (*faqr*). A *faqir* is one who is forced by circumstances to lead a life of poverty, while the continent person (*zahid*), on the other hand, adopts this life of detachment of his own free-will even when the state of affluence is open to him.

The third stage is that of stability in morally virtuous actions. According to Suhrawardi, a *zahid* who does not follow the Law of the Shari`ah is liable to be led astray. It is only through constancy in action for God (*'aml li-Allah*), remembrance (*dhikr*), recitation from the Qur'an, prayers, and meditation (*muraqabah*) that a mystic can hope to attain his objective which is *'ubudiyyah*, perfect obedience to God.

Sahl b. 'Abd Allah Tustari said about this stage: "When a man after passing through repentance, continence, and constancy in virtuous deeds reaches the stage of slavehood, he becomes totally passive towards the divine will and of his own free-will decides no longer to exercise his freedom of choice and action. Then he is granted full power of activity and freedom of action because he has identified himself with the will of God. His self-determination is equivalent to God-determination; the liability of his falling prey to evil temptations and ignorance are totally obliterated."

According to Suhrawardi, the stage of giving up freedom of choice and action is the stage of annihilation, while the second stage where the mystic freely acts, because his will follows the will of God, is the state

of abiding in God. It is the shedding of the mortal self for the eternal, material for the spiritual, human for the divine. The mystic at this stage is the perfect servant.71

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1. Futuh al-Ghaib, Discourse 54, pp.102-104.
2. Ibid., Discourse 10, pp.23-24.
3. Qur'an, xxxvii, 96.
4. Futuh al-Ghaib, Discourse 27, pp.56-58; see also Discourse 13, p. 29, and Discourse 70, pp. 129-30.
5. Qur'an, xvi, 32.
6. Futuh al-Ghaib, Discourse 27.
7. Ibid., Discourse 27, p. 56.
8. Ibid, Discourse 70, p.130.
9. Ibid., Discourse 27, p.59.
10. Shaikh Jilani extols in many sermons the role of a mystic saint who, after completing his spiritual discipline and attaining proficiency in mystic lore, assumes the onerous duty of leading the people to the way of God. The ideal type of a mystic in his eyes is not one who becomes a recluse or anchorite but a man of the world who by the example of his life and the words of his mouth helps the ignorant and misguided to the way of taqwa, righteousness.
11. Futuh al-Ghaib, Discourse 33, pp.66-69; see also Discourse 77 where a different division is presented.
12. Ibid., Discourse 10, pp.23-26; see also Discourse 18, p.40.
13. Shaikh Jilani is careful to point out that the term union (wusul) is only symbolical, for this union is something totally different when applied to human individuals. See Futuh al-Ghaib, Discourse 17, p.36.
14. Futuh al-Ghaib, Discourse 40, p.81; Discourse 17, p.37.
15. Ibid., Discourse 46, p.93; Discourse 13, pp.40-42; Discourse 18, p.60. Discourse 28, etc.
16. Ibid., Discourse 9, p.21.
17. Ibid., Discourse 74, pp.135-6.
18. Ibid., Discourse 75, p.137.
19. Ibid., Discourse 76.
20. According to the tradition translated by Ans b. Malik, cf. Awarif al-Ma'arif, Chapter 6.
21. Khurasan had been one of the centres of Buddhist missionaries before Islam, where, it seems, people adopted the practice of Buddhist Bhikshus in later times.
22. Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, Awarif al-Ma'arif, Urdu translation, Newal Kishore Press, Lucknow, Chapter 6.
23. Qur'an, xcv, 5.
24. Awarif al-Ma'arif, Chapter 1, p.17.
25. In another place he explicitly says that this knowledge is intuitional. Only he who experiences it can fully realize its import. You may describe the sweetness of sugar in any way you like, but it can be realized only by one who tastes it. Ibid., Chap. 3, p. 43.
26. Qur'an, xxxv, 28.

27. Awarif al-Ma'arif, Chap.3, p.46.
28. Reference is to what is theologically called as interpolations of Satan in the revelations of saints. See the Qur'an, xxii, 51, and also 'Awarif al-Ma'arif, Chap.3, p. 36.
29. Qur'an, iii, 6.
30. Awarif al-Ma'arif, Chap.9, p.21; Chap.6, p.14; Chap.25, p.50.
31. Ibid. Chap.3, p.54.
32. Ibid., pp. 61-64. He adds that any revelation or ecstatic experience (kashf or wajd) which is contrary to the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet is unacceptable to the Sufis.
33. Ibid., Chap. 10, pp. 103-07. But Ghazali thinks otherwise. According to him, the third category is the perfect specimen of spiritual leaders. See B.A. Dar's article, "Intellect and Intuition," in Iqbal, Vol. IV, No. 3, pp. 97-99.
34. He defines nafs as a dark earthly veil and qalb as a veil of heavenly light.
35. Awarif al-Ma'arif, Chap. 10, pp. 103-107.
36. One mystic, Abu al-Muzaffar Farmaisi, said that faqir is one who is independent even of God. Such a saying is, of course, a blasphemy, but almost all mystics have tried to explain away its sting. Qushairi in his Risalah and Suhrawardi in his book both try to justify this saying, but Ibn al-Qayyim is not satisfied with any of these explanations and rejects this definition in two. See Islami Tasawuruf, al-Hilal Book Agency, Lahore, pp. 124-26
37. Syria here does not stand for the geographical area which is now called Syria. Previously, nearly all the land now including Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, etc., was called Syria.
38. Qur'an, ii, 273.
39. Ibid., v, 8.
40. Awarif al-Ma'arif, Chap.7, pp.80ff.
41. Qur'an, xxxv, 32.
42. Awarif al-Ma'arif, Chap.7, p.82.
43. Ibid., Chap.8, pp.85-90.
44. Ibid., Chap. 9, pp.90-92.
45. Lahut and nasut are terms for the divine and human aspects of Christ's personality. This doctrine became the basis of many controversies in the Christian Church and many sects like the Nestorians and Monophysites (or Jacobites) appeared in Syria and Egypt respectively. But in spite of Suhrawardi's protests, these terms were used first by Hallaj and then by Ibn 'Arabi and even Ghazali, after which they were accepted by almost all later mystics.
46. Awarif al-Ma'arif, Chap.9, pp. 93-96.
47. Qur'an, iii, 199.
48. He quotes the story of two brothers, one of whom was a Sufi and the other a soldier. The latter wrote to his brother inviting him to join war against the enemy because the times were critical. The Sufi brother refused to accept his advice for he preferred his way of life to that of his brother's, with the remarks: "If all people were to follow my path and remember Allah sitting on their prayer-carpets, they would have conquered Constantinople."' Awarif al-Ma'arif, Chap. 13, pp. 125-26.
49. Qur'an, xxiv, 36-37. "In houses which Allah has permitted to be exalted so that His name may be remembered in them; they glorify Him therein in the morning and evening, men whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from remembrance of Allah ...."
50. Awarif al-Ma'arif, Chap. 19, pp. 178-179.
51. Ibid., Chaps. 19, 20, pp. 173, 186.
52. Ibid., Chap. 21, pp. 192-206. It appears that, in his estimation of women, he is influenced by the Christian doctrine that woman is the source of all evil. See p. 195.
53. Ibid., p.224.
54. Ibid., p.248.
55. Ibid., Chaps. 22, 23, 24 and 25.
56. Qur'an, xli, 53.
57. Ibid., xxiii, 12-14.
58. Qur'an, xvii, 85.

59. Awarif al-Ma'arif, p.552.
60. Ibid., pp.555-558.
61. Ibid., p553.
62. The Shaikh points out that the Qur'an mentions only soul (ruh), self (nafs), reason ('aql), heart (fu'ad), but there is not reference to what Sufis call sirr. See Awarif al-Ma'arif, p.558.
63. Awarif al-Ma'arif, Chap. 56, pp.541-64
64. Ibid., Chap.57, pp.565-78.
65. Ibid., Chap. 58, pp.578-82.
66. Qur'an, xcvi, 19.
67. As previously stated in this chapter, general love is the result of observation of divine attributes as distinguished from special love which appears when the mystic passes to the observation of divine essence (dhat).
68. Awarif al-Ma'arif, Chap. 61, pp.623-53.
69. Ibid., pp.655-57.
70. He calls them scolding of one's self (zajr), warning (intibah), and awakening (bidari).
71. 'Awarif al-Ma arif, Chap. 59, pp. 585-600.

Chapter 19: Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi Maqtul

By Seyyed Hossein Nasr

The intellectual life of Islam and that of Christianity – the two sister civilizations in the Middle Ages can be compared with each other to a large extent through the role that Aristotelian philosophy played in them. Peripatetic science and philosophy entered the Western world through translations from Arabic in the seventh/thirteenth century and eventually became dominant to such an extent as to replace the Augustinian and Platonic wisdom of the earlier period only to be overthrown itself by the humanistic rationalism of the Renaissance.

In Islam the attack of Sufis and theologians upon the rationalistic aspect of Aristotelian philosophy weakened its hold at the very time when that philosophy was gaining strength in the Christian West and was replaced in the Muslim world by two elements, the doctrinal Sufism of Muhyi al-Din ibn 'Arabi and the *Hikmat al-Ishraq*[1] or illuminative wisdom of Shaikh al-Ishraq Shihab al-Din Yahya ibn Habash ibn Amirak Suhrawardi,[2] both of which aimed at an effective realization of the "truth" and replaced the rationalism of Peripatetic philosophy by intellectual intuition (*dhauq*).

Life, Works and Sources of Doctrines

Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, whose *ishraqi* wisdom has played such a great role in the intellectual and spiritual life of Islam and especially of Shi'ism, was born in Suhraward, a village near the present city of Zinjan in northern Persia, in 549/1153. He studied at first with Majd al-Din Jili at Maraghah and later with Zahir al-Din Qari at Ispahan. Having finished his formal studies, he began to travel through Persia, meeting various Sufi masters and benefiting from their presence and teachings. During this period he

spent much time in meditation and invocation in spiritual retreats. He also journeyed during the same period through the regions of Anatolia and Syria and acquired great love for the cities of these countries.

On one of his journeys, he went from Damascus to Aleppo and met Malik Zahir, the son of Salah al-Din Ayyubi, the celebrated Muslim ruler. Malik Zahir became much devoted to Shihab al-Din and asked him to stay at his Court. It was here that the master of *ishraq* fell into disgrace with the religious authorities in the city who considered some of his statements dangerous to Islam. They asked for his death, and when Malik Zahir refused, they petitioned Salah al-Din himself who threatened his son with abdication unless he followed the ruling of the religious leaders. Shihab al-Din was thereby imprisoned and in the year 587/1191, at the age of 38, he was either suffocated to death or died of starvation.[3]

Many miraculous features have been connected with the life of Suhrawardi and many stories told of his unusual powers. His countenance was striking to all his contemporaries. His illuminated and ruddy face and dishevelled hair, his handsome beard and piercing eyes reminded all who met him of his keen intelligence. He paid as little attention to his dress as he did to his words. Sometimes he wore the woollen garb of the Sufis, sometimes the silk dress of the courtiers. His short and tragic life contains many similarities to the life of Hallaj, whom he quoted so often, and to that of the Sufi poet 'Ain al-Qudat Hamadani who was to follow a similar career a few years later.

The writings of Suhrawardi are numerous despite his short and turbulent life. Some of them have been lost, a few published, and the rest remain it manuscript form in the libraries of Persia, India, and Turkey.[4] Unlike his predecessors, Ibn Sina and al-Ghazali, he was never translated into Latin and, therefore, never became well known in the Western world. Yet, his influence in the East can almost match that of Ibn Sina, and any history of Islamic philosophy written without mentioning him and the school of *Ishraq* is, to say the least, incomplete.

Histories of Muslim philosophy written by Westerners, like Munk and de Boer, usually end with Ibn Rushd because the authors have considered only that aspect of Muslim philosophy which influenced Latin scholasticism. Actually, the seventh/thirteenth century, far from being the end of speculative thought in Islam, is really the beginning of this most important school of *Ishraq*. Suhrawardi's writings came to the East at the same time as Peripatetic philosophy was journeying westward to Andalusia and from there through the influence of Ibn Rushd and others to Europe.

There are altogether about fifty titles of Suhrawardi's writings which have come down to us in the various histories and biographies.[5] They may be divided into five categories as follows: [6]

1. The four large doctrinal treatises, the first three dealing with Aristotelian (*masha'i*) philosophy with certain modifications and the last with *ishraqi* wisdom proper. These works, all in Arabic, include the *Talwihat*, *Muqawwamat*, *Mutarahat*, and the *Hikmat al-Ishraq*.[7]

2. Shorter doctrinal treatises like *Hayakil al-Nur*, *al-Alwah al-`Imadiyyah*, *Partau-Nameh*, *I`tiqad al-Hukama'*, *al-Lamahat*, *Yazdan Shinakht*, and *Bustan al-Qulub* [8] all of which explain further the subject-

matter of the larger treatises. These works are partly in Arabic and partly in Persian.

3. Initiatory narratives written in symbolic language to depict the journey of the initiate towards gnosis (*ma`rifah*) and illumination (*ishraq*). These short treatises, all written in Persian, include *'Aql-i Surkh*, *Awaz-i Par-i Jibra'il*, *al-Ghurbat al-Gharbiyyah* (also in Arabic), *Lughat-i Muran*, *Risalah fi Halat al-Tufuliyyah*, *Ruzi ba Jama`at-i Sufiyan*, *Risalah fi al-Mi`raj*, and *Safir-i Simurgh*.

4. Commentaries and transcriptions of earlier philosophic and initiatic texts and sacred Scripture like the translation into Persian of the *Risalat al-Ta'ir* of Ibn Sina, the commentary in Persian upon Ibn Sina's *Isharat wa Tanbihat*, and the treatise *Risalah fi Haqiqat al-`Ishq* which last is based on Ibn Sina's *Risalat al-`Ishq* and his commentary upon the verses of the Qur'an and on the Hadith.[9]

5. Prayers, litanies, invocations, and what may be called books of the hour, all of which Shahrazuri calls *al-Waridat w-al-Taqdisat*.

These works and the large number of commentaries written upon them during the last seven centuries form the main corpus of the tradition of *ishraq* and are a treasure of traditional doctrines and symbols combining in them the wisdom of Sufism with Hermeticism, and Pythagorean, Platonic, Aristotelian, and Zoroastrian philosophies together with some other diverse elements. There is little doubt that Suhrawardi is greatly indebted to the Muslim philosophers, especially Ibn Sina, for the formulation of many of his ideas.

Moreover, inasmuch as he is a Sufi as well as a philosopher or, more properly speaking, a theosophist,[10] he is in debt, both for spiritual inspiration and for his doctrines, to the great chain of Sufi masters before him. More specifically he is indebted to Hallaj whom he quotes so often and to al-Ghazali whose *Mishkat al-Anwar* played so important a role in his doctrine of the relation of light to the Imam.

Suhrawardi came also under the influence of Zoroastrian teaching, particularly in angelology and the symbolism of light and darkness.[11] He identified the wisdom of the ancient Zoroastrian sages with that of Hermes and, therefore, with the pre-Aristotelian philosophers, especially Pythagoras and Plato, whose doctrines he sought to revive.

Finally, he was influenced directly by the vast tradition of Hermeticism which is itself the remains of ancient Egyptian, Chaldaean and Sabaean doctrines metamorphosed within the matrix of Hellenism and is based on the primordial symbolism of alchemy. Suhrawardi considered himself to be the reviver of the perennial wisdom, philosophia perennis, or what he calls *Hikmat al-Ladunniyyah* or *Hikmat al-`Atiqah* which existed always among the Hindus, Persians, Babylonians, Egyptians, and the ancient Greeks up to the time of Plato.[12]

The concept of the history of philosophy for Suhrawardi and his school is itself of great interest. This school identifies philosophy with wisdom rather than with rational systematization. Philosophy for it does not begin with Plato and Aristotle; rather, it ends with them. Aristotle, by putting wisdom in a rationalistic

dress, limited its perspective and separated it from the unitive wisdom of the earlier sages.[13]

From the *Ishraqi* point of view, Hermes or the Prophet Idris is the father of philosophy, having received it as revelation from heaven. He was followed by a chain of sages in Greece and in ancient Persia and later in Islam which unified the wisdom of previous civilizations in its milieu. The chain of transmission of *ishraqi* doctrines, which must be understood symbolically rather than only historically, may be schematized as follows:

In the introduction to his *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, Suhrawardi states explicitly the nature of *ishraqi* wisdom and its relation to ancient doctrines. As he writes: "Although before the composition of this book I composed several summary treatises on Aristotelian philosophy, this book differs from them and has a method peculiar to itself. All of its material has not been assembled by thought and reasoning; rather, intellectual intuition, contemplation, and ascetic practices have played an important role in it.

Since our sayings have not come by means of rational demonstration but by inner vision and contemplation, they cannot be destroyed by the doubts and temptations of the sceptics. Whoever is a traveller (*salik*) on the way to truth is my companion and a help on this Path. The procedure of the master of philosophy, the divine Plato, was the same, and the sages who preceded Plato in time like Hermes, the father of philosophy, followed the same path.

Since sages of the past, because of the ignorance of the masses, expressed their sayings in secret symbols (*rumuz*), the refutations which have been made against them have concerned the exterior of these sayings and not their real intentions. And the *ishraqi* wisdom the foundation and basis of which are the two principles of light and darkness as established by the Persian sages like Jamasp, Farshadshur, and Buzarjumihr is among these hidden, secret symbols. One must never think that the light and darkness which appear in our expressions are the same as those used by the infidel Magi, or the heretical Manichaeans for they finally involve us in idolatry (*shirk*) and dualism."[14]

The Meaning of Ishraq

The Arabic words *ishraq* meaning illumination and *mashriq* meaning the east are both derived etymologically from the root *sharq* meaning the rising of the sun. Moreover, the adjective illuminative, *mushriqiyyah*, and Oriental, *mashriqiyyah*, are written in exactly the same way in Arabic. This symbolic identification of the Orient with light which is inherent in the Arabic language and is employed often by the Ishraqi sages, has given rise to many difficulties in the interpretations of that wisdom which is both illuminative and Oriental.

Already in his *Mantiq al-Mashriqiyyin* most of which is lost, Ibn Sina refers to an Oriental wisdom which is superior to the commonly accepted Peripatetic (*masha'i*) philosophy.[15] Due to the fact that the word *mashriqiyyun* could also be read as *mushriqiyyin* in Arabic, the latter meaning illuminative, one could interpret the esoteric teachings which Ibn Sina proposes as being illuminative as well as Oriental.

Since the famous article of Nallino,[16] it has become common opinion that the reading is Oriental and has nothing to do with illumination. Yet, this opinion, however correct it may be linguistically, is essentially limited in that it does not take into account the profound symbolism inherent in the language and does not consider the great debt which Suhrawardi and *ishraqi* wisdom owe to Ibn Sina.

Suhrawardi writes that Ibn Sina wanted to recapture Oriental philosophy but did not have access to the necessary sources.[17] Yet, if we consider how the sacred geography of the Orient of light and the Occident of darkness in the initiatory trilogy of Ibn Sina, *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, *Risalat al- Ta'ir*, and *Salaman wa Absal*, is followed by Suhrawardi, how the Shaikh al-Ishraq translated several of the treatises of Ibn Sina into Persian, and how parts of *Hikmat al-Ishraq* resemble closely the commentary of Ibn Sina upon the *Theology of Aristotle*, it will become clear how profoundly the roots of Ishraqi philosophy lie in certain of the later non-Aristotelian works of Ibn Sina and how illumination and the Orient are united in this form of wisdom.

The unification of the meaning of illumination and the Orient in the term *ishraq* is connected with the symbolism of the sun which rises in the Orient and which illuminates all things so that the land of light is identified with that of gnosis and illumination.[18]

Inasmuch as the Occident is where the sun sets, where darkness reigns, it is the land of matter, ignorance, or discursive thought, entangled in the mesh of its own logical constructions. The Orient is, on the contrary, the world of light, of being, the land of knowledge, and of illumination which transcends mere discursive thought and rationalism. It is the land of knowledge which liberates man from himself and from the world, knowledge which is combined with purification and sanctity.[19]

It is for this reason that Suhrawardi connects *ishraqi* wisdom with the ancient priest-kings of Persia like Kai Khusrau and with the Greek sages like Asclepius, Pythagoras, and Plato whose wisdom was based on inner purification and intellectual intuition rather than on discursive logic.[20]

In a historical sense, *ishraqi* wisdom is connected with pre-Aristotelian metaphysics. Jurjani in his *Ta'rifat* calls the Ishraqis "the philosophers whose master is Plato." 'Abd al-Razzaq Kashani, the celebrated Sufi, in his commentary upon the *Fusus al-Hikam* of Ibn 'Arabi writes that the Ishraqis derive their chain from Seth, often identified with Agathodemon, from whom craft initiations and Hermetic orders also derive their origin. Ibn Wahshiyyah in his *Nabataean Agriculture* mentions a class of Egyptian priests who were the children of the sister of Hermes and who were called *Ishraqiyyun*. [21]

Suhrawardi himself writes in his *Mutarahat* that the wisdom of Ishraq was possessed by the mythological priest-kings of ancient Persia, Kiumarth, Faridun, and Kai Khusrau and then passed on to Pythagoras and Plato, the latter being the last among the Greeks to possess it, and was finally inherited by the Muslim Sufis like Dhu al-Nun Misri and Bayazid Bistami.[22]

Both metaphysically and historically, *ishraqi* wisdom means the ancient pre-discursive mode of thought which is intuitive (*dhauqi*) rather than discursive (*bahthi*) and which seeks to reach illumination by

asceticism and purification. In the hands of Suhrawardi it becomes a new school of wisdom integrating Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy with Zoroastrian angelology and Hermetic ideas and placing the whole structure within the context of Sufism.

In reading the texts of Suhrawardi one is particularly struck by the large number of quotations from the Qur'an, Hadith, and the sayings of earlier Sufis and by the profound transformation into the Islamic mould of all the diverse ideas which Suhrawardi employs. It is by virtue of such an integration and transformation that the *ishraqi* wisdom could come to play such a major role in Shi'ism.

In the introduction to *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, Suhrawardi outlines the hierarchy of those who know in a manner which demonstrates how he integrates ancient wisdom into the perspective of Islam. There are, according to this scheme, four major types of "knowers": –

1. The *hakim ilahi*, or *theosophos*, who knows both discursive philosophy, i.e., Aristotelianism, and gnosis (*ta'alluh*). Suhrawardi considers Pythagoras, Plato, and himself among this group.

2. The sage who does not involve himself with discursive philosophy but remains content with gnosis, like Hallaj, Bistami, and Tustari.

3. The philosopher who is acquainted with discursive philosophy but is a stranger to gnosis like Farabi or Ibn Sina.[23]

4. He who still seeks knowledge (*talib*) but has not yet reached a station of knowledge.

Above all these degrees is that of the Pole (*Qutb*) or Leader (*Imam*) who is the head of the spiritual hierarchy and of his representatives (*khulafa'*).[24]

The stations of wisdom are also described in a purely Sufi fashion as degrees of penetration into the divine unity expressed by the *shahadah*. In his initiatory treatise, *Safir-i Simurgh* (Song of the Griffin), Suhrawardi enumerates five degrees of unity [25]: *la ilaha il-Allah*, none is worthy of worship but God, which is the common acceptance of the oneness of God and rejection of any other divinity; *la huwa illa huwa*, there is no he but He, which is the negation of any otherness than God, i, e., only God can be called "He"; *la anta illa anta*, there is no thou but Thou, which is the negation of all thouness outside of God; *la ana illa ana*, there is no "I" but the divine "I", which means that only God can say "I"; finally, the highest station of unity which is that of those who say *wa kullu shai'-in halikun illa wajhahu*, i.e., all things perish except His face (essence) [26].

The formulations of Sufism become, therefore, the framework of his classification of knowledge into which he tries to place the heritage of universal gnosis and philosophy inherited by Islam.

The Orient and Occident in Sacred Geography

As already mentioned, the term *ishraq* is closely connected with the symbolism of directions and sacred geography which are essential elements of the traditional sciences. In the trilogy of Ibn Sina to which we have already referred, the disciple passes from the Occident which is the world of matter, through intermediate Occidents and Orients which are the heavens and separate substances, to the Orient proper which symbolizes the world of archangels.

A similar division of the cosmos occurs in the writings of Suhrawardi. The Occident is the world of matter, the prison into which man's soul has fallen and from which he must escape. The Orient of lights is the world of archangels above the visible cosmos which is the origin of his soul (*ruh*). The middle Occident is the heavens which also correspond to the various inner faculties of man.

It is important to note that, contrary to Peripatetic philosophy, the Ishraqis hold that the boundary between the Occident and the Orient is set at the *primum mobile*; all that is visible in the cosmos including the celestial spheres is a part of the Occident, because it is still connected with matter, however subtle it may be. The Orient, properly speaking, is above the visible cosmos; it is the world of informal manifestation with its boundary at the heaven of the fixed stars.

In his treatise *al-Qissat al-Ghurbat al- Gharbiyyah*, "the Story of the Occidental Exile," in which Suhrawardi seeks to reveal the secrets of the trilogy of Ibn Sina, the universe becomes a crypt through which the seeker after truth must journey, beginning with this world of matter and darkness into which he has fallen and ending in the Orient of lights, the original home of the soul, which symbolizes illumination and spiritual realization.[27]

The journey begins at the city of Qairawan in present-day Tunis, located west of the main part of the Islamic world.[28] The disciple and his brother are imprisoned in the city at the bottom of a well which means the depth of matter. They are the sons of Shaikh Hadi ibn al-Khair al-Yamani, i, e., from the Yaman, which in Arabic means also the right hand and, therefore, symbolically the Orient, and is connected traditionally with the wisdom of the Prophet Solomon and the ancient sages as the left is connected with matter and darkness.[29]

Above the well is a great castle with many towers, i.e., the world of the elements and the heavens or the faculties of the soul. They will be able to escape only at night and not during the day which means that man reaches the intelligible or spiritual world only in death, whether this be natural or initiatory, and in dream which is a second death. In the well there is such darkness that one cannot see even one's own hands, i, e., matter is so opaque that rarely does light shine through it. Occasionally they receive news from the Yaman which makes them homesick, meaning that they see the intelligible world during contemplation or in dreams. And so, they set out for their original home.

One clear night an order is brought by the hoopoe from the Governor of the Yaman telling them to begin

their journey to their homeland, meaning the reception of a revelation from the intelligible world and the beginning of asceticism. The order also asks them to let go the hem of their dress, i.e., become free from attachment, when they reach the valley of ants, which is the passion of avidity. They are to kill their wives, i.e., passions, and then sit in a ship and begin their journey in the name of God.30 Having made their preparation they set out for their pilgrimage to Mount Sinai.

A wave comes between the disciple and the son, meaning that the animal soul is sacrificed. Morning is near, that is, the union of the particular soul with the universal soul is approaching. The hero discovers that the world in which evil takes place, meaning this world, will be overturned and rain and stones, i.e., diseases and moral evils, will descend upon it. Upon reaching a stormy sea he throws in his foster-mother and drowns her, meaning that he even sacrifices his natural soul.

As he travels on still in storm, i, e., in the body, he has to cast away his ship in fear of the king above him who collects taxes, meaning death which all mortals must taste. He reaches the Mount of Gog and Magog, i, e., evil thoughts and love of this world enter his imagination. The jinn, the powers of imagination and meditation, are also before him as well as a spring of running copper which symbolizes wisdom. The hero asks the jinn to blow upon the copper which thus becomes fiery, and from it he builds a dam before Gog and Magog.

He takes the carnal soul (*nafs ammarah*) and places it in a cave, or the brain which is the source of this soul. He then cuts the "streams from the liver of the sky," i. e., he stops the power of motion from the brain which is located in the head, the sky of the body. He throws the empyrean heaven so that it covers all the stars, the sun, and the moon, meaning all powers of the soul become of one colour, and passes by fourteen coffins, the fourteen powers of *ishraqi* psychology,31 and ten tombs, the five external and the five internal senses. Having passed through these stages he discovers the path of God and realizes that it is the right path.

The hero passes beyond the world of matter and reaches a light, the active intellect which is the governor of this world. He places the light in the mouth of a dragon, the world of the elements, and passes by it to reach the heavens and beyond them to the signs of the Zodiac which mark the limit of the visible cosmos. But his journey is not yet at an end; he continues even beyond them to the upper heavens. Music is heard from far away, and the initiate emerges from the cavern of limitation to the spring of life32 flowing from a great mountain which is Mount Sinai. In the spring he sees fish that are his brothers; they are those who have reached the end of the spiritual journey.

He begins to climb the mountain and eventually reaches his father, the archangel of humanity, who shines with a blinding light which nearly burns him. The father congratulates him for having escaped from the prison of Qairawan, but tells him that he must return because he has not yet cast away all bonds. When he returns a second time, he will he able to stay. The father tells him that above them is his father, the universal intellect, and beyond him their relatives going back to the Great Ancestor who is pure light. "All perishes except His essence."33

From this brief summary we see how *ishraqi* wisdom implies essentially a spiritual realization above and beyond discursive thought. The cosmos becomes transparent before the traveller and interiorized within his being. The degrees of realization from the state of the soul of fallen man to the centre of the soul freed from all limitation corresponds “horizontally” to the journey from the Occident of matter to the Orient of lights, and “vertically” to the ascent from the earth to the limits of the visible universe and from there, through the world of formless manifestation, to the divine essence.

Hikmat al-Ishraq

Ishraqi wisdom is not a systematic philosophy so that its exposition in a systematic fashion is hardly possible. What Suhrawardi says in one text seems at first sight to be contradicted in another work, and one has to discover the point of view in each case in order to overcome the external contradictions. In expounding the major points of *ishraqi* wisdom we will, therefore, follow the outlines of *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, the most important text in which this wisdom is, expounded, drawing also from the shorter treatises which Suhrawardi wrote as further explanations of his major work.

Hikmat al-Ishraq is the fourth of the great doctrinal works of Suhrawardi, the first three dealing with Aristotelian philosophy which is the necessary prerequisite and foundation for illuminative wisdom. It deals with the philosophy of Ishraq itself which is written for those who are not satisfied with theoretical philosophy alone but search for the light of gnosis. The book which in the beauty of style is a masterpiece among Arabic philosophical texts was composed during a few months in 582/1186, and, as Suhrawardi himself writes at the end of the book, revealed to him suddenly by the Spirit;[34] he adds that only a person illuminated by the Spirit can hope to understand it.[35]

The work consists of a prologue and two sections: the first concerning logic and the criticism of certain points of Peripatetic philosophy, and the second composed of five chapters (*maqalat*), dealing with light, ontology, angelology, physics, psychology and, finally, eschatology and spiritual union.

In the section on logic he follows mostly the teaching of Aristotle but criticizes the Aristotelian definition. According to the Stagirite, a logical definition consists of genus plus differentia. Suhrawardi remarks that the distinctive attribute of the object which is defined will give us no knowledge of that thing if that attribute cannot be predicated of any other thing. A definition in *ishraqi* wisdom is the summation of the qualities in a particular thing which when added together exist only in that thing.

Suhrawardi criticizes the ten categories of Aristotle as being limited and confined only to this universe. Beyond this world there is an indefinite number of other categories which the Aristotelian classification does not include. As for the nine categories of accidents, he reduces them to four by considering relation, time, posture, place, action, and passivity as the one single category of relation (*nisbah*) to which are added the three categories of quality, quantity, and motion.

Suhrawardi alters several points of Aristotelian philosophy in order to make it a worthy basis for the

doctrine of illumination.[36] A major point of difference between the Ishraqis and the Muslim followers of Aristotle (*Masha'is*), also a central issue of Islamic philosophy, is that of the priority of Being or existence (*wujud*) to essence (*mahiyyah*).[37]

The Masha'is like the Sufis consider Being to be principal and *mahiyyah* or essence to be accidental with respect to it. Suhrawardi objects to this view and writes that existence does not have any external reality outside the intellect which abstracts it from objects. For example, the existence of iron is precisely its essence and not a separate reality. The Masha'is consider existence to have an external reality and believe that the intellect abstracts the limitation of a being which then becomes its essence.[38]

The argument of Suhrawardi against this view is that existence can be neither substance nor accident and, therefore, has no external reality. For if it is an accident, it needs something to which it is an accident. If this something is other than existence, it proves what we sought, i.e., this something is without existence. If existence is a substance, then it cannot be accident, although we say accidents "are." Therefore, existence is neither substance nor accident and consequently can exist only in the intellect.

The issue involved, which is essential to the understanding of all medieval and ancient philosophy, is the relation between Being and existence, on the one hand, and the archetypes and limitations on the other. The Masha'is and Sufis consider the universe to consist of degrees of Being and limitations which distinguish various beings from one another. The Sufis, particularly those of the school of Ibn 'Arabi who are concerned essentially with metaphysical doctrines, transpose these limitations into the principial domain and consider them the same as the archetypes or the Platonic ideas.

The traditional interpreters of Shaikh al-Ishraq interpret his doctrine in a way which does not destroy the principiality of Being [39] but rather subordinates the existence of a thing which is temporary and "accidental" to its archetype which with respect to the terrestrial existence of the thing is principial. In other words, essence (*mahiyyah*) is subordinated to Being (*wujud*), if we understand by this term Being *qua* Being; but as archetype, it is superior to particular existence which is an "exteriorization" of Being.

The Ishraqis believe in fact that it is useless to discuss about the principiality of *wujud* and *mahiyyah*, of Being and essence, because the essence or *mahiyyah* is itself a degree of Being. The Ishraqis differ from the Masha'is in that the former considers the world to be actual in its being and potential in its qualities and attributes, and the latter believes, on the contrary, that the world is potential in its being and actual in its qualities and perfections.[40]

Another important criticism of the Aristotelians by Suhrawardi is that of the doctrine of hylomorphism, of form and matter, which is the foundation of Aristotle's philosophy. As we shall see later, Suhrawardi considers bodies to be darkness and transforms the Aristotelian forms into the guardian lights or angels which govern each being. He defines a body as an external, simple substance (*jauhar basit*) which is capable of accepting conjunction and separation.[41] This substance in itself, in its own essence, is called

body (*jism*), but from the aspect of accepting the form of species (*surah nau'iyyah*) it is called the *materia prima* or *hyle* (*hayula*).

He also differs from the Aristotelians in defining the place (*makan*) of the body not as the internal surface of the body which contains it but as the abstract dimension (*bu`d mujarrad*) in which the body is placed. Suhrawardi follows Ibn Sina and other Masha'is in rejecting the possibility of a void and an indivisible particle or atom, and in considering the body to be indefinitely divisible even if this division cannot be carried out physically.

Other elements of Peripatetic philosophy which Suhrawardi condemns include its doctrine of the soul and arguments for its subsistence which he believes to be weak and insufficient;[42] its rejection of the Platonic ideas which are the cornerstone of *ishraqi* wisdom and upon the reality of which Suhrawardi insists in nearly every doctrinal work; and its theory of vision.

This last criticism is of interest in that Suhrawardi rejects both of the theories of vision commonly held during the Middle Ages. Regarding the Aristotelian theory that forms of objects are imprinted upon the pupil of the eye and then reach the senses communis and finally the soul, Suhrawardi asks how the imprinting of large objects like the sky upon this small pupil in the eye is possible. Since man does not reason at the time of vision which is an immediate act, even if large objects were imprinted in smaller proportions, one could not know of the size of the object from its image.

The mathematicians and students of optics usually accepted another theory according to which a conic ray of light leaves the eye with the head of the cone in the eye and the base at the object to be seen. Suhrawardi attacks this view also by saying that this light is either an accident or a substance. If it is an accident it cannot be transmitted; therefore, it must be a substance. As a substance, its motion is dependent either on our will or it is natural. If dependent on our will, we should be able to gaze at an object and not see it, which is contrary to experience; or if it has natural motion, it should move only in one direction like vapour which moves upward, or stone which moves downward, and we should be able to see only in one direction which is also contrary to experience. Therefore, he rejects both views.

According to Suhrawardi, vision can occur only of a lighted object. When man sees this object, his soul surrounds it and is illuminated by its light. This illumination (*ishraq*) of the soul (*nafs*) in presence of the object is vision. Therefore, even sensible vision partakes of the illuminative character of all knowledge.

With this criticism of the Aristotelian (*masha'i*) philosophy, Suhrawardi turns to the exposition of the essential elements of *ishraqi* wisdom itself beginning with a chapter on light, or one might say the theophany of light, which is the most characteristic and essential element of the teachings of this school.[43]

Light (*nur*), the essence of which lies above comprehension, needs no definition because it is the most obvious of all things. Its nature is to manifest itself; it is being, as its absence, darkness (*zulmah*), is nothingness. All reality consists of degrees of light and darkness.[44] Suhrawardi calls the Absolute

Reality the infinite and limitless divine essence, the Light of lights (*Nur al-anwar*).[45] The whole universe, the 18,000 worlds of light and darkness which Suhrawardi mentions in his *Bustan al-Qulub*, are degrees of irradiation and effusion of this Primordial Light which shines everywhere while remaining immutable and for ever the same.[46]

Suhrawardi "divides" reality according to the types of light and darkness. If light is subsistent by itself, it is called substantial light (*nur jauhari*) or incorporeal light (*nur mujarrad*); if it depends for its subsistence on other than itself, it is called accidental light (*nur `ardi*). Likewise, if darkness is subsistent by itself it is called obscurity (*ghasaq*) and if it depends on other than itself for its subsistence it is called form (*hai'ah*).

This division is also based on the degrees of comprehension.[47] A being is either aware of itself or ignorant of it. If it is aware of itself and subsists by itself it is incorporeal light, God, the angels, archetypes, and the human soul. If a thing has need of a being other than itself to become aware of itself, it is accidental light like the stars and fire. If it is ignorant of itself but subsists by itself, it is obscurity like all natural bodies, and if it is ignorant by itself and subsists by other than itself, it is form like colours and smells.

All beings are the illumination (*ishraq*) of the Supreme Light which leaves its vicegerent in each domain, the sun in the heavens, fire among the elements, and the lordly light (*nur ispahbad*) in the human soul. The soul of man is essentially composed of light; that is why man becomes joyous at the sight of the light of the sun or fire and fears darkness. All the causes of the universe return ultimately to light; all motion in the world, whether it be of the heaven, or of the elements, is caused by various regent lights (*nur mudabbir*) which are ultimately nothing but illuminations of the Light of lights.

Between the Supreme Light and the obscurity of bodies there must be various stages in which the Supreme Light weakens gradually to reach the darkness of this world. These stages are the orders of angels, personal and universal at the same time, who govern all things.[48] In enumerating these angelic orders Suhrawardi relies largely upon Zoroastrian angelology and departs completely from the Aristotelian and Avicennian schemes which limit the intelligences or angels to ten to correspond to the celestial spheres of Ptolemaic astronomy.

Moreover, in the Avicennian scheme, the angels or intellects are limited to three intelligible "dimensions" which constitute their being, namely, the intellection of their principle, of the necessity of their existence, and of the contingence of their essence (*mahiyyah*).[49] Suhrawardi begins with this scheme as a point of departure but adds many other "dimensions" such as domination (*qahr*) and love (*mahabbah*), independence and dependence, illumination (*ishraq*) and contemplation (*shuhud*) which open a new horizon beyond the Aristotelian universe of the medieval philosophers.

Suhrawardi calls the first effusion of the Light of lights (*nur al-anwar or nur al-a`zam*) the archangel *Bahman* or the nearest light (*nur al-aqrab*). This light contemplates the Light of lights and, since no veil exists in between, receives direct illumination from it. Through this illumination, a new triumphal light (*nur*

al-qahir) comes into being which receives two illuminations, one directly from the Supreme Light and the other from the first light.

The process of effusion continues in the same manner with the third light receiving illumination four times, twice from the light preceding it, once from the first light and once from the Supreme Light; and the fourth light eight times, four times from the light preceding it, twice from the second light, once from the first light, and once from the Light of lights or Supreme Light.[50] In this manner the order of archangels, which Suhrawardi calls the longitudinal order (*tabaqat al-tul*) or "world of mothers" (*al-ummahat*) and in which the number of archangels far exceeds the number of intelligences in Aristotelian cosmology, comes into being.[51]

Each higher light has domination (*qahr*) over the lower and each lower light, love (*mahabbah*) for the higher. Moreover, each light is a purgatory or veil (*barzakh*) between the light above and the light below. In this manner the supreme order of angels is illuminated from the Light of lights which has love only for Itself because the beauty and perfection of Its essence are evident to Itself.

The supreme hierarchy of being or the "longitudinal" order gives rise to a new polarization of Being. Its positive or masculine aspect such as dominance, contemplation, and independence gives rise to a new order of angels called the latitudinal order (*tabaqat al 'ard*) the members of which are no longer generators of one another; rather, each is integral in itself and is, therefore, called *mutakafiyyah*. Suhrawardi identifies these angels with the Platonic ideas and refers to them as the lords of the species (*arbab al-anwa'*) or the species of light (*anwa' nuriyyah*).

Each species in the world has as its archetype one of these angels, or to express it in another manner, each being in this world is the theurgy (*tilism*) of one of these angels which are, therefore, called the lords of theurgy (*arbab al-tilism*). Water is the theurgy of its angel *khurdad*, minerals of *shahrwar*, vegetables of *murdad*, fire of *urdibihisht*, etc. [52]

Suhrawardi uses the names of the *Amshaspands* (*Amesha Spentas*), the separate powers of Ahura Mazdah in Zoroastrianism, to designate these archetypes, and in this way unites Zoroastrian angelology with the Platonic ideas. These longitudinal angels are not, however, in any way abstract or mental objects, as sometimes the Platonic ideas are interpreted to be. They are, on the contrary, concrete as angelic hypostases and appear abstract only from man's point of view who, because of his imprisonment in the cage of his senses, considers only the object of the senses to be concrete. These angels are the real governors of this world who guide all of its movements and direct all of its changes. They are at once the intelligences and principles of the being of things.

From the negative and feminine aspect of the longitudinal order of archangels, that is, love, dependence, and reception of illumination, there comes into being the heaven of fixed stars which these angels share in common. The stars are the crystallization into subtle matter of that aspect of the archangels which is "Non-Being" or removal from the Light of lights. This "materialization" marks the boundary between the

Orient of pure lights or the archangelic world which lies beyond the visible heavens and the Occident which is comprised of increasing condensations of matter from the luminous heavens to the dense earthly bodies.

The latitudinal order of angels or the archetypes gives rise to another order of angels through which they govern the species. Suhrawardi calls this intermediary order the regent lights (*anwar al-mudabbirah*) or sometimes *anwar ispahbad* using a term from ancient Persian chivalry. It is this intermediary order which moves the heavenly spheres the motion of which is by love rather than by nature,[53] and which governs the species as the agent of the archetypes for which the species are theurgies (*tilismat*) or "icons" (*asnam*).

The *ispahbad* lights are also the centres of men's souls, each light being the angel of some individual person.[54] As for mankind itself, its angel is Gabriel. Humanity is an image of this archangel who is the mediator between man and the angelic world and the focus in which the lights of the Orient are concentrated. It is also the instrument of all knowledge inasmuch as it is the means by which man's soul is illuminated.[55]

This archangel as the Holy Spirit is also the first and supreme intelligence and the first as well as the last prophet, Muhammad (upon whom be peace), the archetype of man (*rabb al-nau' al-insan*) and the supreme revealer of divine knowledge.

The physics and psychology of *Hikmat al-Ishraq* treat of the world of bodies and the world of souls which, along with the world of the intelligences or angels, comprise the totality of this universe.[56] As already mentioned, Suhrawardi does not divide bodies into form and matter. Rather, his division of bodies is based on the degree in which they accept light.

All physical bodies are either simple or compound; the simple bodies are divided into three classes: those that prevent light from entering (*hajiz*), those which permit the entrance of light (*latif*), and those which permit light to enter in various degrees (*muqtasid*) and which are themselves divided into several stages.[57]

The heavens are made of the first category in the luminous state. As for the elements below the heavens, they consist of earth belonging to the first category, water to the second, and air to the third.[58] Compound bodies belong likewise to one of the above categories, depending on which element predominates in them. All bodies are essentially purgatories or isthmus (*barzakh*) between various degrees of light by which they are illuminated and which they in turn reflect.

Suhrawardi rejects the view that the change of bodies is due to particles of one element entering into those of another. As a reason against this view he cites the example of a jug full of water that has been heated, i. e., according to this view particles of fire have entered into it. The volume of the water, however, does not change since it does not spill over; therefore, particles of fire cannot have entered into it.

Qualitative change is due rather to the coming into being of a quality which is intermediate between the qualities of the original bodies and which is shared by all the particles of the new compound. For example, when water is heated a new quality between the cold of the water and the heat of the fire is brought into being by the light governing the change.

In the explanation of meteorological phenomena, Suhrawardi follows closely the teachings of Ibn Sina and Aristotle in accepting the exhalation and vapour theory. He differs, however, from them in the importance he attaches to light as the cause of all these changes. For example, the heat which is responsible for evaporation is nothing but one of the effects of reflected light. All changes in fact which one observes in the world are caused by various hierarchies of light. 59

The elements are powerless before the heavens, the heavens are dominated by the souls, the souls by the intelligences, the intelligences by the universal intellect, and the universal intellect by the Light of lights.

The elements or simple bodies combine to form compounds which comprise the mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms, each of which is dominated by a particular light or angel. All that exists in the mineral kingdom is "lighted body" (*barzakh nuriyyah*) the permanence of which is like that of the heavens.60 Gold and various jewels like rubies make man happy because of the light within them which is akin to the soul of man. This light within the minerals is governed by is *isfandarmudh* which is the master of theurgy for earthy substances.

With greater refinement of the mixture of the elements, plants and animals come into being having their own faculties and powers which are so many "organs" of the light governing them. In higher animals and in man who is the most complete terrestrial being these faculties appear in their perfection. Man as the microcosm contains in himself the complete image of the universe, and his body is the gate of life of all elemental bodies. This body in turn is the theurgy for the *ispahbad* light which governs each man.

All the faculties of the soul are aspects of the light which shines upon all elements of the body and illuminates the powers of imagination and memory for which it is the source. This light is connected with the body by means of the animal soul (*ruh hayawaniyyah*) the seat of which is in the liver and leaves the body for its original home in the angelic world as soon as death destroys the equilibrium of the bodily elements. It is the love (*mahabbah*) of the light which creates the power of desire as it is its domination (*qahr*) which brings about anger.61

Suhrawardi draws heavily upon the psychology of Ibn Sina for the enumeration of the faculties of the various souls.62 It may be said in fact that with a few changes his classification is the same as that of his famous predecessor, despite the different role which the intellect or light plays in governing and illuminating the various faculties in each case.

The classification of the various faculties of the soul by Suhrawardi may be outlined as follows:63

Vegetative soul (*al-nafs al-nabatiyyah*):
feeding (*ghadhiyyah*), growth (*namiyyah*), reproduction (*muwallidah*), attraction (*jadhibah*), retention (*masikah*), digestion (*hadimah*), repulsion (*dafi'ah*)

Animal soul (*al-nafs al-hayawaniyyah*):
power of motion (*muharrikah*), power of desire (*nuzu'iyyah*), power of lust (*shahwah*), power of anger (*ghadb*).

Man, besides the above faculties and the five external senses, possesses five internal senses which serve as a bridge between the physical and the intelligible worlds and have their counterpart in the macrocosmic order. These senses consist of:

Sensus communis (*hiss mushtarik*): The centre in which all the data of the external senses are collected. It is located in the front of the frontal cavity of the brain.
Fantasy (*khayal*): The place of storage for the *sensus communis*. It is located in the back of the frontal cavity.
Apprehension (*wahm*): Governs sensible things by what does not belong to the senses. It is located in the middle cavity.
Imagination (*mutakhayyilah*): Analyses, synthesizes, and governs forms and is sometimes identified with apprehension. It is located in the middle cavity.
Memory (*hafizah*): The place of storage for apprehension. It is located in the back of the middle cavity.

These faculties are crowned by the intellectual soul (*nafs natiqah*) which belongs to the spiritual world and which, through the network of these faculties, becomes for a period attached to the body and imprisoned in the fortress of nature. Often it is so lost in this new and temporary habitat that it forgets its original home and can be re-awakened only by death or ascetic practices. 64

The last section of the *Hikmat al-Ishraq* concerning eschatology and spiritual union outlines precisely the way by which the spirit returns to its original abode, the way by which the catharsis of the intellect is achieved. Every soul, in whatever degree of perfection it might be, seeks the Light of lights, and its joy is in being illuminated by it. Suhrawardi goes so far as to say that he who has not tasted the joy of the illumination of the victorial lights has tasted no joy at all.65 Every joy in the world is a reflection of the joy of gnosis, and the ultimate felicity of the soul is to reach toward the angelic lights by purification and ascetic practices.

After death the soul of those who have reached some measure of purity departs to the world of archetypes above the visible heavens and participates in the sounds, sights, and tastes of that world which are the principles of terrestrial forms. On the contrary, those whose soul has been tarnished by the darkness of evil and ignorance (*ashab al-shaqawah*) depart for the world of inverted forms (*suwar mu`allaqah*) which lies in the labyrinth of fantasy, the dark world of the devils and the *jinn*.66 As for the gnostics or the *theosophos* (*muta'allihin*) who have already reached the degree of sanctity in this life,

their soul departs to a world above the angels.

After leaving the body, the soul may be in several states which Suhrawardi outlines as follows:[67]
Either the soul is simple and pure like that of children and fools who are attracted neither to this world nor to the next.
Or it is simple but impure and as such is attracted more to this world, so that upon death it suffers greatly by being separated from the object of its desire; gradually, however, it forgets its worldly love and becomes simple as in the first case.
Or it is not simple but perfect and pure and upon death joins the intelligible world to which it is similar and has an undescribable joy in the contemplation of God.
Or it is complete but impure, so that upon death it suffers greatly both for separation from the body and from the First Source; gradually, however, the pains caused by alienation from this world cease and the soul enjoys spiritual delights.
Or the soul is incomplete but pure, i.e., it has a love for perfection but has not yet realized it; upon death, therefore, it suffers ceaselessly, although the love of this world gradually dies away. Finally, the soul is incomplete and impure, so that it suffers the greatest pain.

Man should, therefore, spend the few days he has here on earth to transform the precious jewel of his soul into the image of an angel and not into that of an animal.

The highest station to be reached by the soul is that of the prophets (*nafs qudsiyyah*) who perceive the forms of the universals or archetypes naturally. They know all things without the assistance of teachers or books. They hear the sounds of the heavens, i. e., the archetypes of earthly sounds, and not just vibrations of the air, and see the intelligible forms. Their souls and those of great saints also reach such degree of purity that they can influence the world of the elements as the ordinary soul influences the body.[68] They can even make the archetypes subsist by will, that is, give them existence.

The knowledge of the prophets is the archetype of all knowledge. In his nocturnal Ascension (*mi`raj*) the Prophet Muhammad – upon whom be peace – journeyed through all the states of being beyond the universe to the Divine Presence or microcosmically through his soul and intellect to the Divine Self.[69] This journey through the hierarchy of Being symbolizes the degrees of knowledge which the initiate gains as he travels on the Path in imitation of the bringer of revelation who has opened the way for him. A prophet is absolutely necessary as a guide for the gnostic and as a bringer of Law for society.

Man needs a society in order to survive and society needs law and order and, therefore, prophets to bring news of the other world and to establish harmony among men. The best man is he who knows, and the best of those who know are the prophets, and the best prophets are those who have brought a revelation (*mursilin*), and the best of them are the prophets whose revelation has spread over the face of the earth, and the completion and perfection of the prophetic cycle is the Prophet Muhammad – upon whom be peace – who is the seal of prophethood.[70]

The Initiatory Narratives

In a series of treatises written in beautiful Persian prose, Suhrawardi expounds another aspect of *ishraqi* wisdom which is the complement of the metaphysical doctrine. These works which we have called initiatory narratives are symbolic stories depicting the journey of the soul to God much like certain medieval European romances and poems such as *Parsifal* and the *Divine Comedy* although of shorter length. Unfortunately, in this limited space we cannot deal with all of these narratives each of which treats of a different aspect of the spiritual journey using various traditional symbols such as the cosmic mountain, the griffin, the fountain of life, and the lover and the beloved.

Some of the more important of these narratives are the *Risalah fi al-Mi`raj* (The Treatise on the Nocturnal Journey), *Risalah fi Halat al-Tufuliyyah* (Treatise on the State of Childhood), *Ruzi ba Jama'at-i Sufiyan* (A Day with the Community of Sufis), *Awaz-i Par-i Jibra'il* (The Chant of the Wing of Gabriel), *'Aql-i Surkh* (The Red Intellect), *Safir-i Simurgh* (The Song of the Griffin), *Lughat-i Muran* (The Language of Termites), *Risalah al-Tair* (The Treatise on the Birds), and *Risalah fi Haqiqat al-'Ishq* (Treatise on the Reality of Love).

The titles alone indicate some of the rich symbolism which Suhrawardi uses to describe the spiritual journey. Each narrative depicts a certain aspect of the spiritual life as lived and practised by sages and saints. Sometimes theory and spiritual experience are combined as in the *Awaz-i Par-i-Jibra'il* 71 where in the first part of the vision the disciple meets the active intellect, the sage who symbolizes the "prophet" within himself who comes from the "land of nowhere" (*na-kuja-abad*), and asks certain questions about various aspects of the doctrine.

In the second part, however, the tone changes; the hero asks to be taught the Word of God and after being instructed in the esoteric meaning of letters and words, i, e., *jafr*, he learns that God has certain major words like the angels, as well as the supreme Word which is to other words as the sun is to the stars. He learns furthermore that man is himself a Word of God, and it is through His Word that man returns to the Creator. He, like other creatures of this world, is a chant of the wing of Gabriel which spreads from the world of light to that of darkness. This world is a shadow of his left wing as the world of light is a reflection of his right wing. It is by the Word, by the sound of the wing of Gabriel, that man has come into existence, and it is by the Word that he can return to the principial state, the divine origin, from which he issued forth.

The Ishraqi Tradition

The influence of Suhrawardi has been as great in the Islamic world, particularly in Shi`ism, as it has been small in the West. His works were not translated into Latin so that his name hardly ever appears along with those of Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd as masters of philosophy. But in the East from the moment if his death, his genius in establishing a new school of traditional wisdom was recognized and he was to

exercise the greatest influence in Shi'ism. With the weakening of Aristotelianism in the sixth/twelfth century the element that came to replace it and to dominate Islamic intellectual life was a combination of the intellectual Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi and the *ishraqi* wisdom of Suhrawardi.

These two masters who lived within a generation of each other came from the two ends of the Islamic world to Syria, one to die in Damascus and the other in Aleppo, and it was from this central province of Islam that their doctrines were to spread throughout the Muslim East, particularly in Persia. The main link between these two great masters of gnosis was Qutb al-Din Shirazi who was, on the one hand, the disciple of Sadr al-Din Qunawi, himself a disciple and the main expositor of the teachings of Ibn 'Arabi in the East, and, on the other, the commentator of *Hikmat al-Ishraq*.72

Throughout the last seven centuries the tradition of *Ishraq* has continued especially in Persia where it played a major role in the survival of Shi'ism during the Safawid period. Among the most important commentaries written on Suhrawardi's works are those of Shams al-Din Shahrazuri and Qutb al-Din Shirazi in the seventh/thirteenth century, Wudud Tabrizi in the tenth/ sixteenth century, and Mulla Sadra in the eleventh/seventeenth century on the *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, the commentaries of Shahrazuri, Ibn Kammunah, and `Allamah Hilli in the seventh and eighth/thirteenth and fourteenth centuries on the *Talwihat*, and the commentaries of Jalal al-Din Dawwani in the ninth/ fifteenth century and Maula 'Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji in the eleventh/seventeenth century on the *Hayakil al-Nur*.

These commentaries and many others which we have not been able to mention here present a veritable treasure of *ishraqi* wisdom which has influenced so many philosophers, theologians, and gnostics from Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi and Dawwani to Mir Damad, Mulla Sadra, Shaikh Ahmad Ahsa'i, and Haji Mulla Hadi Sabziwari. Some of the works of Suhrawardi were also to influence the sages and philosophers in the Mughul Court in India where parts of his writings were even translated into Sanskrit,73 as they were translated into Hebrew some time earlier.

Ishraqi wisdom has, therefore, been one of the universal elements of Eastern intellectuality during the past centuries and, as it is a version of the perennial philosophy, it is touched by the breath of eternity which, as in the case of all expressions of truth, gives it a freshness and actuality that make this wisdom as essential today as it has been through the ages.

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S. M. Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, Luzac & Co., London, 1908;

H. Ritter, "Philologika, IX. Die vier Suhrawardi; I. Shihab al–Din ... al–Suhrawardi al–Maqtul," *Der Islam*, 1937, pp. 270–96.

1. The Arabic word hikmah is neither philosophy as currently understood in modern European language, i.e., one form or another of rationalism, nor theology. It is, properly speaking, theosophy as understood in its original Greek sense and not in any way connected with the pseudo–spiritualistic movements of this century.

It is also sapiential inasmuch as the Latin root Sapere, like the Arabic word dhauq by which this wisdom is known, means taste. Moreover, it can be designated as speculative wisdom because speculum means mirror and this wisdom seeks to make man's soul a mirror in which divine knowledge is reflected.

2. Shihab al–Din Suhrawardi is often called al–Maqtul, meaning he who was killed, since he was put to death for certain indiscreet formulations. We, however, refer to him as Shaikh al–Ishraq by which name he is universally known among his disciples.

3. The best source for the biography of Shihab al–Din is the Nuzhat al–Arwah wa Raudat al–Afrah of his disciple and commentator Shams al–Din Shahrazuri. See also O. Spies and S. K. Khattak, Three Treatises on Mysticism, Verlag W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1935, pp. 90–101; H. Corbin, Suhrawardi d'Alep fondateur de la doctrine illuminative (ishraqi), G. P. Maisonneuve, Paris, 1939.

4. We are most grateful to Prof. M. Minovi and Mr. M. Daneshpazhuh of the University of Teheran and to Dr. M. Bayani, the head of the Teheran National Library, for making these manuscripts available to us.

5. See the introduction in M. Bayani, Dau Risaleh–i Farsi–i Suhrawardi, Teheran 1925.

6. We follow in part the classification of H. Corbin, however, with some modifications. See Suhrawardi, Opera Metaphysica et Mystica, ed. H. Corbin, Vol. I, Ma`arif Mathaasi, Bibliotheca Islamica, Istanbul, 1945, "Prolegomene," pp. xvi ff.

7. The metaphysical sections of the first three treatises have been published in the first volume of the Opera by Corbin and the complete Hikmat al–Ishraq in the second volume entitled Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques (Opera Metaphysica et Mystica, II), Institut Franco–Iranien, Teheran, and Andrien Maisonneuve, Paris, 1952. Henceforth we shall refer to the two volumes as Opera, Volumes I and II.

8. The treatise Yazdan Shinakht has often been attributed to Ain al–Quddat Hamadani and its authorship remains in any case doubtful. Bustan al–Qulub has also appeared under the name Raudat al–Qulub and has been occasionally attributed to Sayyid Sharif Jurjani.

9. A commentary upon the Fusus of Farabi of which no trace has as yet been found is also attributed to him.

10. The hakim muta'allih which Suhrawardi considers himself and other sages before him to be is exactly theosophos by which the Greek sages were designated. See the Prolegomene by H. Corbin to Suhrawardi's Opera, Vol. II, p. xxiv.

11. Suhrawardi is careful in distinguishing between exoteric Zoroastrians and the sages among Zoroastrians whom he follows. As he writes in Kalimat al-Tasawwuf: “There were among the ancient Persians a community of men who were guides towards the Truth and were guided by Him in the Right Path, ancient sages unlike those who are called the Magi. It is their high and illuminated wisdom, to which the spiritual experiences of Plato and his predecessors are also witness, and which we have brought to life again in our book called Hikmat al-Ishraq.” MS., Ragip, 1480, fol. 407b, Istanbul, cited in H. Corbin, Les motifs zoroastriens dans la philosophie de Sohrawardi, Editions du Courrier, Teheran, 1946, p. 24. Also Teheran University Library MS. 1079, pp. 34ff

12. Mutarahat, Physics, Book VI, cited by H. Corbin in Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. I, p. x1i.

13. Originally, philosophy like all forms of wisdom consisted of a doctrine, a rite, and a “spiritual alchemy.” In Greek civilization the first element gradually separated from the others and became reduced to a theoretical form of knowledge which came to be known as philosophy. In the 55th section of Talwihat, Suhrawardi writes how he saw Aristotle, who is most likely Plotinus, the author of the Theology of Aristotle, in a dream and asked if the Islamic Peripatetics were the real philosophers. Aristotle answered, “No, a degree in a thousand.” Rather the Sufis, Bistami and Tustari, are the real philosophers. Aristotle told Suhrawardi to wake into himself and to pass beyond theoretical knowledge ('ilm suri) to effective realization or the “knowledge of presence” (`ilm huduri or shuhudi). See the Prolegomene of H Corbin in Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. I, p. lxx.

14. Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. II, pp. 10-11. Some modem interpreters of Suhrawardi have considered him to be anti-Islamic and of Zoroastrian sympathy. A. von Kremer in his Geschichte der Herrschenden Ideen des Islam, Leipzig, 1868, pp. 89ff., writes that Suhrawardi was part of the current directed against Islam. On the other hand, the scholarly and sympathetic interpreter of Suhrawardi, H. Corbin, insists on the role of Shaikh al-Ishraq in reviving the philosophy of Zoroastrian Persia and on his sympathy for Zoroastrian and Manichaean ideas, although he does not consider this revival to be a movement against Islam but rather an integration of ancient Persian myths in “the prism of Islamic spirituality.” In any case, all views which consider ishraqi wisdom to be simply a revival of Zoroastrianism or Manichaeism confuse the form with the spirit. There is no doubt that Suhrawardi makes use of Mazdaean symbols especially with regard to angelology, but that is no more reason for calling him Mazdaean than it is to call Jabir ibn Hayyan a follower of Egyptian religion, because he used Hermetic symbols. The only criterion of orthodoxy in Islam is the first shahadah (la ilaha ill-Allah) and, according to it, Suhrawardi cannot be said to lie outside the pale of Islam, no matter how strange his formulations may be. Furthermore, the disciples of the Ishraqi school consider the Persian sages of whom Suhrawardi speaks to have lived before Plato and Pythagoras and not during the Sassanid period. The genius of Islam to integrate diverse elements into itself is evident here as elsewhere and should not be interpreted as a sign of departure from the straight path (sirat al-mustaqim) or the universal orthodoxy which embraces all the perspectives within the tradition. The vocation of Islam is the re-establishment of the primordial tradition so that all the streams of the ancient religions and cultures have flowed into it without in any way destroying its purity.

15. Ibn Sina, Mashriq al-Mantiqiyyin, Cairo 1338/1919, pp.2-4.

16. A. Nallino, “Filosofia 'orientali' od `illuminativa' d'Avicenna,” Rivista degli studi orientali, Vol. X, 1925, pp. 433-67. H. Corbin rightly emphasizes the illuminative as well as the Oriental aspect of Ibn Sina's Oriental wisdom and its profound connection with the Ishraqi school of Suhrawardi. See Corbin, Avicenne et Lericit visionnaire, Institut Franco-Iranien, Teheran, 1952-54, Vol. I, Introduction, p. iii.

17. Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. I, p. 195

18. In European languages the word “orient” means both the east and the placing of onself in the right direction, and refers to the same symbolism.

19. As Corbin states, “Ishraq is a knowledge which is Oriental because it is itself the Orient of knowledge.” Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. I, p. xxix.

20. Throughout our writings we use the word “intellect” as the instrument of gnosis, of direct intuitive knowledge where the knower and the known become identical, and distinguish it from reason which is its passive reflection.

21. Ibn Wahshiyyah, Ancient Alphabet and Hieroglyphic Characters, London, 1806, p. 100. These historical connections are discussed by H. Corbin in Les motifs zoroastriens dans la philosophie de Sohrawardi, Editions du Courrier, Teheran, 1325 Solar, p. 18, and the Prolegomene to Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol.I, pp. xxv ff. We are indebted to him for drawing our attention

to them.

22. Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. I, pp. 502–03.

23. Suhrawardi is considering only the Peripatetic aspect of Ibn Sina.

24. Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. II, pp. 10–11. Actually, the stations mentioned are more numerous; we have described only the major ones.

25. Suhrawardi, Risaleh Safir–i Simurgh, MS. Teheran National Library, 1758, pp. 11–12

26. In this same treatise Suhrawardi writes that the most noble knowledge is gnosis which lies above human reason. As he says, “To seek the knowledge of God through reason is like seeking the sun with a lamp.” Ibid., p. 14

27. There is a profound correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm in all traditional wisdom so that the inward journey of man through the centre of his being corresponds to a journey through the various stages of the universe and finally beyond it. To escape from the prison of the lower soul (nafs ammarah) is also to pass beyond the crypt of the cosmos.

28. Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. II, pp. 274ff

29. It is said that when Christian. Rosenkreutz, the founder of the order of the Rosy–Cross, abandoned Europe, he retired to the Yaman.

30. Suhrawardi indicates here the main technique of Sufism which is the invocation (dhikr) of one of the names of God and which Sufi masters call the sacred barque that carries man across the ocean of the spiritual path to the shore of the spiritual world.

31. These fourteen powers are: Attraction, retention, purgation, repulsion digestion, growth, sleep, imagination, anger, lust, and the four humours

32. The inward journey beyond the carnal soul (nafs) corresponding externally to the journey beyond the visible universe is described by the Ishraqis symbolically as reaching the fountain of life in which there are found the jewels of the purely spiritual world.

33. Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. II, p. 296.

34. The inspiration for the book came to the author on an auspicious day when all the seven planets were in conjunction in the Sign of the Balance.

35. Suhrawardi writes that he who wishes to understand the essence of this work should spend forty days in a retreat (khalwah) occupying himself only with invocation (dhikr) under the direction of the spiritual guide whom he calls in several places qa'im bi al–Kitab.

36. For his criticism, see Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. II, pp. 46ff

37. The term mahiyyah in Arabic is composed of ma meaning “what” and hiyyah derived from the word huwa (“it”). It is the answer given to the question “What is it?” It is used to denote the essence of anything whether the existence of that thing is certain or doubtful, while the word dhat is used to denote the essence of something which possesses some degree of being. In Islamic philosophy reality is understood in terms of wujud and mahiyyah, the latter meaning the limitation placed upon Being and identified with the Platonic ideas. See. S. H. Nasr, “The Polarisation of Being” [Proceedings of the Sixth] Pakistan Philosophical Congress, Lahore, 1959, pp. 50–55.

38. For a general discussion of this subject in the philosophy of the master of the Masha'is, Ibn Sina, see A. M. Goichon, La distinction d l'essence et de l’existence d'apres Ibn Sina (Avicenne), de Brouwer Descles, Paris, 1937.

39. In fact, as Mulla Sadra asserts, Subrawardi substitutes light (nur) for Being, attributing the former with all the features which the latter term possesses in other schools. We are deeply indebted for the knowledge of this interpretation and many other essential elements of ishraqi doctrines to one of the greatest masters of traditional wisdom in Persia, Sayyid Muhammad Kazim `Assar.

40. Although in his Hikmat al–Ishraq, Suhrawardi does not speak of the necessary and possible beings, in many of his other treatises like the Partau–Narneh, I`teqad al–Hukama' and Yazdan Shinakht, he speaks of the masha'i categories of Necessary Being. (wajib at–wujud), possible being (mumkin al–wujud), and impossible being (mumtani' al–wujud).

41. Suhrawardi defines a substance in masha'i fashion as that possible being (mumkin) which has no place (mahall), and accident as that possible being which does have a place. He also defines a body as that substance which has height, width, and depth. Partau–Nameh, MS., Teheran National Library, 1257, pp. 190ff.

42. In his works Suhrawardi insists on the perishable nature of the body and its being a prison into which the soul has fallen. In the Bustan al-Qulub, MS., Teheran Sipahsalar Library, 2911, he gives as argument for the permanence of the soul and its spiritual nature, the fact that the body of man changes its material every few years while man's identity remains unchanged. The masha'i doctrine of the soul is essentially one of defining its faculties; the ishraqi view is to find the way by which the soul can escape its bodily prison.

43. Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. II, pp. 106-21.

44. As the quotations we have already cited demonstrate, Suhrawardi insists that he is not dealing with the dualism of the Zoroastrians. Rather, he is explaining the mysterious polarization of reality in this symbolism. The Ishraqis usually interpret light as Being and darkness as determination by ideas (mahiyyah). They say that all ancient sages taught this same truth but in different languages. Hermes spoke of Osiris and Isis; Osiris or the sun symbolizes Being and Isis or the moon, mahiyyah. They interpret the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers in the same fashion.

45. Actually this term means both the divine essence and its first determination which is the archangel or the universal intellect.

46. "The immense panorama of diversity which we call the Universe is, therefore, a vast shadow of the infinite variety in intensity of direct or indirect illuminations of rays of the Primary Light." Iqbal, The Development of Metaphysics in Persia, Luzac & Co., London, 1908, p. 135.

47. In his Risaleh Yazdan Shinakht, Matba`-i `Ilmi, Teheran, 1316 Solar, pp. l3ff., Suhrawardi divides comprehension (idrak) into four categories: - (i) Sense of sight which perceives external forms like colours, etc. (ii) Imagination (khayal) which perceives images not depending upon external objects. (iii) Apprehension (wahm) which is stronger than the other two and which perceives the meaning of sensible things, but, like the other two, cannot be separated from the matter of bodies. (iv) Intellectual apprehension ('aql) the seat of which is the heart, the instrument which is a bridge between the human being and the intellectual world, and perceives intellectual realities, the world of angels, and the spirit of prophets and sages.

48. Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. II, pp. 131-32

49. Ibn Sina, Najat, MS. al-Kurdi, Cairo, 1938, pp. 256-57.

50. Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. II, pp. 133ff. Also Prolegomene, II, pp. 42ff. In ishraqi wisdom all of the cosmic hierarchies are understood in terms of a series of illuminations (ishraqat) and contemplation (shuhud), the first being a descent and the second an ascent.

51. Usually in medieval cosmology the elements, the acceptors of form, are called the 'mothers" and the celestial orbits, the givers of form, the "fathers." The term "mothers" used by Suhrawardi to designate the archangelic world should not, therefore, be confused with the elements.

52. Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. II, pp. 157ff. Also H. Corbin, Les motifs Zoroastrien dans la philosophie de Sohrawardi, Editions du Courier, Teheran, 1325 Solar, Chap. I.

53. The governing light of the heavens moves each heaven by means of the planet attached to it, which is like the organ of the light. Suhrawardi calls this mover hurakhsh which is the Pahlawi name for the sun, the greatest of the heavenly lights. Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. II, p. 149. Regarding the motion of each heaven, Suhrawardi writes, "Its illumination is the cause of its motion, and its motion is the cause of another illumination; the persistence of the illuminations is the cause of the persistence of motion, and the persistence of both the cause of the persistence of the events in this world." Hayakil al-Nur, MS. Istanbul, Fatih, 5426, Part 5.

54. Each being in this world, including man is connected to the Supreme Light not only through the intermediary angels but also directly. This light which connects each being directly to the Divine Light and places that being in the hierarchy of beings at a place proper to it is called khurrah. In ancient Persia it was believed that when a new king was to be chosen, the royal khurrah would descend upon him and distinguish him from the other pretenders to the throne.

55. Suhrawardi describes Gabriel as one of the supreme archangels who is the archetype of the "rational species" (nau` natiq), the giver of life, knowledge, and virtue. He is also called the giver of the spirit (rawan bakhsh) and the Holy Spirit (ruh al-qudus). Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. II, p. 201.

56. In the I'tiqad al-Hukama' and Partau-Nameh, Suhrawardi divides the universe into the world of intelligences (`alam al-'uqul or `alam al-jabarut), the world of souls ('alam at-nufus or `alam al-malakut), and the world of bodies (`alam al-ajsam

or `alam al-muluk). Also ibid., p. 270

57. Ibid. p. 187.

58. Suhrawardi considers fire, the fourth of the traditional elements, to be a form of light and the theurgy of urdibihisht, and not one of the terrestrial elements.

59. Suhrawardi gives a different meaning to causality than the Aristotelians' whose four causes which he does not accept. For Suhrawardi all these causes are really nothing but light, i, e., everythting is made of light and by light, and is given a form by the archangelic light whom he calls the "giver of forms" (wahib al-suwar) and seeks the Light of lights as its goal and end.

60. Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. II, pp. 199-200

61. Ibid., pp. 204-09.

62. Ibn Sina, Psychologie v Jehe dile as-Sifa, ed. J. Bakos, Editions de l'Academie Tchecoslovaque des Sciences, Prague, 1956, Vol. I, pp. 53ff.

63. Suhrawardi, Partau-Nameh, pp. 190ff.

64. Suhrawardi, Hayakil al-Nur, Sections 6 and 7. In certain other writings Suhrawardi avers that the light of each man is created with his body but survives after it. By creation, however, Suhrawardi means essentially "individualization" and "actualization" rather than creation in the ordinary sense. There is no doubt that his basic teaching is that the spirit or soul comes from the world of light and ultimately returns to it.

65. Suhrawardi, Opera, Vol. II, p. 225

66. This is, properly speaking, the world of the unconscious which has become the subject of study for modem psychologists. It should be clearly distinguished from the world of archetypes which, rather than the "collective unconscious," is the source of symbols.

67. Suhrawardi, Risaleh Yazdan Shinakht, pp. 53-63.

68. Ibid, pp. 66ff. Since human souls are brought into being by the celestial souls they are able to acquire the knowledge which these heavenly souls possess when they are put before them as a mirror. In the dreams of ordinary men this effect occurs occasionally since the external and internal senses which are the veils of the soul are partially lifted. In the case of prophets and saints such effects occur in awakening, i.e., they always reflect the intelligible world in the mirror of their souls so that they have knowledge of the unmanifested world even when awake.

69. The journey to the spring of life which lies at the boundary of the visible heavens symbolizes the journey through the soul (nafs), while the journey to the cosmic mountain Qaf from which the spring flows and the ascent of this mountain which lies above the visible heavens symbolize the inner journey to the centre of one's being. In his Mi`raj-Nameh, Suhrawardi describes the symbolic meaning of the nocturnal Ascension of the Prophet which is the model that all Sufis seem to imitate.

70. Suhrawardi, Risaleh Yazdan Shinakht, pp. 81-82

71. For the translation into French and analysis of this work, see H. Corbin and P. Kraus, "Le bruissement de l'aile de Gabriel," Journal Asiatique, July-Sept. 1935, pp. 1-82.

72. This commentary, finished in 694/1295, appears on the margin of the standard edition of Hikrnat al-Ishraq which is studied in all the theological schools in present day Persia. It has been the means by which the doctrines of Suhrawardi have been interpreted through the centuries.

73. Corbin and certain other European scholars have also emphasized the role of ishraqi wisdom in the tenth/sixteenth-century Zoroastrianism and the movement connected with the name of Azar Kaiwan. This curious eclectic movement in which elements of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Zoroastrianism are combined but which differs greatly from original Zoroastrian doctrines has left behind several works like the Dabistan al-Madhahib and the Dasatir some passages of which seem to be forged. Such a leading scholar of Zoroastrianism as I. Poure-Davoud considers the whole work to be purposeful falsification. See his article "Dasatir", Iran-i Imruz, second year, No. II.

Whatever importance this syncretic movement which is so similar to the religious movements at the Court of Akbar may have had, its followers paid great attention to the writings of Hikmat al-Ishraq. In fact, one of the disciples of Azar Kaiwan by the name of Farzanih Bahram ibn Farshad translated several works of Suhrawardi into Persian. For a discussion of the school of Azar Kaiwan, see M. Mu`in, "Azar Kaiwan wa Pairuwan-i ,u," Revue de la Faculte des Letters, Teheran University, Vol. IV, No. 3, 1336,/1917, pp. 25-42.

Chapter 20: Ibn `Arabi

By A.E. Affifi

Life And Works

A fair and critical account of the life and thought of Shaikh Muhyi al-Din ibn al-'Arabi (or Ibn 'Arabi as he was known in the East) presents certain difficulties. Biographical material is not lacking; he is given great prominence in many of the biographical and historical books, both in Arabic and Persian. Some whole books and chapters of books have been written in defence of his orthodoxy or against his alleged heterodoxy. Many of his own works, particularly the *Futuhat*, *Risalat al-Quds*, and the "Memorandum" in which he enumerates his works and describes the conditions under which they were written, throw abundant light on some of the obscure aspects of his life as a man, and above all as an eminent Sufi and Sufi author.

But the account we derive from all these various sources is conflicting, and the real problem that faces us lies in drawing a true picture of his personality, his pattern of thought, and his works, based on such account. Yet as far as his personal life and his mental and spiritual make-up are concerned, our best source should be his own works to which we have already referred; for in such works we have first-hand information about his mental and spiritual progress.

There are also abundant details concerning his early masters in the Sufi Path, his personal contacts with the men and women he encountered on his vast travels. Here and there we come across a vivid description of his mystical experiences, visions, and dreams. Without the help of such material which has hitherto been neglected, Ibn 'Arabi's true personality, both as a thinker and a mystic, would remain considerably unknown to us.

The task is by no means easy. It means hunting through his voluminous *Futuhat* and other works for the biographical details we have just described. An outline of the main historical facts of his life is easy enough to give, but it would be no complete or scientific biography in the full sense of the word.

Ibn 'Arabi was born at Murcia – South-east of Spain – on the 17th of Ramadan 560/28th of July 1165. His *nisbah* – al-Hatimi al-Ta'i – shows that he was a descendant of the ancient Arab tribe of Tayy – a fact which proves that Muslim mysticism was not the exclusive heritage of the Persian mind as some scholars maintain. He came from a family well known for their piety. His father and two of his uncles were Sufis of some renown.

He received his early education at Seville which was a great centre .of learning at the time. There he remained for thirty years studying under some of the great scholars of that city such as Abu Bakr b. Khalaf, Ibn Zarqun, and Abi Muhammad 'Abd al-Haqq al-Ishbili. At Seville he also met a number of his

early spiritual masters such as Yusuf b. Khalaf al-Qumi who was a personal disciple of Shaikh Abu Madyan,[1] and Salih al-`Adawi whom he describes as a perfect ascetic. He refers to such men in terms of admiration and gratitude in his *Futuhat* and *Risalat al-Quds*, and acknowledges, his debt to them for the initiation he had received from them into the Path of Sufism.

While making Seville his permanent place of residence, he travelled widely throughout Spain and Maghrib establishing wherever he went fresh relations with eminent Sufis and other men of learning. He visited Cordova, while still a lad, and made acquaintance with Ibn Rushd, the philosopher, who was then the judge of the city.[2]

In 590/1194 he visited Fez and Morocco. At the age of 38, i.e., in 589/1193, he set out for the East during the reign of Ya`qub b. Yusuf b. 'Abd al-Mu'min, the Sultan of Africa and Andalusia. His apparent intention was to perform his pilgrimage, but his real aim was perhaps to seek settlement in another country far away from the very much troubled West. The political and religious atmosphere there was stifling, and men like Ibn 'Arabi. were looked upon with suspicion both by the narrow-minded theologians and the ruling monarchs. The Sultans of the Muwahhids and Murabits feared them for the influence they had over their followers and the possible danger of using these followers for political purposes as was the case with Abu al-Qasim b. Qasi, head of the Muridin, who was killed in 546/1151.

The Malikite theologians of the West were most intolerant towards the new school of thought that was beginning to take shape at the time. Even al-Ghazali's teaching was rejected and his books committed to the flames. The East, on the other hand, was more tolerant and more ready to accept new ideas and movements. Yet not the whole of the East can be said to be so, for when Ibn 'Arabi visited Egypt in 598/1201, he was ill-received by some of its people and an attempt was made on his life.

After leaving Egypt he travelled far and wide throughout the Middle East visiting Jerusalem, Mecca (where he studied and taught Hadith for a time), the Hijaz, Baghdad, Aleppo, and Asia Minor. He finally settled down in Damascus until he died on the 28th of Rabi al-Thani 638/17th of November 1240. He was buried in Mount Qasiyun in the private sepulchre of Qadi Muhyi al-Din b. al-Dhaki.[3]

Ibn 'Arabi is one of the most prolific authors in Muslim history. He is adequately described by Brockelmann [4] as a writer of colossal fecundity. There are at least 140 extant works which bear his name, varying from short treatises of some few pages to voluminous books like the *Futuhat*. The exact number of his works is uncertain. Sha`rani gives the figure of 400, [5] and the Persian author Jami, the much exaggerated figure of 500. [6] Muhammad Rajab Hilmi, in a book entitled *al-Burhan al-Azhar fi Manaqib al-Shaikh al-Akbar*, enumerates 284 books and tracts.

In the “Memorandum” which Ibn 'Arabi himself drew up in the year 632/1234, six years before his death, he gave the titles of 251 of his writings and said that that was as far as he could remember. The writing of the “Memorandum” has its significance. It provides a written evidence against anyone who might attempt to forge books in his name; and there must have been many amongst his enemies in the East

who made such attempts.

To establish the identity and authenticity of all the works that have been ascribed to him is a task which has not been undertaken by any scholar yet. But we know within limits the genuineness of most of his major works, although doubt might arise with regard to certain parts of their contents. If what Sha`rani says about the *Futuhat* is true, it would make us wonder how much of this most important book is genuinely Ibn 'Arabi's and how much of it is foisted upon him.[7]

When he tried to summarize the *Futuhat*, Sha'rani said, he came across certain passages which he thought were in conflict with the established opinions of the orthodox Muslims. He omitted them after some hesitation. One day, he was discussing the matter with Shaikh Shams al-Din al-Madani (d. 955/1648) who produced a copy of the *Futuhat* which had been collated with Ibn 'Arabi's own MS. of the book at Quniyah. On reading it he discovered that it contained none of the passages which he had omitted. This convinced him, he goes on to say, that the copies of the *Futuhat* which were in current use in Egypt in his time contained parts which had been foisted upon the author as done in the case of the *Fusus* and other works.[8]

This may very well have been the case, but having not yet read the Quniyah MS. of the *Futuhat* which is still extant, one is unable to say how it compares with the printed texts of our time. A critical edition of the book based on the Quniyah MS. is of utnlost importance. Indeed it might considerably alter our knowledge of Ibn 'Arabi's mystical philosophy.

What seems more certain is that many works or parts of works were written by later disciples of Ibn 'Arabi's school and attributed to him; and many others were extracted from his larger works and given independent titles. All these exhibit the same strain of thought and technique which characterize his genuine works. Such facts account, partly at least, for the enormous number of works which are usually attributed to him.

Although his output was mainly in the field of Sufism, his writings seem to have covered the entire range of Muslim scholarship. He wrote on the theory and practice of Sufism, Hadith, Qur'anic exegesis, the biography of the Prophet, philosophy, literature, including Sufi poetry, and natural sciences. In dealing with these diverse subjects he never lost sight of mysticism. We often see some aspects of his mystical system coming into prominence while dealing with a theological, juristic, or even scientific problem. His mystical ideas are imperceptibly woven into his writings on other sciences and make it all the more difficult to understand him from a mixed and inconsistent terminology.

The dates of only ten of his works are definitely known, but we can tell, within limits, whether a work belongs to his early life in Spain and al-Maghrib, or, to his later life in the East. With a few exceptions, most of his important works were written after he had left his native land, principally at Mecca and Damascus; and his maturest works like *Futuhat*, the *Fusus*, and the *Tanazzulat* were written during the last thirty years of his life.

His earlier works, on the other hand, are more of the nature of monographs written on single topics and show no sign of a comprehensive philosophical system. It seems that it is his contact with the resources and: men of the East that gave his theosophical speculations their wide range, and his mystical system of philosophy its finality.

His *opus magnum*, as far as mystical philosophy is concerned, is his celebrated *Fusus al-Hikam* (Gems of Philosophy or Bezels of Wisdom) which he finished at Damascus in 628/1230, ten years before his death. The rudiments of this philosophy are to be found scattered throughout his monumental *Futuhat* which he started at Mecca in 598/1201 and finished about 635/1237. The general theme of the *Fusus* was foreshadowed in the *Futuhat* in more places than one, and more particularly in Vol. II, pp. 357–77.

Pattern Of Thought And Style

The extraordinary complexity of Ibn 'Arabi's personality is a sufficient explanation of the complexity of the manner of his thinking and his style of writing. It is true that sometimes he is clear and straightforward, but more often – particularly when he plunges into metaphysical speculations – his style becomes twisted and baffling, and his ideas almost intractable. The difficulty of understanding him sometimes can even be felt by scholars who are well acquainted with the characteristic aspect of his thought. It is not so much what he intends to say as the way in which he actually says it that constitutes the real difficulty.

He has an impossible problem to solve, viz., to reconcile a pantheistic theory of the nature of reality with the monotheistic doctrine of Islam. His loyalty to both was equal, and indeed he saw no contradiction in holding that the God of Islam is identical with the One who is the essence and ultimate ground of all things. He was a pious ascetic and a mystic, besides being a scholar of Muslim Law, theology, and philosophy. His writings are a curious blend of all these subjects.

He is for ever trying either to interpret the whole fabric of the teaching of Islam in the light of his pantheistic theory of the unity of all being, or to find justification for this theory in some Islamic texts. The two methods go hand in hand, with two different languages, i. e., the esoteric language of mysticism and the exoteric language of religion, used concurrently. Logically speaking, Islam is irreconcilable with any form of pantheism, but Ibn 'Arabi finds in the mystic experience a higher synthesis in which Allah and the pantheistic One are reconciled.

Interpretation within reasonable limits is justifiable, but with Ibn 'Arabi it is a dangerous means of converting Islam into pantheism or vice versa. This is most apparent in the *Fusus*, and to a certain extent in the *Futuhat*, where the Qur'anic text and traditions of the Prophet are explained mystically or rather pantheistically. Furthermore, while he is thus occupied with eliciting from the Qur'anic text his own ideas, he gathers round the subject in hand material drawn from all sources and brings it all into the range of his meditation. This accounts for the very extensive and inconsistent vocabulary which makes his writings almost unintelligible.

Whenever he is challenged or he thinks he would be challenged about the meaning of a certain statement, he at once brings forth another meaning which would convince the challenger. He was asked what he meant by saying:

"O *Thou who seest me, while I see not Thee, How oft I see Him, while He sees not me*!"

He replied at once, making the following additions which completely altered the original sense, by saying.

"*O Thou who seest me* ever prone to sin, *While Thee I see not* willing to upbraid: *How oft I see Him* grant His grace's aid *While He sees me not* seeking grace to win."[9]

Similarly, when his contemporaries read his *Tarjuman al-Ashwaq*, which is supposed to be written on divine love, they could see in the *Diwan* nothing but erotic poems describing beautiful women, lovely scenes of nature and ordinary human passions. They accused the Shaikh of being in love with Shaikh Makin al-Din's daughter whose physical and moral qualities he describes in the introduction of the *Diwan*.

On hearing this he wrote a commentary on the work explaining it all allegorically. He did not deny that he loved al-Nizam, the beautiful daughter of Makin al-Din. What he denied was that he loved her in the ordinary sense of human love. For him she was only a symbol, a form, of the all-pervading beauty which manifests itself in the infinite variety of things.

"Every name I mention," he says, "refers to her; and every dwelling I weep at is her dwelling ... Yet the words of my verses are nothing but signs for the spiritual realities which descend upon my heart. May God guard the reader of this *Diwan* against entertaining thoughts which do not become men with noble souls and lofty aspirations, for the hearts of such men are only occupied with heavenly things."[10]

It is not improbable that Ibn 'Arabi made a deliberate effort to complicate the style, as Professor E. G. Browne remarks, in order to conceal his ideas from the narrow-minded orthodox and the uninitiated. He certainly succeeded, partly at least, in covering his pantheistic ideas with an apparel of Qur'anic texts and Prophetic traditions – a fact which is largely responsible for the controversy which raged throughout the Muslim world regarding his orthodoxy. But it is also possible, as we have already remarked, that he was equally convinced of the truth of Islam and of his own philosophical system which was verified by his mystical experience. In this case there is no need to talk about concealment of ideas or intentional complexity of style.

It would be a mistake to judge Ibn 'Arabi by the ordinary canons of logic He is undoubtedly a thinker and founder of a school of thought, but he is pre-eminently a mystic. His mystical philosophy, therefore, represents the union of thought and emotion in the highest degree. It is a curious blend of reasoned truths and intuitive knowledge. He is also a man of colossal imagination. His dialectical reasoning is never free from forceful imagery and mystic emotions. In fact, his thought seems to be working through

his imagination all the time. He dreams what he thinks, yet there is a deep under–current of reasoning running through.

He does not always prove his ideas with a formal dialectic, but refers his readers to mystic intuition and imagination as the final proof of their validity. The world of imagination for him is a real world; perhaps even more real than the external world of concrete objects. It is a world in which true knowledge of things can be obtained. His own imagination was as active in his dreams as in his waking life.

He tells us the dates when and the places where he had the visions, in which he saw prophets and saints and discoursed with them; and others in which a whole book like the *Fusus* was handed to him by the Prophet Muhammad who bade him "take it and go forth with it to people that they may make use thereof."[11] He calls this an act of revelation or inspiration and claims that many of his books were so inspired.[12]

"All that I put down in my books," he says, "is not the result of thinking or discursive reasoning. It is communicated to me through the breathing of the angel of revelation in my heart."[13] "All that I have written and what I am writing now is dictated to me through the breathing of the divine spirit into my spirit. This is my privilege as an heir not as an independent source; for the breathing of the spirit is a degree lower than the verbal inspiration."[14]

Such claims point to a supernatural or supermental source by which Ibn 'Arabi's writings were inspired. Yet in discussing the problem of revelation (*kashf* and *wahi*) in general, he emphatically denies all outside supernatural agents, and regards revelation as something which springs from the nature of man. Here are his own words:

"So, if any man of revelation should behold an object revealing to him gnosis which he did not have before, or giving him something of which he had no possession, this `object' is his own *'ain* (essence) and naught besides. Thus from the tree of his 'self' he gathers the fruit of his own knowledge, just as the image of him who stands before a polished mirror is no other than himself."[15]

Revelation, therefore, is an activity of man's, soul, when all its spiritual powers are summoned and directed towards production. It is not due to an external agent, neither is it the work of the mind as we usually know it. What is sometimes seen as an "object" revealing knowledge to an inspired man is nothing but a projection of his own "self."

Ibn 'Arabi is quite consistent with himself when he denies an outside source of divine inspiration, for man, according to him, like everything else, is in one sense divine. So there is no need to assume a duality of a divine revealer and a human receiver of knowledge.

Another very important aspect of his thought is its digressive character. He has offered the world a system of mystical philosophy, but nowhere in his books can we find this system explained as a whole or with any appreciable degree of unity or cohesion. He goes on from one subject to another with no

apparent logical connection, pouring out details which he draws from every conceivable source. His philosophical ideas are widely spread among this mass of irrelevant material and one has to pick them up and piece them together.

That he has a definite system of mystical philosophy is a fact beyond doubt. It is hinted at in every page in the *Fusus* and in many parts of the *Futuhat*; but the system as a complete whole is to be found in neither. It is extraordinary that he admits that he has intentionally concealed his special theory by scattering its component parts throughout his books and left the task of assembling it to the intelligent reader. Speaking of the doctrine of the superelect (by which he means the doctrine of the Unity of all Being), he says:

"I have never treated it as a single subject on account of its abstruseness, but dispersed it throughout the chapters of my book (the *Futuhat*). It is there complete but diffused, as I have already said. The intelligent reader who understands it will be able to recognize it and distinguish it from any other doctrine. It is the ultimate truth beyond which there is nothing to obtain."[16]

The third aspect of his thought is its eclectic character. Although he may rightly claim to have a philosophy of religion of his own, many of the component elements of this philosophy are derived from Islamic as well as non-Islamic sources. He had before him the enormous wealth of Muslim sciences as well as the treasures of Greek thought which were transmitted through Muslim philosophers and theologians. In addition, he was thoroughly familiar with the literature of earlier Sufis.

From all these sources he borrowed whatever was pertinent to his system; and with his special technique of interpretation he brought whatever he borrowed into line with his own ideas. He read into the technical terms of traditional philosophy and theology – as he did with the Qur'anic terms – totally different meanings. He borrowed from Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Philo, and the Neo-Platonists terms of which he found equivalents in the Qur'an or in the writings of the Sufis and Scholastic Theologians. All were used for the construction and defence of his own philosophy from which he never wavered.

Controversy About His Orthodoxy

There has never been in the whole history of Islam another man whose faith has been so much in question. The controversy over Ibn 'Arabi's orthodoxy spread far and wide, and occupied the minds of the Muslims for centuries. We may even say that some traces of it are still to be found. Muslim scholars in the past were not concerned with his philosophy or mysticism as such, but with how far his philosophical and mystical ideas were in harmony or disharmony with the established dogmas of Islam. Instead of studying him objectively and impartially, and putting him in the place he deserves in the general frame of Muslim history, they spent so much time and energy in trying to prove or disprove his orthodoxy. No work could have been more futile and unrewarding.

The difference of opinion on this subject is enormous. By some Ibn 'Arabi is considered to be one of the

greatest figures of Islam as an author and a Sufi, while others regard him as a heretic and impostor. His peculiar style perhaps is largely responsible for this. The ambiguity of his language and complexity of his thoughts render his ideas almost intractable, particularly to those who are not familiar with his intricate ways of expression. He is a writer who pays more attention to ideas and subtle shades of mystical feelings than to words. We must, therefore, attempt to grasp the ideas which lie hidden beneath the surface of his conventional terminology. Again, we must not forget that he is a mystic who expresses his ineffable experience – as most mystics do – in enigmatic language. Enigmas are hard to fathom, but they are the external expression of the feelings that lie deep in the heart of the mystic.

People who read Ibn 'Arabi's books with their eyes fixed on the words misunderstand him and misjudge him. It is these who usually charge him with infidelity (*kufr*) or at least with heresy. Others who grasp his real intention uphold him as a great mystic and a man of God. A third class suspends their judgment on him on the ground that he spoke in a language which is far beyond their ken. They have nothing to say against his moral or religious life, for this, they hold, was beyond reproach.

It seems that the controversy about his religious beliefs started when a certain Jamal al-Din b. al-Khayyat from the Yemen made an appeal to the *`ulama'* of different parts of the Muslim world asking them to give their opinion on Ibn 'Arabi to whom he attributed what Firuzabadi describes as heretical beliefs and doctrines which are contrary to the consensus of the Muslim community.

The reaction caused by the appeal was extraordinarily varied. Some writers condemned Ibn 'Arabi right out; others defended him with great zeal. Of this latter class we may mention Firuzabadi, Siraj al-Din al-Makhzumi, al-Siraj al-Balqini, Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, Qutb al-Din al-Hamawi, al-Qutb al-Shirazi, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, and many others. Both Makhzumi and Suyuti wrote books on the subject. They could see no fault with Ibn 'Arabi except that he was misunderstood by people who were not of his spiritual rank.

Suyuti puts him in a rank higher than that of Junaid when he says that he was the instructor of the gnostics (*`arifin*) while Junaid was the instructor of the initiates (*muridin*). All these men are unanimous in according to Ibn 'Arabi the highest place both in learning and spiritual leadership. They recognize in his writings a perfect balance between *Shari'ah* (religious Law) and *Haqiqah* (the true spirit of the Law), or between the esoteric and exoteric aspects of Islam.

The greatest opposition appeared in the eighth and ninth/fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when an open war was declared against speculative Sufism in general and that of Ibn 'Arabi and Ibn al-Farid in particular. The Hanbalite Ibn Taimiyyah (d. 728/ 1328), with his bitter tongue and uncompromising attitude towards the Sufis, led the attack. He put these two great mystics in the same category with Hallaj, Qunawi, Ibn Sab`in, Tilimsani, and Kirmani as men who believed in incarnation and unification. In this respect, he said, they were even worse than the Christians and the extreme Shi`ites.[17]

He does not even distinguish between the mystical ravings of Hallaj, the deeply emotional utterances of

Ibn al-Farid, the cold-blooded and almost materialistic pantheism of Tilimsani, and the monistic theology of Ibn 'Arabi. They were all guilty of the abominable doctrines of incarnationism and pantheism. Curiously enough, he was less violent in his criticism of Ibn 'Arabi's doctrine which, he said, was nearer Islam than any of the others.

By far the worst enemy of Ibn 'Arabi and Ibn al-Farid and most insolent towards them was Burhan al-Din Ibrahim al-Biqa'i (d. 858/1454). He devoted two complete books to the refutation of their doctrines, not sparing even their personal characters. In one of these books entitled *Tanbih al-Ghabi 'ala Takfir Ibn `Arabi* 18 (Drawing the Attention of the Ignorant to the Infidelity of Ibn 'Arabi) he says:

"He deceived the true believers by pretending to be one of them. He made his stand on the ground of their beliefs; but gradually dragged them into narrow corners, and led them by seduction to places where perplexing questions are lurking. He is the greatest artist in confusing people; quotes authentic traditions of the Prophet, then twists them around in strange and mysterious ways. Thus, he leads his misguided followers to his ultimate objective which is the complete overthrowing of all religion and religious beliefs. The upholders of such doctrines hide themselves behind an outward appearance of Muslim ritual such as prayer and fasting. They are in fact atheists in the cloaks of monks and ascetics, and veritable heretics under the name of Sufis."19

These accusations are unjust as they are unfounded. Ibn 'Arabi, it is true, does interpret the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions in an esoteric manner, and he is not the first or the last Sufi to do it, but his ultimate aim is never the abandonment of religious beliefs and practices as Biqa'i maintains. On the contrary, he did his utmost to save Islam which he understood in his own way. The charge of pretence and hypocrisy is contradicted by the bold and fearless language in which Ibn 'Arabi chooses to express himself. He does not pretend to be a Muslim in order to please or avoid the wrath of true believers to whom Biqa`i refers.

He believes that Islam which preaches the principle of the unity of God could be squared with his doctrine of the unity of all Being, and this he openly declares in the strongest terms. He may have deceived himself or expressed the mystical union with God in terms of the metaphysical theory of the unity between God and the phenomenal world, but he certainly tried to deceive no one.

In contrast to Biqa'i's terrible accusations, we should conclude by citing the words of Balqini who had the highest opinion of Ibn 'Arabi. He says

"You.should take care not to deny anything that Shaikh Muhyi al-Din has said, when he – may God have mercy upon him – plunged deep into the sea of gnosis and the verification of truths, mentioned towards the end of his life in the *Fusus*, the *Futuhat*, and the *Tanazzulat* – things which are fully understood only by people of his rank."

Influence On Future Sufism

Although Ibn 'Arabi was violently attacked by his adversaries for his views which they considered unorthodox, his teachings not only survived the attacks, but exercised the most profound influence on the course of all future Sufism. His admirers in the East, where he spent the greater part of his life, called him al-Shaikh al-Akbar (the Greatest Doctor), a title which has never been conferred on another Sufi since. It pointed to his exceptional qualities both as a great spiritual master and a Sufi author – and it is held to be true of him to this-day. He marks the end of a stage where speculative Sufism reached its culminating point.

The centuries that followed witnessed the rapid spread of Sufi orders all over the Muslim world; and Sufism became the popular form of Islam with much less theory and more ritual and practice. The founders of the.Fraternities were better known for their piety and spiritual leadership than for their speculation. This is why Ibn 'Arabi's theosophy and mystical philosophy remained unchallenged. They were in fact the only source of inspnration to anyone who discoursed on the subject of the Unity of all Being, whether in Arabic-speaking countries or in Persia or Turkey.

Some writers of his own school, such as 'Abd al-Karim al-Jili and 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani, did little more than reproduce his ideas in a different form. Other schools of Sufis were not entirely free of his influence, at least as far as his terminology was concerned. The tremendous commentary of Arusi on Qushairi's *Risalah*, which is the classical model of Sunni Sufism, abounds with ideas and terms borrowed from Ibn 'Arabi's works.

His influence seems to show itself most markedly in the delightful works of the mystic poets of Persia from the seventh/thirteenth to the ninthififteenth century. 'Iraqi, Shabistari, and Jami were all inspired by him. Their wonderful odes are in many respects an echo of the ideas of the author of the *Fusus* and the *Futuhat*, cast into magnificent poetry by the subtle genius of the Persian mind. They overflow with the ideas of divine unity and universal love and beauty.

God is described as the source and ultimate ground of all things. He is for ever revealing Himself in the infinite forms of the phenomenal world. The world is created anew at every moment of time; a continual process of change goes on, with no repetition and no becoming. The divine light illuminates all particles of Being, just as the divine names have from eternity illuminated the potential, non-existent realities of things. When these realities become actualized in space and time, they reflect, like mirrors, the divine names which give them their external existence. The phenomenal world is the theatre wherein all the divine names are manifested. Man is the only creature in whom these names are manifested collectively.

These are but a few of the many ideas which the mystic poets of Persia borrowed from Ibn 'Arabi and to which they gave an endless variety of poetical forms. It is said that 'Iraqi wrote his *Lama'at* after hearing Sadr al-Din Qunawi's lectures on the *Fusus*, and Jami who commented on the same book wrote his Lawa'ih in the same strain. The following is an extract from `Iraqi's *Lama'at* which sums up Ibn 'Arabi's

theory of the microcosm (man):

“Though Form,” he said, “proclaims me Adam's son,
My true degree a higher place hath won.
When in the glass of Beauty I behold,
The Universe my image doth unfold:
In Heaven's Sun behold me manifest
Each tiny molecule doth me attest....
Ocean's a drop from my pervading sea,
Light but a flash of my vast Brilliancy:
From Throne to Carpet, all that is doth seem
Naught but a Mote that rides the sunlit Beam.
When Being's Veil of Attributes is shed,
My Splendour o'er a lustrous World is Spread ... “.20

Doctrines

Unity of All Being

The most fundamental principle which lies at the root of Ibn 'Arabi's whole philosophy, or rather theologico-philosophical and mystical thought, is the principle of the “Unity of All Being” (*wahdat al-wujud*). Perhaps the word “pantheism” is not a very happy equivalent, partly because it has particular associations in our minds, and also because it does not express the full significance of the much wider doctrine of the Unity of All Being as understood by our author. From.this primordial conception of the ultimate nature of reality all his theories in other fields of philosophy follow with an appreciable degree of consistency.

Much of the criticism levelled against Ibn 'Arabi's position is due to the misunderstanding of the role which he assigns to God in his system – a fact which attracted the attention of even Ibn Taimiyyah, who distinguishes between Ibn 'Arabi's *wahdat al-wujud* and that of other Muslim pantheists. He says that “Ibn 'Arabi's system is nearer to Islam in so far as he discriminates between the One who reveals Himself and the manifestations thereof, thus establishing the truth of the religious Law and insisting on the ethical and theological principles upon which the former Shaikhs of Islam had insisted.”21 In other words, Ibn Taimiyyah does not wish to put Ibn 'Arabi in the same category with Tilimsani, Isra'ili, and Kirmani whom he condemns as atheists and naturalists.

Ibn 'Arabi's pantheism is not a materialistic view of reality. The external world of sensible objects is but a fleeting shadow of the Real (*al-Haqq*), God. It is a form of acosmism which denies that the phenomenal has being or meaning apart from and independently of God. It is not that cold-blooded pantheism in which the name of God is mentioned for sheer courtesy, or, at the most, for logical necessity or

consistency. On the contrary, it is the sort of pantheism in which God swallows up everything, and the so-called other-than-God is reduced to nothing. God alone is the all-embracing and eternal reality. This position is summed up in Ibn 'Arabi's own words

"Glory to Him who created all things, being Himself their very essence (*'ainuha*)";

and also in the following verse:

"O Thou Who hast created all things in Thyself,
Thou unitest that which. Thou createst.
Thou createst that which existeth infinitely
In Thee, for Thou art the narrow and the all-embracing."[22]

Reality, therefore, is one and indivisible. We speak of God and the world, the One and the many, Unity and multiplicity, and such other terms when we use the language of the senses and the unaided intellect. The intuitive knowledge of the mystic reveals nothing but absolute unity which – curiously enough – Ibn 'Arabi identifies with the Muslim doctrine of unification (*tauhid*). Hence the further and more daring identification of his pantheistic doctrine with Islam as the religion of unification.

"Base the whole affair of your seclusion (*khalwah*)," he says, "upon facing God with absolute unification which is not marred by any (form of) polytheism, implicit or explicit, and by denying, with absolute conviction, all causes and intermediaries, whole and part, for indeed if you are deprived of such *tauhid* you will surely fall into polytheism."[23]

This, in other words, means that the real *tauhid* of God is to face Him alone and see nothing else, and declare Him the sole agent of all that exists. But such a view points at once to a fact long overlooked by scholars of Muslim mysticism, i.e., that Muslim pantheism (*wahdat al-wujud*) is a natural – though certainly not a logical – development of the Muslim doctrine of *tauhid* (unification). It started with the simple belief that "there is no god other than God," and under deeper consideration of the nature of Godhead, assumed the form of a totally different belief, i. e., there is nothing in existence but God.

In Ibn 'Arabi's case, the absolute unity of God, which is the monotheistic doctrine of Islam, is consistently interpreted to mean the absolute unity of all things in God. The two statements become equivalent, differing only in their respective bases of justification. The former has its root in religious belief or in theological or philosophical reasoning or both; the latter has its final justification in the unitive state of the mystic. We have a glimpse of this tendency in the writings of the early mystics of Islam such as Junaid of Baghdad and Abu Yazid of Bistam, but they speak of *wahdat al-shuhud* (unity of vision) not of *wujud* (Being), and attempt to develop no philosophical system in any way comparable to that of Ibn 'Arabi's.

It is sufficiently clear now that according to Ibn 'Arabi reality is an essential unity – substance in Spinoza's sense; but it is also a duality in so far as it has two differentiating attributes: *Haqq* (God) and *khalq* (universe). It can be regarded from two different aspects. In itself it is the undifferentiated and

Absolute Being which transcends all spatial and temporal relations. It is a bare monad of which nothing can be predicated or known, if by knowledge we mean the apprehension of a thing through our senses and discursive reason. To know in this sense is to determine that which is known; and determination is a form of limitation which is contrary to the nature of the Absolute. The Absolute Monad is the most indeterminate of all indeterminates (*ankar al-nakirat*); the thing-in-itself (*al-shai*) as Ibn 'Arabi calls it.

On the other hand, we can view reality as we know it; and we know it invested with divine names and attributes. In other words, we know it in the multiplicity of its manifestations which make up what we call the phenomenal world. So, by knowing ourselves and the phenomenal world in general, we know reality of which they are particular modes.

In Ibn 'Arabi's own words "we" – and this goes for the phenomenal world as well – "are the names by which God describes Himself." We are His names, or His external aspects. Our essences are His essence and this constitutes His internal aspect. Hence reality is One and many; Unity and multiplicity; eternal and temporal; transcendent and immanent. It is capable of receiving and uniting in itself all conceivable opposites.

Abu Said a1-Kharraz (d. 277/890) had already discovered this truth when he said that God is known only by uniting all the opposites which are attributed to him. "He is called the First and the Last: the External and the Internal. He is the Essence of what is manifested and of that which remains latent.... The Inward says no when the Outward says I am; and the Outward says no when the Inward says I am, and so in the case of every pair of contraries. The speaker is One, and He is identical with the Hearer."[24]

Thus, Ibn 'Arabi's thought goes on moving within that closed circle which knows no beginning and no end. His thought is circular because reality as he envisages it is circular. Every point on the circle is potentially the whole of the circle and is capable of manifesting the whole. Looking at the points with an eye on the centre of the circle (the divine essence), we can say that each point is identical with the essence in one respect, different from it in another respect. This explains the verbal contradictions with which Ibn 'Arabi's books abound.

Sometimes he comes nearer the philosophers than the mystics when he explains the relation between God and the universe. Here we have theories reminiscent of the Platonic theory of ideas and the Ishraqi doctrine of intelligible existence (*al-wujud al-dhihni*) and the scholastic theory of the identification of substance and accidents (the theory of the Ash`arites).

"Before coming into existence," he says, "things of the phenomenal world were potentialities in the bosom of the Absolute." They formed the contents of the mind of God as ideas of His future becoming. These intelligible realities are what he calls "the fixed prototypes of things" (*al-a`yan al-thabitah*). God's knowledge of them is identical with His knowledge of Himself.

It is a state of self-revelation or self-consciousness, in which God saw (at no particular point of time) in

Himself these determinate “forms” of His own essence. But they are also latent states of His mind. So they are both intelligible ideas in the divine mind as well as particular modes of the divine essence. Hence the *a'yan al-thabitah* are identified, on the one hand, with the quiddity (*mahiyyah*) of things, and, on the other hand, with their essence (*huwiyyah*). The former explains the first aspect of the *a'yan* as ideas; the latter, their second aspect as essential modes.

He calls them non-existent in the sense that they have no external existence, on the one hand, and no existence apart from the divine essence, on the other. They are the prototypes and causes of all external existents because they are the potential relations between the divine names as well as the potential modes of the divine essence. When these potentialities become actualities we have the so-called external world. Yet, there is no real becoming, and no becoming in space and time. The process goes on from eternity to everlastingness.

This complicated relation between the One and the many is nowhere systematically explained in Ibn 'Arabi's works, not even in the *Fusus*. A certain formal dialectic can be detected in the *Fusus* where the author attempts to explain his metaphysical theory of reality, but the thread of the formal reasoning is often interrupted by outbursts of mystic emotion. Ibn 'Arabi is essentially a mystic, and in the highest degree a dreamer and fantast as we have already observed. He often uses symbols and similes in expressing the relation between the multiplicity of the phenomenal world and their essential unity.

The One reveals Himself in the many, he says, as an object is revealed in different mirrors, each mirror reflecting an image determined by its nature and its capacity as a recipient. Or it is like a source of light from which an infinite number of lights are derived. Or like a substance which penetrates and permeates the forms of existing objects: thus, giving them their meaning and being. Or it is like a mighty sea on the surface of which we observe countless waves for ever appearing and disappearing. The eternal drama of existence is nothing but this ever-renewed creation (*al-khalq al-jadid*) which is in reality a perpetual process of self-revelation. Or again, he might say, the One is the real Being and the phenomenal world is its shadow having no reality in itself.

But beautiful as they are, such similes are very ambiguous and highly misleading. They are at least suggestive of a duality of two beings: God and the universe, in a system which admits only an absolute unity. Duality and multiplicity are illusory. They are due to our incapacity to perceive the essential unity of things. But this oscillation between unity and duality is due to confusing the epistemic side of the issue with its ontological side.

Ontologically, there is but one reality. Epidemically, there are two aspects: a reality which transcends the phenomenal world, and a multiplicity of subjectivities that find their ultimate explanation in the way we view reality as we know it. To our limited senses and intellects the external world undergoes a process of perpetual change and transformation. We call this creation but it is in fact a process of self-unveiling of the One Essence which knows no change.

Notion of Deity

In spite of his metaphysical theory of the nature of reality, Ibn 'Arabi finds a place for God in his system. His pantheism, like that of Spinoza, is to be distinguished from the naturalistic philosophy of the Stoics and the materialistic atheists. God that figures in his metaphysics as an unknowable and incommunicable reality, beyond thought and description, appears in his theology as the object of belief, love, and worship. The warmth of religious sentiment displayed in his writings attaches itself to his conception of God in the latter sense which comes close to the monotheistic conception of Islam. Indeed he tries his utmost to reconcile the two conceptions; but his God is not in the strict religious sense confined to Islam or any other creed. He is not the ethical and personal God of religion, but the essence of all that is worshipped and loved in all religions

"God has ordained that ye shall worship naught but Him. "25

This is interpreted by Ibn 'Arabi to mean that God has decreed that nothing is actually worshipped except Him. This is an open admission of all kinds of worship, so long as the worshippers recognize God behind the external "forms" of their gods. They call their gods by this or that name, but the Gnostic (*al-'arif*) calls his God "Allah" which is the most universal of all names of God. Particular objects of worship are creations of men's minds, but God, the Absolute, is uncreated. We should not, therefore, confine God to any particular form of belief to the exclusion of other forms, but acknowledge Him in all forms alike. To limit Him to one form – as the Christians have done – is infidelity (*kufr*); and to acknowledge Him in all forms is the spirit of true religion.

This universal religion which preaches that all worshipped objects are forms of One Supreme Deity is the logical corollary of Ibn 'Arabi's metaphysical theory that reality is ultimately one. But it has its deep roots in mysticism rather than in logic. It is nowhere better expressed than in the following verse:

"People have different beliefs about God
But I behold all that they believe."26

And the verse:

"My heart has become the receptacle of every 'form';
It is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks.
And a temple for idols, and pilgrims' Ka'bah,
And the Tablets of the Torah, and the Book of the Qur'an.
I follow the religion of love whichever way its camels take,
For this is my religion and my faith."27

So, all paths lead to one straight path which leads to God. It would be a gross mistake to think that Ibn 'Arabi approves of the worship of stones and stars and other idols, for these as far as his philosophy is concerned are non-existent or mere fabrications of the human mind. The real God is not a tangible

object; but one who reveals Himself in the heart of the gnostic. There alone He is beheld.

This shows that Ibn 'Arabi's theory of religion is mystical and not strictly philosophical. It has its root in his much wider theory of divine love. The ultimate goal of all mysticism is love; and in Ibn 'Arabi's mystical system in particular, it is the full realization of the union of the lover and the Beloved. Now, if we look deeply into the nature of worship, we find that love forms its very basis. To worship is to love in the extreme. No object is worshipped unless it is invested with some sort of love; for love is the divine principle which binds things together and pervades all beings. This means that the highest manifestation in which God is worshipped is love. In other words, universal love and universal worship are two aspects of one and the same fact. The mystic who sees God (the Beloved) in everything worships Him in everything. This is summed up in the following verse

"I swear by the reality of Love that Love is the Cause of all love.
Were it not for Love (residing) in the heart, Love (God) would not be worshipped."[28]

This is because Love is the greatest object of worship. It is the only thing that is worshiped for its own sake. Other things are worshiped through it.

God, as an object of worship, therefore, resides in the heart as the supreme object of love. He is not the efficient cause of the philosophers or the transcendent God of the Mu'tazilites. He is in the heart of His servant and is nearer to him than his jugular vein.[29] "My heaven and my earth contain Me not," says the Prophetic tradition, "but I am contained in the heart of My servant who is a believer."

God and Man

It was Husain b. Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 309/922) who first laid down the foundation for the theory that came to be known in the writings of Ibn 'Arabi and 'Abd al-Karim al-Jili as the Theory of the Perfect Man. In the final form in which Ibn 'Arabi cast it, it played a very important role in the history of Muslim mysticism. Hallaj's theory was a theory of incarnation based on the Jewish tradition which states that "God created Adam in His own image" – a tradition which the Sufis attributed to the Prophet.

He distinguished between two natures in man: the divine (*al-lahut*), and the human (*al-nasut*). The two natures are not united but fused, the one into the other, as wine is fused into water. Thus for the first time in the history of Islam a divine aspect of man was recognized, and man was regarded as a unique creature not to be compared with any other creature on account of his divinity.

The Hallajian idea was taken up by Ibn 'Arabi, but completely transformed and given wider application. First, the duality of *lahut* and *nasut* became a duality of aspects of one reality, not of two independent natures. Secondly, they were regarded as actually present not only in man but in everything whatever; the *nasut* being the external aspect of a thing, the *lahut*, its internal aspect. But God who reveals Himself in all phenomenal existence is revealed in a most perfect and complete way in the form of the perfect man, who is best represented by prophets and saints.

This forms the main theme of the *Fusus al-Hikam* and *al-Tadbirat al-Ilahiyyah* of Ibn 'Arabi, but many of its aspects are dealt with in his *Futuhat* and other works. Each one of the twenty seven chapters of the *Fusus* is devoted to a prophet who is both a Logos (*kalimah*) of God and a representative of one of the divine names. They are also cited as examples of the perfect man. The Logos par excellence is the Prophet Muhammad or rather the reality of Muhammad, as we shall see later.

So man in general – and the perfect man in particular – is the most perfect manifestation of God. The universe which, like a mirror, reflects the divine attributes and names in a multiplicity of forms, manifests them separately or analytically. Man alone manifests these attributes and names collectively or synthetically. Hence he is called the microcosm and the honoured epitome (*al-mukhtasar al-sharif*) and the most universal being (*al-kaun al-jami'*), who comprises all realities and grades of existence. In him alone the divine presence is reflected, and through him alone God becomes conscious of Himself and His perfection. Here are Ibn 'Arabi's own words:

"God, glory to Him, in respect of His most beautiful names, which are beyond enumeration, willed to see their *a'yan* (realities), or if you wish you may say, His (own) *'ayn*, in a Universal Being which contains the whole affair – inasmuch as it is endowed with all aspects of existence – and through which (alone) His mystery is revealed to Himself: for a vision which consists in a thing seeing itself by means of itself is not the same as that of the thing seeing something else which serves as a mirror... . Adam was the very essence of the polishing of this mirror, and the spirit of this form (i.e., the form in which God has revealed Himself: which is man)."[30]

Here Ibn 'Arabi almost repeats the words of Hallaj who says:
"God looked into eternity, prior to all things, contemplated the essence of His splendour, and then desired to project outside Himself His supreme joy and love with the object of speaking to them. He also created an image of Himself with all His attributes and names. This image was Adam whom God glorified and exalted."[31]

Yet, the difference between the two, thinkers is so fundamental. Hallaj is an incarnationist; Ibn 'Arabi, a pantheist. On man as the microcosm he says:

"The spirit of the Great Existent (the Universe)
Is this small existent (man).
Without it God would not have said:
'I am the greatest and the omnipotent.'
Let not my contingency veil thee,
Or my death or resurrection,
For if thou examinest me,
I am the great and the all-embracing.
The eternal through my essence,
And the temporal are manifested. "[32]

This is why man deserves the high honour and dignity of being God's vicegerent on earth – a rank which God has denied all other creatures including the angels. This superior rank goes not to every individual man, for some men are even lower than the beasts, but to the perfect man alone, and this for two reasons:

a) He is a perfect manifestation of God in virtue of unity in himself, of all God's attributes and names.

b) He knows God absolutely through realizing in some sort of experience his essential oneness with Him.

Here Ibn 'Arabi's metaphysical theory of man coincides with the theory of mysticism.

Ethical and Religious Implications

We have already pointed out that Ibn 'Arabi's pantheistic theory of the nature of reality is the pivot round which the whole of his system of thought turns. Some aspects of this philosophy have been explained; and it remains now to show its bearing on his attitude towards man's ethical and religious life.

Everything in Ibn `Arabi's world is subject to rigid determinism. On the ontological side we have seen that phenomenal objects are regarded as the external manifestations of their latent realities and determined by their own laws. Everything is what it is from eternity and nothing can change it, not even God Himself. "What you are in your state of latency (*thubut*) is what you will be in your realized existence (*zuhur*)," is the fundamental law of existence. It is self-determinism or self-realization in which freedom plays no part either in God's actions or in those of His creatures.

Moral and religious phenomena are no exception. God decrees things in the sense that He knows them as they are in their latent states, and pre-judges that they should come out in the forms in which He knows them. So He decrees nothing which lies outside their nature. This is the mystery of predestination (*sirr al-qadar*).33

Belief and unbelief, sinful and lawful actions, are all determined in this sense and it is in this sense also that men are the makers of their own destiny for which, Ibn 'Arabi says, they are responsible. "We are not unjust to them," says God, "but it is they who are unjust to themselves." "I am not unjust to My servants."34

On this Ibn 'Arabi comments as follows: "I (God) did not ordain infidelity (*kufr*) which dooms them to misery, and then demand of them that which lies not in their power. Nay, I deal with them only as I know them, and I know them only as they are in themselves. Hence if there be injustice they are the unjust. Similarly, I say to them nothing except that which My essence has decreed that I should say; and My essence is known to Me as it is in respect of My saying this or not saying that. So I say nothing except what I know that I should say. It is Mine to say, and it is for them to obey or not to obey after hearing My command."35

There is, therefore, a difference between obeying one's own nature and obeying the religious command, a distinction which was made long before Ibn 'Arabi by Hallaj. On the one hand, all men – indeed all creatures – obey their own law which he calls the creative law (*al–amr al–takwini*). On the other, some obey and others disobey the religious Law (*al–amr al–taklifi*). The first is in accordance with God's creative will (*al–mashiyyah*) which brings things into existence in the forms in which they are eternally predetermined. The second is something imposed from without for some ulterior reason, ethical, religious, or social.

Everything obeys the creative commands in response to its own nature, and by so doing obeys God's will, regardless of whether this obedience is also obedience or disobedience to the religious or ethical command. When Pharaoh disobeyed God and Iblis (Satan) refused the divine command to prostrate himself before Adam, they were in fact obeying the creative command and carrying out the will of God, although from the point of view of the religious command they were disobedient. To express the same thing in different words, an action–in–itself, i. e., irrespective of any form whatever, is neither good nor evil, neither religious nor irreligious. It is just an action pure and simple. It comes under one or another of these categories when it is judged by religious or ethical standards.

The whole theory reduces obedience and disobedience in the religious sense to a mere formality, and denies moral and religious obligations. It tells us that man is responsible for his actions, but affirms that he is not a free agent to will his actions. Responsibility and complete absence of freedom do not go together. Theoretically, there are different alternatives out of which man may choose his actions, but according to this theory he is so created that he chooses the only alternative which is determined by his own necessary laws. So he actually chooses nothing and has no more freedom than a stone falling down to the earth in obedience to its own law.

Thus, we go on moving within that closed circle of thought which is so typical of Ibn 'Arabi's reasoning. He has one eye on his pantheistic doctrine with all that it entails, and the other on Islamic teachings, and oscillates between the two all the time. His pantheistic doctrine implies that God is the Ultimate Agent of all actions, and Islam insists on the moral and religious responsibility of man for his actions. The two conflicting points of view cannot be reconciled, and Ibn 'Arabi's way of reconciling them is full of paradoxes.

He is more consistent when he says that all actions are created by God and there is no real difference between the Commander and the commanded.[36] There is no real servantship (*`ubudiyyah*), for the servant is one who carries out the commands of his master. But in reality the servant of God is a mere locus (*mahall*) through which God's creative power acts. So the servant is the Lord and the Lord is the servant.[37]

This seems to contradict what we have already said, i, e., that, according to Ibn 'Arabi, actions belong to man and spring directly from his nature in a determined way. Actually, there is no contradiction when we think of the distinction he makes between the One and the many. In fact, all his paradoxes can be solved

when considered in the light of this distinction. When he says that God is the doer of all actions, he is regarding the question from the point of view of the One, for God's essence is the essence of men to whom actions are attributed. And when he asserts that men are the doers of their actions, he is regarding the question from the point of view of the many.

Having reduced obligation, obedience, disobedience; and similar other concepts to mere formal relations, it was natural enough for him to give the concepts of punishment and reward a positive content. Heaven and hell and all the eschatological matters connected with them are described in the. minutest details, but no sooner does he give a constructive picture of one of them than he uses his allegorical method of interpretation to explain it away.

His method bears some remarkable resemblance to that of the Isma'ilians and the Carmathians, used for the same purpose. All eschatological terms such as punishment, reward, purgatory, the Balance, the Bridge, intercession, heaven, hell, and so on, are regarded as representations of states of man, and corporealizations of ideas. What we learn from Tradition, he says, are words, and it is left to us to find out what is meant by them,38 i.e., to read into them whatever meaning we please.

This is precisely what Ibn 'Arabi himself has done. Heaven and hell, according to him, are subjective states, not objective realities. Hell is the realization of the individual "self"; it is selfhood. Heaven is the realization of the essential unity of all things. There is no real difference between the two. If any, the difference is one of degree, not of kind. Salvation is the ultimate end of all. Speaking of the people of hell and heaven, Ibn 'Arabi says: –

"Nothing remains but the Fulfiller of Promise alone;
The threat of God has no object to be seen.
When they enter the Abode of Misery they experience
Pleasure wherein lies a bliss so different
From that of the Gardens of Everlastingness.
It is all the same: the difference is felt at the beatific vision."39

This means that when the truth is known and God reveals Himself as He really is, everyone, whether in heaven or in hell, will know his position, i.e., will know how near or how far he is from the truth. Those who fully realize their essential oneness with God are the blessed ones who will go to paradise. Those who are veiled from the truth are the damned ones who will go to hell. But both parties will enjoy in their respective abodes happiness proportionate to their degree of knowledge.

Conclusion

In the foregoing pages an attempt has been made to give a bird's–eye view of a tremendously vast field. We have concentrated on the most important features of Ibn 'Arabi's life and thought; many important facts have of necessity been omitted for lack of space. If Ibn 'Arabi experienced – as we must assume

he did – some sort of strain while writing his mystical philosophy, we are placed under greater strain while writing about him. There is more than one way of interpreting his ideas and fathoming his intricate and obscure style. This makes it possible for scholars to give not only different but conflicting accounts of his teachings.

The present account deals with him as a thorough–going pantheist who tried his best to reconcile his pantheistic doctrine with Islam. In doing so he had to read new meanings into the traditional Muslim concepts, and change Islam from a positive into a mystic religion. It is true he never lost sight of the idea of Godhead, but his God is not the transcendent God of revealed religions, but the Absolute Being who manifests Himself in every form of existence, and in the highest degree in the form of man.

People may agree or disagree with some of his theories, but the fact remains that in production and influence he is the greatest Arabic–speaking mystic Islam has ever produced. It has been said that he has annulled religion in the orthodox sense in which it is usually understood. This is not altogether true. He has done away with a good many concepts which were so narrowly understood by Muslim jurists and theologians, and offered in their place other concepts which are much deeper in their spirituality and more comprehensive than those of any of his Muslim predecessors. His ideas about the universality of everything – being, love, religion – may be considered landmarks in the history of human thought.

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Part 3: The Philosophers

(Those who were mainly interested in philosophy and science and were greatly influenced by Greek thought)

Chapter 21: Al-Kindi

By Ahmed Fouad El-Ehwany

Life

Al-Kindi (c. 185/801- c. 260/873) was the first Muslim philosopher. Philosophical studies in the second/eighth century were in the hands of Christian Syriacs, who were primarily physicians. They started, through encouragement by the Caliph, to translate Greek writings into Arabic. Being the first Arab Muslim to study science and philosophy, al-Kindi was rightly called "the Philosopher of the Arabs."

His full name is: Abu Yusuf Ya`qub ibn Ishaq ibn al-Sabbah ibn `Imran ibn Isma`il ibn al-Ash`ath ibn Qais al-Kindi. Kindah was one of the great Arab tribes before Islam. His grandfather al-Ash`ath ibn Qais adopted Islam and was considered one of the Companions (*Sahabah*) of the Prophet. Al-Ash`ath went with some of the pioneer Muslims to al-Kufah, where he and his descendants lived. Ishaq ibn al-Sabbah, al-Kindi's father, was Governor of al-Kufah during the reign of the `Abbasid Caliphs al-Mahdi and al-Rashid. Most probably al-Kindi was born in the year 185/801,[1] a decade before the death of al-Rashid.

Al-Kufah and al-Basrah, in the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries, were the two rivalling centres of Islamic culture. Al-Kufah was more inclined to rational studies; and in this intellectual atmosphere, al-Kindi passed his early boyhood. He learnt the Qur'an by heart, the Arabic grammar, literature, and elementary arithmetic, all of which formed the curriculum for all Muslim children. He, then, studied *Fiqh* and the new-born discipline called *Kalam*. But it seems that he was more interested in sciences and philosophy, to which he consecrated the rest of his life, especially after he went to Baghdad.

A complete knowledge of Greek science and philosophy required proficiency in Greek and Syriac languages into which latter many Greek works had already been translated. It seems that al-Kindi learnt Greek, but certainly he mastered the Syriac language from which he translated several works. He also revised some of the Arabic translations, such as al-Himsi's translation of Plotinus' *Enneads*, which passed to the Arabs as one of the writings of Aristotle. Al-Qifti, the biographer, says that "al-Kindi translated many philosophical books, clarified their difficulties, and summarized their deep theories."[2]

In Baghdad he was connected with al-Ma'mun, al-Mu'tasim, and the latter's son Ahmad. He was nominated tutor of Ahmad ibn al-Mu'tasim, to whom he dedicated some of his important writings. Ibn Nabatah says: “Al-Kindi and his writings embellished the empire of al-Mu`tasim.”[3] He flourished also under the reign of al-Mutawakkil (r. 232-247/847-861). A story related by Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah indicates the great fame of al-Kindi at that time, his advanced knowledge, and his famous private library.

This is the full account: “Muhammad and Ahmad, the sons of Musa ibn Shakir, who lived during the reign of al-Mutawakkil, were conspiring against everyone who was advanced in knowledge. They sent a certain Sanad ibn 'Ali to Baghdad so that he might get al-Kindi away from al-Mutawakkil. Their conspiracies succeeded to the point that al-Mutawakkil ordered al-Kindi to be beaten. His whole library was confiscated and put in a separate place, labelled as the 'Kindian Library.”[4]'

Al-Kindi's notoriety for avarice was equal to his fame for knowledge. This bad repute was due to al-Jahiz's caricature of him in his *Kitab al-Bukhala'*. However, al-Kindi lived a luxurious life in a house, in the garden of which he bred many curious animals. It seems that he lived aloof from society, even from his neighbours.

An interesting story related by al-Qifti shows that al-Kindi lived in the neighborhood of a wealthy merchant, who never knew that al-Kindi was an excellent physician. Once the merchant's son was attacked by sudden paralysis and no physician in Baghdad was able to cure him. Someone told the merchant that he lived in the neighborhood of the most brilliant philosopher, who was very clever in curing that particular illness. Al-Kindi cured the paralyzed boy by music.

Works

Most of his numerous works (numbering about 270) are lost. Ibn al-Nadim and following him al-Qifti classified his writings, most of which are short treatises, into seventeen groups: (1) philosophical, (2) logical, (3) arithmetical, (4) globular, (5) musical, (6) astronomical, (7) geometrical, (8) spherical, (9), medical, (10) astrological, (11) dialectical, (12) psychological, (13) political, (14) causal (meteorological), (15) dimensional, (16) on first things, (17) on the species of some metals, chemicals, etc.

This account shows to what extent al-Kindi's knowledge was encyclopedic. Some of his scientific works were translated by Gerard of Cremona into Latin and influenced very much the thought of medieval Europe. Cardano considered him to be one of the twelve greatest minds.

Scholars studied al-Kindi, until his Arabic treatises were discovered and edited, merely on the basis of the extant Latin translations. His *De Medicinarum Compositarum Gradibus* was published in 938/1531. Albino Nagy[5] in 1315/1897 edited the medieval translations of these treatises: *De intellectu*; *De Somno et visione*; *De quinque essentiis*; *Liber introductorius in artem logicae demonstrationis*.

Since the discovery of some of his Arabic manuscripts, a new light has been thrown on al-Kindi's

philosophy. A compendium containing about 25 treatises was found by Ritter in Istanbul. Now they have all been edited by different scholars, Walzer, Rosenthal, Abu Ridah, and Ahmed Fouad El-Ehwany.[6] There are other short treatises discovered in Aleppo, but they have not yet been edited. It has become possible, to a certain extent, to analyse al-Kindi's philosophy on more or less sure grounds.

Philosophy

It was due to al-Kindi that philosophy came to be acknowledged as a part of Islamic culture. The early Arab historians called him "the Philosopher of the Arabs" for this reason. It is true that he borrowed his ideas from Neo-Platonic Aristotelianism, but it is also true that he put those ideas in a new context. By conciliating Hellenistic heritage with Islam he laid the foundations of a new philosophy. Indeed, this conciliation remained for a long time the chief feature of this philosophy. Furthermore, al-Kindi, specializing in all the sciences known at his time – of which his writings give sufficient evidence – made philosophy a comprehensive study embracing all sciences.

Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd were first scientists and then philosophers. For this reason Ibn al-Nadim placed al-Kindi in the class of natural philosophers. This is his full account: "Al-Kindi is the best man of his time, unique in his knowledge of all the ancient sciences. He is called the Philosopher of the Arabs. His books deal with different sciences, such as logic, philosophy, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, etc. We have connected him with the natural philosophers because of his prominence in science."[7]

Philosophy is the knowledge of truth. Muslim philosophers, like the Greek, believed that truth is something over and above experience; that it lies immutable and eternal in a supernatural world. The definition of philosophy in al-Kindi's treatise on "First Philosophy" runs like this: "Philosophy is the knowledge of the reality of things within man's possibility, because the philosopher's end in his theoretical knowledge is to gain truth and in his practical knowledge to behave in accordance with truth."

At the end of the treatise, God is qualified by the term "truth," which is the objective of philosophy. "The True One (*al-Wahid al-Haq*) is, then, the First, the Creator, the Sustainer of all that He has created. ..." This view is borrowed from Aristotle's metaphysics, but the Unmovable Mover of Aristotle is substituted by the Creator. This difference constitutes the core of the Kindian system.

Philosophy is classified into two main divisions: theoretical studies, which are physics, mathematics, and metaphysics; and practical studies which are ethics, economics, and politics. A later writer, quoting al-Kindi, gives the classification as follows: "Theory and practice are the beginning of the virtues. Each one of the two is divided into the physical, mathematical, and theological parts. Practice is divided into the guidance of one's self, that of one's house, and that of one's city." [8]

Ibn Nabata, quoting also al-Kindi, mentions only the theoretical divisions. "The philosophical sciences are of three kinds: the first in teaching (*ta`lim*) is mathematics which is intermediate in nature; the second

is physics, which is the last in nature; the third is theology which is the highest in nature."[9] The priority of mathematics goes back to Aristotle, but the final sequence of the three sciences beginning with physics came from the later Peripatetics. Most probably al-Kindi was following Ptolemy, who gave a division of sciences in the beginning of *Almagest*.[10] Mathematics was known to the Arabs from that time on as the "first study."

The definition of philosophy and its classification, as mentioned above, remained traditional in Muslim philosophy. As Mustafa 'Abd al-Raziq puts it: "This attitude in understanding the meaning of philosophy and its classification according to subject-matter directed Muslim philosophy from its very outset."[11]

First philosophy or metaphysics is the knowledge of the First Cause, because all the rest of philosophy is included in this knowledge.[12] The method followed in the study of first philosophy is the logic of demonstration. From now on, logic will be the instrument of the philosophers in their quest for truth.

Al-Kindi's value as a philosopher was debated in ancient times because of the lack of logical theory in his system. Sa'id al-Andalusi says: "Al-Kindi wrote on logic many books which never became popular, and which people never read or used in the sciences, because these books missed the art of analysis which is the only way to distinguish between right and wrong in every study. By the art of synthesis, which is what Ya`qub meant by his writings, no one can profit, unless he has sure premises from which he can make the synthesis."

It is difficult for us to give an exact idea concerning this charge until his logical treatises are discovered. But the fact that al-Farabi was called the "Second Master" because of his introducing logic as the method of thinking in Islamic philosophy[13] seems to corroborate the judgment of Sa'id just mentioned.

Harmony Between Philosophy And Religion

Al-Kindi directed Muslim philosophy towards an accord between philosophy and religion.[14] Philosophy depends on reason, and religion relies on revelation. Logic is the method of philosophy; faith, which is belief in the realities mentioned in the Qur'an as revealed by God to His Prophet, is the way of religion. From the very outset, men of religion mistrusted philosophy and the philosophers. Philosophers were attacked for being heretics.

Al-Kindi was obliged to defend himself against the accusation of religious spokesmen that "the acquisition of the knowledge of the reality of things is atheism (*kufr*)."[15] In his turn, al-Kindi accused those religious spokesmen for being irreligious and traders with religion. "They disputed with good men in defence of the untrue position which they had founded and occupied without any merit only to gain power and to trade with religion. "[16]

The accord between philosophy and religion is laid down on the basis of three arguments: (1) that theology is part of philosophy; (2) that the prophet's revelation and philosophical truth are in accord with

each other, and (3) that the pursuit of theology is logically ordained.

Philosophy is the knowledge of the reality of things, and this knowledge comprises theology (*al-rububiyyah*), the science of monotheism, ethics, and all useful sciences.

Furthermore, the prophets have ordained the pursuit of truth and practice of virtue. "The totality of every useful science and the way to attain it, the getting away from anything harmful and taking care against it – the acquisition of all this is what the true prophets have proclaimed in the name of God ....
The prophets have proclaimed the unique divinity of God, the practice of the virtues accepted by Him, and the avoidance of the vices which are contrary to virtues-in-themselves."

Again, the pursuit of philosophy is necessary for it "is either necessary or it is not necessary. If theologians (those who oppose its pursuit) say that it is necessary, they should study it; if they say that it is not necessary, they have to give the reason for this, and present a demonstration. Giving the reason and demonstration is part of the acquisition of the knowledge of reality. It is necessary then that they should have this knowledge and realize that they must obtain it."[17]

In his treatise on "The Number of the Works of Aristotle," al-Kindi makes a sharp distinction between religion and philosophy. The fact that he discussed this point in this particular treatise proves that he was comparing the religion of Islam with Aristotle's philosophy. The divine science, which he distinguished from philosophy, is Islam as revealed to the Prophet and recorded in the Qur'an.

Contrary to his general view that theology is a part of philosophy, here we find (1) that theology occupies a rank higher than philosophy; (2) that religion is a divine science and philosophy is a human one; (3) that the way of religion is faith and that of philosophy is reason; (4) that the knowledge of the prophet is immediate and through inspiration and that of the philosopher is by way of logic and demonstration. We quote in full this interesting and very important passage:

"If, then, a person does not obtain the knowledge of quantity and quality, he will lack knowledge of the primary and secondary substances, so that one cannot expect him to have any knowledge of the human sciences which are acquired by man through research, effort, and industry. These sciences fall short in rank of the divine science (*al-'ilm al-ilahi*)[18] which is obtained without research, effort, and industry, and in no time.

This latter knowledge is like the knowledge of the prophets, a knowledge bestowed by God; unlike mathematics and logic, it is received without research, effort, study, and industry, and requires no period of time. It is distinct in being obtained by the will of God, through the purification and illumination of souls, so that they turn towards truth, through God's support, assistance, inspiration, and His messages.

This knowledge is not a prerogative of all men, but only of the prophets. This is one of their miraculous peculiarities, the distinctive sign which differentiates them from other human beings. Men who are not prophets have no way of attaining knowledge of the secondary substances or that of the primary

sensible substances and their accidents without research and industry through logic and mathematics, and without any period of time.

“Hence, men of intelligence draw the evident conclusion that since this[19] (knowledge) exists, it comes from God; whereas (ordinary) men are unable by their very nature to attain to a similar knowledge, because it is above and beyond their nature and the devices they use. Thus, they submit themselves in obedience and docility to it and faithfully believe in the truth of the message of the prophets.”[20]

The Muslims follow the Word of God stated in the Qur'an and are convinced by its sure arguments. Philosophers refer to logical demonstration, i, e., their reason. Philosophical arguments depend on the self-evident first principles of demonstration. In al-Kindi's view, the Qur'anic arguments, being divine, are more sure, certain, and convincing than the philosophical arguments which are human. The Qur'an gives solutions of some very important problems, such as the creation of the world from nothing, and resurrection.

Al-Kindi holds that the Qur'anic arguments are “beliefs, clear and comprehensive.” Thus, they lead to certainty and conviction. Hence, they are superior to the philosopher's arguments. An example of such sure arguments is to be found in the answer to the infidels who asked, “Who will be able to give life to bones when they have been reduced to dust?” The answer is: “He who produced them originally will give life to them.”

Thus, al-Kindi opened the door for the philosophical interpretation of the Qur'an, and thereby brought about an accord between religion and philosophy. In his treatise “The Worship (*sujud*) of the *Primum Mobile*,” the verse: “Stars and trees are worshipping” is interpreted by reference to the different meanings of the word “*sajdah*.” It means: (1) prostration in praying; (2) obedience; (3) change from imperfection to perfection; (4) following by will the order of a person. It is this last meaning that applies to the worship of the stars. The heavenly sphere is animated and is the cause of life in the world of generation and corruption. The movement of the *primum mobile* is called worship (*sujud*) in the sense that it obeys God.

To sum up, al-Kindi was the first philosopher in Islam to effect an accord between religion and philosophy. He paved the way for al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd. Two quite different views are given by him. The first follows the way of the logicians and reduces religion to philosophy. The second, considering religion a divine science, raises it above philosophy. This divine science can be known by a prophetic faculty. However, through philosophic interpretation religion becomes conciliated with philosophy.

God

An adequate and sure knowledge of God is the final objective of philosophy. Philosophy by its very name was a Greek study. For this. reason, al-Kindi made a great effort to transmit Greek philosophy to

the Arabs. As Rosenthal rightly puts it: “Al-Kindi himself states that he considered it his task to serve as an Arab transmitter and interpreter of the ancient heritage.”[21] In Theon's commentary on the *Almagest* of Ptolemy, we find God described as immutable, simple, of invisible nature, and the true cause of motion.

Al-Kindi in his treatise *al-Sina'at al-'Uzma* [22] paraphrases the same idea. He says: “For God, great is His praise, is the reason and agent of this motion, being eternal (*qadim*), He cannot be seen and does not move, but in fact causes motion without. moving Himself. This is His description for those who understand Him in plain words: He is simple in that He cannot be dissolved into something simpler; and He is indivisible because He is not composed and composition has no hold on Him, but in fact He is separate from the visible bodies, since He ... is the reason of the motion of the visible bodies.”[23]

Simplicity, indivisibility, invisibility, and causality of motion are the divine attributes stated by Theon. When al-Kindi mentions them he is simply a transmitter of the Hellenistic conception of God. The originality of al-Kindi lies in his conciliation of the Islamic concept of God with the philosophical ideas which were current in the later Neo-Platonism.

The basic Islamic notions concerning God are His unicity, His act of creation from nothing, and the dependence of all creatures on Him. These attributes are stated in the Qur'an in a manner which is neither philosophical nor dialectical. Al-Kindi qualifies God in new terms. God is the true one. He is transcendent and can be qualified only by negative attributes. “He has no matter, no form, no quantity, no quality, no relation; nor is He qualified by any of the remaining categories (*al-maqulat*).[24] He has no genus, no differentia, no species, no proprium, no accident. He is immutable.... He is, therefore, absolute oneness, nothing but oneness (*wahdah*). Everything else is multiple.”[25]

To understand the position of al-Kindi, we must refer to the Traditionalists and the Mu'tazilites. The Traditionalists – Ibn Hanbal was one of their chief representatives – refused to interpret the attributes of God. They simply called them “the names of God.” When, for example, Ibn Hanbal was asked whether the Qur'an, being the Word of God, is eternal (*qadim*) or created (*makhluq*), he gave no answer. His only answer was that the Qur'an is the Word (*kalam*) of God. The Traditionalists accepted the literal meaning of the Scripture, i. e. without any further interpretation.

The Mu'tazilites, such as were the contemporaries of al-Kindi, rationally interpreted the attributes of God to establish His absolute unicity. They solved the problem on the basis of the relation between the essence (*dhat*) of God and His attributes (*sifat*). The main attributes in their view amount to three: knowledge, power, and will. These they negate, for, if affirmed of God, they would entail plurality in His essence. The Mu'tazilites and the philosophers shared this denial of the divine attributes. Al-Ghazali rightly says in the *Tahafut al-Falasifah* that “the philosophers agree exactly as do the Mu'tazilites that it is impossible to ascribe to the First Principle knowledge, power, and will.”[26]

Al-Kindi, the first philosopher in Islam, followed the Mu'tazilites in their denial of the attributes. But his

approach to the solution of the problem is quite different. First, it is not the essence of God and His attributes with which he is concerned; it is rather the predicability of the categories – as we have seen above – to the substance of God. Secondly, all things can be defined, hence known, by giving their genera and differentiae, except God who has neither genus nor differentia. In other terms, al-Kindi follows in his quest the "way of the logicians."

The Kindian arguments for the existence of God depend on the belief in causality. Everything that comes to be must have a cause for its existence. The series of causes are finite, and consequently there is a prime cause, or the true cause, which is God. Causes, enumerated by Aristotle, are the material, the formal, the efficient, and the final. In al-Kindi's philosophy, as repeated in many of his treatises, God is the efficient cause.

There are two kinds of efficient causes; the first is the true efficient cause and its action is creation from nothing (*ibdaʿ*). All the other efficient causes are intermediate, i.e., they are produced by other causes, and are themselves the causes of other effects. They are called so by analogy; in fact, they are not true causes at all. Only God is the true efficient cause. He acts and is never acted upon.

Given that the world is created by the action of *ibdaʿ* in no time, it must be in need of a creator, i.e., God. Nothing which is created is eternal; God alone is eternal. Beings come to be and pass away. This is clear in the case of corporeal sensibles which are in perpetual flux and change. Also the world as a whole, the celestial bodies, and the universals, such as genera and species, are not eternal, because they are finite and composed. Everything which is finite in space and time is not eternal. The notion of infinity occupies an important place in the philosophy of al-Kindi, and will be discussed later in detail.

Another proof for the existence of God is the order observed in all natural beings. The regularity inherent in the world, the hierarchical degrees of its parts, their interactions, the most perfect state in every being realizing its highest goodness – all this is a proof that there is a Perfect Being who manages everything according to the greatest wisdom [27]

Beings are in continuous need of God. This is so because God, the Creator *ex nihilo*, is the sustainer of all that He has created, so that if anything lacks His sustainment and power, it perishes.[28]

Infinity

The world in Aristotle's system is finite in space but infinite in time, because the movement of the world is co-eternal with the Unmovable Mover. Eternity of the world was refuted in Islamic thought, since Islam holds that the world is created. Muslim philosophers, facing this problem, tried to find a solution in accord with religion. Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd were accused of atheism because of their pro-Aristotelianism; they assumed that the world is eternal. In fact, this problem remained one of the important features of Islamic philosophy, and al-Ghazali mentioned it at the beginning of his twenty points against the philosophers in the *Tahafut al-Falasifah*.

Al-Kindi, contrary to his great successors, maintained that the world is not eternal. Of this problem he gave a radical solution by discussing the notion of infinity on mathematical grounds.

Physical bodies are composed of matter and form, and move in space and time. Matter, form, space, movement, and time are the five substances in every physical body. (*Res autem quae sunt in omnibus substantiis sunt quinque, quarum una est hyle, et secunda est forma, et tertia est locus, et quarta est motes, et quinta est tempus*.) 29

Being so connected with corporeal bodies, time and space are finite, given that corporeal bodies are finite; and these latter are finite because they cannot exist except within limits.

Time is not movement; it is the number which measures the motion (*Tempus ergo est numerus numerans motum*) for it is nothing other than the prior and posterior. Number is of two kinds: discrete and continuous. Time is not of the discrete kind but of the continuous kind. Hence, time is definable as the supposed instants which continue from the past to the future. In other words, time is the sum of anterior and posterior instants. It is the continuum of instants.

Time is part of the knowledge of quantity. Space, movement, and time are quantities. The knowledge of these three substances and also the other two is subordinate to the knowledge of quantity and quality. As mentioned above, he who lacks the knowledge of quantity and quality will lack knowledge of the primary and secondary substances. Quality is the capacity of being similar and dissimilar; quantity, of being equal and unequal. Hence, the three notions of equality, greater, and less are basic in demonstrating the concepts of finitude and infinity.

The arguments against infinity are repeated in a number of al-Kindi's treatises. We give from his treatise "On the Finitude of the Body of the World" the four theorems given as proofs for finitude: –

(1) Two magnitudes30 of the same kind are called equal if one is not greater than the other.31
(2) If a magnitude of the same kind is added to one of the two magnitudes of the kind, they will be unequal.
(3) Two magnitudes of the kind cannot be infinite, if one is less than the other, because the less measures the greater or a part of it.
(4) The sum of two magnitudes of the kind, each of which is finite, is finite.

Given these axioms, every body, being composed of matter and form, limited in space, and moving in time, is finite, even if it is the body of the world. And, being finite it is not eternal. God alone is eternal.

Soul And Intellect

Al-Kindi was confused by the doctrines of Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus concerning the soul, especially because he revised the parts translated from Plotinus' *Enneads*, a book which was wrongly ascribed to Aristotle. He borrowed from Plotinus the doctrine of the soul, and followed the model of Aristotle in his

theory of the intellect. In a short treatise “On the Soul,” he summarizes, as he says, the views of “Aristotle, Plato, and other philosophers.” In fact, the idea expounded is borrowed from the *Enneads*.

The soul is a simple entity and its substance emanates from the Creator just as the rays emanate from the sun. It is spiritual and of divine substance and is separate and distinct from the body. When it is separated from the body, it obtains the knowledge of everything in the world and has vision of the supernatural. After its separation from the body, it goes to the world of the intellect, returns to the light of the Creator, and sees Him.

The soul never sleeps; only while the body is asleep, it does not use the senses. And, if purified, the soul can see wonderful dreams in sleep and can speak to the other souls which have been separated from their bodies. The same idea is expounded in al-Kindi's treatise: “On Sleep and Dreams,” which was translated into Latin. To sleep is to give up the use of the senses. When the soul gives up the use of the senses and uses only reason, it dreams.

The three faculties of the soul are the rational, the irascible, and the appetitive. He who gets away from the pleasures of the body and lives most of his life in contemplation to attain to the reality of things, is the good man who is very similar to the Creator.

Another treatise on the intellect played an important role in medieval philosophy, both Eastern and Western. It was translated into Latin under the title *De Intellectu*. The purpose of this treatise is to clarify the different meanings of the intellect (*`aql*) and to show how knowledge is obtained.

Aristotle in his *De Anima* distinguished between two kinds of intellect, the possible and the agent. The possible intellect receives intellection and the agent intellect produces intelligible objects. The latter intellect is described by Aristotle as separate, unmixed, always in actuality, eternal, and uncorrupted.

Alexander of Aphrodisias in his *De Intellectu* holds that there are three kinds of intellect : the material, the habitual, and the agent, thus adding a new intellect which is the *intellectus habitus* or *adeptus*. The *intellectus materialis* is pure potentiality and is perishable. It is the capacity in man to receive the forms. The intellect *in habitu* is a possession, which means that the intellect has acquired knowledge and possessed it, i, e., has passed from potentiality into actuality. To bring a thing from potentiality to actuality needs something else to act as an agent. This is the third intellect, the agent intellect, also called the *intelligencia agens* and considered by some interpreters to be the divine intelligence which flows into our individual souls.

When we come to al-Kindi we find not three intellects but four. He divided the intellect *in habitu* into two intellects, one is the possession of knowledge without practising it and the other is the practising of knowledge. The first is similar to a writer who has learnt handwriting and is in possession of this art; the other is similar to the person who practises writing in actuality.

We quote the opening paragraph of his treatise:

“The opinion of Aristotle concerning the intellect is that it is of four kinds:
(1) The first is the intellect which is always in act.
(2) The second is the intellect which is potentially in the soul.
(3) The third is the intellect which has passed in the soul from potentiality to actuality.
(4) The fourth is the intellect which we call the second.”32

What he means by the “second” is the second degree of actuality as shown above in the distinction between mere possession of knowledge and practising it.

A complete theory of knowledge is expounded in the rest of the treatise. There are two kinds of forms, the material and the immaterial. The first is the sensuous, because the sensibles are composed of matter and form. When the soul acquires the material form, it becomes one with it, i. e., the material form and the soul become one and the same. Similarly, when the soul acquires the rational forms which are immaterial, they are united with the soul. In this way, the soul becomes actually rational. Before that it was rational in potentiality. What we call the intellect is nothing other than the genera and species of things.

This intellectual operation is again illustrated in al-Kindi's treatise on “First Philosophy.” He says: “When the genera and species are united with the soul, they become intellectibles. The soul becomes actually rational after its unity with the species. Before this unity the soul was potentially rational. Now, everything which exists in potentiality does not pass to actuality save by something which brings it from potentiality to actuality. It is the genera and species of things, i. e., the universals... which make the soul which is potentially rational to be actually rational, I mean, which get united with it.”33

Al-Kindi abruptly passes from the above epistemological discussion to an ontological one concerning the oneness of the universals and their origin. The universals are the intellect in so far as they are united with the soul. Thus the question arises whether the intellect is one or many. It is one in one respect and many in another.

This is his full account: “And as universals are many, as shown above, so is the intellect. It seems to us that the intellect is the first plurality. But it is also one, because it is a whole, as shown above and oneness is applied to the whole. But the true oneness (*wahdah*)34 is not of the intellect.”

Following the doctrine of Plotinus, al-Kindi passed on to the metaphysical plane of the One. As mentioned above, he confused Aristotle's metaphysics of Being with that of Plotinus.' For this reason he was unable to elaborate a coherent system of his own. This was what al-Farabi, the Second Master, was able to do.

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7. Ibn Nadim, al-Fihrist, Cairo, p.255.
8. Rosenthal, op.cit, p.27.
9. Ibn Nabatah, op. cit., p. 125
10. A full discussion of this question is found in the article of Rosenthal referred to above.
11. Mustafa 'Abd al-Raziq, op. cit., p. 47.
12. El-Ehwany. Ed..”First Philosophy,” Cairo, 1948, p. 79
13. El-Ehwany, Islamic Philosophy, Cairo, 1957, pp. 35-36

14. Mustafa 'Abd al-Raziq, op. cit., p. 47
15. “First Philosophy,” p. 82.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. In Oriens, Vol. X, No. 2, 1957, “New Studies on al-Kindi,” Walzer translates this term by “divine knowledge.” We guess what is meant in this context is the divine science as compared with human science. Guidi and Walzer edited this manuscript and translated it into Italian: Il Numero dei Libri di Aristotle. In the Italian translation the term is scienza divina which corresponds to divine science.
19. “This” either refers to the divine science, the divine knowledge of the prophet, or the prophetic faculty. Walzer in his translation of this passage gives the latter interpretation. Cf. Oriens, p. 206.
20. M. Guidi and R. Walzer, op. cit., p. 395. Except at some places, we follow in the main the translation given by Walzer in Oriens, p. 206.
21. Rosenthal, “Al-Kindi and Ptolemy,” Studi Orientalistsci, Vol. II, Roma, 1956, p. 455. The view that al-Kindi was not a true philosopher, but simply a translator, was held by some ancient writers. Madkour, in his book La Place d'Al-Farabii dans l'Ecole Philosophique Musulmane, considers him rather a mathematician. Abu Ridah, in his “Introduction” to al-Rasa'il, considers him to be a true philosopher in the full sense of the term. We rather adhere to Rosenthal's view. Cf. Ahmed Fouad El-Ehwany's “Introduction” to al-Kindi's “First Philosophy.”
22. This treatise is not yet edited.. Rosenthal, in the above article on “Al-Kindi and Ptolemy,” gave some excerpts and analysed it.
23. Rosenthal, “Al.Kindi and Ptolemy,” Studi Orientalistici, p. 449. The author has compared Ptolemy's text with both Theon's commentary and al-Kindi's text
24. With Abu Ridah we understand this term to be intelligibles or concepts (al-ma'qulat), but categories is more suitable in this .context.
25. “First Philosophy,” p. 141; in Abu Ridah's edition, p. 160. The term wahdah means either unity or oneness, but in this context it is oneness.
26. Van den Bergh, The Incoherence of the Incoherence, London, 1954, Vol. I, p. 186.
27. Abu Ridah, Rasa'il, “On the Efficient Cause of Generation and Corruption,” p. 215.
28. “First Philosophy”, p.143.
29. Liber de Quinque Essentiis. This treatise was translated into Latin in the Medieval Ages.
30. Magnitudes apply to lines, surfaces, or bodies. A magnitude of the same kind means one applying solely to one of the three kinds mentioned. Cf. Abu Ridah, Rasa'il, Vol. I, “Treatise on the Finitude of the Body of the World,” p. 187.
31. We quote the example given by al-Kindi and the proof of this theorem as a specimen of his mathematical method. “Example: Given A and B are magnitudes of the same kind, and the one is
not greater than the other, we say that they are equal. Proof: If they are unequal, then one is greater than the other, say A is greater than B. But since A is not greater than B, as mentioned above, this leads to a contradiction. It follows that they are equal.” Ibid., p. 188.
32. El-Ehwany, Islamic Philosophy, Cairo, 1951, pp. 51-52
33. “First Philosophy.” p. 134
34. The term wahdah means here oneness, not unity. At the beginning of this same paragraph he speaks about “the true one,” and says it is not soul.

Chapter 22 : Muhammad Ibn Zakariya Al-Razi

By Abdurrahman Badawi

Life

According to al-Biruni,[1] Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariya ibn Yahya al-Razi was born in Rayy on the first of Sha`ban in the year 251/865. In his early life, he was a jeweller (Baihaqi), money-changer (Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah), or more likely a lute-player (Ibn Juljul, Said, Ibn Khallikan, Usaibi'ah, al-Safadi) who first left music for alchemy, and then at the age of thirty or (as Safadi says) after forty left alchemy because his experiments in it gave him some eye disease (al-Biruni), which obliged him to search for doctors and medicine. That was the reason, they (al-Biruni, Baihaqi and others) say, he studied medicine.

He was very studious and worked day and night. His master was 'Ali ibn Rabban al-Tabari (al-Qifti, Usaibi`ah), a doctor and philosopher, who was born in Merv about 192/808 and died some years after 240/855. [2] With Ibn Rabban al-Tabari he studied medicine and perhaps also philosophy. It is possible to trace back al-Razi's interest in religious philosophy to his master, whose father was a rabbinist versed in the Scriptures.

Al-Razi became famous in his native city as a doctor. Therefore, he directed the hospital of Rayy (Ibn Juljul, al-Qifti, Ibn Abi Usaibi`ah), in the times of Mansur ibn Ishaq ibn Ahmad ibn Asad who was the Governor of Rayy from 290-296/902-908 in the name of his cousin Ahmad ibn Isma`il ibn Ahmad, second Samanian ruler.[3] It is to this Mansur ibn Ishaq ibn Ahmad that Razi dedicated his *al-Tibb al-Mansuri*, as it is attested by a manuscript[4] of this book, as against Ibn al-Nadim's assumption,[5] repeated by al-Qifti[6] and Ibn Abi Usaibi`ah,[7] that this Mansur was Mansur ibn Ismail who died in 365/975.

From Rayy al-Razi went to Baghdad during the Caliph Muktafi's times [8] (r. 289/901-295/907) and there too directed a hospital.

It seems that after al-Muktafi's death (295/907) al-Razi came back to Rayy. Here gathered round him many students. As Ibn al-Nadim relates in Fihrist,[9] al-Razi was then a Shaikh "with a big head similar to a sack"; he used to be surrounded by circle after circle of students. If someone came to ask something in science, the question was put to those of the first circle; if they did not know the answer, it passed on to those of the second, and so on till it came to al-Razi himself if all others failed to give the answer. Of these students we know at least the name of one, i, e., Abu Bakr ibn Qarin al-Razi who became a doctor.[10]

Al-Razi was generous, humane towards his patients, and charitable to the poor, so that he used to give them full treatment without charging any fee, and even stipends.[11] When not occupied with pupils or patients he was always writing and studying.[12] It seems that this was the reason for the gradual weakening of his sight that finally brought blindness to his eyes. Some say[13] that the reason for his blindness was that he used to eat too much of broad beans (*baqilah*). It began with cataract[14] which ended in complete blindness.

They say that he refused to be treated for cataract saying that he "had seen so much of the world that

he was fed up."[15] But this seems to be more of an anecdote than a historical fact. It was one of his pupils from Tabaristan that came to treat him, but, as al-Biruni says, he refused to be treated saying that it was useless as his hour of death was approaching.[16] Some days after, he died in Rayy, on the 5th of Sha'ban 313/27th of October 925. [17]

Al-Razi's Masters and Opponents

We have already mentioned that al-Razi studied medicine under 'Ali ibn Rabban al-Tabari. Ibn al-Nadim says[18] that he studied philosophy under al-Balkhi. This al-Balkhi, according to Ibn al-Nadim had travelled much, and knew philosophy and ancient sciences well. Some even say that al-Razi attributed to himself some of al-Balkhi's books on philosophy. We know nothing else about this al-Balkhi, not even his full name.

Al-Razi's opponents, on the contrary, are known better. They were the following:

1. Abu al-Qasim al-Balkhi, chief of the Mu'tazilah of Baghdad (d. 319/931), was a contemporary of al-Razi; he composed many refutations of al-Razi's books, especially his *'Ilm al-Ilahi* .[19] He had controversies with him especially on time.[20]

2. Shuhaid ibn al-Husain al-Balkhi,[21] with whom al-Razi had many controversies;[22] one of these controversies was on the theory of pleasure.[23] His theory of pleasure is expounded in his *Tafdil Ladhdhat al-Nafs* from which Abu Sulaiman al-Mantiqi al-Sijistani gives some extracts in *Siwan al-Hikmah*.[24] Al-Balkhi died before 329/940.

3. Abu Hatim al-Razi, the most important of all his opponents (d. 322/933-934) and one of the greatest Isma`ili missionaries.[25] He reproduced controversies between him and al-Razi in his *A`lam al-Nubuwwah*.[26] Thanks to this book, al-Razi's ideas about prophets and religion are preserved for us.

4. Ibn al-Tammar, whom Kraus believes to be perhaps Abu Bakr Husain al-Tammar.[27] He was a physician and had some controversies with al-Razi as is reported by Abu Hatim al-Razi in *A`lam al-Nubuwwah*.[28] Ibn al-Tammar refuted al-Razi's *al-Tibb al-Ruhani* and al-Razi answered this refutation.[29] In fact, al-Razi wrote two refutations: (a) refutation of al-Tammar's refutation of Misma`i concerning matter; (b) refutation of al-Tammar's opinion on the atmosphere of subterranean habitations.[30]

5. Those of whom we know from the titles of the books written by al-Razi: (a) al-Misma'i, a Mutakallim who had written against the materialists and against whom al-Razi wrote a treatise;[31] (b) Jarir the doctor who had a theory about the eating of black mulberry after water-melon;[32] (c) al-Hasan ibn Mubarik al-Ummi, to whom al-Razi wrote two epistles;[33] (d) al-Kayyal, a Mutakallim, against whose theory of the Imam, al-Razi wrote a book; [34] (e) Mansur ibn Talhah, who wrote a book on "Being" refuted by al-Razi;[35] (f) Muhammad ibn al-Laith al-Rasa'ili whose writing against alchemists was answered by al-

Razi.[36]

6. Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib al-Sarakhsi (d. 286/899), an elder contemporary of al-Razi. Al-Razi refuted him on the question of bitter taste;[37] Al-Razi refuted also his master, Ya`qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi, who had written against the alchemists.[38]

7. We should add to all those known by names many others who were refuted by al-Razi, especially the Mu'tazilah and different Mutakallimin.[39]

Works

Al-Razi's books are very numerous. He himself prepared a catalogue of his books, reproduced by Ibn al-Nadim.[40] Here we find: 118 books, 19 epistles, then 4 books, 6 epistles, and one *maqalah*, the total being 148 works.

After Ibn al-Nadim, al-Biruni wrote an epistle on the bibliography of al-Razi. This epistle, found in a unique manuscript in Leiden,[41] was edited by Paul Kraus,[42] and translated into German by J. Ruska in his article: "al-Biruni als Quelle fur das Leben and die Schriften al-Razi's."[43] This catalogue is preceded by a short note on al-Razi's life.

The books are classified as follows: (a) on medicine (1-56 books); (b) physics (57-89); (c) logic (90-96); (d) mathematics and astronomy (97-106); (e) commentaries, abridgments, and epitomes (107-13); (f) philosophy and hypothetical sciences (114-30); (g) metaphysics (131-36); (h) theology (137-50); alchemy (151-72); (i) atheistic books (173-74); (j) miscellaneous (175--84). In al-Nadim's and al-Biruni's lists, there are some common and some non-common titles.

Ibn Abi Usaibi`ah (Vol.I, pp.315-19) mentions 236 works of which some are certainly apocryphal.

The different titles given by al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nadim, al-Qifti, and Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah were assembled by Dr. Mahmud al-Najmabadi in his book: *Sharh Hal Muhammad ibn Zakariya* published in 1318/1900. He gave 250 titles.

As extant manuscripts of al-Razi's books, Brockelmann (Vol. I, pp. 268-71, *Suppl.*, Vol. I, pp. 418-21) gives 59 titles.

Of his philosophical works, we have: -

1. *Al-Tibb al-Ruhani* (Brit. Mus. Add. Or. 25758; vat. Ar. 182 Cairo 2241 Tas).
2. *Al-Sirat al-Falsafiyyah* (Brit. Mus. Add. Or. 7473).
3. *Amarat Iqbal al-Daulah* (Raghib 1463, ff. 98a-99b, Istanbul).

These three were published by Paul Kraus: "Abi Bakr Mohammadi Filu Zachariae Raghensis," *Opera Philosophica*, fragmentaque quae supersunt, Collegit et edidit Paulus Kraus. Pars Prior. Cahirae

MCMXXXIX. In this edition Kraus published also fragments or exposes of the following books: –

4. *Kitab al-Ladhdhah*.
5. *Kitab al-'Ilm al-Ilahi*.
6. *Maqalah fi ma ba'd al-Tabi`ah*.

The last one is spurious; it is attributed falsely to al-Razi in a manuscript (Istanbul, Raghib 1463, f. 90a-98b). Kraus gives also the exposes of different authors of al-Razi's ideas on: (a) The five eternals (God, universal soul, first matter, absolute space, and absolute time); (b) matter; (c) time and space; (d) soul and world. At the end of the volume he gives extracts from *A'lam al-Nubuwwah* of Abu Hatim on prophecy, followed by extracts from *al-Aqwal al-Dhahabiyyah* of Ahmad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Kirmani on the same subject.

7. Besides these books and extracts contained in the first volume (the only one published by Kraus), Kraus published in *Orientalia* some other extracts concerning al-Razi's ideas on prophecy (Vol. V., Fasc. 3/4, Roma, 1936).

8. *Al-Shukuk 'ala Proclus* which was prepared by Kraus to be edited and was found among the papers he left after his suicide.

Nothing of these philosophical books was translated into Latin. All Latin translations of his works were confined to medicine and alchemy.

Philosophy

1. Method

Al-Razi is a pure rationalist. He believes in reason, and in reason alone. In medicine, his clinical studies reveal a very solid method of investigation based on observation and experimentation. In *Kitab al-Faraj ba'd al-Shiddah* by al-Tanukhi (d. 384/994) and *Chahar Maqalah* of Nizami `Arudi Samarqandi written about 550/1155, we find a lot of cases attributed to al-Razi where he shows an excellent method of clinical investigation. E. G. Browne, in his Arabian Medicine, has translated a page supposed to be taken from al-Razi's *Hawi* 44 which shows this method. It runs as follows:

Al-Razi's exaltation of reason is best expressed on the first page of his *al-Tibb al-Ruhani*. He says: "God, glorious is His name, has given us reason in order to obtain through it from the present and future the utmost benefits that we can obtain; it is God's best gift to us.... By reason we perceive all that is useful to us and all that makes our life good – by it we know obscure and remote things, those which are hidden from us. .. by it, too, we succeed to the knowledge of God, which is the highest knowledge we can obtain.... If reason is so highly placed and is of such an important rank, we should not degrade it; we should not make it the judged while it is the judge, or controlled while it is the controller, or commanded while it is the commander; on the contrary, we should refer to it in everything and judge all matters by it;

we should do according as it commands us to do."[45]

Even the most rationalistic mind could not exalt reason so clearly and so highly. There is no place for revelation or mystic intuition. It is only logical reason which is the unique criterion of knowledge and conduct. No irrational force can be invoked. Al-Razi is against prophecy, against revelation, against all irrational trends of thought.

Men are born with equal dispositions for knowledge. It is only through cultivation of these dispositions that men differ, some cultivating them by speculation and learning, others neglecting them or directing them to a practical way of life.[46]

2. Metaphysics

When one begins to expound al-Razi's metaphysics, one at first comes across a small treatise attributed to him: *Maqalah li Abi Bakr Muhammad Ibn Zakariya al-Razi fi ma ba`d al-Tabi'ah* (Raghib MS. No. 1463, ff. 90a-98b, in Istanbul). There is much doubt about the authenticity of this treatise, because its contents do not agree entirely with al-Razi's otherwise known doctrines. So, either it may belong to another period of al-Razi's intellectual development, as Pines supposes,[47] or it may contain only a systematic historical expose of other people's ideas without reference to his own,[48] or it may not be by al-Razi at all.

Anyhow, the main points treated here are: (1) nature, (2) foetus, and (3) eternity of movement. The author refutes the partisans of the idea of nature as principle of movement, especially Aristotle and his commentators: John Philoponos, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and Porphyry.

At first he denies that there is no need to prove the existence of nature, because it is not evident by itself. If nature is one and the same, why does it produce different effects in stone and in man? If nature permeates the body, does not that mean that two things can occupy one and the same place? Why do those partisans say that nature is dead, insensible, impotent, ignorant, without liberty and choice, and at the same time attribute to it the same qualities as to God? Against Porphyry the author says: You admit that nature acts in view of something and not by hazard or mere chance; why then do you say that nature is dead and not a living agent?

It seems that the author wants to refute all doctrines which pretend that nature is the principle of movement and creation, by showing the contradictions to which these doctrines necessarily lead. His standpoint is that there is no place for admitting the existence of nature as principle of action and movement. But he does not define his attitude; his expose is negative and destructive.

As for the question of eternity of movement and time, the author discusses especially the ideas of Aristotle and Proclus.[49] He refers to his refutation of Proclus. We know that al-Razi has written a treatise entitled "Doubts about Proclus," and Kraus[50] thinks that this is an argument in favour of the authenticity of the attribution of the treatise to al-Razi, but we think that this is a weak argument,

because Proclus' *de aetermitate mundi* was much discussed by Arab thinkers after it had been translated by Ishaq ibn Hunain.[51]

The author's idea is that time is finite and not eternal, that the world is also finite, that there is only one world, and, lastly, that outside that one world there is no element and nothing (except God). Here he reproduces the ideas of Metrodorus and Seleucus taken from pseudo-Plutarch's *Placita Philosophorum*.

The general trend of this treatise is polemical and dialectical. It cannot be reconciled with al-Razi's ideas on time, space, and Deity. Therefore, we think that it is spurious and cannot even belong to another period of al-Razi's spiritual development.

The real doctrine of al-Razi should be searched for in his *Kitab al-'Ilm al-Ilahi*. Unfortunately, that work is lost and we have only refutations of some passages from it collected by Kraus.[52] We do not even have textual fragments of al-Razi's book. With all the inconveniences of adversaries' exposes, we have nothing more to do than to content ourselves with these refutations. What we can conclude from these is that al-Razi treated in this book: space, vacuum, time, duration, matter, metempsychosis, prophecy, pleasure, and Manichaeism.

Al-Razi's philosophy is chiefly characterized by his doctrine of the Five Eternals. Al-Biruni says[53] that "Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi has reported from the ancient Greeks the eternity of five things: God, the universal soul, first matter, absolute space, and absolute time, on which he founded his doctrine. But he distinguished between time and duration by saying that number applies to the one and not to the other, because finiteness attains numerality; and, therefore, the philosophers have defined time as the duration of what has a beginning and an end, whereas duration (*dahr*) has neither beginning nor end.

He said also that in Being these five are necessary: the sensible in it is the matter formed by composition; it is spatial, so there must be a space; alternation of its modes is a characteristic of time, because some precede and others follow, and it is by time that oldness and newness, and older and newer and simultaneous are known; so time is necessary. In Being there are living things, so there must be soul; in it there are intelligibles and their constitution is absolutely perfect; there must be then a creator, wise, omniscient, doing things as perfectly as possible, and giving reason for the sake of salvation."

Out of the Five Eternals, two are living and acting: God and soul; one is passive and. not living: matter from which all bodies are made; and two are neither living and acting, nor passive: vacuum and duration.[54] Sometimes we find vacuum (*khala'*) instead of space (*makan*), and duration (*dahr*) instead of time (*zaman*) or duration in the limited sense (*muddah*).

This doctrine is attributed, in, some sources (al-Fakhr al-Razi, al-Shahrastani, Nasir al-Din al-Tusi), to the so-called Harraniyyah. Who were these Harraniyyah? The word comes from Harran, the famous city of the Sabians and a centre of learning immediately before Islam and in the first four centuries of the Islamic era. Massignon[55] thinks that these Harraniyyah are fictitious persons, and that what we find

about them in our sources is a mere “literary romance” (*roman litteraire*).

Kraus is also of the same opinion, and he gives his reasons[56] as follows: (a) before al-Razi we find no one who attributes the doctrine of the five eternals to al-Harraniyyah; (b) al-Razi, in his *'Ilm al-Ilahi* has expounded the doctrines of the Sabian Harraniyyah and also his doctrine of the five eternals. But then Kraus gives a third reason which proves exactly the contrary of what the first two prove: al-Biruni, al-Marzuqi, al-Katibi, and al-Tusi say that al-Razi reported this doctrine from the ancient Greeks, that is to say, the early Greek philosophers, especially Pythagoras, Democritus, etc.

How can we then say that al-Razi attributed this doctrine to a fictitious school, Harraniyyah, when he said expressly in his *'Ilm al-Ilahi* that it was the doctrine of the early Greek philosophers? He was not in need of inventing the Harraniyyah, when he already had declared that it was the doctrine of the early Greek philosophers. For this reason, we cannot admit Massignon's suggestion, nor Kraus' evidence which are very weak. It is not right to identify what is attributed in the different sources to the Harraniyyah with al-Razi’s ideas unless this is expressly declared in the sources themselves.

We may now describe these Five Eternals.

(i) God

God's wisdom is perfect No inadvertence can be attributed to Him. Life flows from Him as light flows from the sun. He is perfect and pure Intelligence. From the soul life flows.[57] God creates everything, He is incapable of nothing, and nothing can be contrary to His will. God knows things perfectly well. But the soul knows only what it experiences. God knew that soul would tend to matter and ask for material pleasure. After that soul attached itself to matter; God by his wisdom arranged that this attachment should be brought about in the most perfect way.

God afterwards poured intelligence and perception upon the soul. That was the reason for the soul to remember its real world and the reason for it to know that so long as it is in the world of matter it will never be free from pain. If soul knows that, and also that in its real world it will have pleasure without pain, it will desire that world and, once separated from matter, it will remain there for ever in utmost happiness.

In that way all doubts can be removed about the eternity of the world and the existence of evil. Since we have admitted the wisdom of the Creator, we must admit that the world is created. If one asks why it was created in this or that moment, we say that it was because soul attached itself to matter in that moment. God knew that this attachment was a cause of evil, but after it had been brought about, God directed it to the best possible way. But some evils remained; being the source of all evils, this composition of soul and matter could not be completely purified.[58]

(ii) Soul

God, according to al-Razi, has not created the world through any necessity, but He decided to create it after having at first no will to create it. Who determined Him to do so? There must be another eternal who made Him decide this.

This other eternal is the soul which was living but ignorant. Matter, too, was eternal. Owing to its ignorance, the soul was fond of matter and formed figures from it in order to get material pleasures. But matter was rebellious to forms; so God intervened in order to aid the soul. This aid was that He made this world and created in it strong forms wherein the soul could find corporeal pleasures. God then created man and from the substance of His divinity he created the intelligence of man to awaken the soul and to show to it that this world is not its real world.

But man cannot attain the real world except by philosophy. He who studies philosophy and knows his real world and acquires knowledge is saved from his bad state. Souls remain in this world till they are awakened by philosophy to the mystery and directed towards the real world.[59]

(iii) Matter

The absolute or first matter is composed of atoms. Each atom has volume; otherwise by their collection nothing could be formed. If the world is destroyed, it too is dispersed into atoms. Matter has been there from eternity, because it is impossible to admit that a thing comes from nothing.

What is more compact becomes the substance of the earth, what is more rarefied than the substance of the earth becomes the substance of water, what is still more rarefied becomes the substance of air, and what is still more and more rarefied becomes the substance of fire.

The body of the sphere is also composed of the particles of matter, but its composition differs from the compositions of other bodies. The proof of this is that the movement of the sphere is not directed to the centre of the world, but to its periphery. Its body is not very compact, as that of the earth, nor very rarefied as that of fire or air.

Qualities such as heaviness, levity, darkness, and luminosity are to be explained by the more or less vacuity which is within matter. Quality is an accident which is attributed to substance, and substance is matter.[60]

Al-Razi gives two proofs to establish the eternity of matter. First, creation is manifest; there must then be its Creator. What is created is nothing but formed matter. Why then do we prove, from the created, the anteriority of the Creator, and not the anteriority of the created being? If it is true that body is created (or more exactly: made [*masnu`*]) from something by the force of an agent, then we should say that as this agent is eternal and immutable before: His act, what received this act of force must also have been eternal before it received that act. This receiver is matter. Then matter is eternal.

The second proof is based on the impossibility of *creatio ex nihilo*. Creating, that is to say, making something out of nothing is easier than composing it. God's creating men fully at one stroke would be easier than composing them in forty years. This is the first premise. The wise Creator does not prefer to do what is farther from His purpose to what is nearer, unless He is incapable of doing what is easier and nearer. This is the second premise. The conclusion from these premises is that the existence of all things should be caused by the Creator of the world through creation and not by composition. But what we see is evidently the contrary. All things in this world are produced by composition and not by creation. It necessarily follows that He is incapable of *creatio ex nihilo* and the world came to be by the composition of things the origin of which is matter.

Al-Razi adds, universal induction proves this. If nothing in the world comes to be except from another thing, it is necessary that natures are made from another thing, and this other thing is matter. Therefore, matter is eternal; it was originally not composed, but dispersed.61

(iv) Space

As it is proved that matter is eternal, and as matter should occupy space, so there is eternal space. This argument is nearly the same as that given by al-Iranshahri. But al-Iranshahri says that space is the manifest might of God. Al-Razi could not follow his master's vague definition. For him, space is the place where matter is.
Al-Razi distinguishes between two kinds of space: universal or absolute, and particular or relative. The former is infinite and does not depend on the world and the spatial things in it.

Vacuum is inside space, and, consequently, inside matter. As aa proof of the infinity of space, the partisans (al-Iranshahri and al-Razi) say that a spatialized thing cannot exist without space, though space may exist without spatialized things.. Space is nothing but the receptacle for the spatialized things. What contains the two is either a body, or a not-body. If it is a body, it must be in space, and outside this body there is space or no-space; if no-space, it is a body and finite. If it is not-body, it is space. Therefore, space is infinite. If someone says that this absolute space has an end, that means that its limit is a body. As every body is finite, and every body is in space, so space is infinite in every sense. What is infinite is eternal, so space is eternal.62

Vacuum has the power of attracting bodies; therefore, water is conserved (or retained) in a bottle submerged in water with the opening turned downwards.63

(v) Time

Time, according to al-Razi, is eternal. It is a substance that flows (*jauhar yajri*). He is against those (Aristotle and his followers) who pretend-that time is the number of the movements of the body, because if it were so, it would not have been possible for two moving things to move in one time by two different numbers.

Al-Razi distinguishes between two kinds of time: absolute time and limited (*mahsur*) time. The absolute time is duration (*al-dahr*). It is eternal and moving. As for the limited time, it is that of the movements of the spheres and of the sun and stars. If you imagine the movement of duration, you can imagine absolute time, and this is eternity. If you imagine the movement of the sphere, you imagine the limited time.[64]

Theology

Al-Razi was a theist, but he does not believe in revelation and prophecy. We content ourselves with giving a summary of his main ideas.

Al-Razi contests prophecy on the following grounds:

1. Reason is sufficient to distinguish. between good and evil, useful and harmful. By reason alone we can know God, and organize our lives in the best way. Why then is there need for prophets?

2. There is no justification for privileging some men for guiding all men because all men are born equal in intelligence; the differences are not because of natural dispositions, but because of development and education.

3. Prophets contradict one another. If they speak in the name of one and the same God, why this contradiction?

After denying prophecy, al-Razi goes on to criticize religions in general. He expounds the contradictions of the Jews, the Christians, the Manichaeans, and the Majusis. He gives the following reasons for the attachment of men to religion:

(a) Imitation and tradition.
(b) Power of the clergy who are in the service of the State.
(c) External manifestations of religions, ceremonials and rituals, which impose themselves upon the imagination of the simple and the naive.

He shows contradictions between religion and religion in detail.

Al-Razi subjects the revealed books, the Bible and the Qur'an, to systematic criticism. He tries to criticize the one by the aid of the other; for instance, he criticizes Judaism by means of Manichaeism, and Christianity by means of Islam; and then criticizes the Qur'an by means of the Bible.

He denies especially the miraculousness (*i'jaz*) of the Qur'an, either because of its style or its contents and affirms that it is possible to write a better book in a better style.

He prefers scientific books to all sacred books, because scientific books are more useful to men in their lives than all sacred books. Books on medicine, geometry, astronomy, and logic are more useful than

the Bible and the Qur'an. The authors of these scientific books have found the facts and truths by their own intelligence, without the help of prophets. Science is drawn from three sources: reasoning, according to logic; tradition, from predecessors to successors according to sure and accurate testimony, as in history; and instinct which guides man without being in need of much reasoning.

After this negative criticism, he goes on to say that it would not even be reasonable of God to send prophets, because they do much harm. Every nation believes only in its own prophets and vehemently denies those of others, with the result that there have been many religious wars and much hatred between nations professing different religions.

These ideas of al-Razi were most audacious. No other Muslim thinker was so daring as he.

Moral Philosophy

Razi's moral philosophy is to be found in the only extant philosophical works of his, *al-Tibb al-Ruhani* and *al-Sirat al-Falsafiyyah*. The latter work is a justification of his conduct of life, from the philosophical point of view, because he was blamed by some people for not living on the model of his master, Socrates. It is a curious and very interesting *apologia pro vita sua*.

He thinks that there should be moderation in a philosopher's life – neither much asceticism, nor too much indulgence in pleasures. There are two limits higher and lower. The higher limit beyond which a philosopher should not go is to abstain from pleasures that cannot be obtained except by committing injustice and doing things contrary to reason. The lower is to eat what does not harm him or cause illness, and to wear what is sufficient to protect his skin, and so on. Between the two limits, one can live without becoming unworthy of being called a philosopher.

Al-Razi claims that he in his practical life did not go beyond these two limits. He did not live in the service of a monarch as a minister or a man of arms, but as a doctor and counsellor. He was not greedy, nor in conflict with other people but, on the contrary, he was very tolerant as regards his own rights. He never exceeded in drinking, eating, or enjoying life. As for his love of science and study, it is all well known to everybody. From the theoretical point of view too, his works entitle him to be called a philosopher.

In *al-Tibb al-Ruhani* he treats, in twenty chapters, the main points of ethics. He wants to expound what the vices are and how we are to get rid of them.

He begins with the exaltation of reason, in the manner we have seen above. Then he goes in *medius res* by treating the question of passions. He says that man should control his passions; he brings out the distinction drawn by Plato between three aspects of the soul: reasonable, pugnacious, and appetitive; and shows how justice should reign among them.

It is necessary that a man should know his own defects. For this, he can appeal to a reasonable friend

who will tell him about his defects. He should get information about what other people, neighbours, and friends, think of him. Here al-Razi depends on two treatises of Galen: “On Knowing One's Own Defects,” and “How Good People Benefit from Their Enemies.”

These are the contents of preliminary chapters. In the fifth, he expounds his theory of pleasure, a theory which he treats again in a special epistle. For him, pleasure is nothing but the return of what was removed by something harmful to the previous state, for example, one who leaves a shadowy place for a sunny and hot place gets pleasure on coming back to the shadowy place. For this reason, says al-Razi, natural philosophers have defined pleasure as a return to nature.

AI-Razi condemns love as an excess and submission to passions. He condemns vanity; because it prevents one from learning more and working better. Envy is an. amalgamation of misery and cupidity. An envious man is the man who feels sad when another obtains some good things, even when no harm comes to him at all. If he has been harmed, then the emotion is not envy but enmity. If a person contents himself with what is necessary for him, then there would be no place for envy in his soul.

Anger is aroused in animals to make it possible for them to take revenge on harmful things. If it is in excess, it does much harm to them.

Lying is a bad habit. It is of two sorts: for good, or for evil. If it is for good, then it merits praise; otherwise, it is blameworthy. So its value depends on the intention.

Misery cannot be wholly condemned. Its value depends on the reason for it. If it is due to the fear of poverty and fear of the future, then it is not bad. If it is for mere pleasure of acquisition, it is bad. There must be a justification for one's misery; if it is a reasonable one, it is not a vice; otherwise it is a thing to be combated.

Worry, when it is too much, is not a good thing, for its excess, without good reason, leads to hallucination, melancholy, and early withering.

Cupidity is a very bad state which brings pain and harm. Drunkenness leads to calamities and ills of body and mind.

Copulation, when in excess, is bad for the body; it causes early senility, weakness, and many other ills. One should indulge in it as little as one can, because excess in it leads to more excess.

Frivolity is also pernicious in some cases.

Acquisition and economy are good for living, but only in moderation. No more wealth should be acquired than is needed and spent, except a little saving for sudden calamities and bad future circumstances.

Ambition may lead to adventures and perils. It is well and good if we can get a better rank without adventure or peril; otherwise it is better to renounce it.

The last chapter treats a favourite theme in the Hellenistic and early medieval period, that of the fear of death. Here al-Razi contents himself by dealing with it from the point of view of those who think that when the body is destroyed, the soul is also destroyed. After death, nothing comes to man, because he cannot feel anything. During his life, man is submerged in pains, whereas after death there would be no pain whatever. The best thing for a reasonable man to do is to get rid of the fear of death, because if he believes in another life, he must be joyful because, by death, he goes to a better world. If he believes there is nothing after death, there is no cause for worry. In any case, one should reject every kind of worry about death, because it is not reasonable to worry.

Conclusion

Al-Razi had no organized system of philosophy, but compared to his time he must be reckoned as the most vigorous and liberal thinker in Islam and perhaps in the whole history of human thought.

He was a pure rationalist, extremely confident in the power of reason, free from every kind of prejudice, and very daring in the expression of- his ideas without reserve.

He believed in man, in progress, and in God the Wise, but in no religion whatever.

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1. Epitre de Beruni, contenant le repertoire des ouvryes de Muhammad ibn Zakariya ar-Razi, publiee par Paul Kraus, Paris, 1936, p. 4.

2. See on him: Fihrist, p. 296; al-Baihaqi, p. 22; Usaibi'ah, Vol. I, p. 309; Meyerhof, ZDMG, 85, 38 et sqq.; Wustenfeld, p. 55; Leclerc, Vol. I, p. 292; Brockelmann, GAL, Vol. I, p. 265, Suppl., Vol. I, pp. 414–15; Brockelmann (Suppl., Vol. I, p. 415) refutes the contention that al-Razi was Ibn Rabban's pupil, on the ground that the latter was in Rayy in 224/838. But this proof is not sufficient, because Ibn Rabban's life is not well known as to enable one to assert that he did not, go to Rayy much later, say between 265/878 and 270/883, especially when we know nothing about his later life till his death

3. Yaqut, Buldan, Vol.II, p.901.
4. In Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah in Cairo, Taimur 129, medicine.
5. Fihrist, pp.299-300.
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8. Ibn Juljul, p.78.
9. P. 299, Flugel; pp. 314-416, Cairo ed.
10. Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah, Vol.1, pg. 312.
11. Fihrist, p.416, Cairo ed.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibn Juljul, p.78.
15. Ibid.
16. Epitre de Beruni, p. 5
17. This is the date given by al-Biruni (ibid., p. 6). Other dates given are : (a) around 320/932 (Sa'id, Tabaqat, p. 83, Cairo ed., repeated by al-Qifti, p. 178, Cairo ed.; repeated by Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah, Vol. I, p. 314, but on the authority of Balmuzaffar ibn Mu'arrif); (b) 295-300/907-912 and a fraction (Abu al-Khair al-Hasan ibn Suwar, in Usaibi'ah, Vol. I, p. 314); (c) 311/923 (Ibn al.'Imad, Shadharat al-Dhahab, Vol. II, p. 263); (d) 364/974 (History of Ibn Shiraz, quoted by Qifti, p. 178, Cairo ed.). Surely the most probable date is that given by al-Biruni.
18. Fihrist, p.416,Cairo ed.
19. Ibid., pp. 300, 301; Usaibi`ah, Vol. I, pp. 317, 320; al-Biruni, No. 117
20. Al-Biruni, No.62.
21. See on him: Qazwini on Chahar Maqalah (Gibb. Mem. Series XI), pp. 127-28; H, Ethe, Rudagi's Vorlaufer and Zeitgenossen, Morgenlandische Forschungen, Leipzig, 1875. p. 43; Yaqut, Udaba', Vol. I, p. 143.
22. Fihrist, p.416, Cairo ed.
23. Ibid., p. 416; p. 300, Flugel (Ed.); Usaibi'ah, p. 319.
24. Manuscript No. 1408 in Muhammad Murad in Istanbul, p.135.
25. Mentioned in Fihrist, pp. 188, 189; Nizam al-Mulk's Siyasat.Nameh, p. 186, Schefer (Ed.); 'Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdadi's Farq bain al-Firaq, p. 267; Ibn Hajar's Lisan al-Mizan, Vol. I, p. 164.
26. Ed. by Kraus, Opera Philosophica, Vol.. I, pp. 295-316 (Orientalia, Vol. V, 1926).
27. Ibid., p. 2, note 3.
28. Ibid., p. 312.
29. Fihrist, p. 301; Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah, Vol. I, p. 316.
30. Al-Biruni, p.79.
31. Fihrist, p.417.
32. Al-Biruni, p.37.
33. Ibid., pp. 129-30.
34. Ibid., p. 147
35. Ibid., p.134.
36. Ibid., p.172.
37. Ibid., p.82.
38. Ibid., p.171.
39. Ibid., pp.119, 120.
40. Fihrist, pp.416-19.
41. Gohins p. 133, II. 33-48.
42. Epitre de Beruni, contenant le repertoire des ouvryeade Muhammad ibn Zakariya ar-Razi, publiee par Paul Kraus, Paris, 1936.
43. Isis, Vol. V, 1922, pp. 26-50.

44. Manuscript in Oxford, Bodley Marsh 156, folios 239b–245b
45. Opera Philosophica, Vol. I, 1939, pp. 17, 18.
46. Ibid., p. 296.
47. Pines, Beitrage zur islarnischen Atomenlehre, S. 36, No. 2, Berlin, 1936.
48. Opera Philosophica, p. 114.
49. Raghib, Manuscript No. 1463 (ff. 90–98b) in Istanbul, pp. 128, 129.
50. Opera Philosphica, p. 114.
51. See Neo Platonici apud Arabes, ed. A. Badawi, Cairo, 1955.
52. Opera Philosophica, pp. 170–190.
53. E. Sachau, Alberuni's India, London, 1910, Vol. I, p. 319.
54. Marzuqi, Al–Azminah w–al–Amkinah, Hyderabad, 1332/1913, Vol. I, p. 144
55. Oriental Studies Presented to E. G. Browne, Cambridge, 1922, p. 333
56. Opera Philosophica, Vol. I, pp. 192–94
57. Marzuqi, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 114.
58. See especially, Fakhr al–Din al–Razi, Muhassal, Cairo 1323/1905, pp. 85–86
59. Nasir–i Khusrau, Zad al–Musafirin, ed. Kaviani, Berlin, 1341/1922, pp. 114–16.
60. Ibid., pp.73 et sqq.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Fakhr al–Din al–Razi, al–Mabahith al–Mashriqiyyah, Hyderabad, 1343/1924, Vol. 1, p. 246.
64. Abu Hatim al–Razi, A`lam al–Nubuwwah in Opera Philosophica, Vol. I, p. 304.

Chapter 23: Al–Farabi

By Ibrahim Madkour

Abu Nasr al–Farabi was born in about 258/870 and he died in 339/950. Eminent founder of a philosophical system as he was, he devoted himself entirely to contemplation and speculation and kept himself aloof from political and social perturbations and turmoils. He left a considerable amount of literature. Besides his immediate pupils, there were many who studied his works after his death and became his followers. His philosophy set the standard for scholarly speculation both in the East and the West long after his death.

Since the last decades of the thirteenth/nineteenth century, several attempts have been made to write his biography, to collect his still unpublished works, and to elucidate some obscurities in his philosophy. In 1370/1950, on the occasion of the millennium of his death, some Turkish scholars discovered some of his works still in manuscript and removed certain difficulties concerning his thought. We cannot say if they have all been resolved. We do not even know if it is easy to resolve them unless we add further to our knowledge of his life and works. Public and private libraries still keep a considerable number of Islamic manuscripts behind closed doors; and we think it is time for these manuscripts to be brought to the light of the day.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to deal briefly with al-Farabi's life, his works, and his philosophy, with special reference to some of the lost links and misconceptions about or objections raised against his doctrine.[1]

Life

Contrary to the usage among some of the Muslim scholars, al-Farabi did not write his autobiography, and no one among his disciples managed to give an account of his life as al-Juzjani did for his master Ibn Sina. Material for that in the works of the biographers is quite unsatisfactory and inadequate. The rather lengthy biography in Ibn Khallikan's *Wafayat al-A'yan*,[2] is open to criticism as regards its authenticity. Thus, in the life of al-Farabi, several obscure points and some unsolved problems are still to be investigated and settled.

His life falls into two distinct periods, the first being the time from his birth till about the age of fifty. The only information we have about this period is that he was born at Wasij, a village in the vicinity of Farab in Transoxiana, in about 258/870. In spite of the scanty information we have about his family, his childhood, and his youth, it has been believed that he was Turkish by birth, that his father was a general, and that he himself worked as a judge for some time.[3] What is better known is the cultural and intellectual movement which flourished and spread with the introduction of Islam in Farab at the beginning of the third/ninth century, and that the reputed philologist al-Jauhari, the compiler of *al-Sihah*, was one of his eminent contemporaries.

Al-Farabi was able to draw largely on this movement. The basis of his early education was religious and linguistic: he studied jurisprudence, Hadith, and the exegesis of the Qur'an. He learnt Arabic as well as Turkish and Persian. It is doubtful whether he knew any other language, and what has been stated by Ibn Khallikan about al-Farabi's mastery of "seventy tongues" is more akin to the fabulous than to exact history.[4] From his interpretation of the word *safsafah* (sophistry), it is obvious that al-Farabi had no knowledge of the Greek languages.[5]

He did not neglect to benefit himself from the rational studies which were current in his time, such as mathematics and philosophy, although it appears that he did not turn to them until much later. Contrary to what has been held, it does not appear that he paid much attention to medicine.[6] And when he became extremely interested in these rational studies, he did not remain content with what he had acquired in this respect in his native town. Spurred by intellectual curiosity, he had to leave his home and wander abroad in pursuit of more knowledge.

That marks the second period of his life, the period of old age and full maturity. Baghdad, as an outstanding centre of learning throughout the fourth/tenth century, was naturally his first destination where he encountered various scholars among whom were philosophers and translators. It was the study of logic which attracted him to that circle of distinguished logicians of Baghdad of whom the most renowned was Abu Bishr Matta ibn Yunus considered to be the foremost logician of his age. Al-Farabi

studied logic under Ibn Yunus for some time. He surpassed his teacher and, on account of the eminent position he had gained in this field, he came to be called “The Second Teacher.” Another famous logician, Yahya ibn 'Adi, was his disciple.

Al-Farabi remained twenty years in Baghdad and then his attention was engaged by another cultural centre in Aleppo. There, in the brilliant and scholarly Court of Saif al-Daulah, gathered the most distinguished poets, philologists, philosophers, and other scholars. In spite of the strong Arab sympathies of that Court, no racial bias or prejudice could mar the scholarly and cultural atmosphere in which Persians, Turks, and Arabs argued and disputed and agreed or differed in the name of disinterested pursuit of knowledge.

In that Court al-Farabi lived, first and foremost, as a scholar and seeker after truth. The glamour and the glory of Court life never allured him, and, in the garb of a Sufi, he addressed himself to the hard task of a scholar and a teacher; and he wrote his books and his treatises among murmuring rivulets and the thick foliage of shady trees.

Except for several short journeys abroad, al-Farabi remained in Syria till his death in 339/950. Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah maintains that al-Farabi visited Egypt towards the end of his life.[7] This is most probable, as Egypt and Syria have been closely linked for a long time in history, and cultural life in Egypt at the time of the Tulunids and the Ikhshidids had its attractions. However, the alleged report of the murder of al-Farabi by some highwaymen while he was travelling between Damascus and `Asqalan quoted by al-Baihaqi is incredible.[8] Al-Farabi had reached such an exalted position in the Court of Saif al-Daulah that the Amir in person, together with his immediate *entourage*, attended the funeral service in honour of the dead scholar.

Works

He left a considerable amount of literature; yet, if we accept the reports of some of the biographers, such as al-Qifti and Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah, the number of his writings is seventy, small compared with that of his contemporaries, namely, al-Kindi and al-Razi the physician. However, we must bear in mind that in the lists of the works of these scholars, the biographers have often mentioned the same book under two, maybe more, different titles, and that most of the works they have listed were mere articles or short treatises.

Al-Farabi's works may be divided into two equal parts, one dealing with logic and the other with other studies. The logical works are concerned with the different parts of Aristotle's *Organon*, either in the form of commentary or paraphrase. Most of these writings, however, are still in manuscript; and a great many of these manuscripts are not yet available.[9]

The second category of his works deals with the other branches of philosophy, physics, mathematics, metaphysics, ethics, and politics. A good part of it is available, and it gives a clear idea of the various

aspects of al-Farabi's philosophy. But some of it is doubtful and his authorship of it is a subject of controversy, as in the case of *Fusus al-Hikam* (Gems of Sageness) or *al-Mufariqat* (Separateness).[10] In this; category, no really scientific study was attempted; al- Farabi did not even mention medicine, and his discussion of chemistry was rather in the nature of a defence than in the form of elaboration and analysis.

Ibn Khallikan is probably right when he maintains that al-Farabi wrote most of his books in Baghdad and Damascus.[11] There is no evidence of his having written any of his books before the age of fifty, and even if he did write any, it is not certain whether it was theological or philosophical. The biographers have not reported anything contradictory.

Some scholars have attempted to make a chronological list of his works.[12] But one wonders what the value of such a list would be since all his works were written in the last thirty years of his life, when he began to write as a fully mature philosopher; and there was certainly no noticeable change or development in his thoughts or doctrine during this period.

The style of al-Farabi is characteristically concise and precise. He deliberately selects his words and expressions as he profoundly thinks of his ideas and thoughts. His aphorisms are pregnant with profound significance. That is why Max Horten has given a large commentary to explain the small treatise entitled *Fusus al-Hikam*.[13] Al-Farabi has a particular, style; anyone accustomed to it can well recognize it. He avoids repetition and redundancy and prefers brevity and conciseness.

It seems that al-Farabi was in favour of esoteric teaching and believed that philosophy should not be made available to the uninitiated among the masses,[14] and that philosophers should expound their ideas garbed in obscurity, mystification, and ambiguity.[15] Even today, it is not an easy task to comprehend the meaning implied in some Farabian aphorisms.

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His method is almost identical with his style. He collects and generalizes; he arranges and harmonizes; he analyses in order to compose; he divides and sub-divides in order to concentrate and classify. In some of his treatises, division and classification seem to be his only objective. His treatise entitled “What Should Be Learnt Before Attempting Philosophy” is in the form of an index of the Greek schools of philosophy, the meanings of their titles and the names of their originators. He has been chiefly concerned with the study of the aims and the style of the works of Aristotle.[16] His “Classification of Sciences” is the first attempt of its kind in the history of Islamic thought.[17]

Al-Farabi is fond of opposites; in fact, he gives the opposite of almost every term he uses: thus negation implies affirmation; and Being, Non-Being. He wrote a treatise in answer to the questions he had been asked. In this treatise he gives the proposition with which he is confronted and contrasts it with its opposite, in order to get an adequate solution. This reminds us of Plato's Parmenides.

His main concern has been to elucidate the basis of a theory and the foundation of a doctrine, to clear

up obscurities, and to discuss controversial questions in order to arrive at the right conclusions. However, he pays scant attention to ordinary topics; and what he supposes to be self–evident is passed by without the slightest attempt at an explanation. A good example of this is his treatise, “The Aims of the Stagirite in Every Chapter of His Book Named the Alphabet.”[18] This study is almost akin to our introduction to or criticism of a new book. It can be favourably compared to a similar work by a con–temporary philosopher.[19] No wonder, Ibn Sina found in this treatise the key to Aristotle's “Metaphysics”[20].

The works of al–Farabi became widespread in the East in the fourth and fifth/tenth and eleventh centuries, and they eventually reached the West where some Andalusian scholars became the disciples of al–Farabi.[21] Some of his writings were also translated into Hebrew and Latin, and had their influence on Jewish and Christian scholasticism.[22] These works were published in the last decades of the thirteenth/nineteenth century, and some of them were translated into various modem European languages. Yet there is still great need for their republication with meticulous editing, especially now that the libraries of Istanbul are much more available to us than before, and we can fill some gaps through them.

Philosophy

The philosophy of al–Farabi has its distinct features and clear–cut aims. He has adopted some of the doctrines of previous philosophers, reconstructed them in a form adaptable to his own cultural environment, and made them so closely knit that his philosophy has become most systematic and harmonious. Al–Farabi is logical both in his thinking and expression, in his argument and discussion, and in his exposition and reasoning.

His philosophy might have depended on some false presuppositions, and might have expounded some hypotheses which modern science has refuted, yet it played a very significant role and influenced several schools of thought in subsequent times. Beginning with his logical studies, we will briefly explain the characteristics and the chief elements of his philosophy

1. Logic

It has been already mentioned that a considerable part of the works of al–Farabi is devoted to the study of logic; but it is almost limited to the delineation of the *Organon* in the version known to the Arabic scholars of that time. He holds that “the art of logic gives, in general, the rules which, if followed, can correct the mind and direct man to the right way to truth away from the pitfalls of error.[23] For him, logic stands in the same relation to intelligibles as grammar to words, and prosody to verse.[24] He emphasizes the practical and applied aspects of logic, indicating that intelligibles are to be tested by its rules, as dimensions, volumes, and masses are by measurement.[25]

Logic also helps us in distinguishing truth from error and attaining the right way of thinking or in guiding

other people along this way; it also indicates where to start our thoughts and how to conduct them necessarily to their final conclusions.[26] Practice in rhetoric and dialectical discourses, or in geometry and arithmetic, can never be a substitute for logic, in the same way as learning a considerable number of poems and speeches is of no avail to a man ignorant of grammar.[27] The art of logic – as is generally thought – is not an unnecessary ornament, because it can never be replaced by natural aptitude.[28]

However, al-Farabi has always had in mind the difference between grammar and logic; for the former is concerned with words only, while the latter deals with meanings and is related to words in so far as they are the embodiments of meanings. Moreover, grammar is concerned with the laws of language, and languages are as diverse as peoples and races; but logic deals with the human mind which is always the same anywhere and everywhere.[29]

The subject-matter of logic is its topics in which the laws of intelligibles are studied. They are classified under eight heads: (1) Categories, (2) Interpretations, (3) First Analytics, (4) Second Analytics, (5) Topics, (6) Sophistics, (7) Rhetorics, and (8) Poetics, all of which constitute the real aim of logic. The fourth part is the most significant and noble of all the others; what is anterior may be considered to be an introduction and what follows an application and comparison leading to the avoidance of error and confusion.[30]

It is obvious that al-Farabi follows in the footsteps of Aristotle, although he considers rhetorics and poetics as branches of logic. The same error was committed by the Peripatetics, especially by those of the school of Alexandria.[31] Some of them even claimed that Porphyry's *Isagoge* was a part of the *Organon* of Aristotle; but this claim is not supported by al-Farabi known as "The Second Teacher," Aristotle having been taken to be the First.

Undoubtedly, "Demonstration" was regarded by Aristotle as important, but he was rather proud of his discovery of syllogism.

The contribution of al-Farabi to logic is two-fold. First, he has succeeded in properly and lucidly expounding the logic of Aristotle to the Arabic-speaking world. In the introduction of one of his recently published treatises, he indicates that he will explain the principle of syllogism after Aristotle in terms familiar to the Arabs; consequently, he substitutes examples from the daily life of his own contemporaries for the otherwise vague and unfamiliar examples originally cited by Aristotle. His process is in no way detrimental to the study of the logic of Aristotle, nor does it alter or vitiate the significance of his philosophy.[32]

On the other hand, al-Farabi lays the basis for the quinary division of reasoning, indicating that it is demonstrative if it leads to certainty; dialectical if it leads to a semblance of certitude through good intention; sophistical if it leads to a semblance of certitude through bad intentions and falsity; rhetorical if it leads to a probable opinion; and poetical if it leads to imagery giving pleasure or pain to the soul.[33] These different kinds are used according to the situation and the standard of the audience.

Philosophers and scholars make use of demonstrative reasoning, theologians resort only to dialectic syllogisms, and politicians take refuge in rhetorical syllogisms. It is obvious that the way of addressing any group of people should be adapted to the standard of their understanding; and, thus, to use demonstrative syllogisms when addressing the populace and the masses is absurd.[34]

2. The Unity of Philosophy

Al-Farabi maintains that philosophy is essentially one unit. Thus, it is imperative for great philosophers to be in accord, the pursuit of truth being their one and only aim. Plato and Aristotle, "being the originators of philosophy and the creators of its elements and principles and the final authority as regards its conclusions and branches,"[35] are closely in accord in spite of some of their apparent and formal differences.

Thus, al-Farabi believes in the existence of only one school of philosophy, the school of truth. Therefore, the terms Peripatetics, Platonists, Stoics, and Epicureans denote only names of groups of philosophers; all constitute one single school of philosophy. Parties and cliques are a nuisance in philosophy as well as in politics.

Al-Farabi, as a philosopher and historian; has been fully aware of the danger of partisanship in philosophy. This partisanship was caused more or less by the fanatics among the disciples of the great philosophers. Instead of attempting to harmonize the doctrines of various philosophers, these disciples managed to widen the gap between two masters by stressing shades of difference and sometimes even by altering and misrepresenting their doctrines.[36] This attitude of al-Farabi is identical with the attitude of the twelfth/eighteenth-century philosophers towards the disputes and dissension of the Renaissance philosophers.

There is no novelty in this doctrine of al-Farabi; it has been previously held by the philosophers of the later Greek schools, especially those of the school of Alexandria. When Porphyry speaks about his master, he points out that he has found the ideas of the Peripatetics and the Stoics fused in Plotinus' works.[37] In fact, Porphyry has devoted several treatises to the attempt of reconciling the philosophy of Plato with that of Aristotle;[38] and a number of scholars of the school of Alexandria followed in his footsteps;[39] but none of these scholars ever thought of combining all the philosophers in a single school. This has been an omission, and al-Farabi has been profuse in his writings in an attempt to point this out.

Religious truth and philosophical truth are objectively one, although formally different. This idea rendered possible the accord between philosophy and the tenets of Islam. Al-Farabi undoubtedly has been the first scholar to raise a new edifice of philosophy on the basis of this accord; later philosophers have followed the lines chalked out by him; Ibn Sina has been to a certain extent occupied in the exposition and delineation of its Platonic aspects, while Ibn Rushd has been busy indicating the accord between Aristotelian philosophy and religion.

This doctrine of reconciliation has been based on two main points: first, revising the Peripatetic philosophy and garbing it in a Platonic form, in order to make it more consonant with Islamic tenets; and, secondly, giving a rational interpretation of religious truths. In fact, al-Farabi expounds philosophy in a religious way and philosophizes religion, thus pushing them in two converging directions so that they may come to an understanding and co-exist.

This revision of the Peripatetic philosophy has been concerned with two theories, one cosmological and the other psychological, viz., Theory of the Ten Intelligences and that of the Intellect. His rational explanation depends on two other theories; the first is concerned with prophecy and the second with the interpretation of the Qur'an. The whole philosophy of al-Farabi is summed up in these four theories which are inter-related and all of which aim at one end.

3. Theory of the Ten Intelligences

This theory constitutes a significant part in Islamic philosophy; it offers an explanation of the two worlds: heaven and earth; it interprets the phenomena of movement and change. It is the foundation of physics and astronomy. Its chief concern is the solving of the problem of the One and the many and the comparing of the mutable and the immutable.

Al-Farabi holds that the One, i. e., God, is the Necessary by Himself; hence, He is not in need of another for His existence or His subsistence. He is an intelligence capable of knowing Himself; He is both intelligent and intelligible. He is quite unique by His essence. Nothing is like Him. He has no opposite or equivalent.[40]

If the above premises are admitted, what would be God's influence on the universe and the relationship between Him and the many? Only through a kind of emanation has al-Farabi laboured to elucidate these problems. He holds that from the Necessary One flows or emanates only one other by virtue of Its self-knowledge and goodness. This emanent is the first intelligence. Thus, knowledge equals creation, for it is enough for a thing to be conceived in order to exist. The first intelligence is possible by itself, necessary by another; and it thinks the One as well as itself. It is one-in-itself, and many by virtue of these considerations.

From this point al-Farabi starts the first step towards multiplicity. From thinking by first intelligence of the One flows another intelligence. By virtue of its thinking of itself as possible in itself flow the matter and form of the "first heaven," because every sphere has its specific form which is its soul. In this way, the chain of emanations goes on so as to complete the ten intelligences, and nine spheres and their nine souls. The tenth and last intelligence, or agent intelligence, is that which governs the sublunary world. From this intelligence flow the human souls and the four elements. [41]

These intelligences and souls are hierarchical. The first intelligence in this hierarchy is the most transcendent, and then follow the souls of the spheres and then the spheres themselves. The last in

order is the earth and the world of matter, which falls in the fourth rank.[42]

The ancient Greeks held that anything celestial is sacred and anything terrestrial is impure. The tenets of Islam categorically assert that heaven is the *qiblah* of prayer, the source of revelation, the destination of the "ascension." Everything in heaven is pure and purifying. Al-Farabi here conforms to both the religious tenets and the philosophical teachings; but his main difficulty lies in maintaining that the impure earthly world has evolved from the sacred celestial one.

The number of intelligences is ten consisting of the first intelligence and the nine intelligences of the planets and spheres, because al-Farabi adopts the same theories as held by the Greek astronomers, especially by Ptolemy according to whom the cosmos is constituted of nine encircling spheres all of which move eternally and circularly around the earth. Intelligences and souls are the originators of this movement. Every sphere has its own intelligence and soul.

The tenth intelligence manages the affairs of the terrestrial world. The soul is the immediate mover of sphere: However it acquires its power from the intelligence. It moves through its desire for the intelligence; and pursuit of perfection moves its sphere. Thus, its desire is the source of its movement. Intelligence in its turn is in a state of perpetual desire. The lower desires the higher and all desire the One which is considered the Prime Mover although It is immovable.[43]

The movement of the spheres is effected by a kind of spiritual attraction: the inferior sphere is always attracted towards the superior. This process is a spiritual dynamism similar to that of Leibniz in spite of its dependence on unequal spiritual powers. It seems that al-Farabi, the musician, is attempting to introduce into the world of spheres the system of musical harmony.

However, al-Farabi's conclusions about physics are closely connected with his theories of astronomy. From the tenth intelligence flows the prime matter, or *hyle*, which is the origin of the four elements, and from the same intelligence flow the different forms which unite with the *hyle* to produce bodies. The terrestrial world is only a series of different kinds of forms united with matter or separated from it. Generation is the result of the unity of form and matter, and corruption is the result of their separation. The movement of the sun produces hotness and coldness necessary for change. All the separate intelligences provide the movements appropriate to the terrestrial world. In this way physics is fused with cosmology and the terrestrial world is subjected to the heavenly world.[44]

Nevertheless, al-Farabi repudiates astrology which was prevalent at his time, and which had been cherished by the Stoics and the Alexandrian scholars before him.

Al-Farabi does not deny the law of causality and the connection between causes and effects. For causes may be either direct or indirect; and if it is an easy matter to discover the former, the latter are more difficult to detect. Hence happens chance or coincidence; and there is no way of controlling coincidence. For how could an astrologer associate the death of an Amir with an eclipse? Or how could the discovery of a new planet have any connection with a war? However, belief in fortuitous happenings

is essential in politics and in religion, because it imbues men with fear and hope, and stimulates obedience and endeavour. 45

It is, thus, through the doctrine of the ten intelligences that al-Farabi solves the problem of movement and change. He has made use of the same theory in his attempt at solving the problem of the One and the many, and in his reconciliation of the traditional Aristotelian theory of matter and the Islamic doctrine of creation. Matter is as old as the ten intelligences, but it is created because it has emanated from the agent intelligence. To vindicate the unicity of God, al-Farabi has resorted to the mediacy of these ten intelligences between God and the terrestrial world.

Some of the elements of the Theory of the Ten Intelligences can be traced to the different sources they have been derived from. Its astronomical aspect is closely identical with Aristotle's interpretation of the movement of the spheres. The Theory of Emanation has been borrowed from Plotinus and the school of Alexandria. But, in its entirety, it is a Farabian theory, dictated and formulated by his desire for showing the unity of truth and his method of grouping and synthesis. He reconciles Plato and Aristotle and religion and philosophy.

This theory met with some success among the philosophers of the East and those of the West in the Middle Ages. Yet reconciliation necessitates, from one side or the other, some concessions; and if it pleases some, others are sure to resent it. Hence, this theory has been fervently embraced by Ibn Sina who has given it a concise and elaborate exposition, while al-Ghazali is loud in denouncing it. Among the Jewish scholars, Ibn Gabriol does not give it even the slightest notice, while Maimonides enthusiastically subscribes to it. And in spite of the objections of Christian scholars to this theory, it has always elicited their respect and esteem.

4. Theory of the Intellect

The psychology of Aristotle has long been reputed for its conciseness and precision; and as an objective study it has not been less noteworthy. Aristotle's classification of the faculties of the soul is the first of its kind. He has emphasized its unity in spite of the plurality of its faculties and explained its relationship with the body. He has but inadequately dealt with the Theory of the Intellect, and in consequence stirred a problem which has puzzled the moderns as well as the ancients. However, his treatise “On the Soul” is the best of its kind among ancient works on psychology, and it even surpasses some of the modern works. In the Middle Ages it was as much in vogue as the *Organon*.

This book was introduced to the Arabs through translations from Syriac and Greek, together with ancient commentaries, especially those of Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius, and Simplicius.46 It was the subject of extensive study with Muslim philosophers, who in their turn commented on it and paraphrased it. Influenced by Aristotle and drawing on his work, these philosophers wrote various theses and treatises on psychology. They were chiefly concerned with the question of the intellect which stood out among all the problems studied by the scholastic philosophers.

Al–Farabi has been fully aware of the significance of this problem, and has recognized in it an epitome of the whole Theory of Knowledge. He has closely identified it with his own philosophy; for it is related to the Theory of the Ten Intelligences, and it is also the foundation of the Theory of Prophecy. He has dealt with the problem of the intellect in several places in his works; and he has devoted to its elaboration a whole treatise, “On the Different Meanings of the Intellect.” This treatise had a wide circulation among the scholars of the East and the West in the Middle Ages, and it was translated into Latin at an early date.

He classifies the, intellect into practical intellect which deduces what should be done, and theoretical intellect which helps the soul to attain its perfection. The latter is again classified into material, habitual, and acquired.47

The material intellect, or the potential intellect as al–Farabi sometimes calls it, is the soul; or is a part of the soul, or a faculty having the power of abstracting and apprehending the quiddity of beings. It can be almost compared to a material on which the forms of beings are imprinted, just like wax which becomes one with the inscriptions carved on it. These inscriptions are nothing but perceptions and intelligibles.

Thus, the intelligible exists in potentiality in sensible things; and when it is abstracted from the senses, it exists in the mind in actuality.48 That explains perception and abstraction, the important operations of the mind which bring the intelligibles from potentiality to actuality; and when these intelligibles are conveyed to the mind, the intellect in its turn is transformed from an intellect in potency to an intellect in action.

Therefore, the intellect in act, or the habitual intellect as it is sometimes called, is one of the levels of the ascension of the mind in the acquisition of a number of intelligibles. Since the mind is incapable of comprehending all the intelligibles, it is intellect in action with regard to what it perceives, and intellect in potency with regard to what it has not yet perceived. The intelligibles themselves exist in potency in the sensibles. Once they are stripped of them, they become intelligibles in action. And once man has attained to this level of the intellect in action, he can comprehend himself. This kind of comprehension has no relation with the external world; it is a mental, abstract comprehension. 49

Once the intellect becomes capable of comprehending abstractions, it is raised again to a higher level, that of the acquired intellect, or the level where human intellect becomes disposed to conceive abstract forms which have no connection with matter.

The difference between this rational conception and sense–perception is that the former is a kind of intuition and inspiration; or, in other words, it is a kind of immediate apprehension. This is the noblest level of human apprehension, and it is reached only by the few and the select who attain to the level of the acquired intellect, where the hidden is unveiled, and come in direct communion with the world of the separate intelligences.50

Thus, the intellect is capable of rising gradually from intellect in potency to intellect in action, and finally

to acquired intellect. The two consecutive levels are different from each other, though the lower always serves as a prelude to the higher. While the intellect in potency is just a receiver of sensible forms, intellect in action retains the intelligibles and comprehends the eoncepts. The acquired intellect rises to the level of communion, ecstasy, and inspiration. Conceptions are of different levels: originally, they are intelligibles in potency existing in matter; once abstracted from matter they become intelligibles in action. Still higher are the abstract forms which can never exist in matter.51

However, this gradual elevation is not spontaneous; for its initial stage is the intelligibles and the intellect in potency, and its transition from potentiality to actuality can never be effected except through the influence of a prior actuality whose action is appropriate to it. This actuality is the agent intelligence, the last of the ten intelligences.

Human knowledge depends on a radiation from the separate intelligences; and agent intelligence stands in the same relation to human intellect as the sun to our eyes: our eyes depend on daylight for sight, and in the same way our intellect is capable of comprehension only, when it is unveiled by the agent intelligence which illuminates its way.52 Thus, mysticism is fused with philosophy, and rational knowledge coincides with ecstasy and inspiration.

The above-mentioned theory of al-Farabi concerning the intellect is obviously based on Aristotle. Al-Farabi himself declares that his theory depends upon the third part of *De Anima* of Aristotle,53 but he has his own contribution to add. His conception of the acquired intellect is alien to Aristotle; for it is almost identified with the separate intelligences, and serves as the link between human knowledge and revelation. Thus, it is different from the acquired intellect,as found in the theory held by Alexander of Aphrodisias and al-Kindi; and it is the outcome of al-Farabi's mystic tendency and his leaning towards Plotinus' system.

This fact becomes clearer if we consider the influence of the agent intelligence in the acquisition of knowledge, since it is the outcome of vision and inspiration; it offers also to the mind the abstract forms and enlightens the way for it. This theory helps in fusing psychology with cosmology, but it underestimates the activity of the human mind, since it is made: capable of comprehension only when it is illuminated by heaven; but would the Sufis care about this deficiency of the human mind?

The general acceptance of this theory in the Middle Ages is clear from the fact that Ibn Sina has not only embraced it, but has also added to it vigour and; clarity; and in spite of Ibn Rushd's strict adherence to the teachings of Aristotle, he has also come under its influence. Among the Jews, Maimonides has copied it almost to the letter. With the Christians, this theory has stood at the top of the problems of philosophy, because it is concerned with the theory of knowledge and is closely connected with the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

This theory has also given rise to different schools, some favouring and the others opposing it. To sum up, al-Farabi's Theory of the Intellect has been the most significant of all theories developed by Muslim

thinkers, and it has exercised a great influence on Christian philosophy.

5. Theory of Prophecy

The basis of every revealed religion is revelation and inspiration. A prophet is a man endowed with the gift of communion with God and the ability of expressing His will. Islam, as well as all the great Semitic religions, has Heaven as its authority. The Qur'an says: ***"It is naught but revelation that is revealed – the Lord of mighty power has taught him."*** (***liii, 4–5***).

It is most imperative for a Muslim philosopher to give due reverence to prophethood, to conciliate rationality with traditionalism, and to identify the language of the earth with the words of Heaven. This has been the endeavour of al–Farabi. His theory of prophethood may be considered to be one of the most significant attempts at the reconciliation of philosophy and religion. It may also be considered to be the noblest part of his system; it has its foundation both in psychology and metaphysics; and it is also closely related with politics and ethics.

Influenced by his political and social environment, al–Farabi has stressed the theoretical study of society and its needs. He has written several treatises on politics, the most renowned of which is his "Model City." He visualizes his city as a whole of united parts, similar to bodily organism; if any part of it is ill, all the others react and take care of it. To each individual is allotted the vocation and the task most appropriate for his special ability and talents. Social activities differ according to their aims; the noblest of these activities are those allotted to the chief, for he stands in the same relation to the city as the heart to the body and is the source of all activities and the origin of harmony and order. Hence, certain qualifications are the prerequisite of his station. The chief must be stout, intelligent, lover of knowledge, and supporter of justice, and he must also rise to the level of the agent intelligence through which he gets revelation and inspiration.[54]

These attributes remind us of the attributes of the philosopher–king in Plato's Republic, but al–Farabi adds to them the ability of communion with the celestial world, as if the city is inhabited by saints and governed by a prophet. Communion with the agent intelligence is possible through two ways contemplation and inspiration. As already mentioned, the soul rises through study and quest to the level of the acquired intellect when it becomes recipient of the divine light. This level can be attained only by the sacred spirits of the philosophers and sages, those who can penetrate through the unseen and perceive the "world of light."

The sacred soul, preoccupied with what is above, gives no heed to what is below; and its external sensation never overwhelms its internal sensation; and its influence may go beyond its own body affecting other bodies and everything in this world. It receives knowledge direct from the High Spirit and angels without any human instruction.[55] Thus, through continuous speculative studies, the sage gets into communion with the agent intelligence.

This communion is also possible through imagination, as happens to the prophets, for all their inspiration or revelation is caused by imagination. Imagination occupies an important place in al-Farabi's psychology. It is closely connected with inclinations and sentiments, and is involved in rational operations and volitional movements. It creates the mental images which are not imitations of sensibles and are the source of dreams and visions.

If we could have a scientific interpretation of dreams, it would help to give us an interpretation of revelation and inspiration, for prophetic inspirations take the form either of true dreams in sleep or of revelation in waking- The difference between these two forms is relative; they are distinct only as regards their degree. In fact, a true dream is but one aspect of prophecy.

When imagination gets rid of conscious activities as in sleep, it is wholly occupied with some of the psychological phenomena. Influenced by some bodily sensations and feelings, or by some emotions and conceptions, it creates new images or composes, from retained mental images, their new forms. Thus, we dream of water or swimming when our temperament is humid, and dreams often so represent the fulfilment of a desire or the avoidance of fear that the sleeper may move in his bed responding to a certain emotion, or leave his bed and beat a person unknown to him, or run after him.56 It is needless to point out that these views in spite of their simplicity are similar to the ideas of modern psychologists, such as Freud, Horney, and Murray.

It is within the power of imagination to create mental images after the pattern of the spiritual world. The sleeper may, thus, behold the Heaven and its inhabitants, and may feel its enjoyments and pleasures. Imagination may also rise to the celestial world and commune with the agent intelligence from which it can receive the heavenly judgments relating to particular cases and individual happenings. Through this communion which may occur by day or at night, prophecy can be explained, since it is the source of true dreams and revelation.

According to al-Farabi: “If the faculty of imagination is so powerful and perfected in a certain person, and is not completely overwhelmed by external sensations ... it gets into communion with the agent intelligence from which images of the utmost beauty and perfection are reflected. He who sees those images would testify to the sublime and wonderful majesty of God.... Once the imaginative faculty in man is completely perfected, he may receive, when awake, from the agent intelligence the pre-vision of the present and future events ... and thus he would, through what he has received, prophesy divine matters. This is the highest level to which imagination may be raised, and which man can attain through this faculty.”57

Thus, the chief characteristic of a prophet is to have a vivid imagination through which he can commune with the agent intelligence during waking time and in sleep, and can attain to vision and inspiration. And revelation is but an emanation from God through the agent intelligence.

Some persons, although in a lower degree than the prophets, have a powerful imagination through

which an inferior kind of vision and inspiration can be achieved. In this way al-Farabi places the saints in a degree lower than the prophets. The imagination of the populace and the masses is so weak that it does not admit of rising to union with the agent intelligence, neither at night nor by day.[58]

Al-Farabi's attempt at reconciliation was not the only motive behind this theory. In the third and fourth/ninth and tenth centuries a wave of scepticism refuting prophecy and prophets was prevalent. Its spokesmen copied some of the arguments held by the unbelievers in prophecy. At the head of these sceptics was Ibn al-Rawandi who was once one of the Mu'tazilites but later rejected their doctrine, and Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi the physician, a tough and powerful adversary. The latter, in particular, refuted any attempt to reconcile philosophy and religion, assumed that philosophy is the only way to reform both the individual and society and that religions are the source of conflict and strife.[59]

This attack aroused all the various Islamic centres to defend their dogmas. Al-Farabi had to contribute to that defence. He explained prophecy on rational grounds and gave it a scientific interpretation.

He borrowed his explanation from Aristotle's theory of dreams, which had already been introduced to the Arab world. Al-Kindi,[60] the forerunner of al-Farabi, adhered to that theory. It assumes that dreams are images produced by the imagination the capacity of which increases during sleep after getting rid of the activities of wakefulness.[61]

Aristotle, however, denies that dreams are revealed by God, and never admits of prophetic predictions through sleep, otherwise the populace and the masses – who have so many dreams-would claim foretelling the future.[62] Here, al-Farabi diverges from his master, and asserts that man through imagination can commune with the agent intelligence, but this is available only to the privileged and the chosen.

The agent intelligence is the source of divine laws and inspirations. It is, in al-Farabi's view, almost similar to the Angel charged with revelation, as in the tenets of Islam. It is within the capacity of the prophet or the philosopher to commune with the agent intelligence – the former through imagination and the latter by way of speculation and contemplation. This is understandable for the two draw together upon the same source and get their knowledge from high above. In fact, religious truth and philosophic truth are both the radiation of divine illumination through imagination or contemplation.

The Farabian theory of prophecy had an obvious impact not only on the East and the West, but on medieval and modern history. Ibn Sina adhered faithfully to it. His elaboration of that theory is closely similar to that of al-Farabi. Ibn Rushd, admitting its validity, was much astonished at al-Ghazali's criticism of it; for it corroborates the religious tenets and affirms that the spiritual perfection can be attained only through man's communion with God.[63]

When the theory was introduced into the Jewish philosophic thought, Maimonides subscribed to it and showed much interest in it.[64] It is noticeable that Spinoza in his *Tractatus theologico-politicus* expounds a similar theory which he most probably borrowed from Maimonides.[65] It continued to be echoed by

some of the modern philosophers in Islam, such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and the Imam Muhammad `Abduh.

6. Interpretation of the Qur'an

Some of the religious tenets are traditional (*sam`iyyat*); they are matters indemonstrable by way of reason, such as miracles; and the Day of Judgment comprising the Doomsday and Resurrection, the Path and the Balance, the Judgment and the Punishment. Acceptance of these *sam'iyyat* is one of the pillars of religion. The believers have but to accept them and remain content with the veracity of their source.

But some thinkers in their attempt at giving a rational explanation interpret them in a certain way or reduce them to certain natural laws. The Mu`tazilites made a noticeable endeavour in this field, for they went so far in the way of interpretation that they refuted the Transfigurists who qualified God with certain attributes contradictory to His transcendence and uniqueness.

Al-Farabi attempts a different interpretation. He admits the validity of miracles since they are the means of proving prophecy. He holds that miracles although supernatural do not contradict natural laws. For the source of these laws is to be found in the world of spheres and its intelligences which manage the terrestrial world; and once we get in communion with that world, matters other than those of the habitual course happen to us.

A prophet, as mentioned above, has a spiritual power by means of which he is associated with the agent intelligence. It is through this communion that he causes rain to fall, the moon to split asunder, the stick to be transformed into a snake, or the blind and leprous to be healed.66 In this way al-Farabi tries – as the Stoics had done before – to reduce to causality matters beyond the habitual course of nature and even contradictory to it.

The Qur'an points to various *sam`iyyat*, such as the Tablet and the Pen. Al-Farabi holds that these should not be understood literally, for the Pen is not an instrument to write with, nor the Tablet a page on which sayings are registered,67 but they are mere symbols for precision and preservation. The Qur'an is also full of extensive stories about the hereafter, Day of Judgment, and reward and punishment. No believer could deny these matters without undermining the principle of divine sanction and individual responsibility.

Although al-Farabi fully admits the eternal bliss or the painful suffering of the hereafter, yet he reduces them to spiritual matters having no relationship with the body and material properties, because the spirit, not the body, is that which enjoys or suffers, is happy or unhappy.68

This interpretation conforms to the Farabian tendency towards spiritualism. Ibn Sina borrowed it and widely applied it. In Ibn Sina's view the Throne and the Chair are symbols of the world of spheres. Prayers are not mere bodily movements, but aim at imitating the celestial world.69 It is as if these two

philosophers wanted to lay the foundation of a philosophical religion and a religious philosophy.

However, al-Ghazali was dissatisfied with this attempt and he attacked it, taking the text of the Scripture literally. Ibn Rushd, although advocating accord between religion and philosophy, was also dissatisfied, because he claimed that for the sake of their security religion and philosophy should be kept separate. If combined, they would not be understood by the ordinary man and might lead astray even some of those capable of deep thinking.[70]

Conclusion

We can now conclude that al-Farabi's doctrine is so fully harmonious and consistent that its parts are completely inter-related. From the One, the First Cause, al-Farabi gets on to ten intelligences from which the two worlds of heaven and earth have flowed. His spheres are moved by the managing intelligences, and nature with its generation and corruption is subjected to these intelligences. The soul is governed by one of these intelligences which is the agent intelligence. Politics and ethics are no exceptions, for happiness pursued by men is but the communion with the celestial world. His "Model City" only aims at this end.

This doctrine is at the same time spiritualistic and idealistic, for al-Farabi reduces almost everything to spirit. His God is the Spirit of the spirits, his astronomical spheres are governed by celestial spirits, and the prince of his city is a man whose spirit transcends his body. This spiritualism is rooted in ideas and concepts, and is given wholly to speculation and contemplation. The One is the Idea *par excellence* and is the Intellect that intellects Itself. The other beings are generated by this Intellect. Through speculation and contemplation man can commune with the celestial world and attain the utmost happiness. No spiritualism is so closely related to idealism as that of al-Farabi.

Although al-Farabi's doctrine is a reflection of the Middle Ages, it comprises some modern and even contemporary notions. He favours science, advocates experimentation, and denies augury and astrology. He so fully believes in causality and determinism that he refers to causes even for those effects which have no apparent causes. He elevates the intellect to a plane so sacred that he is driven to its conciliation with tradition so that philosophy and religion may accord.

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Chapter 24: Miskawaih

By Abdurrahman Badawi

Life

Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ya`qub, surnamed Miskawaih, is also called Abu 'Ali al-Khazin. It is yet undecided whether he was himself Miskawaih or the son of (*ibn*) Miskawaih. Some like Margoliouth and Bergstrasser accept the first alternative; others, like Brockelmann,1 the second.

Yaqut says that he was first a Magi (*majusi*) and was later converted to Islam. But this might be true of his father, for Miskawaih himself, as his name shows, was the son of a Muslim father, Muhammad by name.

He studied history, particularly al-Tabari's "Annals," with Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Kamil al-Qadi (350/960). Ibn al-Khammar, the famous commentator of Aristotle's, was his master in philosophical disciplines. Miskawaih engaged himself too much in the study of alchemy, together with Abu al-Tayyib al-Razi, the alchemist. From certain statements of Ibn Sina2 and al-Tauhidi,3 it seems that they had a poor opinion of his aptitude for speculative philosophy. Iqbal, on the other hand, regarded him as one of the most eminent theistic thinkers, moralists, and historians of Persia.4

Miskawaih lived for seven years in the company of Abu al-Fadl ibn al-'Amid as his librarian. After the death of Abu al-Fadl (360/970) he served under his son Abu al-Fath `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-'Amid, surnamed Dhu al-Kifayatain. It seems that he also served 'Adud al-Daulah, one of the Buwaihids, and later some other princes of that famous family.

Miskawaih died on the 9th of Safar 421/16th of February 1030. The date of his birth is uncertain. Margoliouth gives it to be 330/941, but we think it should be 320/932 if not earlier, because he used to be in the company of al-Muhallabi, the vizier, who rose to the office in 339/950 and died in 352/963, by which time he must have been at least nineteen.

Works

Yaqut[5] gives a list of thirteen books attributed to Miskawaih. These are: 1. *Al-Fauz al-Akbar*.
2. *Al-Fauz al-Asghar*.
3. *Tajarib al-Umam* (a history from the Deluge down to 369/979).
4. *Uns al-Farid* (a collection of anecdotes, verses, maxims, and proverbs).
5. *Tartib al-Sa`adah* (on ethics and politics).
6. *Al-Mustaufa* (selected verses).
7. *Jawidan Khirad* (a collection of maxims of wisdom).
8. *Al-Jami`.*
9. *Al-Siyar* (on the conduct of life).

Of the above works al-Qifti [6] mentions only 1, 2, 3 and 4 and adds the following:

10. "On the Simple Drugs" (on medicine).
11. "On the Composition of the Bajats" (on culinary art).
12. *Kitab al-Ashribah* (on drinks).
13. *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* (on ethics).

Numbers 2, 3, 13 are now extant and have been published. We also have five others which are not mentioned by Yagiit and al-Qifti. These are:

14. *Risalah fi al-Ladhdhat w-al-Alam fi Jauhar al-Nafs* (MS. in Istanbul, Raghib Majmu`ah No. 1463, f. 57a-59a).

15. *Ajwibah wa As'ilah fi al-Nafs w-al-`Aql* (in the above-mentioned Majmu`ah in Raghib, Istanbul).

16. *Al-Jawab fi al-Masa'il al-Thalath* (MS. in Teheran - Fihrist Maktabat al-Majlis, II, No, 634[31]).

17. *Risalah fi Jawab fi Su'al 'Ali Ibn Muhammad Abu Hayyan al-Sufi fi Haqiqat al.'Aql*, (Meshed Library in Iran, I, No. 43[137)).

18. *Taharat al-Nafs*, (MS. in Koprulu, Istanbul, No. 767).

Muhammad Baqir ibn Zain al-'Abidin al-Khawansari attributes to him also some treatises written in Persian (*Raudat al-Jannah*, Teheran, 1287/1870, p. 70).

As to the chronological order of his works, we know only from Miskawaih himself that *al-Fauz al-Akbar* was written after *al-Fauz al-Asghar*, and that *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* was written after *Tartib al-Sa`adah*.[7]

Miskawaih's Personality

Miskawaih was essentially a historian and moralist. He was also a poet. Tauhidi blames him for his miserliness and hypocrisy. He indulged in alchemy not for the sake of science, but in search of gold and wealth, and was most servile to his masters. But Yaqut mentions that in later years he subjected himself to a fifteen-point code of moral conduct.[8] Temperance in appetites, courage in subduing the ferocious self, and wisdom in regulating the irrational impulses were the highlights of this code. He himself speaks of his moral transformation in his *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*,[9] which shows that he practised a good deal of what he wrote on ethics.

Philosophy

First Philosophy

The most important part of Miskawaih's philosophical activity is dedicated to ethics. He is a moralist in the full sense of the word. Three important books of his on ethics have come down to us: (1) *Tartib al-Sa`adah*, (2) *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, and (3) *Jawidan Khirad*.

Miskawaih's *al-Fauz al-Asghar* is a general treatise similar in conception to the earlier part of al-Farabi's *Ara' Ahl al-Madinat al-Fadilah*. It is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the proofs of the existence of God, the second with soul and its modes, and the third with prophethood.

For his treatment of philosophy, he owes much to al-Farabi, particularly in his effort to conciliate Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus. His historical turn of mind has been of benefit to him, for he generally refers precisely to his sources. For instance, at the end of Chapter V of the first part of *al-Fauz al-Asghar*[10] he expressly acknowledges his indebtedness to Porphyry. He also quotes the commentators of Plato[11] and Aristotle.[12] His is the best expose (pp. 53-55) of Plato's proof concerning the immortality of the soul. He benefits especially from the book of Proclus entitled *Kitab Sharh Qaul Flatun fi al Nafs Ghair Maitah*.[13]

The first part of *Fauz al-Asghar* dealing with the demonstration of the existence of God is clear, terse, and solid. His argument here is that of the First Mover, which was most popular at the time. In that he is thoroughly Aristotelian. The fundamental attributes of God are: unity, eternity, and immateriality. Miskawaih devotes the whole of Chapter VIII to the problem of defining God affirmatively or negatively, and concludes that the negative way is the only possible way. He also shows Neo-Platonic tendencies noticeably in Chapter IX.

He says that the first existent which emanates from God is the first intelligence which (so says Miskawaih rather strangely) is the same as the active intellect. It is eternal, perfect in existence, and immutable in state, because "emanation is connected with it in a continuous way eternally, the source of emanation being eternal and wholly generous." It is, perfect in comparison with beings inferior to it, imperfect in comparison with God.

Then comes the celestial soul inferior to intelligence; it needs motion as expression of desire for perfection in imitation of intelligence. But it is perfect in relation to natural bodies. The sphere comes into being through the celestial soul. In comparison with the soul, it is imperfect and so needs the motion of which the body is capable, i, e., the motion in space. The sphere has the circular motion which assures it of the eternal existence assigned to it by God. Through the sphere and its parts our bodies come into being. Our being is very weak because of the long chain of intermediaries between God and us. For the same reason it is changeable and not eternal. All classes of beings come to be through God, and it is His emanating being and permeating might which conserve order in the cosmos. If God abstains from this emanation, nothing will come into existence.

As. a true religious thinker, Miskawaih tries to prove that creation comes *ex nihilo*. He mentions that Galen said something against this view, but was refuted by Alexander of Aphrodisias in a special treatise.[14] The argument given by Miskawaih is as follows: Forms succeed each other, the substratum remaining constant. In this change from one form to another, where do the preceding forms go?

The two forms cannot remain together because they are contrary. Secondly, the first form cannot go elsewhere, because motion in place applies only to bodies, and accidents cannot go from one place to another. There remains only one possibility – the possibility that the first form goes into nothing. If it is proved that the first form goes to Non–Being, then the second form comes and so the third, the fourth, and so on also from nothing. Therefore, all things generated are generated from nothing.

Aristotle conceived of the universe as a process of becoming. The “nature” of each thing is a potentiality which moves through a process of development to an actuality which is its final nature. The movement is towards an end immanent from the first in the subject of movement. An altogether different theory appears in the fiftieth “Epistle” of the Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwan al–Safa*), where the process of evolution has been shown to advance from the mineral to the human stage under the guidance of the spiritual urge for return to God.[15]

The Brethren of Purity used this theory to determine the status of prophethood. Miskawaih goes further and finds in it a stable basis for his moral theory as well.[16] Like Aristotle he does regard happiness (sa`adah) as the chief human good, but unlike him he identifies it in the end with the realization of the vicegerency of God, the place which man occupies in the cosmic evolution by virtue of his specific attribute of rationality.

Miskawaih's theory of evolution is basically the same as that of the Brethren of Purity. It consists of four evolutionary stages: the mineral, the vegetable, the animal, and the human. Coral (*marjan*), date–palm, and ape (*qird*) mark the transition from the mineral to the vegetable, from the vegetable to the animal, and from the animal to the human kingdom, respectively. The prophet, in the end, completes the circle of Being by imbibing the celestial soul within him.

Psychology

Miskawaih's psychology is based on the traditional spiritualistic doctrine laid down by Plato and Aristotle, with a predominant Platonic tendency. He treats the subject in *al-Fauz al-Asghar* and *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*. In the first of these works he discusses the problems more thoroughly. But he repeats himself on many points in both the books; in both we have the same arguments, the same examples, and nearly the same words.

Against the materialists he proves the existence of the soul on the ground that there is something in man which admits different and even opposed forms at the same time. This something cannot be material, for matter accepts only one form in a determinate moment.

The soul perceives simple and complex things, present and absent, sensible and intelligible. But does it perceive them through one and the same faculty, or through many faculties? Soul has no parts; divisibility applies only to matter. Does the soul, in spite of being one and indivisible, perceive different things with different faculties and in different ways? In answering this question, Miskawaih gives two different solutions: that of Plato, who says that similar perceives similar, and that of Aristotle who says that soul has one faculty that perceives complex material things and simple non-material things, but in different ways. In this connection Miskawaih mentions Themistius and his book "On Soul."

On the question of the immortality of the soul, Miskawaih gives at first[17] Aristotle's doctrine. Then he gives (Chapter VI) three arguments of Plato; referring first to Plato himself, then to Proclus' "Commentary on Plato's Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul,"[18] and finally to something that Galen said on this question.

Miskawaih says that Plato's doctrine is too long and needs a commentary; therefore, he attempts to summarize it as clearly as possible, with the help of Proclus' "Commentary." In this and the following chapters (VII, VIII) he is a thorough Platonist and makes a special mention of Plato's *Laws* and *Timaeus*.

Plato says that the essence of the soul is motion, and motion is the life of the soul. Miskawaih explains and says: This motion is of two kinds: one towards intelligence, the other towards matter; by the first it is illuminated, by the second it illuminates. But this motion is eternal and non-spatial, and so it is immutable. By the first kind of motion, the soul comes near to intelligence which is the first creation of God; by the second it descends and comes out of itself. Therefore, the soul comes nearer to God by the first motion, and goes farther by the second. The first leads to its salvation, the second to its perdition.

Quoting Plato[19] he says that philosophy is an exercise of voluntary death. There are two kinds of life: life according to intelligence, which is "natural life," and life according to matter, which is voluntary life. The same applies to death; therefore, Plato says. If you die by will, you live by nature. Here "will" is taken in the sense of "passion."

But Miskawaih at once corrects himself by saying that this voluntary death does not mean renunciation

of the world; that would be the attitude of those who know nothing about the objects of this world and ignore that man is civil by nature and cannot live without the help and service of others. Those who preach renunciation are iniquitous, because they want the services of others without rendering any service to them and this is complete injustice. Some pretend that they need very little, but even this very little needs the services of a great number of people. Therefore, it is the duty of every human being to serve others fairly: if he serves them much he can demand much; and if he serves them little, he can ask for little.

This is an important aspect of Miskawaih's philosophical view, and explains his great interest in ethics.

Moral Philosophy

Moral philosophy is so connected with psychology that Miskawaih begins his big treatise on ethics *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, by stating his doctrine of the soul. Here his expose is less philosophical but richer in detail.

The point of transition from psychology to ethics is given on pages 18 to 21 where, following Plato, be draws a parallel between the faculties of the soul and the corresponding virtues.[20] The soul has three faculties: rational, courageous, and appetitive, and correspondingly three virtues: wisdom, courage, and temperance. By the harmony of these three virtues, we have a fourth one, namely, justice. The Greek temperament being theoretical and speculative,[21] Plato could go no farther than this.

Equipped with a personal code of moral conduct, Miskawaih determined seven species of wisdom, viz., acuteness of intelligence, quickness of intellect, clearness of understanding, facility of acquirement, precision of discrimination, retention, and recollection; eleven species of courage, viz., magnanimity, collectedness, loftiness of purpose, firmness, coolness, stateliness, boldness, endurance, condescension, zeal, and mercy; twelve species of temperance, viz., shame, affability, righteousness, conciliatoriness, continence, patience, contentment, sedateness, piety, regularity, integrity, and liberality (which is further divided into six sub-species) ; and nineteen species of justice, viz., friendship, union, faithfulness, compassion, brotherhood, recompense, good partnership, fair-dealing, cordiality, sub-mission, resignation, devotion to God, forgetting of enmity, abstention from speaking ill of others, discussing the character of the just, ignoring the account of the unjust, and abstention from trusting the ignoble, the mischief-monger, and the flatterer.[22]

We, however, cannot determine exactly whether these sub-divisions and distinctions are all Miskawaih's own. Surely he benefited himself much from his predecessors, and especially from the school of Abu Sulaiman al-Sijistani al-Mantiqi, the echo of whose works we find in Tauhidi's *Muqabasat*.

So far Miskawaih has been Platonic, but from page 29 onward he begins to be Aristotelian, and takes virtue as a mean between two vices. He applies this doctrine of the mean to the four cardinal virtues, and with this he ends the first chapter.

In the second chapter, Miskawaih goes on to discuss the question of human nature and its original state: whether it is born good or bad. He states the opinion of the early Greeks who say that nature can never be changed, but rejects it. Then he takes up the view of the Stoics who think that men are created good but become bad by their inclination to bad appetites and by keeping bad company. There is also a third opinion that men are created bad and they become good only by education. Galen rejects the last two views and says that men are of three kinds: some are good by nature, others are bad by nature, and a third class is intermediate between the two.

Finally, Miskawaih states the opinion of Aristotle as given in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and gives his own view that "the existence of the human substance depends on God's will, but the amelioration of it is left to man and depends on man's will" (p. 46).

Perfection attainable by man is of two kinds: the first is theoretical and the second practical. By the first he attains perfect science, by the second perfect character. Human faculties are three; the highest is reason, the lowest is appetite, and between the two lies courage. Man is man by the first. Therefore, perfection belongs especially to the rational soul. In each faculty there are many degrees, which Miskawaih enumerates in detail. Here (pp. 67–78) we find a long chapter on the education of children and youth.

The essential part of Miskawaih's ethics begins from the third chapter (pp. 90 *et sqq*.). In the first place he follows Aristotle as commented upon by Porphyry. It seems that he depends entirely on the commentary of Porphyry on Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*, which was translated into Arabic by Ishaq ibn Hunain, in twelve books.[23] Unfortunately, this commentary is lost both in Greek and its Arabic translation. But we can gather something of its form from Miskawaih's *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*.

Following Aristotle, Miskawaih says (p. 90) that the good is that at which all things aim. This definition, which is supposed to be perhaps that of Eudoxus (c. 25 B. C.), is given in the very beginning of the *Nichomachean Ethics.*[24] Miskawaih goes on then to say that what is useful to this end may also be called good, i. e., the means as well as the end can be called good. But happiness or well-being is a relative good – good for an individual person. It is only a kind of good and has no distinctive and autonomous essence.

Miskawaih, like Aristotle,[25] gives a classification of happiness but adds more details, perhaps taken from Porphyry's commentary. This classification comprises (1) health, (2) wealth, (3) fame and honour, (4) success, and (5) good thinking.

After giving Aristotle's doctrine of happiness, Miskawaih states the views of Hippocrates, Pythagoras, Plato, the Stoics, and some physicians who believed that body is a part and not an instrument of man, and so held that happiness of the soul is incomplete if it is not accompanied by happiness of the body.

Miskawaih discusses these different doctrines and concludes by saying that we should reject the doctrine according to which happiness can come only after death and affirm that it is possible also in this

world. No happiness is possible except by searching for the good in this world and the world to come. Here he affirms anew his two-fold *Anschauung*. But as a true religious man he gives preference to the next world.

In support of this, he refers to the translation by Abu `Uthman al-Dimashqi of a treatise called "Virtues of the Soul" attributed to Aristotle. We find this treatise attributed to Aristotle nowhere else. There are two kinds of happiness, one according to this world, the other according to the next, but no one can have the second without passing through the first (p. 111), because, as Aristotle said, divine happiness, notwithstanding being higher and nobler, is yet in need of worldly happiness; otherwise, it would remain hidden.

The fourth chapter deals mainly with justice and explains in detail what is meant by it. Here again he follows the corresponding parts in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.[26]

In the fifth chapter he goes on to speak about friendship and love. A striking passage in this part is about two kinds of love: (a) love of man for God, and (b) love of disciple for master. The first is too high to be attained by mortal beings, and is reserved only for a few. As to the second kind of love, Miskawaih draws a parallel between the son's love for his parents and the disciple's love for his master, and says that the latter is nobler and more generous, because masters educate our souls and by their guidance we obtain real happiness. The master is a "spiritual father and a human lord; his goodness for the disciple is divine goodness, because he brings him up on virtues, feeds him with high wisdom, and conducts him to everlasting life in eternal blessing" (p. 175).

Friendship, in general, is most sacred and useful to all human beings. He who betrays it is more wicked than a counterfeiter of coins. A good man is a friend to himself and other people are also friends to him; he has no enemy except the bad. The happy man is he who gains friends and tries his best to be of use to them.

Miskawaih quotes Aristotle saying that man is in need of friends in good as well as in bad circumstances. Even a king is in need of friends because he cannot know his people's needs except through sincere friends, especially because they supply him information and help in execution of his orders. Man should do his best to please his friends and to be always on good terms with them without hypocrisy and flattery.

Miskawaih's treatment of justice (*'adl*) is largely Aristotelian, although for him this virtue is a shadow of divine unity,[27] the true equipoise. The knowledge of the mean or the limit that moderation would set in each particular case is a prerequisite of justice, but, unlike Aristotle, he assigns this function to the divine code rather than to reason or prudence.[28] The king as the deputy of God can exercise royal discretion in minor details according to the exigencies of time and place, without violating the spirit of the divine code.

Aristotle recognized benevolence vaguely in the imperfect form of liberality which for him meant giving to "proper persons, in right proportion, at right times." With Ibn Miskawaih, it is such an excess over the just

award as would eliminate all possibility of under–estimation in justice, provided that its prejudicial effects are confined to the rights of the benevolent person himself only and the recipient himself is a worthy choice for it. Charity, thus, is a form of justice which is safe from disturbance.29

Similarly, love, according to him, is not an extension of self–love, as held by Aristotle, but a limitation of it and love for another. He regards affection (*mahabbah*) as an inborn capacity for associating with mankind in general, but confines friendship (*sadaqah*) to a few individuals, basing it on the considerations of profit, pleasure, or good as conceived by Aristotle. Love (*`ishq*) being the excessive desire for pleasure or good – the consideration of profit is alien to love – cannot extend beyond two individuals.30

The object of animal love is pleasure and that of the spiritual love is virtue or goodness. The former is condemnable, the latter praiseworthy. He makes a specific mention of the love of man for God, of disciple for teacher, and of son for his parents in a graded series, as pointed out earlier. Justice, he concludes, is brought about through fear and force, but affection is a natural source of unity, so that justice is not required where affection reigns supreme. Affection, thus, is the sovereign; justice is the vicegerent.

As in *al–Fauz al–Asghar*, so in *Tahdhib al–Akhlaq* (pp. 195–96) Miskawaih is against all forms of ascetic life, because ascetics "sever themselves from all the moral virtues mentioned above. How can he who retires from men and lives in isolation be temperate, just, generous, or courageous? Is he anything other than something inorganic and dead?" 31 Divine happiness is the ultimate goal and the good of man. It belongs to man's divine part. It is pure good, while reason is the first good.

Spiritual Medicine

The last two chapters of *Tahdhib al–Akhlaq* are devoted to what may be called spiritual medicine, a phrase which we find for the first time as the title of Muhammad ibn Zakariya al–Razi's famous book: *al–Tibb al–Ruhani*. Miskawaih uses the phrase *Tibb al–Nufus* (p. 205), but the resemblance in the general treatment of the subject is, obvious. This implies that Miskawaih is undoubtedly acquainted with al–Razi's treatise, although he does not mention him by name.

The two begin by saying that the mastering of one's passion is the essential foundation of spiritual hygiene. Both refer to Galen's book "On Knowing One's Own Defects." (This work was translated into Arabic by Thuma and revised by Hunain.32) But, whereas al–Razi contents himself with what Galen says in this respect, Miskawaih contends it by saying that there does not exist a friend who can find for you your defects, and that an enemy is more useful in this respect than a friend (p. 200) because he is more aware of your vices and would have no hesitation in revealing them to you.

In this connection Miskawaih recommends the study of another of Galen's treatise: "That Good People Benefit from Their Enemies," which deals with this topic and is also mentioned by al–Razi.33 Miskawaih

then refers to al-Kindi, who, in effect, said that the man who is in search of virtue should realize that the images of his acquaintances are mirrors in which are reflected the evils arising out of pains and passions.

In the end, Miskawaih speaks of remedies for the diseases of the soul. He enumerates the most important diseases – anger, vanity, contentiousness, treason, cowardice, vainglory, fear. and sadness – and deals with their treatment. Some of his chapters correspond with some chapters in al-Razi's *Tibb*, namely, those on vanity, sadness, and fear of death. He also reproduces some passages from al-Kindi's treatise "On the Rejection of Sadness" (p. 256).

Why does not Miskawaih mention Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi? It is because al-Razi's conclusions and method of treatment were quite contrary to his own. Al-Kindi, on the other hand, was a kindred spirit. Al-Razi was bold, rationalistic, and abstruse, whereas al-Kindi was moderate, pious, and more accessible.

We have all along been showing what Miskawaih owes to his Greek predecessors, but we should not forget that Islamic culture also has an important influence on him. In supporting some ideas which he expounds, he very often quotes the Qur'an, traditions (*ahadith*) of the Prophet, sayings of Ibn Abi Talib and al-Hasan al-Basri, besides Arabic poetry.

Philosophy of History

Miskawaih is essentially a historian and moralist. His ethics is genetic[34] (being based on the place and position of man in the cosmic evolution), religious, and practical in character. He even felt it necessary to reform himself morally before writing his *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*.[35] In history, his point of view is philosophical, scientific, and critical. Anticipating the modern outlook, he determines both the function of history and the duties of the historian as follows.

History is not an amusing tale about the royal personages, but a mirror of the politico-economic structure of society in a particular age. It is a record of the rise and fall of civilizations, nations, and States.[36]

In order to realize this end, the historian should scrupulously guard himself against the common tendency of mixing up facts with fiction or pseudo-events. He should not only be factual but also critical in collecting his data.[37]

Above all, he should not be content with the mere descriptions of facts, but, with a philosophic insight, should interpret them in terms of the underlying "human interests," their immediate causal determinants.[38] In history as in nature, there is no room for chance or accident.

History, thus, is no longer a collection of static and isolated facts, but a dynamic process of creative human hopes and aspirations. It is a living and growing organism, whose structure is determined by the basic ideals and the ideals of nations and States. It not only binds together the facts of the past into an

organic whole, but also determines the shape of things to come. The very title of his monumental work, *Tajarib al-Umam* (The Experiences of the Nations) is itself suggestive of its aims and method, which, in the words of Leon Caetani, are "much akin to the principles followed by Western and more modern historians."[39]

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Chapter 25: Ibn Sina

By Fazlur Rahman

In the history of philosophical thought in the Medieval Ages, the figure of Ibn Sina (370/980-428/1037)[1] is, in many respects, unique, while among the Muslim philosophers, it is not only unique but has been paramount right up to modern times. He is the only one among the great philosophers of Islam to build an elaborate and complete system of philosophy – a system which has been dominant in the philosophical tradition of Islam for centuries, in spite of the attacks of al-Ghazali, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, and others.

This ascendancy has been possible, however, not merely because he had a system but because that system had features of remarkable originality displaying a type of genius-like spirit in discovering methods and arguments whereby he sought to reformulate the purely rational and intellectual tradition of Hellenism, to which he was an eminent heir, for and, to an extent, within the religious system of Islam.

The exact terms of this reformulation and their relation to Islam we shall discuss presently in this chapter; it is only to be noted at the outset that it was this kind of originality which rendered him unique not only in Islam but also in the medieval West where the reformulations of the Roman Catholic theology at the hands of Albert the Great, and, especially, of Thomas Aquinas, were fundamentally influenced by him.

Since in this chapter we are mainly concerned with Ibn Sina's interpretation of Greek philosophical doctrines, we need not give an account of his sources in the Greek and Muslim philosophers. To be sure, the elements of his doctrines are Greek, and certain reformulations of Greek doctrines in his writings are also to be found in al-Farabi (to whom Ibn Sina's debt is immense) in varying degrees of development; but our task here is to state, analyse, and appreciate Ibn Sina's teaching. And, indeed, Ibn Sina's system, taken as a whole, is such that it is his, bearing the unmistakable impress of his personality. This is proved by the fact that he states his cardinal doctrines over and over again in his different works and often gives cross references, which are unmistakable signs of systematic thinking and not of random borrowing from heterogeneous sources.

The most fundamental characteristic of Ibn Sina's thought is that of arriving at definitions by a severely rigorous method of division and distinction of concepts. This lends an extraordinary subtlety to his arguments. It can often give his philosophical reasoning a strongly scholastic complexity and intricacy of structure which can annoy the modern temperament, but it is doubtlessly true that it is also this method which has resulted in almost all the original doctrines of our philosopher.

It has enabled him to formulate his most general and basic principle, viz., to every clear and distinct concept there must correspond *a distinctio in re*, a principle on which later Descartes also based his thesis of the mind-body dualism. The fecundity and importance of this principle of analysis in Ibn Sina's system are indeed striking: he announces it recurrently and at all levels, in his proof of the mind-body dualism, his doctrine of universals, his theory of essence and existence, etc. Examples of this principle are: "that which is affirmed and admitted is different from that which is not affirmed and admitted," 2 and "a single conceptual (lit. specific) entity cannot be both known and unknown at the same time except with regard to different aspects."3

This chapter will deal mostly with those concepts and doctrines of Ibn Sina which are not only capital and bring out the nature of his system, but have also both been influential and originally elaborated by him to a greater or lesser extent.

The Doctrine Of Being

Ibn Sina's doctrine of Being, like those of earlier Muslim philosophers, e. g., al-Farabi, is emanationistic. From God, the Necessary Existent, flows the first intelligence alone, since from a single, absolutely simple entity, only one thing can emanate. But the nature of the first intelligence is no longer absolutely simple since, not being necessary-by-itself, it is only possible, and its possibility has been actualized by

God. Thanks to this dual nature which henceforth pervades the entire creaturely world, the first intelligence gives rise to two entities: (i) the second intelligence by virtue of the higher aspect of its being, actuality, and (ii) the first and highest sphere by virtue of the lower aspect of its being, its natural possibility.

This dual emanatory process continues until we reach the lower and tenth intelligence which governs the sublunary world and is called by the majority of the Muslim philosophers the Angel Gabriel. This name is applied to it because it bestows forms upon or "informs" the matter of this world, i.e., both physical matter and the human intellect. Hence it is also called the "Giver of Forms" (the *dator formarum* of the subsequent medieval Western scholastics). We shall return later to these intelligences and these spheres to examine more closely their nature and operations; meanwhile we must turn to the nature of Being.

The procession of the immaterial intelligence from the Supreme Being by way of emanation was intended to supplement, under the inspiration of the Neo-Platonic Theory of Emanation, the meagre and untenable view of God formulated by Aristotle according to whom there was no passage from God, the One, to the world, the many. According to Muslim philosophers, although God remained in Himself and high above the created world, there were, nevertheless, intermediary links between the absolute eternity and necessity of God and the world of downright contingency. And this theory, besides, came very close to satisfying the Muslim belief in angels.

This is the first occasion to remark how Muslim philosophers, by a re-elaboration of the Greek tradition of philosophy, not only sought to build a rational system, but a rational system which sought to integrate the tradition of Islam. But what about the Theory of Emanation itself? Would it not destroy the necessary and all-important gulf between the Creator and the creation and lead to a downright pantheistic world-view – *tat tvam Asi* – against which Islam, like all higher religions, had warned so sternly?

No doubt, this type of pantheism, being dynamic, is different from the absolutist and static forms of pantheism; yet it could lead to anthropomorphism, or, by a reverse process of ascent, to the re-absorption of the creature's being into the being of God. Now, the guarantee against any such danger shall be Ibn Sina's doctrine of essence and existence. This celebrated theory again is designed to fulfil equally both religious and rational needs and, once again, to supplement Aristotle.

Early in this section we said that God and God alone is absolutely simple in His being; all other things have a dual nature. Being simple, *what* God is and the fact that He *exists* are not two elements in a single being but a single atomic element in a single being. What God is, i.e., His essence, is identical with His existence. This is not the case with any other being, for in no other case is the existence identical with the essence, otherwise whenever, for example, an Eskimo who has never seen an elephant, conceives of one, he would *ipso facto* know that elephants exist.

It follows that God's existence is necessary, the existence of other things is only possible and derived

from God's, and that the supposition of God's non-existence involves a contradiction, whereas it is not so with any other existent.[4] It will be seen that the germs of the ontological argument exist in a fairly developed form in this argument. A cosmological argument, based on Aristotle's doctrine of the First Cause, would be superfluous in establishing God's existence.

Ibn Sina, however, has not chosen to construct a full-fledged ontological argument. His argument, which, as we shall see later, became the cardinal doctrine of the Roman Catholic dogmatic theology after Aquinas, is more like the Leibnizian proof of God as the ground of the world, i. e., given God, we can understand the existence of the world. Here cause and effect behave like premises and conclusion. Instead of working back from a supposed effect to its cause, we work forward from an indubitable premise to a conclusion.

Indeed for Ibn Sina, God creates through a rational necessity. On the basis of this rational necessity, Ibn Sina also explains the divine pre-knowledge of all events, as we shall see in his account of God. The world, as a whole, is then contingent, but, given God, it becomes necessary, this necessity being derived from God. This is Ibn Sina's principle of existence stated in brief; we shall now analyse it according to the complex materials which Ibn Sina has left us. It involves more than one point of view.

From the metaphysical point of view, the theory seeks to supplement the traditional Aristotelian analysis of an existent into two constituent elements, as it were, viz., form and matter. According to Aristotle, the form of a thing is the sum total of its essential and universalizable qualities constituting its definition; the matter in each thing is that which has the potentiality of receiving these qualities – the form – and by which the form becomes an individual existent.

But there are two major difficulties in this conception from the point of view of the actual existence of a thing. The first is that the form is universal and, therefore, does not exist. Matter too, being pure potentiality, does not exist, since it is actualized only by the form. How then shall a thing come into existence by a non-existent form and an equally nonexistent matter?

The second difficulty arises from the fact that, although Aristotle generally holds that the definition or essence of a thing is its form, he nevertheless says in certain important passages (e.g., *De Anima*, Vol. I, Chap. I, 403 a, 27 ff.) that matter is also to be included in the essence of a thing, otherwise we shall have only a partial definition of it. If, then, we regard both form and matter as constitutive of definition, we can never arrive at the actual existence of a thing. This is the rock against which the whole scheme of Aristotle to explain Being threatens to break.

This is why Ibn Sina[5] holds that from form and matter alone you would never get a concrete existent, but only the essential and accidental qualities. He has analysed at some length the relation of form and matter in K. al-Shifa', ("Met." II, 4 and "Met." VI, 1), where he concludes that both form and matter depend on God (or the active intellect) and, further, that the composite existent also cannot be caused by form and matter alone but there must be "something else."

Finally, in “Met.” VIII, 5, he tells us, “Everything except the One who is by His essence One and Existent acquires existence from something else. . . . In itself it deserves absolute non-existence. Now, it is not its matter alone without its form or its form alone without its matter which deserves non-existence but the totality (of matter and form).”

This is why Ibn Sina substitutes a three-term analysis of the existent material objects instead of the traditional Greek dyadic formula. It must be noted that it is Aristotle's doctrine which is being developed here. Many scholars have held that Ibn Sina is here following a Neo-Platonic line instead of the Aristotelian one, but, from this point of view, the Neo-Platonic doctrine is the same as that of Aristotle, viz., the dyadic scheme of form and matter, except that, according to Plotinus, under the influence of Plato, the forms have a higher ontological status and exist in God's mind who then proceeds to make them existent in matter.

It should also be borne in mind that existence is not really a constituent element of things besides matter and form; it is rather a relation to God: if you view a thing in relation to the divine existentializing agency, it exists, and it exists necessarily and, further, its existence is intelligible, but when out of relation with God, its existence loses its intelligibility and meaning. It is this relational aspect which Ibn Sina designates by the term “accident” and says that existence is an accident.

Ever since the criticism of Ibn Sina's doctrine by Ibn Rushd who, among other things, accused Ibn Sina of having violated the definition of substance as that which exists by itself, and of Aquinas who, although he adopts the distinction between essence and existence under the direct influence of Ibn Sina, nevertheless follows Ibn Rushd in his criticism, the unanimous voice of the Western historians of medieval philosophy has been to the effect that existence, according to Ibn Sina, is just an accident among other accidents, e. g., round, black, etc.

We have said that when Ibn Sina talks of existence as an accident *with relation to objects* (*as distinguished from essence*) he just means by it a relation to God; it is, therefore, not an ordinary accident. Further, if existence were an accident, one could think it away and still go on talking of the object just as one can do in the case of other accidents and, indeed, in that case Ibn Sina would have been forced to hold something like the Meinongian view held by many Muslim Mutakallims that non-existents must also “exist” in some peculiar sense of that word. But this is the very doctrine which Ibn Sina ridicules. The whole discussion on this point can be found in the article referred to in note No. 5 of this chapter.

Here we give only one passage where our philosopher criticizes the view of those who hold that a non-existent “thing” must, nevertheless, “exist” in some sense so that we can talk about it. He says (*K. al-Shifa'*, “Met.” I, 5), “Those people who entertain this opinion hold that among those things which we can know (i. e., be acquainted with) and talk about, are things to which, in the realm of non-being, non-existence belongs as an attribute. He who wants to know more about this should further consult the nonsense which they have talked and which does not merit consideration.”

Indeed, according to Ibn Sina, the ideas of existence and unity are the primary ideas with which we must start. These underived concepts are the bases of our application of other categories and attributes to things and, therefore, they defy definition since definition must involve other terms and concepts which are themselves derived (*ibid*., I, 5).

It will be seen that this problem now is not a metaphysical one but has to do with logic. Ibn Sina has attempted to give his own answer to the question: How is it possible that we can talk of non-existents and what do these latter mean? His answer is that we can do so because we give to these objects "some sort of existence in the mind." But, surely, our individual images cannot constitute the meanings of these entities for the obvious reason that when we talk, e. g., of a space-ship, it must have an objective meaning.

It is, nevertheless, true that Ibn Sina has seen the basic difficulty of the logic of existence. And our modern logic itself, despite its superior techniques and some valuable distinctions, seems nowhere nearer the solution. It has tried hard to contend that whenever I talk of a space-ship, although none exists, I am not talking of a "thing," of an individual object, but only of a generic object or a conglomeration of properties. But is this really so ? Is it absurd to say that the "individual space-ship I am talking of now has this and this property"? Besides, the crux is the phrase "conglomeration or set of properties" – what is it to which they belong and of which I profess to be talking?

Besides this meaning of "accident" as a peculiar and unique relation of an existent to God, the term "accident" in Ibn Sina has another unorthodox philosophic meaning. This concerns the relationship of a concrete existent to its essence or specific form, which Ibn Sina also calls accidental. This use of the term "accident" is quite pervasive in Ibn Sina's philosophy and, without knowing its correct significance, one would be necessarily led to misinterpret some of his basic doctrines.

Now, *whenever two concepts are clearly distinguishable from each other, they must refer to two different ontological entities*, as we said above, and, further, *whenever two such concepts come together in a thing, Ibn Sina describes their mutual relationship as being accidental*, i. e., they *happen* to come together, although each must be found to exist separately. This is the case, for example, between essence and existence, between universality and essence.

According to Ibn Sina, essences exist in God's mind (and in the mind of the active intelligences) prior to the individual existents exemplifying them in the external world and they also exist in our minds posterior to these individual existents. But these two levels of the existence of an essence are very different. And they differ not only in the sense that the one is creative, and the other imitative.

In its true being, the essence is neither universal nor particular, but it is just an essence. Hence he holds (*K. al-Shifa'*, "Isagoge to Logic," Cairo, 1952, pp. 65-69; also *ibid*. "Met." V, 1) that both particularity and universality are "accidents" which happen or occur to the essence. Universality occurs to it in our minds only, and Ibn Sina takes a strictly functional view of the universals: our mind abstracts universals or

general concepts whereby it is enabled to treat the world of infinite diversity in a summary and scientific manner by relating an identical mental construction to a number of objects.

In the external world the essence does not exist except in a kind of metaphorical sense, i, e., in the sense in which a number of objects allow themselves to be treated as being identical. Existents in the external world are the individual concrete objects, no two of which are exactly the same.

He says, “It is impossible that a single essence should exist identically in many” (“Met.” V, 2), and again, “It (i. e. absolute manness) is not the manness of 'Amr; it is different from it, thanks to the particular circumstances. These particular circumstances have a role in the individual person of Zaid ... *and also a role in the 'man' or 'manness' inasmuch as it is related to him*” (“Met.” V, 1). It is clear especially from this last statement that the “essence” virtually undergoes a change in each individual. That is why we must say that *if we regard essence as a universal,* that concrete determinate existence is something over and above the essence; it is something added to the essence, or it is an “accident” of the essence.

Two things must be specially noted here. First, that existence is something added not to the existent objects – this would be absurd – but to the essence. This is because everything whether it exists or not – indeed whether it is existable or not – in fact every concept is “something” of which assertions can be made, whether positive or negative. Indeed, even non-existence is “something,” since one can talk about it. But a positive individual existent is more than just “something.” (This distinction between “something” and an existent, treated by Ibn Sina [“Met.” 1, 5] which has confusedly returned in present-day logic, was originally made by the Stoics [see, e.g., *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, Vo. II, p. 117].)

Hence Ibn Sina says that when existence is attributed to essences, this existence is equivalent to “is something” and, therefore, such statements are not “profitable.” But statements about existents are informative and profitable, since they add to the essence something that is new.

Secondly, we must note that although Ibn Sina speaks in several places of matter as the principle of multiplicity of forms or essences, he never says that matter is the principle of individual existence. The sole principle of individual existence is God – the Giver of existence; matter is the occasional cause of existence, supplying external attributes of multiplicity.

We have given a considerable number of quotations from Ibn Sina in the treatment of this problem not only because it is of capital importance for Ibn Sina's philosophy, but also because there has been such a great deal of fundamental confusion in the traditional treatment of the subject that a clarification of the terms “existence,” “accident” in this relation, and “essence” is absolutely necessary.

The Body-Mind Relationship

With Aristotle, Ibn Sina stresses the intimate connection of mind and body; but whereas Aristotle's whole trend of thought rejects a two-substance view, Ibn Sina holds a form of radical dualism. How far these

two aspects of his doctrine are mutually compatible is a different question: Ibn Sina certainly did not carry his dualism through to develop a parallelistic, occasionalistic account of mind–body relationship. His remarks, nevertheless, on either side are both interesting and profound. We shall first state his arguments for the two–substance view and then discuss their close inter–connection.

To prove that the human soul is a substance capable of existing independently of the body, our philosopher employs two different arguments. One appeals to direct self–consciousness, the other seeks to prove the immateriality of the intellect. We can postpone his teaching on the intellect till we discuss his theory of knowledge; here we shall state and discuss his first argument. Indeed, according to him, this is the more direct way of proving the incorporeal substantiality of the soul acting not as an argument but as an eye–opener (*K. al–Shifa'*, "Psychology," V 7).

The argument is stated by Ibn Sina in the first chapter of the psychological book of the *K. al–Shifa'* and then re–stated and discussed in the last but one chapter of the same book. Let us suppose, as he says, that a person is created in an adult state, but in such a condition that he is born in a void where his body cannot touch anything and where he cannot perceive anything of the external world. Let us also suppose that he cannot see his own body and that the organs of his body are prevented from touching one another, so that he has no sense–perception whatsoever.

Such a person will not affirm anything of the external world or even the existence of his own body but will, nevertheless, affirm the existence of his self as a purely spiritual entity. Now, that which is affirmed is certainly not the same as that which is not affirmed. The mind is, therefore, a substance independent of the body. Our philosopher is here describing an imaginary case impossible of realization, but his real point, as of Descartes, is that we can think away our bodies and so doubt their existence, but we cannot think away our minds.

The affinity of Ibn Sina's argument with that of Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* has been justly pointed out by historians of philosophy. Actually, this whole trend of thought is inspired by the argument of Plotinus for the separateness of the mind from the body.[6] But there is an important difference between Ibn Sina's and Descartes' formulations. With regard to Descartes, the question can be and has been raised: Is the existence of the self a matter of inference or an immediate datum of consciousness? Whatever the answer to this question may be, there is no doubt that consciousness or "I think" is constitutively and necessarily involved in Descartes' "I am." This is so much so that "I think" and "I am" have the same meaning in Descartes .[7]

This being the position, it is obvious that in this case the consciousness of the self and its existence cannot be logically disengaged from each other. In Ibn Sina, however, although the element of consciousness is present since one can "affirm one's own existence," it is nevertheless present only as a way of locating the self: it is a contingent fact and not a logical necessity. In fact, Ibn Sina presents a medial position between Descartes and Plotinus, for, according to the latter, consciousness, being a relation, signifies not utter self–identity but a kind of otherness; in complete self–identity, consciousness

must cease altogether.

This argument, which seeks to establish dualism by doubting or denying the existence of the body, may be called the argument from abstraction in that it abstracts psychical functions from the total functions of the organism. Its fundamental weakness obviously is to insist that by thinking away the body, the body ceases to play a role in one's total consciousness. If the problem could be solved by a simple inspection of the self in this manner, nothing would be easier.

Ibn Sina seems to be aware that the position is liable to objections. He says ("Psychology," V, 7): (If my self were identical with any bodily members) "say, the heart or the brain or a collection of such members and if it were their separate or total being of which I were conscious as being my self, then it would be necessary that my consciousness of my self should be my very consciousness of these members, for it is not possible that the same thing should be both cognized and uncognized in the same sense."

He then goes on to say that "in fact I do not know by self-consciousness that I have a heart and a brain but I do so either by sense-perception (experience) or on authority." "I mean by what I know to be my self that which I mean when I say: `I perceived, I intellected, I acted,' and all these attributes belong to me." But, Ibn Sina pauses to consider the possible objection: if you are not aware of your self being a bodily member, you are neither directly aware that it is your soul or mind.

Ibn Sina's aswer to this objection is: "Whenever I present bodily attributes to this something which is the source of my mental functions, I find that it cannot accept these attributes," and thus this incorporeal entity must be the soul.

Here we clearly see that the argument has taken a new turn and the phenomenon of direct consciousness is being supplemented by a further consideration to the effect that the disparateness between the mental and physical qualities is such that both cannot belong to one substance. And this is the perennial argument for the two-substance theory, viz. that the mental and the physical attributes are of qualitatively disparate *genre*.

From the acceptance of the view, that the mind is a substance, the conclusion that the mind is a unity follows tautologically and Ibn Sina lays great stress on it. Indeed, once again, both doctrines, viz., the reality of faculties and the unitary nature of the soul, are stated with equal emphasis by him. The reality of mental faculties was established by Aristotle but was further pursued by his commentators, notably Alexander of Aphrodisias.

Ibn Sina has devoted a special chapter to the question ("Psychology," I, 4) where he bases the multiplicity of faculties on the qualitative differences among mental operations. Nevertheless, he repeatedly stresses the necessity of an integrative bond (*ribat*) for the diverse operations.[8] Indeed, he declares that even the vegetative and perceptual functions in man, for example, are specifically different from those in plants and animals, thanks to the rationality present in man which pervades and changes the character of all his functions. This integrative principle is the mind itself.

The soul in its real being is then an independent substance and is our transcendental self. We shall return to its transcendence when we discuss Ibn Sina's theory of knowledge in the next section. Here we shall note only that Ibn Sina's arguments for the immortality of the soul are based on the view that it is a substance and that it is not a form of the body to which it is attached intimately by some kind of mystical relation between the two.

There is in the soul which emerges from the separate substance of the active intelligence simultaneously with the emergence of a body with a definite temperament, a definite inclination to attach itself to this body, to care for it, and direct it to the mutual benefit. Further, the soul, as being incorporeal, is a simple substance and this ensures for it indestructibility and survival, after its origination, even when its body is destroyed.

But if at the transcendental level the soul is a pure spiritual entity and body does not enter into its definition even as a relational concept, at the phenomenal level the body must be included in its definition as a building enters into the definition of a (definite) builder. That is why Ibn Sina says that the study of the phenomenal aspect of the soul is in the field of natural science, while its transcendental being belongs to the study of metaphysics.

Now, since at the phenomenal level there exists between each soul and body a mystique which renders them exclusively appropriate for each other – whether we understand this mystique or not – it follows that the transmigration of souls is impossible. (Transmigration is rejected by Aristotle who does not hold the two-substance view.) Indeed, this mystique is both the cause and the effect of the individuality of the self. Ibn Sina, therefore, totally rejects the idea of the possible identity of two souls or of the ego becoming fused with the Divine Ego, and he emphasizes that the survival must be individual.

It is a primary fact of experience that each individual is conscious of his self-identity which cannot be shaken by any kind of argument. Indeed, our philosopher is so keen to affirm the individuality of personality that he says ("Psychology," V, 3) that even the qualitative nature of the intellectual operations in different individuals may be different – a statement which would have shocked not only the Platonists and Neo-Platonists, but even perhaps Aristotle, since, according to the universal Greek doctrine, the intellect represents, at least, the qualitative identity of mankind, a doctrine which was later pushed to its logical extremes by Ibn Rushd.

The relationship, then, between soul and body is so close that it may affect even the intellect. It goes without saying that all the other psycho-physical acts and states have both aspects – mental and physical. This was emphasized by Aristotle himself. But Aristotle's doctrine, even if it is not outright materialistic, is quasi-materialistic and, whereas it either emphasizes the double aspect of each state or operation, or tends strongly to point out the influence of the body on the mental phenomena, exactly the reverse is the case with Ibn Sina. Indeed, his insistent stress on the influence of the mind on the body constitutes an outstanding and one of the most original features of his philosophy.

Whereas in Aristotle, life and mind give a new dimension to the material organism, in Ibn Sina, under the inspiration of the Neo-Platonic thought and the influence of his own metaphysically spiritual predilections, this no longer remains a mere dimension. The material side of nature is both pervaded and overshadowed by its mental and spiritual side, even though, as a medical man, he is keen to preserve the importance of the physical constitution, especially in the case of the character of the emotions and impulses. Indeed, as we shall see, his medical art helped him to gauge the extent of mental influence on apparently bodily states.

At the most common level, the influence of the mind on the body is visible in voluntary movement: whenever the mind wills to move the body, the body obeys. In his detailed account of animal motion, Ibn Sina has enumerated four stages instead of Aristotle's three. The three stages according to Aristotle are: (1) imagination or reason, (2) desire, and (3) movement of the muscles. Ibn Sina has split up the second into (1) desire and (2) impulsion (*ijma'*) for, he says, not every desire can move to action but only when it is impulsive, whether consciously or unconsciously.

The second, and more important difference between Ibn Sina and the traditional view is that according to the latter the initiation of bodily movement must always lie in a cognitive state, whether it is imagination or reason. Ibn Sina holds that, while in most cases the cognitive act precedes the affective and the conative ones, this is not true of all cases.

We read ("Psychology," IV, 4): "All (the appetitive and conative) faculties also follow imaginative faculties.... But sometimes it happens, e.g., in cases of physical pain, that our natural impulse tries to remove the cause of pain and thus initiates the process of stirring up imagination. In this case, it is these (appetitive) faculties which drive the imagination to their own purpose, just as, in most cases, it is the imaginative faculty which drives the (appetitive and conative) faculties towards the object of imagination."

Thus, according to Ibn Sina, the initiation of the animal motion can lie in the affections as well as in the cognitive states. Psychologically, this is of great significance and marks an advance over the purely and one-sidedly intellectual accounts of traditional philosophy.

Here we reach the second level of the influence of the mind on the body, viz., that of emotions and of the will. Ibn Sina tells us from his medical experience that actually physically sick men, through sheer will-power, can become well and, equally, healthy men can become really ill under the influence of sickness-obsession. Similarly, he says, if a plank of wood is put across a well-trodden path, one can walk on it quite well, but if it is put as a bridge and down below is a chasm, one can hardly creep over it without an actual fall. "This is because he pictures to himself a (possible) fall so vividly that the natural power of his limbs accords with it" ("Psychology," IV, 4).

Indeed, strong emotions like fear can actually destroy the temperament of the organism and result in death, through influencing the vegetative functions: "This happens when a judgment takes place in the soul; the judgment, being pure belief, does not influence the body, but rather when this belief is followed

by joy or grief" (“Psychology,” I, 3). Joy and grief too are mental states, Ibn Sina goes on, but they affect the vegetative functions.

Again, “We do not regard it as impossible that something should occur to the soul, in so far as it is embodied, and be then followed by affections peculiar to the body itself. Imagination, inasmuch as it is knowledge, is not in itself a physical affection, but it may happen that, as a result, certain bodily organs, sexual for example, should expand.... Indeed, when an idea becomes firmly established in the imagination, it necessitates a change in the temperament....” (*ibid*., IV, 4). Just as, we are told, the ideas of health present in the doctor's mind produce actual health in a patient, so the soul acts on the body; only the doctor produces cure through media and instruments, but the soul does it without any instruments.

If, indeed, the soul were strong enough, it could produce cure and illness even in another body without instruments. And here Ibn Sina produces evidence from the phenomena of hypnosis and suggestion (*al-wahm al-ʿamil*). He uses these considerations in order to show the possibility of miracles which are a part of the discussion of the question of prophethood.

Here we will recall what we said before that, according to Ibn Sina, a soul becomes exclusively attached to one body. Our newer consideration shows that it can transcend its own body to affect others. This would become possible only when the soul becomes akin to the universal soul, as it were.

It is on these grounds that Ibn Sina accepts the reality of such phenomena as the “evil eye” and magic in general. We may note that the influence of the emotions on the body was known and discussed in later Hellenism. Especially since the Stoic conception of the principle of “Sympathy” in nature and Plotinus' elaboration of that principle, the mind-body interaction was explained on these lines. What is scientifically new in Ibn Sina is that he also explains phenomena like magic, suggestion, and hypnosis, and, in general, the influence of one mind on other bodies and minds on these lines, i, e., by referring them to the properties of the influencing mind.

In Hellenism, these phenomena were accepted, but were regarded as exceptionally occult. And in the mystery-mongering superstition of later Hellenism, “Sympathy” was given an occult twist. Magical properties were assigned to special objects: metals, animals, etc., through which the magician or the hypnotizer worked or pretended to work on the gods or spirits to intervene in the realm of nature and to produce occult effects.

But the only principle which Ibn Sina will accept – and here he strikes a very modern note – is to refer efficacy to the special constitution of the mind itself. This rests on the premise that it is of the nature of mind to influence matter and it belongs to matter to obey the mind, and Ibn Sina will have no theurgic magic:

“This is because the soul is (derived from) certain (higher) principles which clothe matter with forms contained in them, such that these forms actually constitute matter.... If these principles can bestow

upon matter forms constitutive of natural species... it is not improbable that they can also bestow qualities, without there being any need of physical contact, action, or affection.... The form existing in the soul is the cause of what occurs in matter" ("Psychology," IV, 4).

The reason for this great change is that in later Hellenism the human soul had lost its dignity and people relied more and more for the explanation of the "para-natural" phenomena on the intervention of the gods.

Theory Of Knowledge

In accordance with the universal Greek tradition, Ibn Sina describes all knowledge as some sort of abstraction on the part of the cognizant of the form of the thing known. His chief emphasis, elaborated most probably by himself, is on the degrees of this abstracting power in different cognitive faculties. Thus, sense-perception needs the very presence of matter for its cognitive act; imagination is free from the presence of actual matter but cannot cognize without material attachments and accidents which give to the image its particularity, whereas in intellect alone the pure form is cognized in its universality.

It is very probable too that Ibn Sina elaborated this theory "of the grades of abstraction" to avoid the objection to which Aristotle's doctrine of cognition (according to which all cognition is the abstraction of form "without its matter") was liable, viz., if perception is the knowledge of form alone, how do we know that this form exists in matter? Or, indeed, how do we know that matter exists at all?

Ibn Sina's position on perception is generally that of naive realism, like that of Aristotle and his commentators, holding a representational view of perception. But under criticism from scepticism and relativism which point out the relativity of perceived qualities, this representational view becomes seriously modified and Ibn Sina finally accepts a quasi-causal or, rather, relational view of perceptual qualities, i.e., objects, which have certain real qualities in themselves, appear as such-and-such under such-and-such circumstances and from such-and-such a position.

This is responsible for several subjectivist statements in Ibn Sina, who comes to distinguish between "primary" and "secondary" perceptions: the "primary" perception being subjective or of the state of the percipient's own mind, the "secondary" perception being that of the external world. He did not clearly see, as we moderns do, the basic difficulties in this position. But his conception reappears in Western medieval philosophy as the distinction between the psychological or "intentional" object and the real object, a distinction which was much later developed by Locke into that of primary and secondary perceptual qualities.

But the great key-stone of Ibn Sina's doctrine of perception is his distinction between internal and external perception. The external perception is the operation of the external five senses. Ibn Sina also divides the internal perception formally into five faculties, although he shows a great deal of hesitation on the subject (see "Psychology," IV, I). His chief aim is to separate the different functions or operations on

a qualitative basis, and, of course, we once again remember his principle that to every clear idea there must correspond a distinction in reality. Indeed, his doctrine of the internal senses has no precedent in the history of philosophy.

The first internal sense is *sensus communis* which is the seat of all the senses. It integrates sense-data into percepts. This general sense must be internal because none of the external five senses is capable of this function. The second internal sense is the imaginative faculty in so far as it conserves the perceptual images. The third faculty is again imagination in so far as it acts upon these images, by combination and separation. In man this faculty is pervaded by reason so that human imagination can deliberate and is, therefore, the seat of the practical intellect.

The fourth and the most important internal faculty is called *wahm* which passed into the West as *vis estimativa*: it perceives immaterial motions like usefulness and harmfulness, love and hate in material objects, and is, in fact, the basis of our character, whether influenced or uninfluenced by reason. The fifth internal sense conserves in memory those notions which are called by him "intentions" (*ma'ani*).

The doctrine of *wahm* is the most original element in Ibn Sina's psychological teaching and comes very close to what some modern psychologists have described as the "nervous response" of the subject to a given object. In Aristotle, this function is performed by imagination or perception itself, but Ibn Sina contends that perception and imagination tell us only about the perceptual qualities of a thing, its size, colour, shape, etc.; they tell us nothing about its character or "meaning" for us, which must be read or discerned by an internal faculty of the organism.

In the Stoics, again, we have the perceptual-moral theory of the *oikeiosis* or "appropriation," according to which whatever is perceived by the external senses is interpreted internally by the soul as the bearer of certain values. But the Stoics, in this doctrine, were primarily concerned with the development of a moral personality in man. Ibn Sina's doctrine of *wahm*, on the other hand, despite its moral significance, is primarily a purely psychological doctrine, explaining our instinctive and emotional response to the environment.

This "nervous response" operates at different levels. At one level it is purely instinctive as when a sheep perceives a wolf for the first time and flees from it, or as the mother instinctively feels love for her baby. This occurs without previous experience and hence through some kind of "natural inspiration" ingrained in the constitution of the organism.

Secondly, it also operates at a "quasi-empirical" level ("Psychology," IV, 3). This occurs through association of ideas or images of memory. A dog which has suffered pain in the past from being beaten by a stick or a stone, associates the image of the object and the "intention" of pain and, when it sees the object again, at once runs away. This phenomenon of direct association can also become indirect and irrational. This happens in the case of animals and also in the case of less reasonable human beings. Some people who have irrationally associated the yellow colour of honey with both the colour and the

bitter taste of gall, do not eat honey and in fact at its sight exhibit symptoms of gall-like taste.

This principle of association appeared later in Leibniz (*Monadology*, translated by R. Latta, p. 232); and the principle of irrational or automatic association has appeared more thoroughly worked out in recent experimental psychology under the name of the "conditioned reflex." Since *wahm* makes perceptual predictions on the basis of association of ideas, for which, says Ibn Sina, there are innumerable causes (contiguity, similarity, etc.), its perceptual judgments may sometimes be false. Aristotle had noticed this failure of perception but could not explain it since he did not discern the influence of past experience on present perceptual judgments.

We come next to the doctrine of the intellect which Ibn Sina has elaborated in great detail. He has taken over in his doctrine the theory of the development of human intellect announced by Aristotle very briefly and rather obscurely and then elaborated by Alexander of Aphrodisias and later by Farabi. But he has added quite new and original interpretations of his own.

The doctrine, in brief, distinguishes between a potential intellect in man and an active intellect outside man, through the influence and guidance of which the former develops and matures. Basically, the problem is that of the origin of human cognition and it is explained on the assumption of a supra-hunan transcendent intellect which, when the human intellect is ready, bestows knowledge upon it.

As against Alexander, al-Farabi, and probably Aristotle, Ibn Sina holds that the potential intellect in man is an indivisible, immaterial, and indestructible substance although it is generated at a definite time and as something personal to each individual. This has important religious consequences, for, where, according to al-Farabi only men of developed intellect survive and others perish for ever at death, Ibn Sina holds the immortality of all human souls (According to Alexander of Aphrodisias, even the actualized intellect is perishable so that no soul is immortal.) The immateriality of the intellect is proved by Ibn Sina in an unprecedented, elaborate, and scholastic manner, the basic idea being that ideas or "forms," being indivisible, cannot be said to be localized in any material organ.

But it is in his account of the intellectual operation and the manner of the acquisition of knowledge that the most original aspect of his doctrine of the intellect lies. Whereas, according to the Peripatetic doctrine, accepted by Farabi, the universal, which is the object of the intellective act, is abstracted from the particulars of sense-experience, for Ibn Sina it issues directly from the active intellect.

The Peripatetic tradition has given the following account of the rise of the universal from perceptual experience: First, we perceive several similar individuals; these are stored up in memory and after this constant operation the light of the active intellect "shines" upon them so that the essential nature common to all the particulars emerges from them. This theory is neither nominalistic nor realistic: it does say that the universal is more than what the instances of experience have given to the mind, but it holds that the universal *lies* somehow in these instances.

For Ibn Sina, the universal cannot emerge from the images of sense because it does not lie there.

Further, as we have seen already, the essence, according to Ibn Sina, is not really a universal: it only *behaves* as such when it is in *our* minds. Besides, no amount of particular instances would actually suffice to produce the universal essence which is applicable to infinite instances. He, therefore, declares that the task of our minds is to "consider" and reflect upon the particulars of sense-experience. This activity prepares the mind for the reception of the (universal) essence from the active intellect by an act of direct intuition. The perception of the universal form, then, is a unique movement of the intellective so not reducible to our perceiving the particulars either singly or totally and finding the common essence among them, for if so, it would be only a spurious kind of universal.

There is, besides, another vital consideration which leads to this view. If the perception of the individual instances and the noting of their resemblance (which latter, indeed, itself presupposes the possession of the universal by the mind) were sufficient to cause the universal, then acquisition of knowledge would become mechanical and this mechanism would operate necessarily.

It is, however, in fact not true that cognition can be so mechanically and deterministically produced. The origin of knowledge is mysterious and involves intuition at every stage. Of all intellectual knowledge, more or less, it is not so much true to say "I know it" as to admit "It occurs to me."

All seeking for knowledge, according to Ibn Sina (even the emergence of the conclusion from the premises), has this prayer-like quality: the effort is necessary on the part of man; the response is the act of God or the active intellect. We are, indeed, often not aware as to what it is we want to know, let alone go ahead and "know it." A theory of knowledge which fails to notice this fundamental truth is not only wrong but blasphemous.

All ideas or forms then come from outside. The precise sense of the "outside" we shall try to work out in the next section. But in the meantime we should notice certain other important characteristics of our knowledge. The first is that it is piecemeal and discursive, not total; it is also mostly "receptive" in the sense noted just above. In our normal consciousness we are not fully aware of the whence and whither of our cognition.

True, there are people who are receptive in the ordinary sense of the word in that they do not discover either anything, or much that is new and original; they only learn for the most part; while there are others who discover new things. But even these latter are only "receptive" in the sense that, not being fully conscious of the whence and whither of their knowledge – not aware of the total context of reality – they do not know the full meaning of their discoveries. This is because, in the common run of thinkers ideas come and go in succession and, therefore, their grasp of reality is not total.

Hence Ibn Sina rejects the general and especially later Greek doctrine of the absolute identity of subject and object in intellectual operation, for, he argues, in the case of normal consciousness, there being a succession of ideas, if the mind became identical with one object, how could it then become identical with another? In this connection he rebukes Porphyry for his "mystical and poetical statements." Why he

should single out the pupil of Plotinus, is not quite clear, for the doctrine is both Peripatetic and Neo-Platonic, although there are, it must be admitted, moderate representatives like Alexander of Aphrodisias just as there are extremist champions of the doctrine like most Neo-Platonists.

Ideas in this detailed, discrete, and discursive form of knowledge, as we have said, come into the mind and go out of it. Ibn Sina is insistent that when an idea is not actually being used in intellection, it does not remain in the mind, or, in other words, there is, properly speaking, no intellectual memory as there is a memory of sensible images. There is nothing in the mind which can conserve intelligibles just as there is a conservatory in the soul for sensibles for the existence of an intelligible in the mind means nothing else than the fact that it is actually being intellected.

Absolutely speaking, it should be remarked that the word memory, when applied to sensible objects and individual events of the past, is radically different from the memory of universals and universal propositions, for in the former case there is a reference to the past. Aristotle himself had indicated this doctrine in his *De Memoria et Reminiscentia* where he says that universals are remembered only *per accidens*.

The ordinary human thinking mind, says Ibn Sina, is like a mirror upon which there is a succession of ideas reflected from the active intellect. This does not mean that a truth once acquired, because it "goes out of the mind," has to be *learnt* all over again when it is remembered. By our initial acquisition we acquire a skill to contact the active intellect and in remembering we simply use that skill or power. Resuming the analogy of the mirror, Ibn Sina says that, before acquisition of knowledge, the mirror was rusty; when we re-think the mirror is polished, and it only remains to direct it to the sun (i.e., the active intellect) so that it should readily reflect light.

Even so is the ordinary philosophic (or mystic) consciousness: it is mostly partial (in varying degrees) even when it is original and creative (again in varying degrees) and it is, therefore, obviously not in total contact with reality, or, as Ibn Sina puts it, "is not one with the active intellect." But even in our ordinary cognitive processes, there are serious pointers to existence of a type of consciousness in which this partiality and discursiveness may be overcome and which may be wholly creative, with the pulse of the total reality in its grasp.

These pointers are illustrated by Ibn Sina by the example of a man who is confronted suddenly with a questioner who asks him a question which he has never asked himself before and, therefore, to which he cannot give a detailed answer on the spot. He is sure, however, that he *can* answer it because the answer has just "occurred" to him and lies within him. He then proceeds to the details and formulates the answer.

"The strange thing", says Ibn Sina, "that when this man begins to teach the questioner the answer to his question, he is simultaneously teaching himself as well" the detail and elaborated form of knowledge even though he previously possessed knowledge in a simple manner. This simple, total insight is the

creator of the detailed, discursive knowledge which ensues. Now, this simple, total insight (the *scientia simplex* of the medieval Latin scholastics comes from Ibn Sina) is the creative reason (or the active intellect); the formulated and elaborate form is the "psychic" knowledge, not the absolutely intellectual cognition.

A person possessed of this simple creative agency, if such a one exists, may well be said to be one with the active intellect; and since he possesses a total grasp of reality, he is sure, absolutely sure, of the whence and whither of knowledge (Ibn Sina puts a great emphasis on this self-confidence, certainty, conviction, or faith); he alone is aware of the total context of truth and therefore, in him alone there is the full awareness of the meaning of each term in the process of reality; and, therefore, finally, only such a person can enter (and must enter) most significantly into temporal history, moulding it and giving it a new meaning. This is the prophet; but how to ascertain his existence?

Doctrine Of Prophecy945

The necessity of the phenomenon of prophethood and of divine revelation is something which Ibn Sina has sought to establish at four levels: the intellectual, the "imaginative," the miraculous, and the socio-political. The totality of the four levels gives us a clear indication of the religious motivation, character, and direction of his thinking. Indeed, from our description and partial interpretation of his central philosophical theses so far, his deeply religious spirit has emerged very clearly.

His theory of "Being" has led to the dependence of every finite being, on God; and his doctrines of mind-body relationship and of the genesis and nature of knowledge have both culminated in the religious conception of miracles in the one case, and of a creative revelatory knowledge in the other. And there is not the slightest suggestion that religiosity is something artificially grafted upon his purely rational thinking; on the contrary, it has organically grown out of a rigorous process of ratiocination, and goes down to the very kernel of his thought.

It may be said that Ibn Sina is a citizen of two intellectual-spiritual worlds; the Hellenic and the Islamic. In his own mind he has so intrinsically unified the two worlds that they are identical; the question of disloyalty to either, therefore, does not arise for him at all. Under this circumstance, both traditional Islam and the heritage of Hellenism were inevitably interpreted and modified to a greater or lesser extent. This is apparent in the whole of his philosophy which enters into the technically religious field, but is most palpably so in his doctrine of prophecy.

In this doctrine, Ibn Sina drastically modifies the Muslim dogmatic theology by declaring that the Qur'i.nic revelation is, by and large, if not all, symbolic of truth, not the literal truth, but that it must remain the literal truth for the masses (this does not mean that the Qur'an is not the Word of God; indeed, as we shall see, it is in a sense *literally* the Word of God); further, that the Law, although it must be observed by everyone, is also partly symbolic and partly pedagogical and, therefore, an essentially lower discipline than philosophic pursuits. (This again does not mean that we can dispense with the Law at any stage of

our individual or collective development, for to be social belongs to the essence of man.)

The interpretation and modification of Hellenism in this doctrine is obvious: although most elements of the Muslim philosophic doctrine of prophethood exist in Hellenism, they nevertheless exist in a nebulous and sometimes in a crude form; further, they are scattered. Indeed, the Greeks had no conception of prophethood and prophetic revelation as the Muslims knew it. In fact, the Muslim conception of prophethood is new and unique in the history of religion. For the Muslim philosophers (especially Ibn Sina, for although al-Farabi had pioneered the way, we do not find all the elements in him, notably, the intellectual and the miraculous), to have evolved out of these nebulous, crude, and disjointed elements an elaborate, comprehensive, and refined theory of prophecy to interpret the personality of Mutiammad, is nothing short of the performance of a genius. 9

At the intellectual level, the necessity of the prophetic revelation is proved by an argument elaborated on the basis of a remark of Aristotle (*Anal. Post*, I, Chap. 34) that some people can hit upon the middle term without forming a syllogism in their minds. Ibn Sina constructs a whole theory of total intuitive experience on the basis of this scanty remark. Since, he tells us, people differ vastly with regard to their intuitive powers both in quality and quantity, and while some men are almost devoid of it, others possess it in a high degree, there must be a rarely and exceptionally endowed man who has a total contact with reality. This man, without much instruction from outside, can, by his very nature, become the depository of the truth, in contrast with the common run of thinkers who may have an intuitive experience with regard to a definite question or questions but whose cognitive touch with reality is always partial, never total.

This comprehensive insight then translates itself into propositions about the nature of reality and about future history; it is simultaneously intellectual and moral-spiritual, hence the prophetic experience must satisfy both the philosophic and the moral criteria. It is on the basis of this creative insight that the true prophet creates new moral values and influences future history. A psychologico-moral concomitant of this insight is also the deep and unalterable self-assurance and faith of the prophet in his own capacity for true knowledge and accurate moral judgment: he must believe in himself so that he can make others believe in him and thus succeed in his mission to the world.

This insight, creative of knowledge and values, is termed by Ibn Sina the active intellect and identified with the angel of revelation. Now, the prophet *qua* prophet is identical with the active intellect; and in so far as this identity is concerned, the active intellect is called *`aql mustafad* (the acquired intellect). But the prophet *qua* human being is not identical with the active intellect. The giver of revelation is thus in one sense internal to the prophet, in another sense, i.e., in so far as the latter is a human being, external to him.

Hence Ibn Sina says that the prophet, in so far as he is human, is "accidentally," not essentially, the active intellect (for the meaning of the term "accidental," see the first section of this chapter). God can and, indeed, must come to man so that the latter may develop and evolve, but the meaning of God can at no stage be entirely exhausted in man.

But although the intellectual–spiritual insight is the highest gift the prophet possesses, he cannot creatively act in history merely on the strength of that insight. His office requires inherently that he should go forth to humanity with a message, influence them, and should actually succeed in his mission. This criterion leads the Muslim philosophers, although they admit the divineness of the leading Greek thinkers and reformers, to fix their minds upon Moses, Jesus, and, above all, Muhammad who, undoubtedly, possesses the requisite qualities of a prophet to the highest degree. These requisite qualities are that the prophet must possess a very strong and vivid imagination, that his psychic power be so great that he should influence not only other minds but also matter in general, and that he be capable of launching a socio–political system.

By the quality of an exceptionally strong imagination, the prophet's mind, by an impelling Psychological necessity, transforms the purely intellectual truths and concepts into lifelike images and symbols so potent that one who hears or reads them not only comes to believe in them but is impelled to action. This symbolizing and vivifying function of the prophetic imagination is stressed both by al–Farabi and Ibn Sina, by the latter in greater detail.

It is of the nature of imagination to symbolize and give flesh and blood to our thoughts, our desires, and even our physiological inclinations. When we are hungry or thirsty, our imagination puts bej'ore us lively images of food and drink. Even when we have no actual sexual appetite but our physical condition is ready for this, imagination may come into play and by stirring up suitable vivid images may actually evoke this appetite by mere suggestion.

This symbolization and suggestiveness, when it works upon the spirit and the intellect of the prophet, results in so strong and vivid images that what the prophet's spirit thinks and conceives, he actually comes to hear and see. That is why he “sees” the Angel and “hears” his voice. That is why also he necessarily comes to talk of a paradise and a hell which represent the purely spiritual states of bliss and torment. The revelations contained in the religious Scriptures are, for the most part, of the figurative order and must, therefore, be interpreted in order to elicit the higher, underlying, spiritual truth.

It is the technical revelation, then, which impels people to action and to be good, and not the purely intellectual insight and inspiration. No religion, therefore, can be based on pure intellect. However, the technical revelation, in order to obtain the necessary quality of potency, also inevitably suffers from the fact that it does not present the naked truth but truth in the garb of symbols. But to what action does it impel? Unless the prophet can express his moral insight into definite enough moral purposes, principles, and indeed into a socio–political structure, neither his insight nor the potency of his imaginative revelation will be of much use.

The prophet, therefore, needs to be a Lawgiver and a statesman *par excellence* – indeed the real Lawgiver and statesman is only a prophet. This practical criterion throws into still bolder relief the personality of Muhammad in the philosopher's mind. The Law (*Shari'ah*) must be such that it should be effective in making people socially good, should remind them of God at every step, and should also

serve for them as a pedagogic measure in order to open their eyes beyond its own exterior, so that they may attain to a vision of the true spiritual purpose of the Lawgiver.

The Law is not abrogated at any stage for anybody, but only the philosophic vision of the truth gives to the Law its real meaning; and when that vision is attained, the Law seems like a ladder which one has climbed but which it would still be unwise to discard. For those relatively unfortunate souls which cannot see through the Law its philosophic truth, the technical revelation and the letter of the Law must remain the literal truth.

God And The World

We have learnt in the first section that God is unique in that He is the Necessary Being; everything else is contingent in itself and depends for its existence upon God. The Necessary Being must be numerically one. Even within this Being there can be no multiplicity of attributes – in fact, God has no other essence, no other attributes than the fact that He exists, and exists necessarily. This is expressed by Ibn Sina by saying that God's essence is identical with His necessary existence.

Since God has no essence, He is absolutely simple and cannot be defined. But if He is without essence and attributes, how can He be related to the world in any way? For Aristotle, who held this conception of the Deity, the world presented itself as a veritable other – it was neither the object of God's creation, nor of care, not even of knowledge. His God led a blissful life of eternal self-contemplation and the world organized itself into a cosmos out of love and admiration for Him, to become like Him.

The Muslim philosophical tradition finds the solution under the influence of the Neo-Platonic example which combines God's absolute simplicity with the idea that, in knowing Himself, God also knows in an implicit, simple manner the essences of things.

The system is worked out and systematized by Ibn Sina, who strives to derive God's attributes of knowledge, creation, power, will, etc., from His simple unchanging being, or, rather, to show that these attributes are nothing but the fact of His existence. This is done by an attempt to show that all the attributes are either relational or negative; they are, thus, identical with God's being and with one another.

The Deity is, therefore, absolutely simple. That God is knowing, is shown by the fact that being pure from matter and pure spirit, He is pure intellect in which the subject and object are identical.

But God's self-knowledge is *ipso facto* knowledge of other things as well, since, knowing Himself, He also inevitably knows the rest of the existents which proceed from Him. Here Ibn Sina strikes an original note. According to the philosophical tradition of Hellenism, God, at best, can know only the essences (or universals) and not the particular existents, since these latter can be known only through sense-perception and, therefore, in time; but God, being supra-temporal and changeless and, further,

incorporeal, cannot have perceptual knowledge.

This doctrine of the philosophers was especially repugnant to Islam, for it not only made God's knowledge imperfect, but it made God Himself useless for those whose God He is to be. Ibn Sina devises an argument to show that although God cannot have perceptual knowledge, He nevertheless knows all particulars "in a universal way," so that perceptual knowledge is superfluous for Him.

Since God is the emanative cause of all existents, He knows both these existents and the relations subsisting between them. God knows, for example, that after such a series of events a solar eclipse would occur, and knowing all the antecedents and consequences of this eclipse, He knows in a determinate manner its qualities and properties; He knows, therefore, what this particular eclipse will be, and can differentiate it completely from all other events even of the same species, viz., eclipse in general.

But when the particular eclipse actually occurs in time, God, not being subject to temporal change, cannot know it. But He also need not know it in this way, for He knows it already (see *K. al-Najat*, Cairo, 1938, pp. 247-49). Very ingenious though this theory is and, we think, successful in showing that sense-perception is not the only way to know the particulars, it is obvious that it cannot avoid the introduction of time factor, and, therefore, change in divine knowledge.

Al-Ghazali's criticism of the theory in the thirteenth discussion of his *Tahafut al-Falasifah* certainly finds the target at this point, although his view that according to Ibn Sina, God cannot know individual men but only man in general, is obviously mistaken, for if God can know a particular sun-eclipse, why can He not know, in this manner, an individual person? Indeed Ibn Sina declares in the Qur'anic language (*op. cit.*, p. 247) that "not a particle remains hidden from God in the heavens or on the earth."

As regards God's attributes of volition and creation, ibn Sina's emanationist account renders them really pointless as al-Ghazali has shown. In a thoroughly intellectualist-emanationist account of the Deity, will has no meaning. For Ibn Sina, God's will means nothing but the necessary procession of the world from Him and His self-satisfaction through this. Indeed, he defines it in purely negative terms, viz., that God is not unwilling that the world proceed from Him; this is very different from the positive attributes of choice and the execution of that choice.

Similarly, the creative activity of God, for Ibn Sina, means the eternal emanation or procession of the world, and since this emanation is grounded finally in the intellectual nature of God, it has the character of unalterable rational necessity.

Even though a1-Ghazali's criticism which assimilates the divine activity of Ibn Sina to the automatic procession of light from the sun and, thus, rejects the appellation of "act" to God's behaviour, is not quite correct (since according to Ibn Sina, God is not only conscious of the procession of the world from Him, but is also satisfied with and "willing" to it), the term "creation" is nevertheless used only in a Pickwickian sense, and the term "act" (in the sense of voluntary action) is also seriously modified, since as we have

said, there is no question of real choice.

Rationally determined activity is, of course, compatible with will and choice and can also be said to be done with choice, but this choice has to be brought in as an additional element both initially and finally. For, suppose, a man chooses to think about a certain problem. Now, the initial choice is his own to think about this rather than that problem and then at any moment he can also choose or will to terminate this process of thinking.

What goes on between the beginning and the end will be a rationally determined process of thought, and not a series of choices, though the process as a whole is also chosen and voluntary. But in the philosophical account of God there is just no room for this additional factor either at the end or at the beginning.

The world, then, exists eternally with God, for both matter and form flow eternally from Him. But although this concept was abhorrent to Islamic orthodoxy, Ibn Sina's purpose in introducing it was to try to do justice both to the demands of religion and of reason and to avoid atheistic materialism.

For the materialists, the world has existed eternally without God. For Ibn Sina, too, the world is an eternal existent, but since it is in itself contingent in its entirety it needs God and is dependent upon Him eternally. We see here the double purpose of the doctrine of essence and existence. Unlike atheism it requires God who should bestow being upon existents; and in order to avoid pantheism, it further requires that the being of God should be radically differentiated from the being of the world.

The chief crux of the eternity of the world, which has been stressed by the opponents of the doctrine throughout the history of thought, is that it involves an actual infinite series in the past. In answer, it has been said, ever since Kant, that it is not impossible at all to imagine an infinite in the past, just as it is not impossible to imagine it in the future, i.e., there is no absurdity involved in starting from any given moment backwards and traversing the past and at no point coming to the beginning of the past.

The fallacy of this answer consists in assimilating the past to the future, for the past is something actual in the sense that it has happened and is, therefore, determinate one and for all. But the same fallacy, we think, is implied in the objection itself and it seems that the application of the term “infinite” is inappropriately used for the past: the term “infinite” is used either for a series which is endless or which is both beginningless and endless.

According to the thesis, the series is beginningless *in the past*, and endless in the future, whereas the objection seeks to put an end to the series at a given moment of time and then argue for an infinity in the past. Also, whereas beginning is a temporal concept, beginninglessness is a negation and need not be a temporal concept, but the objection obviously implies “infinity in the past” as a temporal concept.

Influence On The East And The West

The influence of Ibn Sina's thought has been enormous. In the East, indeed, his system has dominated the Muslim philosophical tradition right down to the modern era when his place is being given to some modern Western thinkers by those who have been educated in modern universities. In the madrasahs run on traditional lines, Ibn Sina is still studied as the greatest philosopher of Islam. This is because no subsequent philosopher of equal originality and acuteness produced a system after him.

Ibn Rushd, the last great philosophical name in the medieval tradition of Muslim philosophy, did not formulate his thought systematically, but chose to write commentaries on Aristotle's works. These commentaries, because of their superb scholarliness and acuteness, had a tremendous impact on the medieval West (which received Aristotle first through him) but were not only not influential in the Muslim East, but most of them are even lost in the original Arabic. His comparative lack of influence, of course, is chiefly due to the destruction of his works.

For the rest, the subsequent philosophical activity was confined to the writing of commentaries on Ibn Sina or polemics against him. Rare exceptions, like Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi, who wrote works on systematic philosophy, became less philosophical and more mystical in their intellectual, if not spiritual, temper. Nevertheless, these commentaries and polemics against and for Ibn Sina and later systems have never yet been studied to any appreciable extent by modern students.

Now, let us determine more exactly the influence of Ibn Sina, within the Islamic tradition. To say that he has dominated the philosophical tradition in Islam is certainly not to say that he has dominated the Islamic tradition itself. On the contrary, the influence of Ibn Sina – which is equivalent to the influence of philosophy – within Islam suddenly and sharply dwindled after the polemics of al-Ghazali and later on of al-Razi and then declined and became moribund.

He continued to be read in the madrasahs merely as an intellectual training ground for theological students, not to philosophize anew but to refute or reject philosophy. The chief contributory factors to this situation were the formal rigidity of dogmatic theology and the fact that human reason itself became suspect due to the incompatibility of certain tenets of Ibn Sina with this theology (besides, of course, social, political, educational, and economic causes).

Not only did the philosopher's concept of the eternity of the world give affront to orthodoxy but also to those doctrines of his own which were developed with an especial regard for Islam, like the doctrine of prophethood. But perhaps the greatest theological objection was to his rejection of the bodily resurrection. On this point, although he maintains in the *K. al-Najat* (and the *Shifa'*) that the resurrection of the flesh, while not demonstrable by reason, ought to be believed on faith; in his expressly esoteric work called *Risalat al-Adwiyyah* he rejects it in totality and with vehemence.

Ibn Sina's works were translated into Latin in Spain in the middle of the sixth/twelfth century. The

influence of his thought in the West has been profound and far-reaching. We have, while discussing Ibn Sina's individual theories, alluded time and again to certain definite influences of his. But as it is impossible to do justice to this aspect fully within the space at our disposal, we shall be content with certain general remarks.

Ibn Sina's influence in the West started penetrating palpably since the time of Albert the Great, the famous saint and teacher of St. Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas' own metaphysics (and theology) will be unintelligible without an understanding of the debt he owes to Ibn Sina. No one can fail to observe Ibn Sina's influence even in Aquinas' later and bigger works like the *Summa Theologica* and the *Summa contra Gentiles*.

But the influence of the Muslim philosopher in the earlier formative period of the Christian Saint is overwhelming; he is mentioned by the latter, e.g., on almost each page of his *De Ente et Essentia* which is, indeed, the foundation of Aquinas' metaphysics. No doubt, Ibn Sina is also frequently criticized by Aquinas and others, but even the amount of criticism itself shows in what esteem he was held in the West.

But the influence of Ibn Sina is not restricted to Aquinas,[10] or, indeed, to the Dominican Order or even to the official theologians of the West. The translator of his *De Anima*, Gundisalvus, himself wrote a *De Anima* which is largely a wholesale transporation of Ibn Sina's doctrines. Similar is the case with the medieval philosophers and scientists, Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon. Duns Scotus and Count Zabarella, the finest of the late medieval commentators of Aristotle, also bear testimony to Ibn Sina's enduring influence. Dr. S. van den Bergh in his Averroes' *Tahafut al- Tahafut*, London, 1954 (Vol. II, *passim*) has traced the influence of certain of the ideas of the *Shaikh al-Ra'is* down to modern times.

But it would be futile to go on giving a mere catalogue of individual authors. In fact, the historic influence of this rich personality is a phenomenon which is being realized only now in the West and Professor Etienne Gilson has started it off notably by his articles: (1) "Avicenne et le point de depart de Duns Scot" and (2) "Les sources greco-arabes de l'augustinisme avicennisant" (in *Arch. Hilt. Doctr. Litt.*, 1927 and 1929, respectively).

Since then partial and not very determined efforts have been made on the subject, but there is still no comprehensive treatment. Still less satisfactory is the treatment of the historic influence of Ibn Sina's scientific thought, although again beginnings have been made, notably by Professor Sarton and Dr. Crombie's work (see also *Avicenna, Scientist* & *Philosopher*, edited by G. M. Wickens, London, 1952, Chaps. 4, 5, 6).

But the question of his influence on the West and East apart, a very small portion of his original works has ever been edited. In 1951, the Egyptian Government and the Arab League set up a Committee in Cairo to edit the encyclopaedia, Kitab al- Shifa'. Some parts of it have already been published.

Bibliography

Besides the works meptioned in the body of this chapter, and the bibliography given by Father Anawati, an account of the works on Ibn Sins between 1945 and 1952 will be found in the *Philosophical Quarterly*, 1953, *Philosophical Surveys*, Vol. VIII, Part 1, “Medieval Islamic Philosophy” by R. Walzer, and in P. J. de O. P. Menasce's “Bibliographische Einfuhrungen in das Studium der Philosophie,” 6, *Arabische Philosophie*, Bern, 1948.

1. Little can be added to the biography of Ibn Sina – a quasi–autobiography – which is available in Arabic works, e.g., al–Qifti's and modern works based upon them. Here it is omitted because it is scarcely important for an appreciation of his philosophical thought.
2. K. al–Shifa’ (Psychological part, henceforth cited as “Psychology”).
3. “Psychology”, V, 7.
4. K. al–Najat, Cairo, 1938, p. 224, II, .21ff.
5. This section has been drawn on F. Rahman's article “Essence and Existence in Avicenna,” in Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies, Oxford, 1958, although certain new considerations added here have changed the presentation to a certain extent.
6. A similar development took place in the West, beginning with Augustine, and, again, under Neo–Platonic influences.
7. Meditations II: “What of thinking? I find here that thought is an attribute that belongs to me; it alone cannot be separated from me. I am, I exist, that is certain. But how often? Just when I think; for it might possibly be the case, that if I ceased entirely to think, I should likewise cease entirely to exist ... to speak accurately I am not more than a thing which thinks.”
8. An interesting question may be raised here about the unity of the mind. We have seen that the qualitative disparateness between the mental and physical phenomena has necessitated their attribution to different substances. This argument has been re–stated with great vigour in recent times by G. F. Stout who in his Mind and Matter lays down the “Principle of Generic Resemblance” for acts and operations if they are to fall in a single substance. C. D. Broad has rejected this dualism in his Mind and Its Place in Nature on the ground that no criterion can be laid down as to how great a qualitative difference there should be to warrant us to assign phenomena to different substances. However, Broad himself favours a “Compound Theory” of mind and body, thus implicitly giving force to the same principle of qualitative resemblance and difference which he seeks to refute. For, why else should there be the necessity for a “Compound” ?
Yet, if we accept the full consequences of the principle, what, we may ask, constitutes the resemblance between mental acts so as to attribute them to one substance? For, hoping, desiring, thinking are so mutually divergent phenomena. According to the modern traditional philosophy, consciousness may be a common quality satisfying the principle and, indeed, it has been regarded as the stuff of which mental phenomena are made. If we hold this, it will follow that unconscious desires, fears, and hopes are non–mental.
9. See F. Rahman's Prophecy in Islam, G. Allen & Unwin, London, 1958
10. Miss A. M. Goichon's La Philosophie d'Avicenne et son Influence en Europe medievale, Paris, 1944, may be consulted; in general, however, the author's knowledge of Arabic and philosophy should be taken cautiously.

Chapter 26: Ibn Bajjah

By Muhammad Saghir Hasan al–Ma’sumi

Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Yahya al–Sa'igh, known as Ibn Bajjah or Avempace (d. 533/1138), hailed from

the family *al-Tujib* and is, therefore, also known as *al-Tujibi*. Ibn Bajjah was born at Saragossa towards the end of the fifth/eleventh century, and prospered there. We have no knowledge of his early life, nor have we any idea of the teachers under whom he completed his studies. However, this much is clear that he finished his academic career at Saragossa, for when he travelled to Granada he was already an accomplished scholar of Arabic language and literature and claimed to be well versed in twelve sciences.

This is evident from the incident that occurred in the mosque of Granada as recorded by al-Suyuti: "One day Ibn Bajjah entered the mosque (*jami'ah*) of Granada. He saw a grammarian giving lessons on grammar to the students sitting around him. Seeing a stranger so close to them, the young students addressed Ibn Bajjah, rather by way of mockery: 'What does the jurist carry? What science has he excelled in, and what views does he hold?' 'Look here,' replied Ibn Bajjah, 'I am carrying twelve thousand dinar under my armpit.'

He thereupon showed them twelve valuable pearls of exquisite beauty each of the value of one thousand dinar. 'I have,' added Ibn Bajjah, 'gathered experience in twelve sciences, and mostly in the science of 'Arabiyyah which you are discussing. In my opinion you belong to such and such a group.' He then mentioned their lineage. The young students in their utter surprise begged his forgiveness."[1]

Historians are unanimous in regarding him as a man of vast knowledge and eminence in various sciences. Fath ibn Khaqan, who has charged Ibn Bajjah of heresy and has bitterly criticized his character in his *Qala'id al-'Iqyan*,[2] also admits his vast knowledge and finds no fault with his intellectual excellence. On account of his wealth of information in literature, grammar, and ancient philosophy, he has been compared by his contemporaries with *al-Shaikh al-Ra'is* Ibn Sina.[3]

Due to his growing fame, Abu Bakr Sahrawi, Governor of Saragossa, appointed him as his vizier. But when Saragossa fell into the hands of Alphonso I, King of Aragon, in 512/1118, Ibn Bajjah had already left the city and reached Seville via Valencia, settled there, and adopted the profession of a medical practitioner. Later on, he left for Granada, where occurred the incident referred to above. He then journeyed to north-west Africa.

On his arrival at Shatibah, Ibn Bajjah was imprisoned by Amir Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Yiisuf ibn Tashifin most probably on the charge of heresy, as Fath ibn Khaqan has it. But as Renan opines,[4] he was set free, probably on the recommendation of his own disciple, father of the famous Spanish philosopher Ibn Rushd.

Later on, when Ibn Bajjah reached Fez, he entered the Court of the Governor, Abu Bakr Yahya ibn Yusuf ibn Tashifin, and rose to the rank of a vizier by dint of his ability and rare scholarship. He held this post for twenty years.

This was the time of great troubles and turmoils in the history of Spain and north-west Africa. The governors of towns and cities proclaimed their independence. Lawlessness and chaos prevailed all over

the country. The rival groups and personalities accused one another of heresy to gain supremacy and to win the favour of the people. The enemies of Ibn Bajjah had already declared him a heretic and tried several times to kill him. But all their efforts proved a failure. Ibn Zuhr, the famous physician of the time, however, succeeded in killing him by poison during Ramadan 533/1138 at Fez, where he was buried by the side of Ibn al'Arabi the younger.

His Predecessors

There is no doubt that philosophy entered Spain after the third/ninth century. Some of the ancient manuscript copies of *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa* available in Europe are ascribed to Maslamah ibn Abmad al-Majriti.[5] Maslamah was a great mathematician in Spain. He flourished during the reign of Hakam II and died in 598/1003. [6] Among his disciples, Ibn al-Safa, Zahrawi, Karmani, and Abu Muslim 'Umar ibn Abmad ibn Khaldun al-Hadrami were famous for mathematical sciences.

Karmani and Ibn Khaldun were also known as philosophers. Ibn Khaldun al-Hadrami hailed from Seville and died in 449/1054. [7] Karmani, whose full name is Abu al-Hakam 'Amr ibn 'Abd al-Rabman ibn Ahmad ibn 'Ali, hailed from Cordova, journeyed to the Eastern countries and studied medicine and arithmetic at Harran. On his return to Spain he settled at Saragossa. According to the statement of Qadi Sa`id[8] and Maqqari,[9] he was the first man who took the *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa* to Spain. Karmani died at Saragossa in 450/1063.

But philosophy had entered Spain long before the *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa* were introduced in that region. Muhammad ibn `Abdun al-Jabali[10] travelled to the East in 347/952, studied logic with Abu Sulaim Muhammad ibn Tahir ibn Bahrain al-Sijistani, and returned to Spain in 360/965. Similarly, Ahmad and 'Umar, . the two sons of Yunus al-Barrani, entered Baghdad in 330/935, studied sciences with Thabit ibn Sinan ibn Thabit ibn Qurrah, and after a considerable period returned to Spain in 351/95611. [11]

This is evident that philosophy was imported into the West from the East and that in the fourth/ tenth century Spanish students studied mathematics, *Hadith*, *Tafsir*, and *Fiqh* as well as logic and other philosophical sciences at Baghdad, Basrah, Damascus, and Egypt. But from the end of the fourth/tenth century, when philosophy and logic were condemned in Spain and the advocates of these sciences were persecuted, the common people stopped favouring these sciences as far down as the fifth and sixth/eleventh and twelfth centuries. This was the reason why Ibn Bajjah, Ibn Tufail, and Ibn Ruahd had to face persecution, imprisonment, and condemnation. Very few people in those days dared deal with rational sciences.

Among the predecessors of Ibn Bajjah, Ibn Hazm deserves special attention. Ibn Hazm occupies a very high place in theology and other religious sciences. His *Kitab al-Fasl fi al-Milal w-al-Nihal* is unique in that he has recorded the creeds and doctrines of the Christians, Jews, and others without displaying any prejudice. But in the domain of philosophy he has never been mentioned by any Spanish scholar side by side with the philosophers. Maqqari records:[12] “Ibn Habban and others say, Ibn Hazm was a man of

Hadlth, jurisprudence, and polemics. He wrote many books on logic and philosophy in which he did not escape errors."

His Contemporaries

For throwing light on the contemporary thinkers of Ibn Bajjah we have no earlier authority than his own disciple ibn al-Imam, through whom we have received information about his writings. Al-Wazir Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-`Aziz ibn al-Imam, a devoted disciple of Ibn Bajjah, preserved the latter's writings in an anthology to which he added an introduction of his own. That Ibn Bajjah was very fond of this disciple, a vizier, is apparent from the preamble of his letters addressed to him which are available in the said anthology as preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.[13]

In his introduction to the anthology, Ibn al-Imam says: "... the philosophical books were current in Spanish cities in the time of al-Hakam II (350/961-366/976), who had imported the rare works composed in the East and had got them made clear. He (Ibn Bajjah) transcribed the books of the ancients and. others and carried on his investigation into these works. The way had not been opened to any investi-gator before him (Ibn Bajjah). Nor had anything except errors and alterations been recorded concerning these sciences of the ancients.

A number of errors for example, were committed by Ibn Hazm, who was one of the most exalted investigators of his time, while most of them had not ventured even to record their thoughts. Ibn Bajjah was superior to Ibn Hazm in investigation, and more penetrating in making distinctions. The ways of investigation in these sciences were opened only to this scholar (Ibn Bajjah) and to Malik ibn Wuhaib of Seville, both of whom were contemporaries. But except for a short account of the principles of logic nothing was recorded by Malik.

Then he gave up investigating these sciences and speaking about them openly, because of the attempts made on his life due to his discussing philosophical sciences, and due to the fact that he aimed at victory in all his conferences on scientific subjects. He turned to the religious sciences and became one of the leaders in them; but the light of philosophical knowledge did not shine upon his mind, nor did he record in philosophy anything of a private nature which could be found after his death.

As for Abu Bakr (may Allah show him mercy) his superior nature stirred him not to give up investigating into, inferring from, and reading all that had left its real impression on his mind on various occasions in the changing conditions of his time."

The words of Ibn al-Imam are quite clearly appreciative of the merits of the contemporary Malik, and of predecessors like Ibn Hazm. Ibn al-Imam's praise of his teacher has been shared by a number of historians. Ibn Tufail, the famous author of the well-known philosophical romance, *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, and a younger contemporary of Ibn Bajjah, singles out Ibn Bajjah in the introduction to his immortal romance, and describes him as follows: "But none of them possessed a more penetrative mind, a more

accurate view or a more truthful insight than Abu Bakr ibn al-Sa'igh."

Al-Shaqandi (d. 629/1231), in his famous letter in which he enumerates the achievements of the Spanish Muslims as against the Africans, challenges the latter by saying: "Have you anybody among yourselves like Ibn Bajjah in music and philosophy?"[14] Maqqari records the following statement: "As for the works on music, the book of Ibn Bajjah of. Granada is sufficient by itself. He occupies in the West the place of Abu Nasr al-Farabi in the East "[15]

Another contemporary of Ibn Bajjah was al-Amir al-Muqtadir ibn Hud, who reigned over Saragossa (438/1046-474/1081). He has been mentioned by al-Shaqandi, who addresses the Africans in these words: "Have you any king expert in mathematics and philosophy like al-Muqtadir ibn Hud, the ruler of Saragossa?"[16] His son al-Mu'tamin (d. 474/1085) was a patron of rational sciences."[17]

Works

We give below a list of Ibn Bajjah's works:

1. The Bodleian MS., Arabic Pococke, No. 206, contains 222 folios.[18] It was written in Rabi' II 547/1152 at Qus. This MS. lacks the treatise on medicine, and *Risalat al-Wada'*.

2. The Berlin MS. No. 5060 (vide Ahlwardt : Catalogue), lost during World War II.

3. The Escurial MS. No. 612. It contains only those treatises which Ibn Bajjah wrote as commentaries on the treatises of al-Farabi on logic. It was written at Seville in 667/1307.

4. The Khediviah MS. *Akhlaq* No. 290. It has been published by Dr. Omar Farrukh in his Ibn *Bajjah w-al-Falsafah al-Maghribiyyah*. On comparison it has been established that this is an abridgment of *Tadbir al-Mutawahhid*-abridgment in the sense that it omits the greater part of the text but retains the very words of the original writer.

5. Brockelmann states that the Berlin Library possesses a unique ode of Ibn Bajjah entitled *Tardiyyah*.

6 Works edited by Asin Palacios with their Spanish translation and necessary notes. (i) *Kitab al-Nabat*, *al-Andalus*, Vol. V, 1940; (ii) *Risalah Ittisal al-'Aql.bi al-Insan, al-Andalus*, Vol. VII, 1942; (iii) *Risalah al-Wada', al-Andalus*, Vol. VIII, 1943; (iv) *Tadbir al-Mutawahhid* entitled *El Regimen Del Solitario*, 1946.

7 Works edited by Dr. M. Saghir Hasan al-Ma'sumi: (i) *Kitab al-Nafs* with notes and introduction in Arabic, *Majallah al-Majma' al-'Ilm al.'Arabi*, Damascus; 1958; (ii) *Risalah al-Ghayah al-Insaniyyah* entitled *Ibn Bajjah on Human End*, with English translation, *Journal of Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, Vol. II, 1957.

Philosophy

Ibn Bajjah was skilled both in the theory and practice of the mathematical sciences, particularly astronomy and music, adept in medicine, and devoted to speculative studies like logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics. In de Boer's opinion, he conforms entirely to al–Farabi in his logical writings and generally agrees with him even in his physical and metaphysical doctrines.[19] Let us examine how far this statement is correct in the light of the writings of Ibn Bajjah that have come down to us.

Ibn Bajjah has undoubtedly relied in philosophy and logic on the works of al–Farabi, but it is obvious that he has made considerable additions to them. Again, he has adopted an entirely different method of philosophical investigation. Unlike al–Farabi, he deals with the problems on the basis of reason alone.

He admires the philosophy of Aristotle on which he has founded his own system. But, he says, for understanding the speculative method of Aristotle it is of utmost importance to understand, first of all, his philosophy .correctly. That is why Ibn Bajjah wrote his commentaries on the works of Aristotle. These commentaries bear clear evidence that he studied the texts of Aristotle very carefully. As in Aristotle's philosophy, Ibn Bajjah has based his metaphysics and psychology on physics, and that is why his writings abound in discourses on physics.

Matter And Form

De Boer writes: "Ibn Bajjah starts with the assumption that matter cannot exist without some form, while form may exist by itself, without matter." But this is erroneous. According to Ibn Bajjah, matter can exist without form. He argues that if matter is not formless then it will be divided. into "matter" and "form," and this will go on *ad infinitum*.[20] Ibn Bajjah claims that the "First Form" is an abstract form which exists in matter that is said to have no form.

Aristotle defines matter as what receives form and is in a way universal. His matter in this sense differs from the matter of Plato who, though agreeing with the above definition, maintains that form in itself is real and needs nothing to bring it into existence. The aim of Aristotle is not only to state that matter and form are dependent upon each other but also to distinguish the particular form of a species from that of another species. The form of a plant is different, for example, from the form of an animal, and the form of an inanimate object differs from the form of a plant, and so on.

In the writings of Ibn Bajjah the word *form* has been used to convey several different meanings: soul, figure, power, meaning, concept. In his opinion the form of a body has three stages: (1) the general spirit or the intellectual form, (2) the particular spiritual form, and (3) the physical form.

He has divided the spiritual form into the following types: –

I. The forms of circular bodies have only this much connection with matter that they make the material intelligibles perfect.
2. The material inteligibles which exist in matter.
3. Those forms which exist in the faculties of the soul – common sense, imaginative faculty, memory, etc., and are the *via media* between spiritual forms and material intelligibles.

Those forms which are related to the active intellect are called by Ibn Bajjah general spiritual forms, and those which are related to the common sense are called particular spiritual forms. This distinction has been maintained because the general spiritual forms have only one relation and that with the recipient, whereas the particular spiritual forms have two relations – one particular with the sensible, and the other general with the percipient.

A man, for example, recalls the form of the Taj Mahal; this form is not different from the form of the actual Taj Mahal when it is before the eyes – this form has, besides the aforementioned particular relation, a relation with the general body of percipients, since there are many individuals who enjoy the sight of the Taj Mahal.

Psychology

Ibn Bajjah, like Aristotle, bases his psychology on physics. He begins his discussion of the soul with its definition by stating that bodies, natural or artificial, are composed of matter and form, their form being the permanent acquisition or the entelechy of the body. Entelechy is of various kinds: it belongs either to those existents that perform their function without being essentially moved, or to those that move or act while they are being acted upon.

A body of this latter type is composed of both mover and moved, whereas the artificial body has its mover outside. Now, the form that supplies the entelechy of a natural body is called the soul. The soul is, therefore, defined as the first entelechy in a natural, organized body which is either nutritive, sensitive, or imaginative.

The ancient philosophers who preceded Aristotle had confined their study to the human soul alone and regarded the study of the animal soul as a part of natural soience. *Soul* is an equivocal term, because it is not homogeneous in nature. If it were so, its functions would have likewise been homogeneous. It actually functions heterogeneously: nutritively, sensitively, imaginatively, or rationally.

Since every transitory being has to perform a particular function in virtue of which it stands as a part of the universe, the nutritive faculty has two ends, namely, growth and reproduction. This faculty does not only provide substances which are needed for the upkeep of the body, but also a surplus which is employed for the growth and development of the body. But when the growth is completed, the surplus is used for reproduction in those bodies that are reproductive.

The faculty of reproduction is to be distinguished from the nutritive faculty which acts on food and makes it a part of the body. This faculty is the “Actual Intellect” which changes a potential species into the body of an actual species. Those bodies that are not reproductive depend for the preservation of their species upon spontaneous generation. The reproductive faculty is the end of the faculty of growth and perishes only in old age when the nutritive faculty is left alone.

Sense–perception is either actual or potential. What is potential can become actual only when it is changed by something else. It, therefore, requires a mover to change it. This mover is the sensible, the moved being the sense–organ.

The sensibles or the natural accidents are of two kinds: either they are particular to the natural bodies or common to the natural and the artificial bodies; and they are, again, either mover or moved. They are always moved towards the species, since a mover causes motion in them only in so far as they are particular species, and not because they possess matter.

Every sentient body is composite and is the result of a mixture of different elements. This mixture is produced by innate heat and gives rise, for example, to condensation and rarefaction, as of odours, flavours, and colours. But besides these material states, there arise certain other states such as reproduction and spontaneous generation which are caused by the intellect or some other mover.

As soon as the process of mixture begins, the form begins to be received. Motion and reception of form take place simultaneously; and when the soul attains perfection, the reception of form is completed, matter and form, thus, becoming a single whole. When form is separated from matter, it exists actually as abstracted from matter, but is not the same as it is when it is in matter – and this is possible only if it now exists as an idea in the mind.

Sensation is, therefore, transitory. But how can a separate form be transitory, since transitoriness is only due to matter? The answer is this. The term “matter” is used for “psychical faculty” and “corporeal faculty” equivocally, and it means only the receptivity of form through which a body that has the faculty of sensitivity becomes sentient. The faculty of sense–perception is, therefore, a capacity in the sense–organ that becomes a form of the thing perceived.

But a further question arises: If perception is a form in matter, how can matter actually exist when it is not so informed? The answer is given as follows: “That `apprehensions' are in a substratum and are identical with it, is clear, or else `an apprehension' would not be a particular. But it does not follow from this that form cannot exist apart from–matter since the matter of `apprehension' is the receptivity of the forms of the apprehensibles only, and is called matter *per prius*, while the matter of the `apprehensible' is called *per posterius.*”

Psychical perception is of two kinds: sensation and imagination. As said before, sensation is by nature prior to imagination, for which it supplies the matter. In short, sensation is a capacity of the body which is acted upon by the sensible. Since movements are many, sensations are also many; and because the

sensibles are either general or particular, sensations are also general or particular.

The five senses –– sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch are five faculties of a single sense, viz., the common sense. Common sense plays the role of matter through which the forms of things become perceptible. It is through common sense that a man judges and distinguishes different states of the perceptible and realizes that every particle of an apple, for example, possesses taste, smell, colour, warmth, or cold. For this faculty preserves the impressions of the sensibles which enable the senses to apprehend the sensibles. The common sense is the entelechy of the whole body and is, therefore, called the soul. This faculty also supplies matter for the faculty of imagination.

Defined as the first entelechy of the organized imaginative body, the imaginative faculty is preceded by sensation which supplies material to it.. Sensation and imagination have, therefore, been described as two kinds of the perceception of the soul. But the difference between the two is obvious inasmuch as sensation is particular and imagination general. The imaginative faculty culminates .in the reasoning faculty through which one man expresses himself to another, and achieves as well as imparts knowledge.

The appetitive soul consists of three faculties: (1) The imaginative appetenee through which progeny are reared, individuals are moved to their dwellings, and have affection, love, and the like. (2) The intermediate appetence through which there is desire for food, housing, arts and crafts. (3) The appetence that makes speech and, through that, teaching possible and, unlike the other two, is peculiar to man.

The appetitive soul is applied to these three faculties *per prius et per posterius*. Every animal possesses the intermediate appetence by which it inclines to nutrition. Some animals do not possess the imaginative yearning. The yearning of intermediate appetence precedes by nature the imaginative appe–tences. The one thing that is clear is that every man has two faculties – the appetitive and the rational – and these precede others by nature.

The appetitive soul desires a perpetual object or an object in so far as it is perpetual. This desire is called pleasure, and the absence of desire is dullness, pain, and the like. Action is caused by desire, and perpetuity is caused by the faculties. Desire is not distinctive of man. Anyone who does an action induced by desire is regarded to have done an action based on animality. It is obvious that when a man acts in this manner, he does it not because he is possessed of ideas. He attains perpetuity only to the extent to which he is possessed of them.

Though devoid of eternity, the appetitive soul has a strong desire for eternity. It loves only the intermediate imaginary form and the imaginary form. These are the only two forms which are perpetually loved by the appetitive soul. But since forms are many, the appetitive soul hesitates to make an attempt to realize them.

Again, the appetitive soul seeks the service of nature, and suffers from pain and laziness when nature

does not co-operate with it. As nature is not simple, it is not always in one and the same state. It is due to nature that an animal needs rest, and it is due to the appetitive soul that it feels dissatisfied with it when prolonged.

But these two forms (i. e., the intermediate imaginary form and the imaginary form) are transitory, not eternal. Hence the appetitive soul does not achieve eternity but that which represents it, and what represents it is not difficult to estimate, for individuals as individuals think that they achieve eternity through perfection and perfection through the attainment of power and freedom.

Hence arises the power and freedom of those despots who hold sway over large areas of the world. Their unlimited power, abundant wealth, and unbridled activities, however, bring them no benefit, for most of them die of hunger and in utter regret for losing what they possessed. They are overtaken by fatigue and distress in dealing with the appetitive soul. In their hearts there survives the memory of their past and they feel regret and remorse.

When this occurs to the class of despots, what will be the fate of those who are lower in rank? This is as it should be, because the anxiety of their appetitive soul is to collect what is not to be collected and achieve what is not to be achieved. The animals which have no reason do not suffer from this kind of remorse, for their appetitive soul has no ambition and they have no memory of their past whims. They suffer only from natural calamities such as old age, which is the lot of every natural organism.

The imaginative faculty in man is the faculty through which he receives impressions of the sensibles and presents them before himself in imagination after their disappearance. This function of the imaginative faculty takes place both in our waking life and in sleep. This faculty also composes forms of the objects of imagination never sensed before. Sometimes it imagines and composes something which is not an individual but something applicable to a whole class.

At the final stage of imagination appears the intellect, and the rational faculty starts functioning; and we find in ourselves something which distinguishes us from other animals that obtain nutrition and possess sense-organs. Man finds in himself, for example, some objects of knowledge (concepts) containing the distinction between good and evil, useful and harmful. He also finds in himself things which he considers to be definitely true, things which are merely conjectural, and things which are false. These known objects in the soul are called *logos*.

Logos is in the first instance related to the potential rational faculty, the function of which is to receive the objects of knowledge. This is so because in the earlier stages man is devoid of them and receives them only at a later stage. The term “logos” is applicable to the objects of knowledge after they become potentially receptible, and also when they actually exist and are expressed through words.

These objects of knowledge (concepts) which exist in potentiality and become actual in rationality, when considered in relation to the objects which they signify, constitute their knowledge since they are known through and recognized by them. When they are considered in so far as they are perceived by the

imaginative faculty and are applied to the contents derived from them, they are called intelligibles;–but when they are considered in so far as they are perceived by the rational faculty which completes them and brings them from potentiality into actuality, they are called mind or the intellect.

There are various grades of knowledge, the first of which is the knowledge of a particularly specified object. This primarily comes into being by achieving the apprehension of the particular in the imaginative faculty in a general way only, i.e., it cannot be imagined specifically. Nor can any quality of the same be described. But it is distinguished in a general way without attending to any one of its qualities. This is the weakest knowledge of an object and resembles the imagination of an animal.

Again, when the state of the particular is possible in the imaginative faculty, man advances to this particular with its detailed characteristics, which help him to recognize it to be the same at different times. He distinguishes Zaid, for example, as tall, fair, delicate, and considers all these descriptions in his imagination as though they were related numerically to one individual.

Some people, however, think that sometimes words lead to absurdity for they introduce multiplicity where there is only unity: for example, the particular which is described by the words “tall,” “fair,” and so on, is not more than one. However, this is the way in which man achieves the knowledge of individuals in so far as they are definite and particular. Since.the qualities through which the particular individuals are known as described above are accidents attached to different individuals, there is no resemblance between any two individuals. Tallness in Zaid, for example, is not exactly the same as tallness in Bakr.

When the objects of imagination are obtained in the imaginative faculty, the rational faculty looks at them through its insight, and realizes the universal meanings. Through these universal meanings the rational faculty imagines and distinguishes the nature of every imagined object. And when the words indicating the universal meanings are mentioned, the rational faculty distinguishes them, presents them before the mind, and apprehends them. All this occurs in more ways than one.

1. The rational faculty presents universal meanings before the mind, and apprehends them as true of the imagined individuals signified by them. Through insight the rational faculty sees the universal meanings in the individuals. In this sense this faculty distinguishes universal meanings from one another in the manner described above.

2. According to another method, the rational faculty distinguishes these universal meanings perfectly, but when it sees them through its insight and presents them to the soul well arranged, it sees them through its insight in the imaginative faculty which also acts upon them, and makes them resemble the universal meaning and imparts to them forms which are common to more than one, but not to all individuals to which the meaning is applicable.

The sculptor represents the form of a horse in stone, or a painter draws the form of a horse on the surface of a board, but this representation is imperfect, for it represents and reproduces the form of a horse that *obtains nutrition*, and *neighs*. But all that is represented thus is not common to all horses. The

imaginative faculty represents things which are limited in respect of age, size, etc. The image of a horse is not common to the full-grown horse, the young horse, and the colt. Its image is common only to the horses of that particular size or age which the imaginative faculty represents.

As soon as the rational faculty makes distinctions of universal meanings, and presents them to the mind to look more closely into them through its insight, the latter looks into them through the image which the imaginative faculty represents. The rational faculty distinguishes whether the image is perfect or not perfect, common or not common. Without any difficulty it thinks of the intelligible meanings.

In this way the universal meanings are apprehended by artists and most scientists. When the artisan, for example, thinks how to make an article, he presents the image of the particular article to his imaginative faculty, and prepares his plan to make it. Similarly, when a scientist looks into the objects of knowledge to know their nature and give their description, he presents their images to his imaginative faculty.

These are two methods by which the imaginative faculty serves the rational faculty by presenting to the latter the phantoms of an object, either the phantoms of the individual object itself or those of its image, which represents the universal meaning, as mentioned above. The rational faculty imparts universal descriptions to the objects of imagination. Whoever exerts the rational faculty to act on the objects obtained in the imaginative faculty sees the confirmation of what has been mentioned and sees through his rational faculty the divine gift flowing over the faculty. This is just like a person who sees by the faculty of seeing the light of the sun through the light of the sun.

The immediate cause of the apprehension of intelligibles and the activity of the rational faculty in actuality is a gift which is like the light of the sun through which one realizes and sees the creation of God so clearly that one becomes a believer in Him, His angels, books, messengers, and the next world, enjoys certain belief, and remembers God while standing, sitting, and lying. Every thought is obtained through this gift which is no other than man's connection with the active intellect.

Thus, it may be concluded that Ibn Bajjah starts describing “Aristotelian Psychology” and in the end arrives at the position of Ibn Sina and also of al-Ghazali, whose name he mentions with respect and reverence.

Intellect And Knowledge

According to Ibn Bajjah, the intellect is the most important part of man. In his opinion correct knowledge is obtained through the intellect which alone enables us to attain prosperity and to build character. Something has already been said about the source of the intellect and its working. The following extracts will, however, throw some further light on the matter:

“It is necessary for man to see through his own insight the contents of the imaginative faculty, just as he sees the individual objects with his eyes and distinguishes them fully. He is sure to find that those

individual objects are repeatedly impressed upon the imaginative faculty. Many imaginable objects have one or more than one individual in the imaginative faculty. They also possess the accidents attached to these individuals, viz., measure, colour, knowledge, health, sickness, motion, time, space, and other categories.

Having realized all this, a man sees through his insight that the rational faculty looks into the objects of imagination and apprehends their common characteristic, i. e., the differentia which distinguishes them from the objects of sense, differentia by virtue of which they are considered to be individuals and distinguished as intelligible objects. One should also realize that these differentiae are discerned by the rational faculty through the divine gift which flows over them in the same way as the objects of sight become manifest to the perceiving mind through the light of the sun that falls on them, without which light they would remain completely invisible.

Through the same gift the whole is distinguished from its parts and is judged to be greater than the parts. Again, numbers considered to be numerals are declared by this gift as different and many when investigation into God's creation – the creatures of heaven and earth, night and day, messengers, revelation, dreams, and what the soothsayer's tongue utters – is repeated so much that man comprehends them through the imaginative faculty, and the rational faculty sees through its insight in a pure, simple, and peculiar way the existence of objects which are neither conceived by thought nor perceived by the senses. Its outlook becomes widened, and it desires to know the causes of those creatures which become intelligible.

The rational faculty does not know the objects of knowledge adequately unless it knows them through four causes – form, matter, agent, and purpose. It is necessary to know all these causes in respect of the objects which inevitably possess them.

Man is by nature inclined to investigate and know all these causes. His inquiry covers in the first instance the four causes of the objects of sense-perception. This is quite evident with respect to the objects of art as well as those of nature. He is all the more interested in knowing the causes of the intelligible objects, for this investigation is considered to be sublime, high, and useful. Finally, it is through investigation of causes that man reaches the belief in God, His angels, books, messengers, and the life hereafter."

"Look," says Ibn Bajjah, "into the wonders that lie between the intellect and the faculty of imagination through your penetrative soul. You can see with certainty that the intellect derives from the imaginative faculty the objects of knowledge called the intelligibles, and offers to the imaginative faculty a number of other objects of knowledge.

Take, for example, the moral and artistic ideals, or those objects of knowledge which are either the events that might take place and are available in the imaginative faculty before their occurrence, or the events that have not occurred but have found their way into the imaginative faculty not through the

sense–organs but rather through the intellect as in the case of true dreams.

The most astonishing thing concerning the imaginative faculty is that which relates to revelation and soothsaying. It is clear in these cases that what the intellect offers to the human imagination does not proceed from the intellect itself, nor is acted upon by the intellect, but arises in imagination through an agent who has known it beforehand, and is able to create it.

It is God who causes by His will the mover of the active spheres to act upon the passive spheres as He likes. When, for example, He intends to make manifest what will occur in the universe, He first of all sends the knowledge to angels and through them to the human intellect. This knowledge comes to man in accordance with his capacity for receiving it. This is evident in most cases of God's virtuous servants whom He has shown the right path and who are sincere to Him, particularly the apostles to whom He makes manifest through His angels in waking life or dream the wonderful events that are going to happen in the universe.

“God, the Almighty, makes manifest to His existing beings and creatures both knowledge and deed. Every being receives these from Him according to its rank in the perfection of existence: the intellects receive from Him knowledge according to their positions, and spheres receive from Him figures and physical forms according to their ranks and positions. Every celestial body possesses intellect and a soul through which it performs particular actions which are perceived by way of imagination such as the imagination of transference from an imaginary place which continues to exist.

Due to this individually perceptible particular transference there arise particular actions which are perceived by the bodies that come into being and pass away. This is most manifest in the sun and the moon from among the celestial bodies. It is through this intellect that a man knows sciences which are revealed to him from God, things that are intelligible, the particular events which are to take place in the present and the future, as well as the events that happened in the past. This is the knowledge of the unseen of which God informs His chosen servants through His angels.”

Ibn Bajjah further elucidates the nature of human knowledge and the stages thereof when he says: “Knowledge in man means his seeing the existents together with their perfect existence iu his intellect through the insight of his soul which is a gift of God. This gift of God is of different grades in different men, the greatest insight being that of prophets who perfectly know Him and His creatures, and enjoy that sublime knowledge in their own souls through their excellent insights without learning and without making any effort to learn.

The highest knowledge is that of God Himself and His angels down to the knowledge of what particular events have taken place and will take place in this universe – knowledge gained through the insight of their hearts, without the use of the eyes.

In a lower rank than that of the prophets are the friends of God who possess excellent nature through which they derive from the prophets that which enables them to attain to the knowledge of God and the

knowledge of His angels, books, apostles, the Last Day, and the highest blessing, which they continue to attest by the insight they enjoy in accordance with the different degrees of the divine gift they receive. These sincere men also receive a little bit of the knowledge of the unseen in their dreams. The friends of God include the Companions of the Prophet.

After them come a number of men whom God has favoured with insight through which they realize with certainty the reality of everything till stage by stage they attain to sure knowledge of God, His angels, books, apostles, and the Last Day. They realize through their insight that they have become pure and have achieved perfection or the highest blessing, which is continuity without destruction, honour without disgrace, and richness without fear of poverty. These people who include Aristotle are very few in number."

Ibn Bajjah believes in the plurality of intellects and refers to the first intellect and the secondary intellects. In his opinion, the human intellect is the intellect remotest from the first intellect. He further explains the grades of the intellect by saying that some intellects have been directly derived from the first intellect, and some others are derived from other intellects, the relation of what has been derived to that from which derivation has been made being the same as the relation of the light of the sun which is inside the house to that of the sun which is in the courtyard of the house.

Knowledge of the nature of existents which the intellect possesses is of two kinds: (1) that which is intelligible but cannot be invented, and (2) that which is intelligible and can be invented. The intellect itself is also of two kinds: (i) theoretical intellect through which man understands things which he cannot bring into being, and (ii) practical intellect through which he conceives artificial beings which he can invent.

Perfection of the practical intellect lies in man's understanding artificial objects and bringing them into being in accordance with his own intention. These are invented only through the organs of the human body, either by the movement of the organs without any implement from outside, or by moving the organs which in their turn move some external instruments. This happens when the artificial objects are accomplished by the human volition.

Human organs are moved *per se,* but when an artificial object is made, they are moved by the human volition at first in the mind, and then the object is produced outside the mind in accordance with the image formed in the mind before the organs bring it into being. This image is a phantom in the imaginative faculty of the soul and is general. This image disappears from the soul which obtains another image, and the process continues.

Whenever man intends to make a certain object, he forms an image in the imaginative faculty. Then he can see by his insight that another faculty of the soul abstracts this image in the imaginative faculty and transfers it from one state to another until its existence is accomplished in the soul, and then he sets the organs into motion to bring the object into being. This faculty which understands and abstracts in

imagination is called the practical intellect. When in the imaginative faculty the practical intellect primarily abstracts the image of the artificial object according to a particular form and size, the moving faculty moves the organs to invent the object.

The intellect is, therefore, the first maker of the object, and not the organs which are moved by the soul, nor indeed the faculty which moves the organs. It is clear that the power of organs is not primarily found in nature but is caused to come into being by the faculty of the intellect which causes it to appear in imagination, and only then the organs cause the objects to be made through volition.

The imaginative faculty seeks the help of sense-perception at the time of inventing the object to present it to the faculty which has moved the organs, and to enable the intellect to compare and see whether the imagined object belongs to sense-perception in the same way as it belongs to the imaginative faculty.

The intellect has two functions to perform; (1) to present to the faculty of imagination the image of the object to be created, and (2) to have the object made outside the soul by moving the organs of the individual's body.

According to Ibn Bajjah, the human intellect by degrees achieves nearness to the first intellect in two ways:. (1) by achieving knowledge based on proof, in which case the highest intellect is realized as form; and (2) by achieving knowledge without learning or making an effort to acquire it. This second method is that of the Sufis, notably of al-Ghazali; it enables one to gain the knowledge of God.

From this it is clear that though Ibn Bajjah has emphasized the speculative method, he does not condemn the mystic method, as some Europeans would have us believe.[21]

God, The Fountain-Head Of Knowledge

With regard to the divine gift through which the rational faculty discerns the differentiae, one man excels another, and that in accordance with the capacity that God has given him. But these two gifts are innate, not acquired. The capacities and gifts which are acquired are next to the innate ones and they are acquired by doing, under the guidance of the prophets, what pleases God. Man, therefore, should respond to the Holy Prophet's call and do what he urges him to do.

He can, thus, see through the insight of his heart the nature of every creature, its origin, and its final destination. He can know in the same way that God is a necessary being *per se*, is alone, has no associates, and is the creator of everything; that everything besides Him is contingent and has emanated from His perfect essence: that His self-knowledge implies His knowledge of all objects; and that His knowledge of objects is the cause of their coming into being.

To reduce the number of stages to achieve nearness to God, Ibn Bajjah advises us to do three things : (1) charge our tongues to rememebr God and glorify Him, (2) charge our organs to act in accordance with the insight of the heart, and (3) avoid what makes us indifferent to the remembrance of God or turns

our hearts away from Him. These have to be followed continuously for the whole of one's life.

Political Philosophy

Ibn Bajjah wrote a number of small treatises on the administration of the House–State and the administration of the City–State, but the only available book on the subject is *Tadbir al–Mutawahhid* (Regime of the Solitary). As is clear from this book, Ibn Bajjah agrees to a great extent with the political theory of al–Farabi. He has, for example, accepted al–Farabi's division of the State into perfect and imperfect. He also agrees with al–Farabi in holding that different individuals of a nation possess different dispositions–some of them like to rule, and some others like to be ruled.22

But Ibn Bajjah adds to the system of al–Farabi when he exhorts that the solitary man (*mutawahhid* or the penetrative philosopher) should keep aloof from the people in certain circumstances. Even though avoidance of people is in itself undesirable, it is necessary in the endeavour to achieve perfection. He also advises him that he should meet the community only on a few inevitable occasions for a short time, and that he should migrate to those countries where he finds knowledge, migration being perfectly permissible under the laws of the science of politics.23

In his *Risalat al–Wada`* Ibn Bajjah has given two alternative functions of the State: (1) to estimate the deeds of the subjects in order to guide them to reach their intended goals and not any other ends. This function can be best performed in the ideal State by a sovereign ruler. (2) The alternative function is to devise means for the achievement of particular ends just as a rider as a preliminary exercise acquires control over the bridle in order to become an expert in riding. This is the function of the administrators of those States which are not ideal. In this case the ruler is called the chief (*ra'is*). The chief enforces in the State a traditional system for the subjects' execution of all actions.

In the system of al–Farabi, as well as in that of Ibn Bajjah, the constitution is to be framed by the Head of the State, who has been equated by al–Farabi with a prophet or Imam. Ibn Bajjah does not mention this identity in so many words but he indirectly agrees with al–Farabi when he declares that "human perfection cannot be attained but through that which the apostles bring from God the Exalted (i, e., the divine Law or *Shari`ah*). Those who follow God's guidance cannot be led astray."24 It is, therefore, too sweeping a statement to say, "He (Ibn Bajjah) ignores the political relevance of the divine Law (*Shari`ah*) and its educative value for man as a citizen."25

Ethics

Ibn Bajjah divides actions into animal and human. The former are due to natural needs and are human as well as animal. Eating, for example, is animal in so far as it is done to fulfil need and desire, and human in so far as it is done to preserve strength and life in order to achieve spiritual blessings.

Ibn Bajjah draws our attention to the active human faculties, as man is too dignified to be qualified with

the passive faculties which are either material or animal. The human faculty of learning is a passive faculty, but it is so in a different sense. The active faculty intends to attain perfection only, and then it stops, as in the art through which a trade is accomplished. But the repetition of the art is exercised only through the appetitive soul and opinion.

What is done due to the appetitive soul is the action which is done by the agent for its own sake. And, what is done by opinion is the action which is done to gain some other end. The appetitive soul desires a perpetual object, the desire being called pleasure, and its absence dullness and pain. Anybody who performs an action in this way is regarded as having done an animal action.

Those who act through opinion act only in so far as they are men. Opinion either moves one to that which is essentially perpetual, or to that which is perpetual because it is abundant. If the action is perpetual due to abundance, then the end will take the place of the preliminary action. This end-seeking is either due to propensity only, in which case it is an animal action, or due to opinion which has an intended goal in the achievement of which lies its completion.

The end varies in accordance with the nature of the individuals; some people, for example, are born for shoe-making and others for other vocations. Ends serve one another mutually, and all of them lead to one and the same ultimate goal-the chief end. The chief man is naturally he who prepares himself to aim at the chief end, and those who are not prepared for it are subservient by nature. Some people are, therefore, naturally submissive and are ruled by others, and some possess authority by nature and rule others.

Opinion is sometimes right essentially. It is so when it desires the eternal. Sometimes it is right accidentally and not in its essence. The opinions of the shrewd and crafty, for example, are right in respect of the objects they have set up before them; but they are not right-in-themselves. These opinions are relatively right but not universally so.

Colocynth is useful for a man of phlegmatic disposition, but not for all. On the other hand, bread and meat are useful both naturally and universally. The opinion which is right relatively as much as generally is right absolutely. But sometimes what is relatively right is not so in general, and is, therefore, right in one respect and wrong in another.

To declare an action animal or human it is necessary to have speculation in addition to volition. Keeping in view the nature of volition as well as speculation Ibn Bajjah divides the virtues into two types, the formal virtues and the speculative virtues. A formal virtue is innate without any trace of volition and speculation, such as the honesty of a dog, since it is impossible for a dog to be dishonest. This virtue has no value in man. The speculative virtue is based on free volition and speculation.

The action which is done for the sake of righteousness and not for fulfilling any natural desire is called divine and not human, since this is rare in man. Good, according to Ibn Bajjah, is existence, and evil is absence of existence. In other words, evil for him is really no evil.

Mysticism

Renan is right in his view that Ibn Bajjah has a leaning towards mysticism, but is certainly wrong in thinking that he attacks al-Ghazali for his insistence on intuition and Sufism. As a matter of fact, Ibn Bajjah admires al-Ghazali and declares that the latter's method enables one to achieve the knowledge of God, and that it is based on the teachings of the Holy Prophet.

The mystic receives a light in his heart. This light in the heart is a speculation through which the heart sees the intelligibles in the same way as a man sees the sunlit objects through eyesight; and through this apprehension of the intelligibles it sees all that which by implication precedes them or succeeds them.

Ibn Bajjah holds the friends of God (*auliya' Allah*) in high esteem and places them next only to the prophets. According to him, some people are dominated by corporeality only – they are the lowest in rank – and some are greatly dominated by a fine spirituality – this group is very rare, and to this group belong Uwais al-Qarani and Ibrahim ibn Adham.[26]

In his attitude towards God and His decree Ibn Bajjah comes close to declaring himself a fatalist. In one of the treatises he declares that if we were to refer to the decree of God and His power we would verily attain peace and comfort. All existing things are in His knowledge and He alone bestows good upon them. Since He knows everything essentially, He issues orders to an intermediary to invent a form like the one which is in His knowledge and to the recipient of forms to receive that form. This is the case concerning all existents, even concerning transitory matter and the human intellect.

In support of his view that God is the Ultimate Creator of all actions Ibn Bajjah refers to al-Ghazali's view, expressed at the end of his *Mishkat al-Anwar*, that the First Principle created agents as well as the objects of action to be acted upon; and he gets further support for this view from al-Farabi's observation, in *`Uyun al-Masa'il*, that all are related to the First Principle in so far as the First is their creator.

Ibn Bajjah also states that Aristotle said in his Physics that the First Agent is the real agent and the near agent does not act but through the First. The First makes the near act and the object to be acted upon. The near is known to the majority of people as agent only in affairs that concern matter. The just king, for example, deserves the ascription of justice, although he is distant in rank from him who is below him in the series of agents.

Whoever ascribes an action to a near agent is like the dog that bites the stone by which it is struck. But such ascription of action to the near agent is not possible in affairs which do not concern physical matters. The active intellect which surrounds the heavenly bodies is the near agent of all transitory particulars. But He who created both the active intellect and the heavenly bodies is the real eternal agent.

God causes the existence of a thing to continue without end after its physical non-existence. When an existent reaches its perfection, it ceases to remain in time (*zaman*) but exists eternally in the continuous flux of duration (*dahr*). Ibn Bajjah here reminds one of the Holy Prophet's saying: "Do not abuse *dahr* as *dahr* is Allah." So interpreted, the saying implies that the human intellect enjoys eternal continuity. In support of this interpretation of the word *dahr* Ibn Bajjah mentions his predecessors like al-Farabi and al-Ghazali.

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Chapter 27: Ibn Tufail

By Bakhtyar Husain Siddiqi

Life And Works

Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Malik ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Tufail (Latin, Abubacer), the first great leader of philosophical thought in the Muwahbid Spain, was born in the first decade of sixth/twelfth century, at Guadix, in the province of Granada. He belonged to the prominent Arab tribe of Qais. Al-Marrakushi traces his education to Ibn Bajjah, which in view of Ibn Tufail's denial of acquaintance with him, is incorrect.1

He started his career as a practising physician in Granada and through his fame in the profession became secretary to the governor of the province. Later, in 549/1154, he became Private Secretary to the Governor of Ceuta and Tangier, a son of 'Abd al-Mu'min, the first Muwahhid ruler of Spain who captured Morocco in 542/1147.

Finally, he rose to the eminent position of the physician and Qadi of the Court and vizier2 to the Muwahhid Caliph Abu Ya'qub Yusuf (r. 558/1163-580/1l84), whose personal interest in philosophy and liberal patronage turned his Court into a galaxy of leaders of philosophical thought and scientific method and made Spain, what R. Briffault calls, "the cradle of the rebirth of Europe."3

Tbn Tufail enjoyed enormous influence with Caliph Abu Ya'qub Yusuf, and it was he who introduced Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198) to him. On the express desire of the Caliph, he advised Ibn Bajjah to annotate the works of Aristotle, a task that had been taken up zealously by Ibn Bajjah but had remained unfinished to the time of his death.4

Ibn Tufail resigned his position as Court physician in 578/1182 due to old age and recommended Ihn Rushd to his patron as his successor. He, however, continued to retain Abu Ya'qub's esteem and after his death (in 580/1184) gained the favour of his son Abu Yusuf al-Mansur (580/1184-595/1199). He died at Morocco in 581/1185-86. Al-Mansur himself attended his obsequies.

Ibn Tufail was an illustrious physician, philosopher, mathematician, and poet of the Muwahhid Spain, but unfortunately very little is known about his works. Ibn Khatib attributes two treatises on medicine to him. Al-Bitruji (his pupil) and Ibn Rushd credit him with "original astronomical ideas." Al-Bitruji offers a refutation of Ptolemy's theory of epicycles and eccentric circles which in the preface to his *Kitab al-Hai'ah* he acknowledges to be a contribution of his teacher Ibn Tufail.5

Quoting Ibn Rushd, Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah attributes *Fi al-Buqa' al-Maskunah w-al-Ghair al-Maskunah* to Ibn Tufail, but in Ibn Rushd's own account no such reference is traceable.[6] Al-Marrakushi, the historian, claims to have seen the original manuscript of one of his treatises on the science of divinity.[7] Miguel Casiri (1122/1710-1205/1790) names two extant works: *Risalah Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* and *Asrar al-Hikmah al-Mashriqiyyah*, the latter in manuscript form.[8] The preface to the *Asrar* discloses that the treatise is only a part of the *Risalah Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, the full title of which is *Risalah Hayy Bin Yaqzan fi Asrar al-Hikmat al-Mashriqiyyah*. [9]

Creed Of The Muwahhids

The foundation of the Muwahhid dynasty is associated with the name of Ibn Tumart (d. c. 524/1130), a politico-religious leader who claimed to be the Mahdi. He introduced in the West orthodox scholasticism of al-Ghazali and exhorted people to observe the Zahirite *Fiqh*. During his travels he met 'Abd al-Mu'min al-Qumi (d. 558/1163), a potter's son, and made hirn his disciple and successor in his puritanical movement. He raised the banner of revolt against the corrupt Murabit rulers of Spain, but success ultimately fell to the lot of 'Abd al-Mu'min, who took Oran, Tlemcen, Fez, Sale, Ceuta and in 542/1147 became the first Muwahhid ruler of Morocco. He was succeeded by Abu Ya'qub Yusuf (d. 580/1184) and then by Abu Yusuf al-Mansur (d. 595/1199) on whose Courts the two great luminaries Ibn Tufail and Ibn Rushd, shed imperishable luster.[10]

The Muwahhids professed to be Ghazalians. They were noted for their puritanical belief in the unity of God. Anthropomorphic notions were an anathema to them. Secondly, inspired by Ibn Tumart, they stood for the strict observance of the exoteric aspect of religion. The Zahirite Fiqh constituted the Muwahhid State religion. Thirdly, as a legacy of Ibn Bajjah, they regarded philosophy as a species of esoteric truth reserved for the enlightened few. The masses, being incapable of pure knowledge, should not be taught more than the literal sense of the colourful eschatology of the Qur'an.[11]

Needless to say, the mental equipment of Ibn Tufail is largely provided by the official religion of the Muwahhids, and his *Hayy Bin Yaqzan* is but a defence of the attitude of the Muwahhids both towards people and philosophers.[12]

Hayy Bin Yaqzan

Summary

The treatise dramatically opens with the spontaneous birth of Hayy in an uninhabitated island, followed by a popular legend about his being thrown to this desolate place by the sister of a certain king, in order to keep her marriage with Yaqzan a secret. Unalloyed by social conventions. he is nourished there by a roe and taught by natural reason or common sense, which, though really very uncommon, equips him with inductive intellect to probe into the secret of things.

Unlike the lower animals, he becomes conscious of his being naked and unarmed with physical weapons of defence. He reflects over the situation and covers the lower parts of his body with leaves. arms himself with a stick, and thus comes to realize the superiority of his hands over the feet of animals. The death of the mother–roe leads him to the discovery of the animal soul which uses the body as an instrument, like the stick in his hands, shares light and warmth with fire, and thus bears resemblance to the heavenly bodies.

He then turns to the analysis of the phenomena of nature, compares the objects around him, and discriminates between them, and classifies them into minerals, plants, and animals. Observation shows him that body is a common factor in all the objects, but they belong to different classes because of the functions peculiar to them. This leads him to assume a specific form or soul for each class of objects.

But the soul being imperceptible, his dialectical ingenuity at last brings him to the idea of an ultimate, eternal, incorporeal, and necessary Being which is the efficient cause of the peculiar behaviour of bodies. This makes him conscious of his own immaterial essence; and acting upon a three–point code of ascetic discipline which will be explained later, he is finally absorbed in the unrestrained contemplation of the Ultimate Being.

At this stage, Asal, a contemplative and meditative soul, from the neighbouring inhabited island appears on the scene in quest of attaining perfection in solitude. He informs Hayy, the child of nature, about the Qur'anic conceptions of God, His angels, prophets, the Day of Judgment, etc., which he by his self–developed intellect immediately recognizes as truths. He, however, in the first instance, fails to see the wisdom implicit in the figurative languages of the Qur'an about God and the hereafter, and in the permission that it gives one to lead a worldly life – –a permission which is likely to turn one away from the truth.

Full of ambition and hope, he sets out in the company of Asal to the said inhabited island ruled by Salaman and begins to reform its convention–ridden people. He endeavours hard to enlighten the masses through pure concepts, but, in the end, finds these concepts far above their heads. He then realizes the wisdom of the Prophet in giving them sensuous forms instead of full light, returns to his lonely island, and is absorbed in contemplation.

Sources

Hayy Bin Yaqzan is a unique creation of Ibn Tufail's mystico–philosophical thought. Nevertheless, the idea of this romance is not entirely new. Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), among his predecessors, had written a mystic allegory of the same title. But the comparison ends here. Ibn Sina's dramatized tale narrates how one day he, with a few companions, went out for a ramble in the vicinity of a town and chanced to meet an old man, Hayy bin Yaqzan, and requested him to be permitted to accompany him is his unending journeys. But the old man replied that that was not possible for Ibn Sina, because of his companions whom he could not leave.

In this allegory Ibn Sina himself represents the rational soul, the companions the various senses, and the old man, Hayy bin Yaqzan, the active intellect.[13] “With Ibn Sina,” thus, “the character of Hai [Hayy] represents the Superhuman Spirit, but the hero of Ibn Tofail's romance seems to be the personification of the natural spirit of Mankind illuminated from above; and that Spirit must be in accordance with the Soul of Muhammed when rightly understood, whose utterances are to be interpreted allegorically.”[14]

Similarly, the names of Salaman and Asal, the other two characters of Ibn Tufail's romance, are not new in the philosophical literature. These, too, have been borrowed from Ibn Sina's tale of *Salaman wa Absal*, of which we know only through Tusi's paraphrase in his commentary on *Isharat*.

The story relates how Absal, the younger brother of Salaman, was obliged to proceed to war in order to avoid the immoral designs of the latter's wife, but was deserted by the army through her machinations and his wounded body was carried away by a gazelle to a place of safety. On returning home, he raised a strong army and regained the lost kingdom for Salaman, whose wife becoming desperate poisoned him to death.

The sorrow-stricken Salaman lost heart and became a hermit. A mystic trance, at last, revealed to him that his own wife was the cause of the catastrophe, and he killed her and all her accomplices.[15] Salaman, in this tale, represents the rational soul, Absal the theoretical reason, and Salaman's wife, the passion-worshipping body.

Notwithstanding the similarity of names and the episode of the gazelle, the basic theme of both the treatises is intrinsically different. With Ibn Sina the main object is to show how personal afflictions (he himself was a prisoner in the dungeon of a fortress while writing the allegory) invoke divine grace and cause the purification of the soul but the object of Ibn Tufail is nothing less than to dramatize the development of theoretical reason from the gross sense-perception to the beatific vision of God.[16]

By far the most marked, deep, and saturating influence, which seems to have coloured the basic structure of Ibn Tufail's romance, is that of Ibn Bajjah, his arch-rationalist predecessor. His lonely, metaphysically minded Hayy is only an extreme form of the “solitary man” of Ibn Bajjah's *Tadbir al-Mutawahhid*. Nevertheless, in spite of his recognition of the necessity of solitude for the improvement of theoretical reason, Ibn Tufail feels rather unhappy over Ibn Bajjah's one-sided emphasis on the role of reason in arriving at the ultimate truth. Somewhat sympathetically he complains of the “incompleteness” of Ibn Bajjah's *Tadbir al-Mutawahhid*.[17]

It is to the desire of removing this incompleteness that Ibn Tufail's *Hayy Bin Yaqzan* owes its origin. And it is the influence of Ghazali (d. 505/1111) and perhaps also of Suhrawardi Maqtul, his Persian contemporary that made him supplement reason with ecstasy in its flight to the celestial world.

Of Hayy's birth in an uninhabited island, Ibn Tufail relates two versions. The scientific version of his spontaneous birth, he owes entirely to Ibn Sina.[18] The legendary version is traced by Gracia Gomez (“Comparative Study of Ibn Tufail and Baltazar Gracian,” Madrid, 1926) to *Dhu al-Qarnain wa Qissat al-*

Sanam w-al-Malak we Bintuhu, a Greek tale translated into Arabic by Hunain ibn Ishaq.

The tale narrates how, under royal displeasure, the daughter of a king threw away her natural daughter from the son of her father's vizier, in the sea, the surging waves of which landed her in an uninhabited island where she was nourished by a roe. She grew up into a beautiful damsel; later, Alexander the Great chanced to meet her in the island of Oreon.[19] That the life of Hayy resembles that of the damsel in its initial stages, there can be no doubt, but the resemblance ends there. Besides, the aforesaid Greek tale does not seem to be the only source of this legend. Badi' al-Zaman Foruzanfar has lately traced the threads of the fable to the Persian tale of *Musa-o Dara-o Nimrud*.[20]

The romantic frame of *Hayy Bin Yaqzan* is by no means original. It is of Alexandrian origin; it may have even a Persian strain. Nevertheless, it is Ibn Tufail who changes a simple tale into a romance of a unique philosophical significance. It is the philosophical acumen rather than the poetic imagination that marks the treatise with novelty and makes it to be "one of the most original books of the Middle Ages."[21]

Object of the Treatise

As al-Marrakushi, the historian, has said, *Hayy Bin Yaqzan* is a treatise which aims at giving a scientific explanation of the beginning of human life on earth.[22] As a prelude to the story of *Hayy Bin Yaqzan*, it is related that the moderate climate of the uninhabited island, coupled with a fair proportion of the elements, led to the spontaneous birth of the first man, who found the stick a successful weapon in the struggle for existence, and thereby got the conviction of his own superiority over other animals. But actually this beginning is meant merely to provide a background for showing the development of inductive intellect, independently of any social influence whatsoever.

Contradicting al-Marrakushi's position, but in complete agreement with de Boer, Dr. Muhammad Ghallab[23] rightly contends that the treatise essentially aims at showing that the individual man left to himself is able, with the resources of nature alone and without any help from society, to advance to and reach the ultimate truth, provided he has the necessary aptitude for doing so.

The truth of the Qur'an and the Hadith is open to pure intellectual apprehension, but it has to be guarded against the illiterate masses whose business it is not to think but to believe and obey. In fact, this view is an echo of Ibn Bajjah's position, which later came to be regarded as the proper official attitude under the Muwahhids.

Muhammad Yunus Farangi Mahalli[24] points to a still higher aim implicit in the treatise. Religion is as much essential for a progressive society as are philosophy and mysticism – a thesis which is brilliantly exemplified by the co-operation of the three dramatic characters: Hayy, the philosopher; Asal, the mystic; and Salaman, the theologian. The underlying aim is not only to show that philosophy is at one with religion properly understood, but that both the exoteric and the esoteric aspects of religion and philosophy are expressions of the same eternal truth revealed to individuals according to their intellectual

capabilities.

Philosophically speaking, the treatise is a brilliant exposition of Ibn Tufail's theory of knowledge, which seeks to harmonize Aristotle with the Neo-Platonists on the one hand, and al-Ghazali with Ibn Bajjah on the other. Al-Ghazali was dogmatically critical of Aristotelian rationalism, but Ibn Bajjah was Aristotelian through and through. Ibn Tufail, following the middle course, bridged the gulf between the two.

As a rationalist he sides with Ibn Bajjah against al-Ghazali and qualifies mysticism with rationalism; as a mystic he sides with al-Ghazali against Ibn Bajjah and qualifies rationalism with mysticism. Ecstasy is the highest form of knowledge, but the path leading to such knowledge is paved with the improvement of reason, followed by the purification of the soul through ascetic practices.

The methods of al-Ghazali and Ibn Tufail are both partially the same, but, unlike the former, the latter's ecstasy is marked by a Neo-Platonic strain. Al-Ghazali, true to his theologico-mystical position, takes ecstasy as the means to see God, but to Ibn Tufail, the philosopher, the beatific vision reveals the active intellect and the Neo-Platonic chain of causes reaching down to the elements and back to itself.

Doctrines

World

Is the world eternal, or created by God at will out of sheer nothingness? This is one of the most challenging problems of Muslim philosophy. Ibn Tufail, quite in keeping with his dialectical ingenuity, faces it squarely in the manner of Kant. Unlike his predecessors, he does not subscribe to any of the rival doctrines, nor does he make any attempt to reconcile them. On the other hand, he subjects both the Aristotelian and the theological positions to scathing criticism.

The eternity of the world involves the concept of infinite existence which is no less impossible than the notion of infinite extension. Such an existence cannot be free from created accidents and as such cannot precede them in point of time; and that which cannot exist before the created accidents must itself be created in time. Similarly, the concept of *creatio ex nihilo* does not survive his scrutiny. Like al-Ghazali, he points out that the notion of existence after non-existence is unintelligible without supposing the priority of time over the world; but time itself is an inseparable accident of the world, and so its being prior to the world is ruled out. Again, the created must needs have a Creator. Why then did the Creator create the world now and not before? Was it due to something that happened to Him? Obviously not, for nothing existed before Him to make anything happen to Him. Should it be attributed to a change in His nature? But what was there to bring about this change? 25

Consequently, Ibn Tufail accepts neither the eternity nor temporal creation of the world.
This antinomy clearly anticipates the Kantian position that reason has its own limits and that its arguments lead to a maze of contradictions.

God

Both eternity of the world and its *creatio ex nihilo* equally and inevitably lead to the existence of an eternal, incorporeal Necessary Being.[26] The creation of the world in time presupposes a Creator, for the world cannot exist by itself. Again, the Creator must, of necessity, be immaterial, for matter being an accident of the world is itself subject to creation by a Creator. On the other hand, regarding God as material would lead to an infinite regress which is absurd.

The world, therefore, must necessarily have a Creator that has no bodily substance. And since He is immaterial, it follows that we cannot apprehend Him by any of our senses or even by imagination; for imagination represents nothing except the sensuous forms of things in their physical absence.

The eternity of the world implies the eternity of its motion as well; and motion, as held by Aristotle, requires a mover or an efficient cause. If this efficient cause is a body, its power must be finite and consequently incapable of producing an infinite effect. The efficient cause of eternal motion must, therefore, be immaterial. It must neither be associated with matter nor separated from it, nor within it nor without it; for union and separation, inclusion and exclusion are the properties of matter, and the efficient cause, by its very nature, is absolutely free from it.

However, a question is posed here. God and the world both being eternal, how could the former be the cause of the latter? Following Ibn Sina, Ibn Tufail makes a distinction between eternity in essence and that in time, and holds that God does precede the world in point of essence, and not in respect of time. Take an example. If you have a body in your fist and move your hand, the body, no doubt, will move with the movement of the hand, yet its motion will be subject to the motion of the hand. The motion of the latter proceeds from its essence, that of the former is borrowed from the latter,[27] though in point of time neither precedes the other.

As to the world becoming co-eternal with God, he maintains in a mystic strain that the world is not something other than God. Interpreting the divine essence in terms of light, the essential nature of which is perpetual illumination and manifestation, as held by al-Ghazali, he conceives of the world as the manifestation of God's own essence and the shadow of His own light that has no temporal beginning or end. It is not subject to annihilation as the belief in the Day of Judgment tends to suggest. Its corruption consists in its transformation into another form rather than in its complete annihilation. The world must continue in one form or another, for its annihilation is inconsistent with the supreme mystic truth that the nature of divine essence is perpetual illumination and manifestation.[28]

Light Cosmology

In full agreement with Ibn Sina and other predecessors, Ibn Tufail accepts the principle that from one nothing can proceed except one. The manifestation of the existing plurality from unity is explained in the monotonous Neo-Platonic fashion, as successive stages of emanation proceeding from the divine light.

The process, in principle, resembles the successive reflection of solar light in looking-glasses. The light of the sun falling on a looking-glass and from there passing into another, and so on, gives an appearance of plurality.

All these are the reflections of the light of the sun, and yet they are neither the sun, nor the looking-glasses, nor anything different from both. The plurality of reflected light is lost into the unity of the sun when we look to their source, but reappears when we look to the looking-glasses in which the light is reflected. The same is true of the primal light and its manifestation in the cosmos.[29]

Epistemology

The soul, in its first state, is not a *tabula rasa,* or a blank slate. The image of God is implicit in it from the very beginning, but, in order to make it explicit, we need to start with a clean mind, with neither bias, nor prejudice. Freedom from social prejudices and prepossessions as a primary condition of all knowledge is precisely the idea behind Hayy's spontaneous birth in an uninhabited island.

This being achieved, experience, intellection, and ecstasy play their respective roles freely in giving a clear vision of the truth inherentt in the soul. Not mere discipline of spirit, but the education of the senses and the intellect, too, is essential for such a vision. The harmony of experience with reason (Kant), on the one hand, and that of reason with intuition (Bergson and Iqbal), on the other, constitutes the very essence of Ibn Tufail's epistemology.

Experience is a process of knowing the environment through the senses. The sense-organs owe their respective functions to the animal soul with its seat in the heart; from there the confused manifold of sense-data reaches the brain which spreads it all over the body through the nerve-paths. It is transmitted through the same paths to the brain, where it is organized into a perceptive whole.

Observation gives us knowledge about bodies which the inductive intellect, with its instruments of comparison and discrimination, classifies into minerals, plants, and animals. Each of these classes of bodies exhibits certain specific functions, which lead us to postulate specific forms or souls (like Aristotle) as the cause of the functions peculiar to the bodies of different classes. Such a hypothesis, however, is untenable on inductive grounds, for the supposed form or soul is not open to direct observation. Actions, no doubt, appear to be issuing from a certain body; in reality, they are caused neither by the body, nor by the soul in a body, but by some cause external to it and that cause is God as indicated before.[30]

Ibn Tufail also knows the limitations of his newly discovered method. Following al-Ghazali[31] and anticipating Hume, he sees no power in the cause which may necessarily produce the effect as it does. Hume's empiricism ends in scepticism, but the mystic in Ibn Tufail makes him see that the bond of causality is an act of synthesis which he ascribes to God, but which Kant attributes to the *a priori* form of understanding.

Ibn Tufail is at once a forerunner of Bacon, Hume, and Kant. He anticipated the inductive method of

modern science; perceived the inability of theoretical reason to solve the puzzle of the eternity and temporal creation of the world, and that of the inductive intellect to establish a necessary connection between cause and effect; and finally cleared the clouds of scepticism by declaring with Ghazali that the bond of causality is a synthetic act of God.

After educating the senses and the intellect and noticing the limitations of both, Ibn Tufail finally turns to the discipline of the spirit, leading to ecstasy, the highest source of knowledge. In this state, truth is no longer obtained through a process of deduction or induction, but is perceived directly and intuitively by the light within. The soul becomes conscious of itself and experiences "what the eye hath never seen, nor ear ever heard, nor the heart (mind) of any man ever conceived."[32]

The state of ecstasy is ineffable and indescribable, for the scope of words is restricted to what can be seen, heard, or conceived. Divine essence, being pure light, is perceived only by the light within, which comes into its own through the proper education of the senses, intellect, and spirit. The knowledge of essence, therefore, is itself essence. Essence and its vision are identical.[33]

Ethics

Not earthly felicity, nor even divine vicegerency, but complete union with God is the *summum bonum* of ethics. Its realization, after the improvement of inductive and deductive intellect, finally depends upon a three-point code of spiritual discipline, which, according to de Boer, has a "Pythagorean appearance."[34] Man is a curious mixture of body, animal soul, and immaterial essence, and, thus, at once resembles animals, celestial bodies, and God. His spiritual ascent, therefore, consists in satisfying all the three aspects of his nature, by imitating the actions of animals, heavenly bodies, and God.

As to the first imitation, it is binding upon him to provide his body with bare means of sustenance and protect it against inclement weather and wild animals, with the sole intention of preserving the animal soul. The second imitation demands of him cleanliness in dress and body, kindness to animate and inanimate objects, contemplation of the divine essence and revolving round one's own essence in ecstasy. (Ibn Tufail seems to believe that the celestial bodies possess animal soul and are absorbed in the unrestrained contemplation of God.)

Lastly, he must equip himself with the positive and negative attributes of God, viz., knowledge, power, wisdom, freedom from corporeality, etc. Discharging one's obligation to oneself, others, and God, is, in brief, one of the essentials of spiritual discipline.[35] The last obligation is an end-in-itself, the first two lead to its realization in the beatific vision, where vision at once becomes identical with the divine essence.

Philosophy and Religion

Philosophy is purely intellectual apprehension of truth in concepts and images which, by their very nature, are beyond the grasp of conventional modes of expression. Language is a product of the

material needs of social environment and as such can lay its hand only on the phenomenal world. The celestial world, being abstract and immaterial, altogether eludes its grasp. Described in material symbols, it loses its essential nature, and occasions men to think of it other than what it really is. 36

Why then does the Qur'an describe the divine world in parables and similitudes and thereby waive aside a clearer notion of it, and occasion men to fall into the grave error of attributing a corporiety to the essence of God, from which He is absolutely free? And why does not the Holy Book go further than the precepts and rites of worship, and give men leave to gather riches and allow them liberty in the matter of food, by which means they employ themselves in vain pursuits and turn away from the truth? Is it not the imperative need of the soul to free itself from earthly passions and chains before starting its journey towards heaven? Would not men lay aside worldly pursuits and follow the truth, if they were elevated to pure knowledge in order to understand things aright? 37

Hayy's miserable failure to enlighten the masses by means of pure concepts clears the way to the answers to these questions. The Prophet acted wisely in giving the masses sensuous forms instead of full light, for they had no other way of salvation. Elevated to pure knowledge, they would waver and fall headlong and make a bad end.

Nevertheless, though Ibn Tufail voices the Muwahhid State policy of withholding the teaching of philosophy from the multitude, he clearly recognizes a class of gifted people who deserve philosophic instruction and to whom allegory is the best means of imparting knowledge and wisdom.

Religion is for the masses: but philosophy is a privilege of the gifted few. Their provinces should be scrupulously kept apart. Philosophy, no doubt, is at one with religion properly understood; both of them reach the same truth, but through different ways. They differ not only in their method and scope but also in the degree of the blessedness they confer on their devotees.38

Religion describes the divine world in terms of exoteric symbols. It abounds in similitudes, metaphors, and anthropomorphic notions, so that they might better accord with the people's understanding, fill their souls with desire, and attract them to virtue and morality. Philosophy, on the other hand, is a species of esoteric truth. It seeks to interpret the material symbols of religion in terms of pure concepts and images culminating in a state where the divine essence and its knowledge become one.

Sense–perception, reason, and intuition are the bases of philosophical knowledge. Prophets too have intuitions; their main source of knowledge is revelation from God. The knowledge of the prophet is direct and personal, but that of the followers is constituted of testimony.

Philosophy is an exclusive affair of the individual; it presupposes a certain temperament and aptitude for enlightenment. Religion, on the contrary, is a social discipline. Its point of view is institutional, not individual. It aims, more or less, at a uniform betterment of the masses in general, ignoring the individual differences in ability and inner light.

Philosophy brings us face to face with reality. It demands unrestrained contemplation of truth, uninterrupted vision of the primal light, the source of all existence, by renouncing all worldly connections. Religion is not so exacting in its dictates. It decries asceticism in any and every sense of the word; for the generality of mankind, for whom it is primarily meant, are incapable of living up to this ideal. It, therefore, fixes the absolute minimum and then gives men leave to lead a worldly life, without, however, transgressing the limits thereto.

Thus, the philosopher, left to his inner light, is capable of attaining to supreme bliss. As to the masses, they should rest content with a second-rate salvation, beyond which, owing to their own limitations, they cannot rise. Later on this theory, under the influence of Ibn Rushd, armed the medieval European scholars in their struggle against the Church, with the doctrine of "two-fold truth," John of Brescia and Siger of Brabant being two of its chief representatives.[39]

The story does not seem to end here; for the redeeming individualistic attitude of modern philosophy, an attitude that distinguishes it from both the medieval and the ancient outlook, also appears to be a characteristic deposit of the same theory.

Influence

Of Ibn Tufail's works only *Hayy Bin Yaqzan* is extant today. It is a short philosophical romance, but so great has been its influence on the succeeding generations in the West that it has come to be recognized as "one of the most remarkable books of the Middle Ages."[40] In spirit, says Leon Gauthier, it resembles Arabian Nights; in method it is both philosophical and mystical.[41]

It combines pleasure with truth by calling imagination and intuition to the help of reason, and it is this peculiar appeal that has made it an embodiment of imperishable lustre and eternal freshness, and has caused its numerous editions and translations into Hebrew, Latin, English, Dutch, French, Spanish, German, and Russian.[42] Even today, the world's interest in it has not ceased. Ahmad Amin's recent critical Arabic edition (1371/1952), followed by its translations into Persian and Urdu within the same decade, go far enough to prove that it has no less a hold over the modem world than it had over the medieval world.[43]

The treatise caught the attention of the Quakers,[44] and George Kieth, finding in it a support for "enthusiastic notions"[45] of the Society of Friends, translated it into English in 1085/1674. So tremendous and alarming was its influence or what Simon Ockley calls "bad use," that he was obliged to devote a thirty-six-page appendix to his English version of the booklet (1120/1708), in order to refute Ibn Tufail's thesis that the individual man, left to his a priori inner light, can arrive at the ultimate truth.[46]

A Spanish writer, Gracian Baltasar's indebtedness to Ibn Tufail occupied the world's attention during the first four decades of the present century. According to L. Gauthier, the early life of Andrenio, the hero of Gracian Baltasar's *El Criticon* (Saragossa, 1062/1651), is a "manifest" and "undeniable imitation" of

Hayy's legendary version of birth.[47] But G. Gomez, the Spanish critic, claims that the *El Criticon* is nearer to the Greek tale of *Dhu al-Qarnain wa Qissat al-Sanam w-al-Malak wa Bintuhu*, referred to earlier, than to the *Hayy Bin Yaqzan*.[48]

D. K. Petrof, the Russian Orientalist, too holds that Gracian Baltasar is an exception to Ibn Tufail's influence.[49] But L. Gauthier, in his latest version of the treatise (Beirut, 1355/1936), contradicts the position of Gomez and Petrof, and concludes that Gracian Baltasar is indebted to the Greek *Qissat al-Sanam* indirectly through the *Hayy Bin Yaqzan* of Ibn Tufail.[50]

The influence of the romantic frame of the treatise is also visible in *Menedez Pelyo*, *Pou*,[51] *Saif Bin dhi Yazan*, and *Tarzan*.[52] Even the Robinson Crusoe (1132/1719) of Daniel Defoe is no exception to its pervading influence, as proved by A. R. Pastor in his Idea of Robinson Crusoe.[53]

Of Ibn Tufail's pupils Abu Ishaq al-Bitruji and Abu al-Walid ibn Rushd stand far above the rest. He maintained his leadership in the sphere of astronomy through al-Bitruji[54] whose theory of "spiral motion" (*harkat laulabi*) marks the "culmination of the Muslim anti-Ptolemic movement."[55] In philosophy and medicine he dominated the scene in the person of Ibn Rushd,[56] whose rationalism "ran like wild fire in the schools of Europe" and ruled their minds for no less than three centuries.

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14. De Boer, The History of Philosophy in Islam, p. 185
15. A. S. Nadawi, op. cit., p. 50.
16. Later on 'Abd al–Rahman Jami (d. 898/1492) also adopted the names of Salaman and Absal as characters in one of his best known mystic poems (first edition by F. Falconer, London, 1267/1850; translated into English verse by Fitzgerald, 1267/1850, 1297/1879; literal translation along with Fitzgerald's versions by A. J. Arberry, Cambridge, 1376/1956). Salaman in this poem symbolically represents the rational soul, and Absal, his nurse and lover, the passion–worshipping body. Their close union is frowned on by Salaman's royal father and the two enter fire to put an end to their lives. But only Absal is consumed while Salaman remains unharmed, whose sorrow for Absal, in the end, gives way to celestial love for Venus. The poem, as it is, is nearer in its aim and method to Ibn Sina's tale of Salaman wa Absal, rather than to Ibn Tufail's Hayy Bin Yaqzan.
17. We know of this book only through Moses of Narbonne's version in his Hebrew commentary on Hayy Bin. Yaqzan, 750/1349, the summary of which appears in M_ Lntfi Jum`ah's Tarikh Falsafat al–Islam. Cf. also A. S. Nadawi. op. cit., Vol. 11, p. 30.
18. Ibn Sina has advocated the same view in his Shifa'. Cf.. also Jaihl al–Din Dawwani, Akhlaq–i Jalali, Lueknow, 1916, p. 41.
19. Hayy Bin Yaqzan, p. 13, footnote.
20. Zindah–i Bedar, p. 13.
21. G. Sarton, Introduction to the History of Science, Vol. II, p. 354.
22. Khilafat–i Muwahhidin, p. 237.
23. Article “Ibn Tufail,” Majallah Azhar, 1361/1942.
24. Article “Ibn Tufail”,. Ma`arif, Azamgarh, January 1922, pp. 18–28

25. Hayy Bin Yaqzan, p.95.
26. Ibid., pp. 96–97.
27. Ibid., p.98.
28. Ibid., p.120.
29. Ibid., p.117.
30. Ibid., p.92.
31. Al–Ghazali "... goes to the extreme of intellectual scepticism, and, seven hundred years before Hume, he cuts the bond of causality with the edge of his dialectic and proclaims that we can know nothing of cause or effect, but simply that one thing follows another (D. B. Macdonald op. cit., p. 229).
32. Hayy Bin Yaqzan, p.114.
33. Ibid., p.115.
34. De Boer, op.cit., p.186.
35. Hayy Bin Yaqzan, pp.107–113.
36. Ibid., p.119.
37. Ibid., p.127.
38. Z.A.Siddiqi, Falsafa–i Hayy Bin Yaqzan, p.103.
39. F. Thilly, A History of Philosophy, p. 239.
40. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. II, p. 425.
41. Kamil Gilani, Hayy Bin Yaqzan, p. 106.
42. The little masterpiece has a history of translations into European languages, spread over six centuries: Hebrew translation with a commentary and comparison with the Tadbir al–Mutawahhid of Ibn Bajjah by the Jew Moses Ibn Joshua of Narbonne, 750/1349; Latin, E. Pococke Jr., Oxford, 1082/1671; reprinted, Oxford, 1112/1700; oriental editions, at least four from Cairo and two from Constantinople, 1299/1881; English, G. Kieth, London, 1085/1674; G. Ashwell, London, 1098/1686; S. Ockley, London, 1120/1708, reprinted 1123/1711, 1144/1731, revised by E. A. Dyek, Cairo, 1323/1905; P. Bronnle, London, 1322/1904; revised with an Introduction by A. S. Fulton, London, 1325/1907, reprinted, London, 1328/1910, 1348/1929; Dutch, Bouwmeester, Amsterdam, 1083/1672, reprinted 1113/1701; German, .J. G. Pritius, Francfort, 1139/1726; J. G. Eichhorn, Berlin 1197/1782; Spanish, F. P. Biogues, Saragossa, 1318/1900, reprinted 1353/1934; Russian, J. Kuzmin, Leningrad, 1339/1920; French, L. Gauthier, Alger, 1318/1900, Paris, 1327/1909, and Beirut, 1355/1936, the only authentic and exhaustive critical estimate. (Brockelmann, Vol. I, p. 460, Supp. I, p. 831; George Sarton, op. cit., Vol. II, Part I, p. 355; Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. II, p. 425).
43. Arabic edition, Egypt, 1327/1909, Damascus, 1359/1940, with a commentary by Dr. J. Saliba and K. 'Awad, Ahmad Amin's critical Arabic edition along with Ibn Sina and Suhrawardi's treatises of the same title, has renewed world's interest in it. Arabic summary, K. Gilani, Egypt; Persian (on Ahmad Amin's lines), B. Z. Frouzanfar, Teheran, 1376/1956; Urdu, Z. A. Siddiqi, Aligarh, 1376/1955, with a separate exhaustive critical estimate, Aligarh, 1376/1956.
44. A religious "Society of Friends," started by George Fox (1034/1624–1103/1691), with no formulated creed, liturgy, priesthood, and outward sacrament. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. IX, p. 849.)
45. S. Ockley, The Improvement of Human Reason, p. 194.
46. Ibid., p.168.
47. Gauthier, op. cit., p. 52.
48. Hayy Bin Yaqzan, p. 13.
49. G. Sarton, op.cit., p.355.
50. Hayy Bin Yaqzan, p. 14, footnote.
51. Ibid., pp.12, 14.
52. Kamil Gilani, op.cit., p.105.
53. A. R. Pastor, Idea of Robinson Crusoe, Part I, Wartford, 1930.
54. He refuted Ptolemy's theory of epicycles and eccentric circles and in the preface to his Kitab al–Hai'ah confesses that he is following the ideas of Ibn Tufail (L. Gauthier, op. cit., p. 26).
55. G. Sarton, op. cit., p. 399.

56. He was advised by Ibn Tufail with regard to his commentaries on Aristotle's works as well as his medical work Kulliyat. Cf. G. Sarton, op. cit., p. 355

Chapter 28: Ibn Rushd

Chapter 28: Ibn Rushd[1]
By Ahmed Fouad El-Ehwany

Introduction

Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Abmad ibn Muhammad ibn Rushd was born in Cordova in 520/1126. His family was renowned for its deep knowledge in *Fiqh*, and his father and grandfather held the office of the Chief Justice of Andalus. This religious descent gave him the opportunity to reach a high standard in Islamic studies. The Qur'an and its exegesis, the Tradition of the Prophet, the science of *Fiqh*, Arabic language and literature were all learnt by him by oral transmission from an authorized doctor (*`alim*).

He revised the Malikite book *al-Muwatta'*, which he had studied with his father Abu al-Qasim, and learnt it by heart.[2] He also pursued such scientific studies as mathematics, physics, astronomy, logic, philosophy, and medicine. His teachers in these sciences were not renowned, but on the whole Cordova was famous for being a centre of philosophical studies, while Seville was renowned for its artistic activities.

In a dialogue between him and Ibn Zuhr the physician, while they were in the Court of al-Mansur ibn `Abd al-Mu'min, Ibn Rushd, proud of the scientific atmosphere in his native city, said: "If a learned man died in Seville his books are sent to Cordova to be sold there; and if a singer died in Cordova his musical instruments are sent to Seville."[3] In fact, Cordova at that time rivalled Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, and the other great cities in eastern Islam.

He was the pupil of neither Ibn Bajjah nor Ibn Tufail, the two great Maghhribian philosophers. In his story, *Hayy Bin Yaqzan*, Ibn Tufail observed that most of the learned men in Maghrib were interested in mathematics, and that philosophy when introduced through the books of Aristotle, al-Farabi, and Ibn Sina was found unsatisfactory. The first philosopher who could have produced something valuable on this subject was Ibn Bajjah, but he was occupied in worldly affairs and died before completing his works. Al-Ghazali criticized the doctrines of the Muslim philosophers in his book *Tahafut*: and his way to attain to truth was a mystic one. Ibn Sina expounded the doctrine of Aristotle in *al-Shifa'*, but he mixed his own opinions with those of Aristotle- This short account given by Ibn Tufail concerning the state of philosophical studies in eastern Islam explains why he asked Ibn Rushd to comment on Aristotle.

Ibn Rushd lived in the midst of disturbed political conditions. He was born in the reign of the Almoravides who were overthrown in Marrakush in 542/1147 by the Almohades, who conquered Cordova in 543/1148. The Almohade movement was started by Ibn Tumart who called himself al-Mahdi. He tried to imitate the Fatimids, who had appeared a century before and founded an empire in Egypt, in their encouragement of philosophy, their secret interpretations, and their excellence in astronomy and astrology.[4] His three Almohade successors 'Abd al-Mu'min, Abu Ya`qub, and Abu Yusuf, whom Ibn Rushd served, were known for their encouragement of science and philosophy.

When Abu Ya`qub became Amir, he ordered Ibn Rushd to write commentaries on Aristotle. This is the account given by al-Marrakushi. Ibn Rushd said: "When I entered into the presence of the Prince of the Believers Abu Ya`qub, I found him with Abu Bakr Ibn Tufail alone. Abu Ya`qub began praising me, mentioning my family and ancestors. The first thing the Prince of the Believers said to me ... was, `What is their opinion about the heavens?' referring to the philosophers. `Are they eternal or created?' Confusion and fear took hold of me.... But the Prince of the Believers understood my fear and confusion, and turned to Ibn Tufail and began talking about the question he had asked me, mentioning what Aristotle, Plato, and all the philosophers had said...".[5]

In another account given by the same biographer, Ibn Rushd relates that Ibn Tufail summoned him one day and told him that the Prince of the Believers complained of the difficulty of the expression of Aristotle and his translators, and mentioned the obscurity of his aims saying: "If someone would tackle these books, summarize them, and expound their aims after understanding them thoroughly, it would be easier for people to grasp them." And Ibn Tufail got himself excused on the plea of old age and his occupation in government service and asked Ibn Rushd to take up this work.

Thus, Ibn Rushd started his commentaries on the books of Aristotle. He deserved for this undertaking the title of the "Commentator"[6] for which he was renowned in medieval Europe. Dante in his *Divine Comedy* mentions him together with Euclid, Ptolemy, Hippocrates, Avicenna, and Galen, designating him as the great Commentator.

"Euclide geometra e Tolemeo,
Ipocrate, Avicenna e Galieno,
Averois, che'l gran comento feo."
(Dante, "Inferno," IV, 142-44)

It is related that he wrote three kinds of commentaries: the great, the middle, and the lesser. The great commentaries are called *tafsir*, following the model of the exegesis of the Qur'an. He quotes a paragraph from Aristotle and then gives its interpretation and commentary. We have now in Arabic his great commentary of the *Metaphysica*, edited by Bouyges (1357-1371/ 1938-1951).

The lesser ones are called the *talkhis*. In the Arabic language *talkhis* means summary, resume or precis. One may say that these commentaries although Aristotelian in the main, reveal also the true Rushdian

philosophy. A compendium called the *Majmu`ah* or *Jawami`* comprising six books (*Physics*, *De Caelo et Mundo, De Generations el Corruption, Meteorologica, De Anima* and *Metaphysica*) has now been published in Arabic. In these commentaries, Ibn Rushd did not follow the original text of Aristotle and, the order of his thought.

An example of the middle commentaries is to be found in the "Categories," edited by Bouyges in 1357/1932. At the beginning of the paragraph, Ibn Rushd says: "*qala*" ("*dixit*") referring to Aristotle, and sometimes (not always) gives an excerpt of the original text.[7] This method was current in eastern Islam, and Ibn Sina followed it in his *al-Shifa'*, reproducing in many places the very phrases of the Arabic translation of Aristotle. In fact, Ibn Sina, declared that in his *al-Shifa'* he was following the "First Master."

It is true that most of the commentaries are found in their Latin or Hebrew translations, or conserved in Hebrew transliteration, but the original Arabic texts are more sure and accurate. On the whole, the value of Ibn Rushd's commentaries is historical, except for the lesser ones which reveal to a certain extent his own thought. His own philosophical opinions are to be found in three important books, the *Fasl*, the *Kashf*, and the *Tahafut*, and in a short treatise called *al-Ittisal*. His *Colliget* (*Kulliyat*) in medicine is as important as the *Canon* of Ibn Sina, and was also translated into Latin, but it was less famous than that of Ibn Sina's. In jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) his book *Bidayat al-Mujtah*id is used as an Arabic reference book.

He was better known and appreciated in medieval Europe than in the East for many reasons. First, his numerous writings were translated into Latin and were circulated and conserved, while his original Arabic texts were either burnt or proscribed due to the antagonistic spirit against philosophy and philosophers. Secondly, Europe during the Renaissance was willing to accept the scientific method as viewed by Ibn Rushd, while science and philosophy began in the East to be sacrificed for the sake of mystical and religious movements. In fact, he himself was affected by this conflict between science (and philosophy) and religion. Religion won the battle in the East, and science triumphed in the West.

His disgrace, persecution, and exile in 593/1198 were the result of that conflict. The dispute for political power between the representatives of religion and philosophers never ceased from the third/ninth century onward. Al-Kindi described this dispute and defended the philosophers in his books.[8] The men of religious learning (*fuqaha'* and *`ulama'*) were nearer to the masses who were influenced by them. The Muslim rulers, in need of their support, left the philosophers to the rage of the masses.

Several accounts have been given concerning the exile of Ibn Rushd to Lucena, near Cordova. The charge was that he had written in some of his books of having seen the giraffe in the garden of the king of the Berbers. Ibn Rushd said in his defence that he had written "the king of the *two lands*." (*Berber* written in free hand without diacritical marks can be read as *Barrain*.) A second story holds that he had written down that Venus is divine. A third story is that he denied the historical truth of the People of `Ad mentioned in the Qur'an.

The intrigues of the religious party succeeded to the point that not only was Ibn Rushd exiled but his

writings too were publicly burned. A manifesto[9] against philosophy and philosophers was issued and distributed everywhere in Andalus and Marrakush, prohibiting the so-called dangerous studies and ordering to burn all the books dealing with such sciences. However, his disgrace did not last long and al-Mansur after his return from Marrakush pardoned and recalled him. Ibn Rushd went to Marrakush where he died in 595/1198.

Philosophy And Religion

The accord between philosophy and religion is rightly regarded as the most important feature of Islamic philosophy. Ibn Rushd's solution to this problem was really an ingenious one. As a philosopher, he found that it was his duty to defend the philosophers against the fierce attacks of the *faqihs* and theologians, especially after their condemnation by al-Ghazali in his "Incoherence of the Philosophers." Ibn Rushd's treatise called *Fasl al-Maqal fi ma bain al-Hikmah w-al-Shari`ah min al-Ittisal* is a defence of philosophy in so far as it is shown to be in harmony with religion.

It may be doubted nowadays whether this question should receive so much attention, but in the sixth/twelfth century it was really vital. Philosophers were accused of heresy (*kufr*) or irreligion. In fact al-Ghazali condemned the philosophers as irreligious in his *Tahafut*. If this accusation were true, the philosophers according to Islamic Law would be put to death, unless they gave up philosophizing or proclaimed publicly that they did not believe in their philosophical doctrines. Consequently, it was necessary for philosophers to defend themselves and their opinions.

Ibn Rushd begins his treatise by asking whether philosophy is permitted, prohibited, recommended, or ordained by the *Shari'ah* (Islamic Law). His answer is, from the very outset, that philosophy is ordained or at least recommended by religion (religion is used in this context as synonymous with *Shari`ah* and specifically Islam). Because the function of philosophy is nothing more than speculating on the beings and considering them in so far as they lead to the knowledge of the Creator.[10]

The Qur'an exhorts man to this kind of rational consideration (*i'tibar*) in many a verse such as: ***"Consider, you who have vision."*** *Al-i`tibar* is a Qur'anic term which means something more than pure speculation or reflection (*nazar*).

To translate this Qur'anic consideration in logical terms is nothing more than getting the unknown from the known by way of inference. This type of reasoning is called deduction of which demonstration (*burhan*) is the best form. And since God exhorts man to know Him through demonstration, one must begin to learn how to distinguish between the demonstrative and the dialectical, rhetorical, and sophistical deductions. Demonstration is the instrument by which one can attain to the knowledge of God. It is the logical method of thinking, which leads to certainty.

It follows that the Qur'an exhorts man to study philosophy since he must speculate on the universe and. consider the different kinds of beings. We have now passed from the legal plane of *Fiqh* to the

philosophical one, in spite of their distinction. The objective of religion is defined in philosophical terms: it is to obtain the true theory and the true practice (*al-'ilm al-haqq w-al-`amal al-haqq*).[11]

This reminds us of the definition of philosophy given by al-Kindi and his followers, which remained current all through Islamic philosophy. True knowledge is the knowledge of God, of all the other beings as such, and of the happiness and unhappiness in the hereafter.[12] The way of acquiring knowledge is of two kinds, apprehension and assent. Assent is either demonstrative, dialectical, or rhetorical.

These three kinds of assent are all used in the Qur'an. Men are of three classes, the philosophers, the theologians, and the common people (*al-jumhur*). The philosophers are the people of demonstration. The theologians – the Ash'arites whose doctrine was the official one at the time of ibn Rushd – are of a lower degree, since they start from dialectical reasoning and not from scientific truth. The masses are the "people of rhetoric" who understand only through examples and poetic thinking.

So far, religion is compatible with philosophy. The act and aim of philosophy are the same as those of religion. Now about the compatibility of their methods and subject-matter. If the traditional (*al-manqul*) is found to be contrary to the rational (*al-ma`qul*), it is to be interpreted in such a way as to be in harmony with the rational.[13] Allegorical interpretation (*ta'wil*) is based on the fact that there are certain Qur'anic verses which have an apparent (*zahir*) meaning and an inner (*batin*) meaning.

Early Muslim scholars in the face of such verses avoided interpreting them, because they were afraid to confuse the minds of the common people. The Ash'arites interpreted some such verses as that of "sitting on the Throne" (*al-istiwa'*), while the Hanbalites believed in its apparent meaning. The position of Ibn Rushd, as a philosopher, is different from that of the early Muslims, the Ash'arites and the Hanbalites. *Ta'wil* is to be practised only by the philosophers who are the people of demonstration. Even then, this *ta'wil* should be kept back as esoteric knowledge, far from being declared to the masses.

Ibn Rushd returns to the plane of *Fiqh* and compares the logical method of philosophy with the traditional one of *Fiqh*. This latter, called the principles of Fiqh, depends on four sources: the Qur'an, Tradition, *ijma`* (consensus) and *qiyas* (legal syllogism). We have seen that the Qur'an has to be rationally interpreted.

Ijma' comes from the unanimous accord of the opinions of all the qualified scholars at a certain time. But there was no consensus at any time about doctrinal matters, simply because some scholars believed, as mentioned in the Qur'an, that there were certain matters which should be concealed. Only "those who are well grounded in learning"[14] (*al-rasikhun fi al-'ilm*) had the right to know. And, since there is no consensus in doctrinal matters, al-Ghazali had no right to condemn the philosophers as irreligious on the basis of *ijma'*. They deserved, in al-Ghazali's opinion, the charge of heresy (*takfir*) for three things: their doctrine concerning the eternity of the world, their denial of God's knowledge of particulars, and their denial of bodily resurrection.

According to Ibn Rushd, religion is based on three principles in which every Muslim of the above-

mentioned three classes should believe. These are the existence of God, the prophecy, and resurrection.[15] These three principles constitute the subject-matter of religion.

As prophecy depends on revelation, philosophy remains distinct from religion, unless it is shown that reason and revelation are in accord with each other. This problem is discussed in other books of his in detail. But he who denies any one of the above principles is irreligious (*kafir*). He can believe what he likes through any of the demonstrative, dialectical, or rhetorical ways.

Philosophers should not declare their esoteric interpretations to the masses lest they should be led to heresy. The theologians who did so were responsible for the origin of the various Islamic sects which accused one another of heresy.

All in all, philosophy is the twin sister of religion; they are the two friends who, by their very nature, love each other.

The Way To God

Having established that religion has apparent and inner meanings, symbolic for the common people and hidden for the learned, Ibn Rushd endeavours in his book: *al-Kashf `an Manahij al-Adillah* to find out the way to God, i.e., the methods given in the Qur'an to attain to the belief in the existence of God and to the knowledge of His attributes, according to the apparent meaning, for the first knowledge that every reasonable man is entitled to obtain is of the way which leads to the belief in the existence of the Creator.

Since this book was written in a theological form, Ibn Rushd began to review the methods of the various Islamic sects, which he classified into five principal kinds: the Ash'arites, the Mu'tazilites, the Batinites, Hashawites, and the Sufis.[16] It was but natural that he should have reserved for his contemporaries, the Aah'arites, the greatest part of his discussion, but strangely enough he never referred to the Batinites mentioned in the above classification. The Mu'tazilites were briefly discussed along with the Ash'arites, but not separately through their original writings which had not, as he later stated, reached the Maghrib.

The Hashawites maintain that the way to God is listening through oral transmission (*al-sama'*)[17] and not through reason. They mean that faith in God is received from the Prophet and that reason has nothing to do with it. But this contradicts what is mentioned in the Sacred Book which calls men in general to believe through rational proofs.

The Ash`arites hold that the way to God is through reason, but their method is different from the religious way which the Qur'an has called man to follow. They lay down certain dialectical premises from which they start, such as: the world is temporal; bodies are composed of atoms; atoms are created; the agent of the world is neither temporal nor eternal. Their arguments, however, are far from being understood by the common people, and are inconsistent and unconvincing.[18]

Another Ash`arite way is that of Abu al-Ma`ali.[19] It is based on two premises, that the world is probable (*ja'iz*), and that what is probable is temporal. But this way abolishes the wisdom of creating the creatures as such. The way of Ibn Sina[20] is in some respects similar to that of Abu al-Ma`ali; only he substitutes the probable by the possible.

The Sufis[21] follow the mystic way. They say that the knowledge of God is thrown into the soul from high above, after we have got rid of our earthly desires. But, this way is not accessible to all mankind, and it abolishes speculation for which people are exhorted all through the Qur'an.

What, then, is the true way to God which is suitable for all mankind? Two ways are mentioned in the Qur'an, called by Ibn Rushd the proof of providence and the proof of creation. The first is teleological and the second cosmological, both starting from man and other beings, not from the universe as a whole.

The proof of providence depends on two principles: the first is that all beings are suitable for the existence of man; and the second is that this suitability is by necessity due to an agent intending to do so by will, since this suitability cannot be achieved by chance. All beings are created for the service of man: stars shine at night for his guidance, his bodily organs are fit for his life and existence. A whole theory of value can be developed from this view.

The proof called creation takes into consideration the animals, plants, and heavens. It is also based on two principles: that all beings are created, and that everything created is in need of a Creator. The examples given refer to animated beings. When we see that bodies devoid of life are endowed with life, we know by necessity that there is a Creator of life, i.e., God. Heavens, also, are commanded to move and take care of the sublunary world. God says in the Holy Book: ***"Verily, those on whom ye call beside God could never create a fly if they all united to do so."*** [22] He who wants to know God should know the essence and uses of things to attain to the knowledge of true creation.

These two ways are common both to the learned elite and the masses. The difference between their knowledge lies in the degree of details.[23] Common people are content with the sensuous knowledge, which is the first step to science. The elite are convinced only by demonstration.

The significance of God's unicity is expressed in the Qur'anic principle ***"No God but He."***[24] Negation of other deities is considered here to be an additional meaning to the affirmation of God's unicity.[25] What would happen if there were more than one God? The world would be subject to corruption: one god would be superior to the others, or the rest of the gods would find some device to dethrone the one in power.[26]

God is qualified by seven main attributes:[27] knowledge, life, power, will, audition, sight, and speech. They are human qualifications considered in their absolute perfection. Three positions can be taken as regards the relation between God's essence and His attributes. The first is the negation of the attributes. This is the position of the Mu'tazilites. The second is to affirm them in a state of complete perfection. The third is to conceive them as trancendent and beyond human knowledge. They are in the sphere of the

unknowable.

As a matter of fact, the Qur'an asserts the attributes and yet states that ***"Nothing is similar to Him,"***[28] which means that He is unknowable. The common people may believe according to the apparent meaning of the text that He sees, hears, speaks, etc. The people of demonstration should not expound their interpretation before the masses.

The doctrines of both the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites are unsound. Ibn Rushd criticizes their solutions in his book *al-Manahij* and at length in the *Tahafut*. He holds that in the case of the attributes, without affirming or negating them, one must follow the apparent meaning mentioned in the Qur'an. As to philosophical interpretation, this must be kept esoteric.

The acts of God are reduced to five principal ones: creation, sending the prophets, predestination, justice, and resurrection.[29] They constitute the relationship between God and the world and man.

Creation is an act of God. He created the world providentially, not by chance. The world is well ordered and is in a state of the most perfect regularity, which proves the existence of a wise Creator. Causality is presupposed. All the Rushdian proofs depend on the belief that nothing comes to be without a cause, and that there is a definite series of causes emanating from a Prime Cause.

He says: "He who, in the artificial things, denies or cannot understand the caused resulting from causes would have no knowledge of the art or the artisan; similarly, he who denies the existence in this world of the dependence of effects on causes would deny the wise Maker.[30]

The proof for sending prophets is based on two principles mentioned in the Qur'an. The first is that men of this type are those who prescribe the laws through God's revelation, not through human learning. The act of a prophet is to prescribe laws which if followed by men would bring them everlasting happiness. The second principle is that he who is found to be qualified to perform this act of lawgiving is a prophet.

Just as the act of the physician is to cure the body, and he who effects this cure is a physician, so the act of the prophet is to prescribe laws and he who is found to do this act is a prophet. Theologians assume that our belief in the truth of the prophets lies in the belief in their miraculous acts, which are supernatural. But the Qur'an refuses to follow this way which was common to previous religions.

When the Arabs told Muhammad that they would not believe in him unless he made a spring flow from dry earth, he answered through God's revelation: "I am only a human being, a messenger."[31] The only miracle of Islam is its Holy Book, the Qur'an, which comprises the laws necessary for the well-being of man. Thus, there is nothing supernatural,[32] since everything goes on according to natural laws resulting from the close association of causes and effects.

Predestination is a very difficult problem about which the opinions of the Muslim thinkers oscillate from absolute fatalism to absolute free-will. Fatalism abolishes man's freedom, and, consequently, his

responsibility. The Mu'tazilites are in favour of free-will which is the ground of man's responsibility for his good and bad doings. If this view is assumed, God has nothing to do with man's acts, man being creator of his own acts. And, consequently, there would be other creators besides the Creator.

The Ash`arites maintain a midway position saying that man is predestined and yet he acquires the power to act. This is their famous doctrine concerning the acquisition (*al-kasb*). But this solution is, in Ibn Rushd's view, self-contradictory. Their doctrine leads to fatalism.

Man is predisposed neither to fatalism nor to free-will. He is determined. Determinism is the production of acts according to their appropriate causes. Causes are external or internal. Our acts are accomplished both through our will and the compatibility of external happenings. Human will is determined by outer stimuli which are subject to definite regularity and harmonic order according to the universal will of God.

Not only are our acts determined by causes from without, they are also related to causes from within ourselves. The determined regularity in external and internal causes is what we call predestination.[33] God's knowledge of these causes and of what results from them is the reason for their being.

God is just and never does injustice to man, as declared in the Qur'an. The nature of man is not absolutely good, although good is dominant. The majority of mankind are good. God has created good essentially, and bad accidentally for the good. Good and bad are similar to fire which has many uses for the well-being of things, yet in some cases it may be harmful. This Rushdian theory supports the optimism that prevails in the world.

All religions are in accord as to the reality of resurrection. They differ only as to whether it is spiritual or bodily. Spiritual resurrection is the survival of the soul after its separation from the body. Belief in bodily resurrection is more suitable for the minds of the masses who are short of understanding the spiritual immortality of the soul.

The Way To Knowledge

We pass now from Ibn Rushd, the Muslim philosopher garbed in a cloak of *Fiqh*, to the commentator of Aristotle, who was more faithful to the “First Master” than Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius. Medieval philosophy in Europe was influenced by Aristotle through the commentaries of Ibn Rushd. As Gilson rightly puts it: “Strangely enough, very few men have been more influential than Averroes in shaping the popular notion of medieval philosophy which is now currently received as historical truth.”[34] It is true that his main system is Aristotelian, but under the influences of ideas received from different sources, he gave the system a new form.

The way to knowledge is one of the major problems, discussed all through Muslim philosophy because of its relationship to higher existents, namely, the “agent intellect” with which man gets in communion.

The soul and intellect are carefully distinguished by Ibn Rushd in his consideration of the process of knowledge.

A full account about the hierarchical order of beings is necessary to understand the place of these two entities. This is why Ibn Rushd began his treatise *Talkhis Kitab al-Nafs* by giving a short review concerning the composition of beings and their source of behaviour and knowledge. From the very start he says: "The aim of this treatise is to set forth in psychology the commentators' opinions which are more related to natural science and more appropriate to Aristotle's purpose. It would be relevant before that to give a brief introduction about the necessary principles presupposed for understanding the substance of the soul."

These are: (i) All perishable beings are composed of matter and form, each of which is not by itself a body, although through their combination the bodyexists. (ii) Prime matter has no existence in actuality, but is only the potency to receive forms. (iii) The first simple bodies in which prime matter is actualized are the four elements: fire, air, water, and earth.

(iv) The elements enter in the composition of all other bodies through mixture. The remote cause of this mixture is the heavenly bodies. (v) Natural heat is the proximate cause of the real combination. (vi) Organic beings are generated from animate individuals of their kind through natural heat. Soul is the proximate cause of their generation and their remote cause is the intelligence that moves the spheres.

Before further discussion of psychology Ibn Rushd asks the crucial question "Can there be forms separate from matter ?"[35] The answer to this question constitutes the true way of knowledge.

Material forms can never be separate from matter, since physical forms[36] – which is another expression of material forms – subsist only in matter. Hence they are temporal and subject to change. They are not eternal since they have no subsistence except in matter. It follows that separate forms are something other than the material forms. Consequently, the separateness of the rational soul, namely, the intellect, can only be demonstrated if it is shown that it is pure form.

The soul is not separate because it is "the form of an organic natural body".[37] The soul is divided according to its acts into five kinds: the nutritive, the sensitive, the imaginative, the cognitive, and the appetitive, and this last seems to be subsequent to the imaginative and sensitive.[38]

The hierarchical order of the faculties is dependent on the order of the material forms, mentioned above. The way of animal knowledge is by sensation and imagination, and that of man, besides these two, by intellect. Thus, the way to knowledge is either through the senses or through the intellect, leading either to the knowledge of the particular or of the universal. True knowledge is that of the universal, otherwise animals can be said to have knowledge.

The term "knowledge" is applied equivocally to animals, man, and God. Animal knowledge is limited by the sensuous and imaginative, whereas human knowledge is universal. Sensation and imagination exist

in animals for their conservation. To assure their security, protect themselves, and obtain food, animals have to move towards or away from the sensibles.

In case the sensibles are present, they are perceived by the senses; and in their absence, representations take their place. Sensations are, then, the condition of representation, and “every being which has representations necessarily has sensations.” 39 But, since man has a higher faculty, namely, intellect, he gets representations through thought and reasoning, whereas in animals representations exist by nature.40

Further, forms perceived by animals are finite, and sometimes, when perceived by man, they become universal images. Those who assume that animals have reason confuse universal images with universal concepts. Forms perceived by man are infinite, in the sense that the particulars they denote are infinite. Representations, in so far as they are the motor cause for movement, effect their action in man through their collaboration with concepts.

Human knowledge must not be confused with divine knowledge, since “man perceives the individual through the senses and universal existents through his intellect. The cause of man's perception changes through the change in the things perceived, and the plurality of perceptions implies the plurality of objects.”41

It is impossible that God's knowledge should be analogous to ours, because “our knowledge is the effect of the existents, whereas God's knowledge is their cause.”42 The two kinds of knowledge, far from being similar to one another, stand in opposition. God's knowledge is eternal, while man's knowledge is temporal. “It is God's knowledge which produced the existents, and it is not the existents which produce His knowledge.”43

So far, we have seen that there is individual as well as universal knowledge. The first is the outcome of sensation and imagination, and the second is the result of the intellect. The act of the intellect is to perceive the notion, the universal concept, and the essence.

The intellect has three basic operations abstraction, combination, and judgment. When we perceive a universal notion, we abstract it from matter. This is more evident in a thing denuded of and far from matter, such as the point and line.44 Not only does intellect abstract simple apprehensions from matter, it combines them together and judges that some of them when predicated of some others are true or false. The first of these operations is called apprehension (*intelligere* in the Latin terminology) and the second is called assent (*credulitas*).

We have, then, three successive operations. First, we get in the intellect single notions (intentions) totally abstracted from matter, and this operation is what has been called abstraction. Secondly, by way of combining two or more notions together we have the concept, such as the concept of man which is composed of animality and rationality, the genus and differentia. And this constitutes the *esse* of a thing. Hence, a complete essence constitutes also its definition. Thirdly, since concepts are neither true nor

false, when affirmed or negated in a proposition, we have a judgment.[45]

The intellect is theoretical and practical. Practical intellect is common to all people. This faculty is the origin of arts of man necessary and useful for his existence. Practical intellectibles are produced through experience which is based on sensation and imagination: Consequently, practical intellect is corruptible since its intellectibles depend for their existence on sensation and imagination. Hence they are generated when perceptions and representations are generated, and corrupted when these are corrupted.

Through practical intellect man loves and hates, lives in society, and has friends. Virtues are the product of practical intellect. The existence of virtues is nothing more than the existence of representations from which we move towards virtuous acts in the most right manner; such as to be brave in the proper place and time and according to the right measure.[46]

Two main questions must be settled concerning the theoretical intellect, the first its eternity and the second, its communion with the agent intellect. The first question can be put in other terms: Are the theoretical intellectibles always in actuality, or do they first exist in potency and then in actuality, thus being in some way material?[47] This brings Ibn Rushd once more to the consideration of the material forms, grading from the elementary forms (i.e. forms of the four elements) to the representations produced by the imaginative soul.

They all have four things in common. (1) Their existence is subsequent to change. (2) They are diverse and multiple according to the diversity and plurality of their objects. (It follows from these two qualities that they are temporal.) (3) They are composed of something material and something formal. (4) The perceived is different from the existent, since the form perceived is one in so far as it is intelligible and multiple as regards its individuality.[48]

Intelligible forms in man are different from all the other material forms. (1) Their intellectual existence is one and the same as their objective existence which can be pointed out. (2) Their perception is infinite since the forms when abstracted have no individual plurality. (3) The intellect is the intellectible and perception is the perceived. (4) Intellect grows with old age, whereas all other faculties weaken, because the intellect operates without an organ.[49]

The operatica of intellection runs like this: there is the intellect or the person who perceives, and there are the intellectibles which are the object of intellection and perceived by the intellect. Intellectibles must be existent, otherwise the intellect would have nothing to apprehend, because it can only be attached to what exists, not to what does not exist.[50] And, our knowledge is the effect of the existents.

Now, these intellectibles, namely, the universals, either exist in the soul as held by Plato, or exist in the reality outside the soul. Ibn Rushd, following Aristotle, rejects the doctrine of idealism. Consequently, universals exist in reality and their existence is attached to the particulars composed of matter and form. Through the operation of abstraction, the intellect denudes the forms of matter.

It follows that intellectibles are partly material and partly immaterial.[51] They are material in so far as they depend on representations which in their turn depend on the particulars. The material intellect must not be understood as corporeal, but as mere possibility, the disposition to receive the intellectibles. What brings but the possible intellect from potency to actuality is the agent intellect. It is higher and nobler than the possible. It is itself existing, always in actuality, whether perceived by us or not. This agent intellect is from all points of view one and the same with the intellectibles.

Man can attain to the agent intellect in his life-time as he grows up. Since it has been shown that the intellect is nothing other than the intellectibles, the act of the intellect in acquiring the intellectibles is called the "union" (*al-ittihad*) or the "communion" (*al-ittisal*).

Union is not something analogous to the way of the Sufis, since the agent intellect is not divine and does not illuminate our souls as some Neo-Platonists hold. Union is a rational operation explained on epistemological grounds, and is based on the acquirement of the universal forms by the possible intellect. These universal forms have no existence in actuality apart from the sensible individuals.

When Ibn Rushd was translated into Latin, some of his doctrines were accepted and some refuted. The movement which was influenced by him is called Latin Averroism. It means Aristotelian philosophy as interpreted by Ibn Rushd, his distinction between philosophy and theology, his empirical rationalism, and more especially his theory concerning the intellect. On the whole, Latin Averroism considered Ibn Rushd a faithful exponent of Aristotle and of truth.

Meanwhile, there arose many theologians who opposed his doctrines. An example of this opposition is to be found in the treatise of Albert the Great, "On the Oneness of the Intellect against Averroes." Siger of Brabant followed Ibn Rushd in his psychology in particular; a summary of Siger's treatise: "On the Intellect,"[52] proves that he borrowed his ideas from a translation of the Kitab al-Nafs. The Averroist movement lasted till the ninth/fifteenth century and had many reactions, which proves the great influence of the philosopher of Cordova.

The Way To Science

Science, religion, and philosophy constitute three different realms. Man is by necessity forced to find some way of harmonizing these different aspects of culture which co-exist in the society in which he lives; otherwise his personality would disintegrate.

Science is necessary for the welfare of all the people living in a civilized community. Their material existence is dependent on and correlated with the degree of scientific knowledge. Religion is even more fundamental in human societies. As Bergson puts it, "We find in the past, we could find today, human societies with neither science nor art nor philosophy. But there has never been a society without religion."[53] Philosophy is the search for truth. It has rightly been said that man is a metaphysical animal.

The greatness of famous philosophers – Plato, Aristotle, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Descartes, Kant, etc. – lies in placing each of these three disciplines in its proper place, both in the sphere of knowledge and of action. The first philosophers in Islam gave to science its due consideration, without devaluing religion. Al–Kindi, al–Farabi, and Ibn Sina were all scientists and philosophers. And with that, they were all sincere Muslims, except that they interpreted religion in the light of their scientific and philosophical knowledge.

Al–Ghazali was dissatisfied with the doctrines of the philosophers. He attacked them in his book "The Incoherence of the Philosophers" and accused them of *kufr* on twenty points. The eloquence of al–Ghazali, his deep knowledge of the art of controversy and argumentation, and his vast erudition in every study gave him a wide popularity to the point that he was considered an eminent authority on Islam (*hujjat al–Islam*).

Ibn Rushd answered the accusations point by point. The discussion between the two great figures is really an interesting debate, which mirrors a genuine conflict in Muslim society, between religion, on the one hand, and science and philosophy, on the other, Ibn Rushd, in his capacity as a philosopher aiming at truth, integrated the three apparently diverse realms. Through rational interpretation of the Qur'an, he effected the harmony of religion with philosophy. He unveiled the true way to religion as stated in the Qur'an.

He, now, turns to pave the way to science. In his enthusiastic defence of religion, al–Ghazali unintentionally shut the door to it. The mystic way of the Sufis prescribed by him is incompatible with the rational methods of science. The Muslims, unfortunately, followed al–Ghazali, the "Authority of Islam," and neglected little by little the study of the sciences. Their once great civilization faded.

On the other hand, Ibn Rushd defended science, and medieval Europe followed the way prescribed by him to attain to it. This is the true spirit of Latin Averroism which led to the rise of European science. Science is the body of systematized and formulated knowledge based on observation and classification of facts. But the way to science is more basic than the scientific truths so obtained, since through the scientific method we can attain to the scientific realities and progress more and more in our study.

The two *Tahafuts*, of al–Ghazali and that of Ibn Rushd, picture the ideas which were in play on the stage of Islamic civilization during the fifth and sixth/eleventh and twelfth centuries. Some of those ideas, though now considered to be of mere historical value, were of major importance at the time.

The length at which the problem of the eternity of the world is discussed and its prime place at the head of the twenty discussions indicate the importance that al–Ghazali gave to it. Ibn Rushd considers that the main questions for which al–Ghazali charged the philosophers of being irreligious amount to three: eternity of the world, denial of God's knowledge of particulars, and bodily resurrection.

In our view, the problem which still remains of vital importance is that of causality. Scientific thought can only be established on the basis of the causal principle. While Hume criticized causality, Kant tried to

find out some rational grounds on which causality can stand. Through transcendental *a priori* forms of pure reason, Kant believed that science is safeguarded.

The induction of Stuart Mill presupposes universal causation. Russell says “Whether from pure prejudice, or from the influence of tradition, or for some other reason, it is easier to believe that there is a law of nature to the effect that causes are *always* followed by their effects than to the effect that this *usually* happens.”54 Only contemporary science has replaced the conception of “cause” by “causal laws,” causal lines, statistics, etc.

Ibn Rushd found himself entitled to safeguard science and show the way to attain to scientific realities, since al-Ghazali undermined the necessary relation of cause and effect. As Quadri puts it: “La science perdait ainsi toute raison d'etre. La subsistance n'avait plus de fondement.... La pence scientifique devait etre revendiquee et sauvee.”55

Al-Ghazali begins the dialogue about the natural sciences by enumerating the different sciences “to make it known that the Holy Law does not ask one to contest and refute them.” In this enumeration he mentions such sciences as the art of incantation, alchemy, astrology, etc. Ibn Rushd rejects such pseudo-sciences. The talismanic art is vain. Whether alchemy really exists is very dubious. Astrology does not belong to the physical sciences.56

The real reason why al-Ghazali denied the necessary causal relation is that “on its negation depends the possibility of affirming the existence of miracles which interrupt the usual course of nature, like changing of the rod into a serpent .... “57 According to Ibn Rushd, miracles must not be questioned or examined by the philosophers. “He who doubts them merits punishment.”

However, the miracle of Islam lies not in such miracles as changing the rod into a serpent, but in the Qur'an, “the existence of which is not an interruption of the course of nature assumed by tradition ... but its miraculous nature is established by way of perception and consideration for every man.... And this miracle is far superior to all others. “58

In fact, Ibn Rushd repeats here what he has stated before in his twin books the *Fasl* and the *Kashf*. . Recent Muslim theologians, Muhammad `Abduh, Ameer Ali, and others, have adopted this Rushdian view which is now current in all Muslim societies. A return to Ibn Rushd is one of the incentives to recent renaissance in the East. Muhmmad 'Abduh says : “It is impossible for the people of Islam to deny the relation existing in this world between causes and effects.”59

We pass from this prelude to the heart of the discussion. Al-Ghazali posits the theme like this: “According to us the connection between what is usually believed to be a cause and what is believed to be an effect is not a necessary connection, each of the two things has its own individuality and is not the other... the satisfaction of thirst does not imply drinking, nor burning contact with fire.... For the connection in these things is based on a prior power in God to create them in a successive order, though not because this connection is necessary in itself.”

Ibn Rushd starts his answer from common sense, which in his view is the basis of certitude. “To deny the existence of efficient causes which are observed in sensible things is sophistry, and he who denies them either denies with his tongue what is present in his mind or is carried away by a sophistical doubt .... “60

But philosophy cannot be based on common sense. Empiricism is useful for practical ends, not for exact sciences. Both practical empiricism based on common sense and scientific knowledge believe in causality, except that the first is less sure and the latter more precise. To be scientific is to be able to predict what will happen in the future when a cause is given. Belief in science and its power results from our ability to predict on the basis of causal necessity.

Modern science still believes in causality, not in its older form of cause–effect relationship, but in causal lines and structures. To sum up, belief in causality is a matter of faith, originating from the animal faith in expectation. Ibn Rushd had complete faith in nature, and maintained that everything in the world happens according to a perfect regularity which can be understood in terms of cause and effect.

This brings us to the picture of the physical world as conceived by Ibn Rushd, and the way it can be scientifically known. The world is a continuum of things and persons interrelated through necessary causality. Two principles are presupposed, though not enunciated: the one is the permanence of things and the other is the law of causation. These two postulates are the result of metaphysical assumptions derived from Aristotelianism, namely, the idea of substance and the idea of the four causes.

Al–Ghazali denies the two principles. As to the permanence of things, he reproduces the counter–argument of some philosophers in a comical manner that “if a man who had left a book at home might find it on his return changed into a youth ... a stone changed into gold, and gold changed into stone; and if he were asked about any of these things he would answer, `I do not know what there is at present, in my house.”61

Al–Ghazali accepts the challenge saying “There is no objection to admitting that anything may be possible for God.” An example of this possibility is the miracle of Ibrahim when he was thrown into fire and was not burnt. Fire by the will of God lost its quality of burning. Fire in itself is not an efficient cause. The true cause is God who through His will and power gives the things their qualities. There is no reason, then, why they might not be contrary to what they are.

To meet this argument, ibn Rushd looks at the problem from the philosophical point of view already mentioned. The permanence of things permits us to attain to the essence of a thing, its definition, and giving it a name. “For it is self–evident that things have essences and attributes which determine the special functions of each one of them and through which the definitions and names are differentiated. If a thing had not its specific nature, it would not have a special name nor a definition, and all things would be one.” 62

As to the second postulate concerning causality, “all events have four causes, agent, form, matter, and

end." Human mind perceives the things and conceives their causes. And, "intelligence is nothing but the perception of things with their causes, and in this it distinguishes itself from all the other faculties of apprehension; and he who denies causes denies the intellect. Logic implies the existence of causes and effects, and knowledge of the effects can only be rendered perfect through knowledge of their causes. Denial of causes implies the denial of kntwledge."63

If they call the relation of cause–effect a habit, habit is an ambiguous term. Do they mean by habit (1) the habit of the agent, or (2) the habit of the existing things, or (3) our habit to form a habit about such things? Ibn Rushd rejects the first two meanings and accepts the last which is in harmony with his conceptualism. Because it is impossible that God should have a habit. The habit of existing things is really their nature, since habit can only exist in the animated.

On the whole, the way to science starts with faith which is the basis of certitude. Sceptics and agnostics have no place in science. Armed with this faith in the existence of the world as such, the intellect discovers the causes of things. Scientific knowledge is the knowledge of things with their causes which produce them.

The Way To Being

Two distinct types of metaphysics came down to the Arabs, a metaphysics of Being and a metaphysics of the One. The first is that of Aristotle, and the second that of Plotinus. Since the *Enneads* of Plotinus was mistakenly ascribed to Aristotle, al–Kindi was confused between the two systems and could not bring them into accord.

Al–Farabi was more inclined to the philosophy of the One. He fused the two systems in the Necessary Being, God, the One of the Qur'an and the One of Plotinus. The way to the One is rather a mystic way, and that to Being is purely logical. The philosophy of al–Farabi was mixed with the wine of mysticism. Ibn Sina, following the way opened by al–Farabi, looked at the problem from a new standpoint, i, e., from the distinction between the necessary and the contingent, yet in his old age he dwelt upon the fusion of the One and the Being with a kind of divergence towards a gnostic mysticism.

Ibn Rushd returned to the original doctrine of Aristotle and freed himself from the burden of Neo–Platonism. Being, and the way to attain to it, is the object of his short *Talkhis* on Metaphysics. At the beginning of this treatise he says: "Our aim is to pick up from the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle his theoretical doctrines."64

As a faithful follower of Aristotle he defines metaphysics as the knowledge of Being as such. Metaphysics is part of the theoretical sciences. It studies Being absolutely (*bi–itlaq*); the immaterial principles of physical sensibles such as unity, plurality, potency, actuality, etc., the causes of the existents on the side of God and divine entities. Physical science is concerned with the causes of individual beings. It remains for metaphysics to study the highest causes of the particulars.

The subject-matter of metaphysics is three-fold: the study of (1) sensible things and their genera, namely, the ten categories; (2) the principles of substance, the separate entities and how they are related to the First Principle, which is the Supreme Perfection and the Prime Cause; and (3) the particular sciences in view of correcting their sophistries. It is evident that the second part of this division is the most fundamental, and the two others are related to it. Hence, Ibn Rushd gives a more elaborate definition of metaphysics. "It is the science which studies the relationship of the different existents as regards their hierarchical order of causes up to the Supreme Cause."[65]

Hence, knowledge of Being consists in an exploration into Its causes and principles. True knowledge is conformity with the existent. Ibn Rushd confronts the mental with the external existence to the point that if what exists in our minds is in conformity with what is outside, it is true of Being. Two distinct meanings are thus applied to Being, the one epistemological and the other ontological. Which of the two is the origin of the other, essence or existence?

There is no ambiguity in the system of Ibn Rushd about this question. The external existents are the basis of our knowledge. If an entity exists in our minds without having any real existence outside, it would not be a being, but simply an entity such as chimera, for example.[66] Being and existence are, then, one and the same. To exist is to be real.

The criterion of Being is its real existence, whether in potency or in act. Prime matter has being, although it never exists without form. When the intellect is attached to external existents, the being which was outside becomes inside the mind in the form of a concept or an essence. Existence, then, is presupposed in Being.

External existents are called substances. Substance is the first of the ten categories; the rest are the secondary substances. Prime substance has more substantiality than the secondary. When we say, "Socrates is a man," this denotes that Socrates is more substantial than human, humanity, or manness. Meanwhile, manness is as real as Socrates. Both the universal and the particular are substances. The particular has a sensuous existence, and the universal an intellectual one. But the individual substances are the starting point in the entire metaphysics of Ibn Rushd.

Physical bodies are commonly said to be composed of two principles, matter and form. This is not quite true, because a body is not only matter or only form; it is a whole composed of the two. It is a composite. This whole is additional to the two principles of Being.[67] Hence the principles of the sensible substances amount to three. The body is one unity which has many parts. By substance, we mean the whole composed of matter and form.

Some philosophers, for example Ibn Sina, assumed that every physical body has two forms, a specific form and a corporeal form. The latter, *forma corporeitatis*, consists in the three dimensions which give the body extension in space. According to Ibn Sina, the form of corporeity is substance and is the cause of plurality in physical beings. Ibn Rushd rejects this view and says that Ibn Sina was totally wrong.[68]

Individual substances are composed of matter and only one form. They have two kinds of existence, the one sensuous and the other intellectual, Matter is the cause of their corporeity and form the cause of their intelligibility.

A thing is known by its definition which gives its essence; and definition is composed of parts, the genus and the differentia. Genera, species, and diferentiae are universals. Now, are the essences or the universals the same as the individual things, or are they different? Universals are identical with individuals, since they define their essences.

Those who assume that the universals have a separate existence and subsist by themselves fall in contradictions very difficult to resolve. In their view human knowledge can be possible only if the universals have separate real existence. But, "it is evident that for the intellection of essences we have no need to assume the separateness of the universals. "69 They exist only in our minds as concepts denuded of matter. Hence, this doctrine is conceptualism, as opposed to realism and nominalism. Human mind occupies a dignified place in nature and plays an active role in acquiring knowledge.

Moreover, universals are not eternal and immutable as Platonic idealism assumes. It is true that, as regards essence, universals are eternal since essence as such is not corruptible. But as regards the individual which is essentially corruptible, the universal is corruptible and changeable in so far as it is a part of the composite of form and matter. The first substance is the "this" which is pointed at.

How can the universals be eternal and at the same time corruptible? Or, as Ibn Rushd puts it: "How can eternal entities be the principles of corruptible things?"70 This difficulty is solved by reference to potency and actuality. The scale of beings is graded from pure potency to pure actuality. Prime matter is pure potency; it can only exist in a being combined with form. The lowest existents are the four elements of which sensible bodies are composed.

Potency (dynamic in Greek) can be understood as possibility or disposition. Potency is so called as opposed to actuality. Now, the first substance can exist in actuality or in potency. Matter inherent in the substance is its potentiality. This potentiality is of different degrees according to proximity and remoteness. Man, for example, exists potentially in the sperm and in the four elements; the first potency is the near one, the latter is the remote one.

Four conditions are necessary for a thing to exist: (1) the proximate subject, (2) its disposition, (3) the motor causes, (4) the absence of preventing causes. Take, as an example, a sick man. Not all sick men have the possibility to be cured, and he who has the possibility should also have the disposition. In addition to these two conditions, he must have the efficient cause which brings him from sickness to health, provided there are no external preventions.71 The case of the natural objects is similar to that of the artificial ones.

Consequently, there is always a motor cause which brings a thing to exist in actuality. Sometimes, there are more than one motor causes. For example, bread has the potency to change into flesh and blood,

and has as motor causes the mouth, the stomach, the liver. etc. The remote cause is the potency in the elements to change into flesh. Along with these causes, bread is in need of a very remote cause, namely, the heavenly bodies.

Since physical things are composed of matter and form, potency is always subsequent to matter, and actuality subsequent to form. Form, which is the act, is prior to matter at every point, because form is also the efficient and final cause. The final cause is the cause of all other causes, since these are there for the sake of it. Furthermore, potency is not prior in time to act, because potency can never be denuded of act.

Matter and form exist simultaneously in a being. The motor cause of a physical thing is apparently prior to the existence of the thing. A distinction must be made .between a motor cause and an efficient cause. Motor cause applies only to change in place, namely, the movement of translation. All other changes, especially generation and corruption, are caused by efficient causes.

Celestial bodies are moved by a motor, not an efficient, cause, because their movement is translation in space and they do not change. They are intermediate existents between the pure act and the existents which exist sometimes in potency and sometimes in act. Their similarity to existents in act lies in their eternity and incorruptibility. Their similarity to the things which exist in potency and come to actuality is in their change of place, their circular movement in space.

Ibn Rushd terminates the discussion of this point by saying: “Consider how divine providence has managed to combine the two kinds of existence. In between pure act and pure potency, it has posited this kind of potency, namely, the potency in space through which the eternal and corruptible existences are connected.”72

Furthermore, act is prior to potency in point of dignity and perfection, because evil is privation or one of the two opposites, such as sickness which, although existent, is bad as regards privation of health; and since potency is the possibility to become either of the two opposites, it is not an absolute good. Pure act is an absolute good.73 Hence, the nearer the things are to the First Principle which is pure act, the better they are.

Celestial bodies have obtained their principles from the First Principle, God. And, likewise, everything on this earth which is good is the product of His will and design. As to evil, it exists because of matter. This world, as it is, is the best possible one. Either the world would not have existed at all, or it would have existed having some evil for the sake of a greater good.

We have seen that sensible substances are composed of matter and form. Now, are these two principles sufficient for the existence of sensible substances? Or, is there a separate substance which is the cause of their perpetual existence?74 It is evident that the sensible is in need of a motor cause, and this cause needs another, up to the First Mover whose movement is eternal. This brings us to the consideration of time.

Time is an eternal continuum subordinate to an eternal movement, which is continuous and one, because the true one is continuous. It is clear that Ibn Rushd asserts the eternity of the world, on the assumption that both movement and time are eternal. Eternity of the world is the first and longest discussion in the *Tahafut* of al–Ghazali. The whole discussion is, as mentioned above, only of historical value, and, therefore, we need not dwell on it.

The First Mover moves the *primum mobile* by desire, not by representation. The world is animated, i, e., it has a soul. It also has intelligence. Celestial bodies are moved not through sensations and representations, as is the case with animals, but through the conception of intelligence. (Intelligence is so called with regard to celestial bodies; with regard to man it is called intellect.)

Heavenly bodies have no senses, because these are found in animals for their conservation. Representations exist in animals for the same end. Celestial bodies are in no need of conservation since they are eternal. Their movements are the product of desire (*shauq*) through intellection. The first mover of the firmament is moved by a most dignified desire – desire for the Supreme Good. The movers of the celestial bodies are, then, intelligences which are themselves immobile. There are thirty–eight movers and nine spheres.

The tenth intelligence, or the *Intelligentsia Agens*, is the last of these movers. It moves the sphere of the moon. It is the cause of the movement of the sublunary beings. It is this intelligence which gives forms to the elements and other existents.

Man is the nearest being to the celestial bodies, and this is because of his intellect. He is intermediate between the eternal and the corruptible.75 Through the agent intelligence, he acquires the forms which are its products. Thus, communion with the agent intelligence can be realized. And in this communion lies man's felicity and happiness.

1. On the life and work of Ibn Rushd see: Renan, Averroes et l'averroisme, Paris, first ed., 1852, ninth ed., 1932; Munk, Melanges de Philosophic Juive et Arabe, Paris, 1859, reprint 1927; Horten, Die Philosophie des Ibn Roschd, Bonn, 1910; Die Metaphysik des Averroes, Halle, 1912; Die Hauptlehren van Averroes nach seiner Schrift, Die Widerlegung des Gazali, Bonn, 1913; Carra de Vaux, Les Penseurs de'Islam, Vol. IV, Paris, 1923; Gauthier, Ibn Rochd, Paris, 1948; La theorie d'Ibn Rochd sur 1es rapports de la religion et de la philosophie, Paris, 1909; Quadri, La philosophie Arabe dans l'Europe Medievale des Origines a Averroes, Paris, 1947 (translated from the Italian); Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages, New York, 1954; El–Ehwany, Islamic Philosophy, Cairo, 1957; Hourani, The Life and Thought of Ibn Rushd (a series of four lectures), American University, Cairo, 1947; 'Abbas Mahmud al–`Aqqad, Ibn Rushd (in Arabic), Cairo, 1953.
For the editions of his writings, and his manuscripts see: Brockelmann, Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur, Vol. I, Weimar, 1898; Bouyges, Notes sur les philosophes arabes commes des Latins au Moyen–Age; Inventaire des textes arabes d'Averroes, Malanges de l'Universite Saint Joseph, Beyrouth, 1922.
Latin Translations: Opera Omnia, apud Juntas, 10 Vols, Venice, 1574. New editions of the Averroes Latinus have been recently published: (i) Parva Naturalia, Cambridge, Mass., 1949; (ii) Commentarium magnunt in Aristotelis De Anima, Cambridge, Mass., 1953.
Arabic Editions and Translations: Editions by Bouyges: Tahafut al–Tahafut, Beyrouth, 1930; Talkhis Kitab al Maqulat, Beyrouth, 1932; Tafsir ma ba'd al–Tabi'ah, 5 Vols., 1938–1951; Tahafut al–Tahafut, Cairo, 1319/1901 (this editior comprises the Tahafut of al–Ghazali, the Tahafut of Ibn Rushd and the Tahafut of Khwajah Zadah), complete English translation by

Simon van den Bergh, London, 1954, in 2 Vols., the first for the text and the second for the notes. (i) Fasl al-Maqal; (ii) Al-Kashf 'an Manahij al-Adillah; (iii) "Discussion of the Opinions of Ibn Rushd by Ibn Taimiyyah." The first two treatises are edited in Arabic by Muller, Munich,1859, and translated by him into German, 1875; reprinted in Arabic, Cairo, 1894-1895. French translation by Gauthier, Accord de la religion et de la Philosophie, Algier, 1905.

English translation by Jamilur Rahman, The Philosophy and Theology of Averroes, Baroda, 1921; a new English trans. is in preparation by George Hourani.

Rasa'il Ibn Rushd, Hyderabad, 1947. A compendium of six treatises Talkhis; (i) Physics; (ii) De Caelo et Mundo; (iii) De Generatione et Corruptione; (iv) Meteorologica; (v) De Anima; (vi) Metaphysica. De Anima, Talkhis Kitab al-Nafs, Arabic edition by A. F. El-Ehwany, Cairo, 1950.

Metaphysics, Talkhis ma ba'd al-Tabi`ah; (i) Arabic edition by Mustafa Kabbani, Cairo, n.d.; (ii) Compendio de metafisica, Arabic text with Spanish trans., introduction and glossary by Carlos Quiros Rodriguez, Madrid, 1919; (iii) Die Epitome der Metaphysik des Averroes, German translation by Simon van den Bergh, Leiden, 1924; (iv) new Arabic edition by Amin Osman, Cairo, 1958 (paraphrasis in Libros Platonic de Republica); new English translation by Rosenthal, Cambridge, 1956.

2. The biography of Ibn Rushd by al-Dhahabi, reproduced in Arabic by Renan, p. 456. (See also Tabaqat al-Atibba' by Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah; Kitab al-Mughrib by Ibn Said, etc.)

3. Al-Maqqari, Nafh al-Tib, Vol.II.

4. Ibn Khallikan, biography number,660. On the connection between Almohades and the Ismailites, see al.'Aqqad, Ibn Rushd, Cairo 1953, pp. 9-15.

5. 'Abd al-Wahid al-Marrakushi, ed. Pozy, pp. 174-75.

6. This is also the opinion of Bouyges. In his preface to Talkhis Kitab al-Maqulat (Beyrouth, 1932, p. v.), he says: "C'est an qualite de `Commentateur' d'Aristote que le philosophe arabe andalous Averroes (1126-1198) est devenu celebre."

7. The only Arabic middle commentary we have is the "Categories." The text of Ibn Rushd compared with the ancient Arabic translation shows that there is nothing additional. It is neither a summary nor a commentary. It is simply a new edition of the translation put in a new phraseology. Are all the so-called middle commentaries of this type? We leave the question open.

8. E1-Ehwany, Islamic Philosophy, Cairo, 1957, pp. 40-42, in which excerpts from al-Kindi's treatise on "First Philosophy" are translated. Compare what al-Kindi says in favour of philosophy with what ibn Rushd sets forth.

9. Mentioned by al-Ansari in Renan's Averroes et l'averroisme, pp. 439-43.

10. Fasl, Cairo ed., p.2.

11. Ibid., p.18.

12. Ibid., p.19.

13. Ibid., p.8.

14. Ibid., p.10.

15. Ibid., p.15.

16. Al-Kashf 'an Manahij al-Adillah, Cairo ed., p. 31. Ibn Rushd mentions in the beginning only four sects; the Sufis have been excluded, although he discusses their method later.

17. Ibid., p. 31. Al-sam' is also called the traditional.

18. Ibid., p.32, and ad passim.

19. Ibid., p.40.

20. Ibid., p.41.

21. Ibid., p.44.

22. Ibid., p.46.

23. Ibid., p.48.

24. Ibid., p.49, (La ilaha illa hu).

25. Wahdaniyyah; sometimes translated as "unity" which gives a different meaning, unity being wahdah.

26. Ibn Rushd refers to three verses; (i) xxi, 22:"If there were therein Gods besides Allah, then verily both (the heavens and the earth) had been disordered." (ii) xxiii, 91: "Nor is there any God along with Him; else would each God have assuredly championed that which he created, and some of them would assuredly have overcome others...." (iii) xvii, 42: "If there were

other gods along with Him, as they say, then had they sought a way against the Lord of the Throne" (Pickthall's trans.).

27. Al-Kashshaf, p.53.

28. Ibid., p.60; Surah xlii, 11: "Naught is as His likeness; and He is the Hearer, the Seer" (Pickthall's trans.).

29. Ibid., p.80.

30. Ibid., p.86.

31. Ibid., p.97. Surah xvii, 93: "Am I aught save a mortal messenger?"

32. Supernatural in the sense of interrupting the course of nature (khariq).

33. Al-Kashshaf, p.107.

34. Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages, New York, 1954, p.219.

35. Ibn Rushd, Kitab al-Nafs, p. 8.

36. "Material forms" is called in Arabic hayulaniyyah or tabi`iah. The first term comes from the Greek term hyle, the second means physical or natural.

37. Kitab al-Nafs, p.12.

38. Ibid., p.13.

39. Ibn Rushd, Tafahut, tr. van den Bergh, p. 301.

40. Kitab al-Nafs, p.69.

41. Tahafut, p.279.

42. Ibid., p.285.

43. Ibid.

44. Kitab al-Nafs, p.67.

45. Ibid., p.68.

46. Ibid., p.71.

47. Ibid., p.72.

48. Ibid., p.74.

49. Ibid., p.76.

50. Tahafut, p.281.

51. Kitab al-Nafs, p.88.

52. For this summary, see Gilson, op.cit. p.396.

53. Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, New York, 1954, p.102.

54. Bertrand Russell, Human Knowledge, London, 1948, p. 472.

55. Quadri, La Philosophie Arabe, Paris, 1947, p. 204.

56. Tahafut al-Tahafut, tr. van den Bergh, Vol. I, p. 312.

57. Ibid., p.313.

58. Ibid., p.315.

59. Ibn Rushd wa Falsafatuhu, by Antun Farah, Alexandria, 1903, p. 91. The author began an Arabian Averroism analogous to the Latin Averroism, and wrote articles on Ibn Rushd in his journal al-Jami`ah. When he published this book, he added the discussions of Muhammad 'Abduh and Qasim Amin, the two leaders of recent renaissance in Egypt.

60. Tahafut al-Tahafut, p.318.

61. Ibid., p.324.

62. Ibid., p.318.

63. Ibid., p.319.

64. Talkhis ma ba'd al-tabi'ah, Cairo edition by Osman Amin, 1958.

65. Ibid., p.34.

66. Ibid., p.17.

67. Ibid., pp. 37, 65. On p. 65 Ibn Rushd says: "It is evident that the sensible substances are three: matter, form, and the whole composed of them." Now one would ask, "If sensible substances are composed of matter and form, what do their names denote, the matter, the form, or the composite?" It is clear that the name most probably denotes the whole.

68. Ibid., pp 40-41 He says: "Some assumed that corporeity means divisibility in dimensions, they thought that dimensions

are more liable to have the name of substance...". For the doctrine of Ibn Sina, see Ahmed Fouad El-Ehwany's book, Ibn Sina, Cairo, 1958, pp. 49-50.

69. Ibid., p.45.

70. Ibid., p.94.

71. Ibid., p.86

72. Ibid., p.94.

73. Ibid., p.95.

74. Ibid., p.124.

75. Ibid., p.159.

Chapter 29: Nasir Al-Din Tusi

By Bakhtyar Husain Siddiqi

Life

Khwajah Nasir al-Din Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Hasan, an accomplished scholar, mathematician, astronomer, and Shiite politician of the period of the Mongol invasion on the Assassins and the Caliphate, was born at Tus in 597/1201. After receiving early education from his father and Muhammad b. Hasan, he studied *Fiqh*, *Usul*, *Hikmah* and *Kalam* especially the *Isharat* of Ibn Sina, from Mahdar Farid al-Din Damad, and mathematics from Muhammad Hasib, at Nishapur. He then went to Baghdad, where he studied medicine and philosophy from Qutb al-Din, mathematics from Kamal al-Din b. Yunus, and Fiqh and Usul from Salim b. Badran.1

Tusi began his career as an astrologer to Nasir al-Din 'Abd al-Rahim, the Governor of the Isma`ilite mountain fortress of Quhistan during the reign of 'Ala al-Din Muhammad (618-652/1221-1255), the seventh Grand Master (*Khudawand*) of Alamut. His "correspondence"2 with the *wazir* of the last 'Abbasid Caliph, al-Musta`sim (640-656/1242-1258) of Baghdad, was, however, intercepted by his employers, and he was removed to Alamut under close supervision, although he enjoyed there every facility to continue his .studies. In 654/1256, he "played"3 the last Assassin ruler Rukn al-Din Khurshah into the hands of Hulagu and then accompanied the latter as his trusted adviser to the conquest of Baghdad in 657/1258.4

The Maraghah Observatory

Tusi's chief claim to fame rests on his persuading Hulagu to found the celebrated observatory (*rasad khanah*) at Maraghah, Adharbaijan, in 657/1259, which was equipped with the best instruments, "some of them constructed for the first time."5 Here he compiled the astronomical tables, called *Zij al-Ilkhani*, which "became popular throughout Asia, even in China." 6

Besides being dedicated to the advancement of astronomy and mathematics in the late seventh/thirteenth century, this observatory was important in three other ways. It was the first observatory the recurring and non-recurring expenditure of which was met out of endowments, thus opening the door for the financing of future observatories.[7]

Secondly, just as Ibn Tufail (d. 581/1185) turned the Court of Caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min into an enviable intellectual galaxy that promoted the cause of knowledge and wisdom in the West, Tusi made the Maraghah observatory a "splendid assembly"[8] of the men of knowledge and learning by making "special arrangements"[9] a for the teaching of philosophical sciences, besides mathematics and astronomy, and by dedicating the income of endowments to stipends. Thirdly, annexed to the observatory, there was a huge library in which were stored the incorruptible treasures of knowledge looted by the Mongols and Tartars during their invasions on Iraq, Baghdad, Syria, and other territories. According to Ibn Shakir, the library contained more than four hundred thousand volumes.[10]

Tusi retained his influential position under Abaqa, Hulagu's successor, uninterrupted until his death in 672/1274.

Works

In an age of widespread political devastation followed by intellectual decline, Hulagu's patronage to Tusi is of singular importance in the history of Muslim thought. The revival and promotion of philosophical sciences in the late seventh/thirteenth century centred round Tusi's personality. To the Persians, he was known as "the teacher of man"[11] (*ustad al-bashar*). Bar-Hebraeus regarded him as "a man of vast learning in all the branches of philosophy."[12] To Ivanow, he appears an "encyclopedist,"[13] and Afnan thinks him to be "the most competent ... commentator of Avicenna in Persia."[14]

One also cannot help being impressed by the "remarkable industry" displayed by him in "editing and improving"[15] the translations made by Thabit bin Qurrah, Qusta bin Luqa, and Ishaq bin Hunain of Greek mathematicians and astronomers. Brockelmann has enumerated fifty-nine of his extant works,[16] but Ivanow attributes "something like one hundred and fifty works"[17] to him. The list given by Mudarris Ridwi runs to one hundred and thirteen titles, excluding twenty-one the attribution of which to Tusi is doubtful.[18]

Himself an accomplished scholar rather than a creative mind, Tusi's position is mainly that of a revivalist and his works are largely eclectical in character. But even as a revivalist and eclectic, he is not lacking in originality, at least in the presentation of his material. His versatility is indeed astonishing. His manifold and varied interests extend to philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, physics, medicine, mineralogy, music, history, literature, and dogmatics. His important philosophical works are listed below.

I . *Asas al-Iqtibas* (logic), 1947.
2. *Mantiq al-Tajrid*, (logic).

3. *Ta'dil al-Mi'yar* (logic).

4. *Tajrid al.'Aqa'id* (dogmatics), Teheran, 1926.
5. *Qawa'id al-'Aqa'id* (dogmatics), Teheran, 1926.
6. *Risaleh-i I'tiqadat* (dogmatics).

7. *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* (ethics).

8. *Ausaf al-Ashraf* (Sufi ethics)

9. *Risaleh dar Ithbat-i Wajib* (metaphysics).
10. *Ithbat-i Jauhar al-Mufariq* (metaphysics).
11. *Risaleh dar Wujud-i Jauhar-i Mujarrad* (metaphysics).
12. *Risaleh dar Ithbat-i 'Aql-i Fa"al* (metaphysics).
13. *Risaleh Darurat-i Marg* (metaphysics).
14. *Risaleh Sudur Kathrat az Wahdat* (metaphysics).
15. *Risaleh 'llal wa Ma'lulat* (metaphysics).
16. *Fusul* (metaphysics), Teheran, 1956.
17. *Tasawwurat* (metaphysics), Bombay, 1950.

18. *Talkhis al-Muhassal*, Cairo, 1323/1905.
19. *Hall-i Mushkilat al-Isharat*, Lucknow, 1293/1876.

Akhlaq-I Nasiri

Nothing can be farther from truth than the assertion that Akhlaq-i Nasiri of Tusi is a mere "translation"[19] of *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* of Ibn Miskawaih. The author was undoubtedly commissioned by Nasir al-Din 'Abd al-Rahim, the Isma'ilite Governor of Quhistan, to translate the *Kitab al-Taharat* (*Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*) from Arabic into Persian, but he did not accept the suggestion for fear of "distorting and disfiguring the original."[20]

Besides, Ibn Miskawaih's effort is confined to the description of moral discipline; the domestic and political disciplines are altogether missing in his work. These, according to Tusi, are equally important aspects of "practical philosophy" and, therefore, are not to be ignored. With this in mind, Tusi compiled *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* on the following pattern.

With regard to content, the part on moral philosophy is a "summary"[21] and not a translation of *Kitab al-Taharat*, but the form, the arrangement of topics, and the classification of subjects is Tusi's own, which apparently give an air of originality to it.

For the parts on domestic and political philosophy, Tusi is greatly indebted to Ibn Sina [22] and Farabi,[23] and yet the mere addition of these two parts which completed practical philosophy (*hikmat-i `amali*) in all

its details, if not anything else, justifies Tusi's claim that *Akhlaq–i Nasiri* was written “not on the style of imitation nor in the spirit of translation, but as an original venture.”[24]

Ethics

Following Ibn Miskawaih,.Tusi regards ultimate happiness (*sa`adat–i quswa*) as the chief moral end, which is determined by the place and position of man in the cosmic evolution, and realized through his amenability to discipline and obedience. The concept of ultimate happiness is intrinsically different from the Aristotelian idea of happiness which is devoid of the “celestial element”[25] and also has no reference to the cosmic position of man.

The Platonic virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice (derived from the trinity of the soul – reason, ire, and desire) and their differentiation into seven, eleven, twelve, and nineteen species respectively, given by Ibu Miskawaih, figure prominently in Tusi's ethics, the only difference being that he reduced the last nineteen to twelve.

But following Aristotle's distinction in the soul of theoretical reason, practical reason, ire, and desire, and, unlike Ibn Miskawaih, he deduces justice from the culture of practical reason[26] without disclaiming the Platonic view of the proper and harmonious functioning of the triple powers of the soul. Unlike Aristotle and like Ibn Miskawaih, he ranks benevolence[27] (*tafaddul*) higher than justice, and love (*mahabbah*) as a natural source of unity, higher than benevolence.

Aristotle conceived of vice as an extreme of virtue either on the side of excess or defect. To Galen, vice was a malady of the soul. The Qur'an, after enunciating the general ethical principles of moderation,[28] defines vice as a disease of the heart.[29]

Ibn Miskawaih, after enumerating the eight generic vices of astuteness and stupidity (*safah* and *balahat*), rashness and cowardice (*tahawwur* and *jubun*), indulgence and abstention (*sharrahat* and *khumud*), tyranny and sufferance (*jaur* and *mahanat*), on the Aristotelian pattern, describes at length the causes and cures of fear and sorrow. Ibn Miskawaih does not make it clear whether fear and sorrow constitute the excess or deficiency of ire and desire.

This problem is taken up by Tusi, and he finds out a solution for it, befitting his ingenuity. Disease is the deviation of the soul from equipoise (*i`tidal*). Aristotle and following him Ibn Miskawaih had thought of this deviation in terms of quantity (*kammiyyat*) and, therefore, the excess (*ifrat*) and defect (*tafrit*) of a state were for them the only two causes of moral diseases.

Tusi for the first time propounded the view that the deviation is not only quantitative but also qualitative, and to this new type of deviation he gave the name of perversion[30] (*rada'at*). Consequently, a moral disease may have one of the three causes: (1) excess, (2) defect, or (3) perversion of reason, ire, or desire. This explains adequately that fear constitutes the perversion of ire, and sorrow, the perversion of

desire.

Equipped with the theory of triple causation of the maladies of the soul, Tusi classifies the fatal diseases of the theoretical reason into perplexity (*hairat*), simple ignorance (*jahl–i basit*), and compound ignorance (*jahl–i murakkab*), constituting its excess,–deficiency, and perversion – a classification which cannot be traced to Ibn Miskawaih.

Perplexity is caused by the inability of the soul to distinguish truth from falsehood due to the conflicting evidence and confusing arguments for and against a controversial issue. As a cure of perplexity, Tusi suggests that a perplexed man should, in the first instance, be made to realize that composition and division, affirmation and denial, i, e., the contraries, being mutually exclusive, cannot exist in one and the same thing at the same time, so that he may be convinced that if a proposition is true, it cannot be false, and if it is false, it cannot be true. After his assimilating this self–evident principle, he may be taught the rules of syllogism to facilitate the detection of fallacies in the arguments.

Simple ignorance consists in a man's lack of knowledge on a subject without his presuming that he knows it. Such ignorance is a precedent condition for acquiring knowledge, but it is fatal to be contented with it. The disease may be cured by bringing home to the patient the fact that intellection and not physical appearance entitles a man to the designation of man, and that an ignorant man is no better than a brute; rather he is worse than that, for the latter can be excused for its absence of reason, he cannot.

Compound ignorance is a man's lack of knowledge on a subject coupled with his presumption that he knows it. In spite of ignorance he does not know that he is ignorant. According to Tusi, it is almost an .incurable disease, but devotion to mathematics may perhaps reduce it to simple ignorance.

Tnsi regards anger (*ghadab*), cowardice (*jubun*), and fear (*khauf*) as the three prominent diseases of ire (*quwwat–i difa'*) on the side of excess, deficiency, and perversion, respectively. In his analysis of fear, especially the fear of death, and in his elaboration of the seven concomitants and ten causes of anger, he follows Ibn Miskawaih.

Similarly, excess of appetite (*ifrat–i shahwat*) is caused by the excess of desire while levity (*batalat*) results from its deficiency, and sorrow (*huzn*) and jealousy (*hasad*) constitute the perversion of this power. He defines jealousy as one wishing a reverse in the fortune of another, without longing to possess a similar fortune for oneself. Following Ghazali, he also distinguishes between envy31 (*ghibtat*) and jealousy, by defining the former as a longing to have the fortune similar to the one possessed by another without wishing any reverse to him. Jealousy consumes virtue as fire consumes fuel, but envy is commendable, if directed to the acquisition of virtues, and condemnable if directed to lust for worldly pleasures.

Tusi regards society as the normal background of moral life, for man is by nature a social being, and his perfection consists in evincing this characteristic of sociability towards his fellow–beings. Love and

friendship, therefore, constitute the vital principles of his moral theory – a theory in which apparently there is no place for the retired and secluded life of an ascetic.

In a later work, *Ausaf al–Ashraf*, however, he approvingly writes of asceticism as a stage in mystical life. He claims no mystic experience and makes it clear in the preface that his effort is a purely intellectual appreciation and rational formulation of the mystic tradition.[32] Though not a mystic, he is an advocate of a rational treatment of mysticism. He classifies it into six progressive stages, each stage, excepting the last, having six moral states of its own.

The first stage is that of the preparation for the mystic journey (*suluk*), the necessary requirements of which are faith in God (*iman*), constancy in the faith (*thabat*), firmness of intention (*niyyat*), truthfulness (*sidq*), contemplation of God (*anabat*), and sincerity (*khulus*).

The second stage consists of the renunciation of the worldly connections which obstruct the mystic path. There are six essentials of this stage and these are repentance over sins (*taubah*), asceticism of the will (*zuhd*), indifference to wealth (*faqr*), rigorous practices to subdue irrational desires (*riyadat*), calculation of virtues and vices (*muharabat*), harmony between actions and intentions (*muraqabat*), and piety (*taqwa*).

The third stage of the mystic journey is marked by aloofness (*khalwat*), contemplation (*tafakkur*), fear and sorrow (*khauf* and *huzn*), hope (*rija'*), endurance (*sabr*), and gratitude to God (*shukr*).

The, fourth stage covers the experiences of the traveller (*salik*) before reaching the final goal. They are devotion to God (*iradat*), eagerness in devotion (*shauq*), love of God (*mahabbah*), knowledge of God (*ma'ri fat*), unshakeable faith in God (*yaqin*), and tranquillity of the soul (*sukun*).

The fifth stage consists of resignation to God (*tawakkul*), obedience (*rida'*), submission to the divine will (*taslim*), certitude about the oneness of God (*tauhid*), effort for union with God (*wahdat*), and absorption in God (*ittihad*).

In the sixth stage the process of the absorption in God reaches its culmination and the traveller is ultimately lost (*fana'*) into the oneness of God.

Domestic Science

Acknowledging his debt to Ibn Sina,[33] Tusi defines home (*manzil*) as a particular relationship existing between husband and wife, parents and children, master and servant, and wealth and its possessor. The aim of domestic science (*tadbir–i manzil*) is to evolve an efficient system of discipline, conducive to the physical, social, and mental welfare of this primary group, with father as its controlling head. The father's function is to maintain and restore the equipoise of the family, having in view the particular dispositions of the constituents and the dictates of expediency in general.

Wealth is necessary for achieving the basic ends of self-preservation and race-preservation. For its acquisition, Tusi recommends the adoption of noble professions and the achievement of perfection in them, without ever giving way to inequity, infamy, and meanness. Hair-dressing and filth-clearing are, no doubt, mean and repulsive professions, but they are warranted on the ground of social expediency.

Tusi regards the saving of wealth as an act of prudence, provided it is not prompted by greed or miserliness, and does not cause hardship to the constituents of the home or involve the risk of one's integrity and prestige in society. In matters of expenditure, he stands for moderation in general. Nothing should be spent which may smack of extravagance, display, miscalculation or stinginess.

Not gratification of lust, but procreation and protection of property are the basic aims of marriage. Intelligence, integrity, chastity, modesty, shrewdness, tenderness of the heart, and, above all, obedience to husband are the qualities which ought to be sought in a wife. It is good if she is further graced with the qualities of noble birth, wealth, and beauty, but these are absolutely undesirable if not accompanied with intelligence, modesty and chastity.

Administrative expediency requires that the husband should be awe-inspiring. He may be benevolent and magnanimous to his wife, but in the wider interests of the home, he should avoid excessive affection, keep her in seclusion, and should not confide secrets or discuss important matters with her. Polygamy is undesirable because it invariably upsets the whole domestic organization. Women are feeble-minded by nature and psychologically jealous of another partner in the husband's love and fortune.

The concession of polygamy is reluctantly given by Tusi to kings because they are in a position to command unconditional obedience, but even for them it is desirable to avoid it as an act of prudence. Man is to the home as heart is to the body, and as one heart cannot give sustenance to two bodies, so one man cannot manage two homes So great is the sanctity of home in Tusi's eyes that he even advises people to remain unmarried if they are unfit to enforce family equilibrium.

On the discipline of children, Tusi, following Ibn Miskawaih,34 begins with the inculcation of good morals through praise, reward, and benevolent censure. He is not in favour of frequent reproof and open censure; the former increases the temptation, and the latter leads to audacity. After bringing home to them the rules regarding dining, dressing, conversation, behaviour, and the manner of moving in society, the children should be trained for a particular profession of their own liking. The daughters should be specifically trained to become good wives and mothers in the domestic set-up.

Tusi closes the discussion with the greatest emphasis on the observance of parental rights, as enjoined by Islam. Psychologically speaking, children realize the rights of the father only after attaining the age of discrimination, but those of the mother are evident from the very start of life. From this Tusi concludes that paternal rights are largely mental, while maternal ones are largely physical in character. Thus, to the father one owes unselfish devotion, veneration, obedience, praise, etc., and to the mother, the provision

of food, clothes, and other physical comforts.

Lastly, servants are to home as hands and legs are to man. Tusi recommends that they should be treated benevolently, so that they may be inspired to identify their interests with those of their master. The underlying idea is that they should serve out of love, regard, and hope, and not out of necessity compulsion, and fear, which affect adversely the interests of the home.

To sum up: Home for Tusi is the centre of domestic life. Income, saving, expenditure, and the discipline of wife, children, and servants, all revolve round the general welfare of the family group as a whole.

Politics

Farabi's *Siyasat al-Madinah* and *Ara' Ahl al-Madinat al-Fadilah* form the first attempt towards the philosophical formulation of a political theory in the Muslim world. He used *`ilm al-madani* both in the sense of the civic science and the science of government. Following him, Tusi has also used *siyasat-i mudun* in both of these senses. In fact, his treatment of the need for civic society (*tamaddun*) and the types of social groups and cities is largely derived from Farabi's views on the subject.[35]

Man is by nature a social being. To substantiate his position, Tusi refers to *insan*, the Arabic word for man, which literally means to be gregarious or associating. Since this natural sociability[36] (*uns-i taba'i*) is characteristically human, it follows that the perfection of man consists in evincing this characteristic fully towards his fellow-beings. Civilization is another name for this perfection. It is for this reason that Islam has emphasized the superiority of congregational prayers over those offered in isolation.

The word *tamaddun* is derived from *madinah* (city) which means living together of men belonging to different professions for the purpose of helping one another in their needs. Since no man is self-sufficient, everyone is in need of help and co-operation from others. Wants differ from man to man and the same is true of the motives which induce one to co-operation. Some seek co-operation for the sake of pleasure; others are prompted by the consideration of profit; and still others aim at goodness or virtue. This diversity in the causes of co-operation leads to conflict of interests resulting in aggression and in-justice. Thus arises the need for government to keep everyone content with his rightful lot without infringing the legitimate rights of others.

Administration of justice, therefore, is the chief function of a government, which should be headed by a just king, who is the second arbitrator, the first being the divine Law. He can exercise royal discretion in minor details according to the exigencies of time and occasion, but this too should conform to the general principles of the divine Law. Such a king, Tusi concludes, is the vicegerent of God upon earth, and the physician of the world temper.

As to the qualities of this monarch, he should be graced with the nobility of birth, loftiness of purpose, sobriety of judgment, firmness of determination, endurance of hardship, large-heartedness, and

righteous friends. His first and foremost duty is to consolidate the State by creating affection among its friends and disaffection among its enemies, and by promoting unity among the savants, warriors, agriculturists, and business men – the four constituents of the State.

Tusi then proceeds to lay down the principles of war ethics for the guidance of rulers. The enemy should never be taken lightly, however lowly he might be, but at the same time war should be avoided at all costs, even through diplomatic tricks, without resorting to perfidy.37 But if the eonfiict becomes inevitable, offensive should be taken only in the name of God and that too with the unanimous approval of the army. The army should be led by a man of dashing spirit, sound judgment, and experience in warfare.

Tnsi particularly emphasizes the maintenance of an efficient secret service to have vigilance over the movements of the enemy. Again, diplomacy demands that the enemy should, as far as possible, be taken prisoner rather than killed, and there should be no killing after the final victory, for clemency is more befitting a king than vengeance. In the case of a defensive stand, the enemy should be overtaken by ambush or surprise attack, provided the position is strong enough; otherwise no time should be lost in digging trenches building fortresses, and even in negotiating for peace by offering wealth and using diplomatic devices.

Tusi, being the wazir of Hulagu, was well aware of the degeneration of monarchy into absolute despotism, and, therefore, advised the attendants upon kings to avoid seeking close contact with them, for being in their company is in no way better than associating with fire. No office is more perilous than that of a minister to a king, and the minister has no greater safeguard against the jealousies of the Court and the vagaries of the royal mood than his trustworthiness.

The minister should guard jealously the secrets confided to him, and should not be inquisitive about what is withheld from him. Tusi was held in great esteem by the Mongol chief, yet he agrees with Ibn Muqna`, that the closer one may be to the king, the greater should he show his respect to him, so much so that if the king calls him “brother,” he should address him as “lord.”

Source Of Practical Philosophy

According to Tusi, the Qur'anic injunctions relate to man as an individual, as a member of a family, and as an inhabitant of a city or State.38 This threefold division is evidently suggestive of the classification of practical philosophy into ethics, domestics, and politics by Muslim thinkers. The same is true of the content of these sciences; but it is no less true that later on these disciplines were considerably broadened under the influence of Plato and Aristotle. Shushtery's remark that “ethics was the only subject in which the East did not imitate the West,” and that “the only influence which the West could bring to bear upon the East in connection with this subject, was the method of scientific treatment,”39 is more true of domestics and politics, where Greek influence is least traceable, than of ethics proper.

Psychology

Instead of proving the existence of the soul, Tusi starts with the assumption that it is a self-evident reality and as such it needs no proof. Nor is it capable of being proved. In a case like this, reasoning out of one's own existence is a logical impossibility and absurdity, for an argument presupposes an argumentator and a subject for argument, but in this case both are the same, viz., the soul.

Nature of the Soul

The soul is a simple, immaterial substance which perceives by itself. It controls the body through the muscles and sense-organs, but is itself beyond the perception of the bodily instruments. After reproducing Ibn Miskawaih's arguments for the incorporeality of the soul from its indivisibility, its power of assuming fresh forms without losing the previous ones, its conceiving opposite forms at one and the same time, and its correcting sense illusions,[40] Tusi adds two of his own arguments.

Judgments of logic, physics, mathematics, theology, etc., all exist in one soul without intermingling, and can be recalled with characteristic clarity, which is not possible in a material substance; therefore, soul is an immaterial substance. Again, physical accommodation is limited and finite, so that a hundred persons cannot be accommodated at a place meant for fifty people, but this is not true of the soul. It has, so to say, sufficient capacity to accommodate all the ideas and concepts of the objects it knows, with plenty of room for fresh acquisition.[41] This too proves that the soul is a simple, immaterial substance.

In the common expression “My head, my ear, my eye,” the word “my”[42] indicates the individuality (*huwiyyah*) of the soul, which possesses these organs, and not its incorporeality. The soul does require a body as a means to its perfection, but it is not what it is because of its having a body.

Faeulties of the Soul

To the vegetative, animal, and human soul of his predecessors, Tusi adds an imaginative soul which occupies an intermediate position between the animal and the human soul. The human soul is characterized with intellect (*nutq*) which receives knowledge from the first intellect. The intellect is of two kinds, theoretical and practical, as conceived by Aristotle.

Following Kindi, Tusi considers the theoretical intellect to be a potentiality, the realization of which involves four stages, viz., the material intellect (*`aql-i hayulani*), the angelic intellect (*'aql-i malaki*), the active intellect (*'aql-i bi al-fi`l*), and the acquired intellect (*'aql-i mustafad*). It is at the stage of the acquired intellect that every conceptual form potentially contained in the soul becomes apparent to it, like the face of a man reflected in a mirror held before him. The practical intellect, on the other hand, is concerned with voluntary and purposive action. Its potentialities are, therefore, realized through moral, domestic, and political action.

The imaginative soul is concerned with sensuous perceptions, on the one hand, and with rational abstractions, on the other, so that if it is united with the animal soul, it becomes dependent upon it, and decays with it. But if it is associated with the human soul, it becomes independent of the bodily organs, and shares the happiness or misery of the soul with its immortality. After the separation of the soul from the body, a trace of imagination remains in its form, and the punishment and reward of the human soul depend upon this trace (*hai'at*) of what the imaginative soul knew or did in this world.[43]

The sensitive and calculative imagination of Aristotle apparently constitutes the structure of Tusi's imaginative soul, but his bringing the imaginative soul into relation with an elaborate theory of punishment and reward in the hereafter is his own.

As a matter of tradition handed down from Ibn Sina and Ghazali,[44] Tusi believes in the localization of functions in the brain. He has located common sense (*hiss–i mushtarak*) in the first ventricle of the brain, perception (*musawwirah*) in the beginning of the first part of the second ventricle, imagination, in the fore part of the third ventricle, and memory in the rear part of the brain.

Metaphysics

According to Tusi, metaphysics proper consists of two parts, the science of divinity (*'ilm–i Ilahi*) and the first philosophy (*falsefah–i ula*). The knowledge of God, intellects, and souls constitutes the science of divinity, and the knowledge of the universe and the universals constitutes the first philosophy. The knowledge of the categories of unity and plurality, necessity and contingency, essence and existence, eternity and transitoriness also forms part of the latter.

Among the accessories (*furu`*) of metaphysics fall the knowledge of prophethood (*nubuwwat*), spiritual leadership (*imamat*), and the Day of Judgment (*qiyamat*). The range of the subject itself suggests that metaphysics is "of the essence of Islamic philosophy and the realm of its chief contribution to the history of ideas."[45]

God

After denying the logical possibility of atheism and of an ultimate duality, Tusi, unlike Farabi, Ibn Miskawaih, and Ibn Sina, argues that logic and metaphysics miserably fall short of proving the existence of God on rational grounds. God being the ultimate cause of all proofs, and, therefore, the foundation of all logic and metaphysics, is Himself independent of logical proof. Like the fundamental laws of formal logic, Ile neither requires nor lends Himself to proof. He is an *a priori*, fundamental, necessary, and self––evident principle of cosmic logic, and His existence is to be assumed and postulated rather than proved. From the study of moral life as well, he arrives at a similar conclusion and, like Kant in modem times, regards the existence of God as a fundamental postulate of ethics.

Tusi further argues that proof implies perfect comprehension of the thing to be proved, and since it is

impossible for the finite man to comprehend God in His entirety, it is impossible for him to prove His existence.[46]

Creatio ex nihilo

Whether the world is eternal (*qadim*) or was created by God *ex nihilo* (*hadith*), is one of the most vexing problems of Muslim philosophy. Aristotle advocated the eternity of the world, attributing its motion to the creation of God, the Prime Mover. Ibn Miskawaih agreed with Aristotle in regarding God as the creator of motion but, unlike him, reasoned out that the world, both in its form and matter, was created by God *ex nihilo*.

Tusi in his *Tasawwurat* (written during the period of Isma`ilite patronage) effects a half-hearted reconciliation between Aristotle and ibn Miskawaih. He begins by criticizing the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. The view that there was a time when the world did not exist and then God created it out of nothing, obviously implies that God was not a creator before the creation of the world or His creative power was still a potentiality which was actualized later, and this is a downright denial of His eternal creativity. Logically, therefore, God was always a creator which implied the existence of creation or world with Him. The world, in other words, is co-eternal with God. Here Tusi closes the discussion abruptly with the remark that the world is eternal by the power of God who perfects it, but in its own right and power, it is created (*muhdath*).

In a later work, *Fusul* (his famous and much commented metaphysical treatise), Tusi abandons the above position altogether and supports the orthodox doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, without any reservation. Classifying Being into the necessary and the possible, he argues that the possible depends for its existence on the necessary; and since it exists by other than itself, it cannot be assumed in a state of existence, for the creation of the existent is impossible and absurd. And that which is not in existence is non-existent, and so the Necessary Being creates the possible out of nothing. Such a process is called creation and the existent, the created (*muhdath*).

Similarly, in *Tasawwurat*, Tusi agrees with Ibn Sina that from one nothing can proceed except one, and following this principle explains the emanation (*sudur*) of the world from the Necessary Being after the Neo-Platonic fashion. In *Risaleh-i `Aql*, *Risaleh-i 'Ilal wa Ma`lulat*, and *Sharh-i Isharat* too, he supports, both logically and mathematically, pluralization in the creative process taken as a whole. But in later works, *Qawa'id at-`Aqa'id*, *Tajrid al-`Aqa'id*, and *Fusul*, he evidently attacks and blows up the very foundation of this principle, once held so dearly by him.

The reflection of the first intellect is said to have created the intellect, soul, and body of the first sphere. This position, he now points out, obviously implies plurality in what is created by the first intellect, which goes against the principle that from one nothing can proceed except one. As to the source of plurality, he further argues that it exists either by the authority of God or without His authority. If it exists by the authority of God, then there is no doubt that it has come from God. If, on the other hand, it exists without

the authority of God, that would mean the setting up of another god besides God.[47]

Again, in *Tasawwurat*, Tusi holds the view that God's reflection is equivalent to creation and is the outcome of His self-conscious necessity. But in *Fusul*, he abandons this position as well. He now regards God as a free creator and blows up the theory of creation out of necessity. If God creates out of necessity, he argues, His actions should spring out of His essence. Thus, if a part of the world becomes non-existent, the essence of God should also pass into nothingness; for the cause of its non-existence is conditioned by the non-existence of a part of its cause, the non-existence of which is further determined by the non-existence of the other parts of its cause and so on. And since all existents depend for their existence on the necessity of God, their nonexistence ultimately leads to the non-existence of God Himself.[48]

Prophethood

After establishing freedom of the will and resurrection of the body, Tusi proceeds to establish the necessity of prophethood and spiritual leadership. Conflict of interests coupled with individual liberty results in the disintegration of social life, and this necessitates a divine Code from God for the regulation of human affairs. But God Himself is beyond all sensory apprehension; therefore, He sends prophets for the guidance of peoples. This, in turn, makes necessary the institution of spiritual leadership after the prophets to enforce the divine Code.

Good And Evil

Good and evil are found mixed up in this world. The obtrusiveness of evil is inconsistent with the benevolence of God. To avoid this difficulty, Zoroastrians attributed light and good to Yazdan and darkness and evil to Ahriman. But the existence of two equal and independent principles itself involves a metaphysical inconsistency. Rejecting the view on this ground, Tusi explains away the reality and objectivity of evil with the enthusiasm of Ibn Sina, his spiritual progenitor.

According to Tusi, the good proceeds from God and the evil springs up as an accident (*'ard*) in its way. The good, for instance, is a grain of wheat thrown into the soil and watered, so that it grows into a plant and yields a rich crop. The evil is like the foam which appears on the surface of the water. The foam evidently comes from the water-courses and not from the water itself. Thus, there is no evil principle in the world, but as an accident it is a necessary concomitant or by-product of matter.

In the human world, evil is occasioned by an error of judgment or through a misuse of the divine gift of free-will. God by Himself aims at universal good, but the veils of the senses, imagination, fancy and thought hang before our sight and cloud the mental vision. Thus, prudence fails to foresee the consequences of actions, resulting in wrong choice, which in turn begets evil.

Again, our judgment of evil is always relative and metaphorical, that is, it is always with reference to

something. When, for instance, fire burns a poor man's cottage or flood sweeps away a village, a verdict of evil is invariably passed on fire and water. But in reality there is nothing evil in fire or water; rather their absence would constitute an absolute evil in comparison to the partial evil occasionally caused by their presence.

Lastly, evil is the outcome of ignorance, or the result of some physical disability, or the lack of something which provides for the good. The absence of day is night, the lack of wealth is poverty, and the absence of good is evil. In essence, therefore, evil is the absence of something – a negative, not a positive something.[49]

To the question why a finite sin is dealt with infinite punishment by God, Tusi replies that it is a mistake to attribute either reward or punishment to God. Just as the virtuous, by nature and necessity, deserve eternal bliss and happiness, so the vicious by nature and necessity deserve eternal punishment and despair.

Logic

On logic, his works include *Asas al-Iqtibas*, *Sharh-i Mantiq al-Isharat*, *Ta'dil al-Mi`yar*, and *Tajrid fi al-Mantiq*. The first of these gives a comprehensive and lucid account of the subject in Persian on the lines of Ibn Sina's logic in *al-Shifa'*.

Tusi regards logic both as a science and as an instrument of science. As a science, it aims at the cognition of meanings and that of the quality of the meanings cognized; as an instrument, it is the key to the understanding of different sciences. When knowledge of meanings as well as of the quality of meanings becomes so ingrained in the mind that it no longer requires the exercise of thought and reflection, the science of logic becomes a useful art (*san`at*), freeing the mind from misunderstanding, on the one hand, and perplexity, on the other.[50]

Having defined logic, Tusi, like Ibn Sina, begins with a brief discussion of the theory of knowledge. All knowledge is either a concept (*tasawwur*) or a judgment (*tasdiq*); the former is acquired through definition and the latter through syllogism. Thus, definition and syllogism are the two instruments with which knowledge is acquired.

Unlike Aristotle, Ibn Sina had divided all syllogisms into the copulative (*iqtirani*) and the exceptive (*istithna'i*). Tusi has followed this division and elaborated it in his own way. His logical works are Aristotelian in general outline, but he mentions four[51] instead of three syllogistic figures; and the source of this fourth figure is found neither in the *Organon* of Aristotle nor in any of the logical works of Ibn Sina.[52]

Review

Tusi, as we have already seen, owes his ethics to Ibn Miskawaih and politics to Farabi; but neither of them reaches the depth and the extent of Ibn Sina's influence over him. Tusi's logic, metaphysics, psychology, domestics, and dogmatics – all are substantially borrowed from him. Besides, his long though casual connection with the Nizari Isma`ilites also influenced his ethical, psychological, and metaphysical speculations.

Historically speaking, his position is mainly that of a revivalist. But from the standpoint of the history of culture, even the revival of the philosophical and scientific tradition, especially in an era of political and intellectual decline, though marked by tiresome erudition and repetition, is no less important than origination, inasmuch as it prepares the ground for the intellectual rebirth of a nation.

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1. Zand's article on Tusi in Hilal, November 1956, Karachi.
2. Ivanow, Tasawwurat,.p. xxv.
3. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. IV, p. 980.
4. After passing into the service of Hulagu, Tusi, in the preface to Zij al-Ilkhani, referred to his connection with the Isma'llites as "casual" (Ivanow, op cit., p xxv) and also "rescinded" the dedication of Akhlaq-i Nasiri to Nasir al-Din 'Abd al-Rahim, his Isma'ili patron at Quhistan (Browne, Literary History of Persia, Vol. II, p. 456)
5. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. IV, 981.
6. P. K. Hitti, History of the Arabs, p. 378.
7. Aidin Sayili's article in Yadnameh-i Tusi, Teheran University, Teheran, 1957, p. 61.
8. Hukuma'-i Islam, Vol.II, p.256.
9. Yadnameh-i Tusi, p.66.
10. Browne, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 485.
11. Asas al-Iqtibas, p.YB.
12. Browne, op. cit, Vol. III, p. 18.
13. Ivanow, op.cit., p. lxv.
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19. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. I, p. 933.
20. Akhlaq-i Nasiri, p. 5.
21. Ibid., p.6.
22. Ibid., p. 145.
23. Ibid., p. 175.
24. Ibid., p.6.
25. Ibid., p.44.
26. Ibid., p.61.
27. Aristotle regards "prodigality" as the extreme of liberality on the side of excess, and hence a positive vice, although it is for him "no sign of meanness, but only of folly" (Nichomachean Ethics, p. 105).
28. Qur'an, ii, 190; v,2.
29. Ibid., ii, 10.
30. Akhlaq-i Nasiri, p. 114.
31. Ghazali, Ihya', Vol.III, Chap.III
32. Ausaf al-Ashraf, p. 1
33. Akhlaq-i Nasiri, p. 145. The treatise referred to by Tusi is Kitab al-Siyasat, ed. Ma'luf, Beirut, 1911.
34. Tahdhib al-Akhlaq, pp.46-54.
35. Ara' Ahl al-Madinat al-Fadilah, pp. 53-85; Siyasat at-Madaniyyah, pp. 1-76.
36. Compare this theory of natural sociability with Hobbes' view of man as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (Roger, Students' History of Philosophy, p. 245).
37. Compare it with Machiavellian ethics of "force and fraud.' "A ruler will perish if he is always good. He must be as cunning as a fox and as fierce as a lion" (Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy, p. 528).
38. Akhlaq-i Nasiri, p. 10.
39. Outlines of Islamic Culture, Vol. II, p. 441
40. Tahdhib al-Akhlaq, pp.3-7.
41. Tasawwurat, p.25.
42. Every body belongs to a soul, according to this argument. In modern times, William James too has used the same argument to prove that every thought belongs to a mind. "It seems as if the elementary psychic facts were not thought, this

thought or that thought, but my thought, every thought being owned." W. James, Psychology (Briefer Course), p. 153

43. Tasawwurat, p.23.

44. Ghazali has located retention (hafizah) in the first ventricle (tajwif) of the fore part of the brain, imagination (wahmiyyah) in the middle ventricle of the brain, thought (tafakkur) in the middle of the brain, and recollection (tadhakkur) in the rear verticle of the brain. (Mizan al-`Amal, p. 25.).

45. Afnan, op.cit., p.106.

46. Tasawwurat, p.8.

47. Fusul, p.18.

48. Ibid., pp. 16-18.

49. Tasawwurat, p.44.

50. Asas al-Iqtibas, p.5.

51. Ibid., p.379.

52. Afnan, op.cit., p.101.

Part 4: The Middle-Roaders

Chapter 30: Al-Ghazali Part 1 - Metaphysics

A. Introduction

Al-Ghaz□l□ occupies a position unique in the history of Muslim religious and philosophical thought by whatever standard we may judge him: breadth of learning, originality, or influence. He has been acclaimed as the Proof of Islam (hujjat al-Islam), the Ornament of Faith (zain al-din) and the Renewer of Religion (mujaddid).1 Al-Subki (d. 771/1370) went so far in his estimation of him as to claim that if there had been a prophet after Mohammad, al-Ghaz□l□ would have been the man.2

To be sure he gathered in his own person all the significant intellectual and religious movements of his time and lived over again in the inwardness of his soul the various spiritual phases developed by Islam. He was, in turn, a canon-lawyer and a scholastic, a philosopher and sceptic, a mystic and a theologian, a traditionist and a moralist. His position as a theologian of Islam is undoubtedly the most eminent.

Through a living synthesis of his creative and energetic personality, he revitalized Muslim theology and reoriented its values and attitudes. His combination of spiritualization and fundamentalism in Islam had such a marked stamp of his powerful personality that it has continued to be accepted by the community since his time. His outlook on philosophy is characterized by a remarkable originality which, however, is more critical than constructive. In his works on philosophy one is struck by a keen philosophical acumen and penetration with which he gives a clear and readable exposition of the views of the philosophers, the

subtlety and analyticity with which he criticizes them, and the candour and open-mindedness with which he accepts them whenever he finds them to be true.

Nothing frightened him nor fascinated him, and through the philosophies of Aristotle and Plotinus and to their Muslim representatives before him, al-Farabi and ibn Sina. The main trends of the religious and philosophical thought of al-Ghaz□l□, however, came close to the temper of the modern mind. The champions of the modern movement of religious empiricism, on the one hand, and that of logical positivism, on the other, paradoxical though it may seem, would equally find comfort in his works. The teachings of this remarkable figure of Islam pertaining either to religion or philosophy, either constructive or critical, cannot, however, be fully understood without knowing the story of his life with some measure of detail, for, in his case, life and thought were one, rooted in his own personality. Whatever he thought and wrote came with the living reality of his own experience.

B. Life

B. Life[3]

Abu Hamid Mohammad ibn Mohammad ibn Mohammad ibn Ta'us Ahmad al-Tusi al-Shafi'i, generally known simply by his *nisbah* al-Ghaz□l□,[4] was born in 450/1058 at Tabaran, one of the two townships of Tus, now in ruins in the neighbourhood of modern Meshed in Khurasan.

Al-Ghaz□l□ was not the first scholar of distinction in his family. There had been another Abu Hamid Ghaz□l□ (d. 435/1043), his grand-uncle, who was a theologian and juris-consult of great repute,[5] possibly a model which he might have set before him in his ambitious youth. But he was early exposed to Sufistic influences. His own father was a pious dervish, who, according to al-Subki would not eat anything but what he could earn with his own hands and spend as much time as he could in the company of the divines.

Early left as an orphan, al-Ghaz□l□ was brought up and educated by a pious Sufi friend of his father along with his brother who later made a mark as a great mystic. While still a boy al-Ghaz□l□ began the study of theology and canon-law, with the express desire for wealth and reputation as he himself has acknowledged[6] first in his native town under Shaikh Ahmad ibn Mohammad al-Radhkhani al-Tusi and then at Jurjan under the Imam Abu Nasr al-Isma'ili. After his return from Jurjan he stayed for a while in Tus and possibly during this period studied Sufism under Yusuf al-Nassaj and perhaps even undertook some of the Sufistic exercises. At the age of about 20 he proceeded to the Nizamiyyah Academy of Nishapur to study under Abu al-Ma'ali al-Juwanini known as Imam al-Haramian, the most distinguished Ash'arite theologian of the day, only fourth from Al-Ash'ari himself in an apostolic succession of the Ash'arite teachers.

The curriculum of the Academy included a wide range of subjects such as theology, canon-law, philosophy, logic, dialectics, natural sciences, Sufism, etc. Imam al-Haramain allowed full freedom of

thought and expression to his students; they were encouraged to engage in debates and discussions of all kinds. Al-Ghaz□l□ gave early proof of great learning and also of a tendency towards philosophizing. Imam al-Haramain described him as "a plenteous ocean to be drowned" and comparing him with two other students of his observed, "al-Khawafi's strong point is verification, al-Ghaz□l□'s is speculation and al-Kiya's is explanation.7

In his debates with other students he showed great suppleness of mind and a gift for polemics. Not long afterwards he began to lecture to his fellow students and to write books. But al-Ghaz□l□ was one of those rare minds whose originality is not crushed by their learning. He was a born critic and possessed great independence of thought. It was verily during his studentship at the Nizamiyyah Academy of Nishapur that he became impatient of dogmatic teaching and freed himself from the bondage of authority (*taqlid*) and even showed the signs of scepticism.

During his stay at Nishapur, he also became a disciple to the Sufi Abu 'Ali al-Fadl ibn Mohammad ibn 'Ali al-Farmadhi al-Tusi, a student of al-Ghaz□l□'s own uncle and of the reputed al-Qushairi (d. 465/1074). From al-Farmadhi al-Ghaz□l□ learned more about the theory and practice of Sufism. He even practised rigorous ascetic and Sufistic exercises under his guidance but not to the desired effect. As he himself narrates, he could not attain to that stage where the mystics begin to receive pure inspiration from "high above."8 So he did not feel quite settled down in his mind.

On the one hand, he felt philosophically dissatisfied with the speculative systems of the scholastic theologians and could not accept anything on authority, on the other, the Sufistic practices {583} also failed to make any definite impression on him for he had not received any sure results. There is no doubt, however, that the increasing attraction of the Sufistic teaching, with its insistence upon a direct personal experience of God, added to al-Ghaz□l□'s critical dissatisfaction with dogmatic theology.

Al-Farmadhi died in 477/1084 and Imam al-Haramain in 478/1085. Al-Ghaz□l□ was then in his 28th year, ambitious and energetic; the fame of his learning had already spread in the Islamic world. He betook himself to the Court of Nizam al-Mulk, the great vizier of the Saljuq sovereign Malik-shah (r. 465/1072 – 485/1092) and joined his retinue of canonists and theologians. Nizam al-Mulk, by his munificent patronage of scholarship, science, and arts had gathered round him a brilliant galaxy of savants and learned men. He used to hold frequent assemblies for debate and discussion and al-Ghaz□l□ soon made his mark at these and was conspicuous for his skill in debate.

Al-Ghaz□l□'s profound knowledge of Muslim law, theology, and philosophy impressed Nizam al-Mulk so much that he appointed him to the Chair of Theology in the Nizamiyyah Academy (established 458 – 60/1065 – 67) at Baghdad in 484/1091. He was then only 34. This was most coveted of all honours in the then Muslim world and one which had not previously been conferred on anyone at so early an age.

As a professor in the Academy, Al-Ghaz□l□ was a complete success; the excellence of his lectures, the extent of his learning, and the lucidity of his explanations attracted larger and larger classes including the

chief savants of the time. Soon all Islam acclaimed his eloquence, erudition, and dialectical skill and he came to be looked upon as the greatest theologian in the Ash'arite tradition. His advice began to be sought in matters of religious and political, and he came to wield influence comparable to that of the highest officials of the State. Apparently, he attained all the glory that a scholar could by way of worldly success, but inwardly he began to undergo an intellectual and spiritual crisis.[9]

His old doubts and scepticism began to assail him once again and he became highly critical of the very subjects that he taught. He keenly felt the hollowness of the meticulous spinning of casuistry of the canon-lawyers.[10] The systems of the scholastic theologians (*Muta'allimin*) had no intellectual certainty, for they depended entirely on the acceptance of their initial dogmatic assumptions on authority. He denounced their over-emphasis on the doctrinal, for it led to a faulty representation of religion by reducing it to a mere mould of orthodoxy and catechism of dogmas.

The disputes of the scholastics amongst themselves he considered as mere dialectical logomachies which had no relation with religious life.[11] Al-Ghaz□l□ turned once again to the study of philosophy, this time as diligently and as comprehensively as he could,[12] but found, like Kant, that it was impossible to build theology on reason alone. Reason was good so far as it went, but it could not go very far. The ultimate, the Supreme Truth, could not be reached through it. Becoming keenly aware of the theological limitations of reason, he fell into a state of scepticism and lost his peace of mind. The hypocrisy of his orthodox teaching became unbearable and he found himself to be in a false position.

But all was not lost. He had some assurances that he could be delivered from this state of despair through the Sufi way. It was not that he now discovered that in Sufism lay the possibility for a direct encounter with reality; this fact he had been realizing over a period of exercises, only he had not advanced far enough into them. If he could consecrate himself to the Sufistic way of life through spiritual renunciation, sustained asceticism, and prolonged and deep meditation, he might have received the light he sought. But this meant, in his case, giving up his brilliant academic career and worldly position. He was, by nature, ambitious and had great desire for fame and self-glorification.

On the other hand, he was the most earnest seeker after truth. Besides, he had the anxiety to reach a secure faith which was accentuated by his thought of life after death. He remained in the throes of severe moral conflict and in a spiritual travail for about six months beginning with Rajab 488/July 1095. He collapsed physically and mentally, appetite and digestion failed and he lost his power of speech. This made it easy for him to renounce his post as a professor. He left Baghdad in Dhu'l al-Qa'dah 488/November 1095, ostensibly on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Actually, he went into seclusion to practice the ascetic and religious discipline of the Sufis in order to secure certainty for his mind and peace for his soul. He gave away all his fortune except some "trust funds" to maintain his family and proceeded to Syria.

For two years, from 488/1095 to 490/1097, he remained in strict retirement in one of the minarets of the mosque of the Umayyads in Damascus, undergoing a most rigorous ascetic discipline and performing

religious exercises. He moved to Jerusalem for another period of meditation in the mosque of ‘Umar and the Dome of the Rock. After paying a visit to the tomb of Abraham at Hebron, he went on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, and then followed a long period of retreat at different places in holy shrines and mosques and wandering in deserts.[13] After 11 years, the life of a wandering dervish and scholar came to an end and he finally returned to his native town, Tus, in 499/1105.[14]

Of his inner spiritual experiences in their experimental actuality, after he left Baghdad, al-Ghazālī tells us almost nothing except that there were revealed to him in periods of solitude things innumerable and unfathomable. Apparently, these experiences culminated in his acknowledgement of the authority of the Prophet and the complete submission of the truth revealed in the Qur’an. The first public sign of his recovery to orthodoxy is perhaps *al-Risalah al-Qudsiyya*, written during his retreat in Jerusalem, where in all probability he was before 492/1099, for in Sha‘ban of that year Jerusalem was captured by the Crusaders. This has been inserted as *Qawa‘id al-‘Aqa’id* in the third chapter of the second book of his massive *magnum opus Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din* (The Revivification of the Sciences of Religion) in which he began to set down what he had learned through his long periods of self-discipline and meditation.[15] During his wanderings he not only kept on writing other books besides *Ihya’* but also resumed teaching from time to time. He keenly felt it incumbent upon him to crush heresy and disbelief around him and to call people back to the truth and moral power of Islam, both through writing and teaching; he virtually assumed the role of a moral and religious reformer. He began to devote himself more and more to the study of the traditions of the Prophet and make an extensive use of them for the purposes of edification and spiritual guidance.

On his return to Tus he once again gave himself to the life of retirement and contemplation, but soon Fakhr al-Mulk, the son of his old patron, Nizam al-Mulk, who was the vizier of Sultan Sanjar, urged him to accept the care of theology at the Maimunah Nizamiyyah College at Nishapur which he did after some hesitation in Dhu’l Qa’dah 499/August 1106. But he did not stay there long and retired once more to his home in Tus and established a *madrasah* at which he began to teach both theology and *Tasawwuf*. At the instance of the learned and the common people of Baghdad he was once again summoned by the Grand Vizier al-Said to take up teaching in the old Nizamiyyah Academy of Baghdad but al-Ghazālī chose to remain in Tus. There he lived in peace with some personal disciples in charge of his *madrasah*. Every moment was filled with study and devotion until his death on the 14th of Jamada the second 505/ December 19, 1111. It was a beautifully complete and round life in which the end had become a beginning.

C. Method

The most important thing about al-Ghazālī’s system of thought is its method which may be described as that of the courage to doubt. The best expression of it is given in his famous auto-biographical work, *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* (The Deliverer from Error), which he wrote some five years before his death.[16] In *al-Munqidh* al-Ghazālī makes a critical examination of the methods of the various schools of thought

current in his time in a manner closely similar to that of Descartes' (d. 1060/1650) in his *Discours de la methods* (1047/1637).

All kinds of knowledge, al-Ghaz□l□ held, should be investigated and nothing should be considered dangerous or hostile. For him, he said that he had embarked on the open sea of knowledge right from his adolescence setting aside all craven caution, "I poked into every dark recess and made an assault on every problem, I plunged into every abyss. I scrutinized the creed of every sect and I fathomed the mysteries of each doctrine. All this I did that I might distinguish between the true and the false. There was no philosopher whose system I did not acquaint myself with, or a theologian whose doctrines I did not examine. If ever I met a Sufi, I coveted to probe into his secretes, if an ascetic, I investigated into the basis of his austerities, if one of the atheistic *zindiqs*, I groped into the causes of his bold atheism."[17] Such was the courage of al-Ghaz□l□ to know.

He was free from the parochialism of the dogmatic theologians of his day who would rather consign the books of the atheists and philosophers to flames than read them. But prepared though he was to listen to every creed and doctrine, he would accept none and doubt all. For one thing, he came to the conclusion and the greatest hindrance in the search for truth was the acceptance in beliefs on the authority of others and blind adherence to the heritage of the past. He remembered the traditional saying of the Prophet, "Every child is born with a sound disposition (*fitrah*); it is the parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian,"[18] and he was anxious to know what that sound disposition was before it suffered the impress of the unreasoned convictions imposed by others. Indeed, he wanted to reconstruct the knowledge from its very foundation and was led to make the following reflections, "The search after truth being the aim which I propose to myself I ought to recognize the certitude is the clear and complete knowledge of things, such knowledge as leaves no room for doubt, nor any possibility of error."[19]

As one might foresee, this proposed test for certitude only led him to a series of doubts. No part of the knowledge he had acquired hitherto could stand this rigorous test. He further observed, "We cannot hope to find truth except in matters which carry their evidence in themselves, i.e. in sense-perception and necessary principles of thought, we must, therefore, first of all establish these two on a firm basis." But he doubted the evidence of sense-perception; he could see as plainly as Descartes did later that they so often deceive us. No eye can perceive the movement of a shadow, still the shadow moves. A small coin would cover any star yet the geometrical computations show that a star is a world vastly larger than the earth.[20]

Al-Ghaz□l□'s confidence in sense-perception having been shaken, he turned to the scrutiny of what he called the necessary principles, but he doubted even these. Are ten more than three? Can a thing be and not be at the same time or be both necessary and impossible? How could he tell? His doubt with regard to the sense-perception made him very hesitant to accept the infallibility of reason. He believed in the testimony of sense until it was contradicted by the verdict of reason. Well, perhaps there is above

reason another judge who, if he appeared, would convict reason of falsity and if such a third arbiter is not yet apparent it does not follow that he does not exist.

Al-Ghaz□l□ then considers the possibility that life in this world is a dream by comparison with the world to come, and when a man dies, things may come to appear differently to him from he now beholds.[21] There may be an order of reality different from this spatio-temporal order which may be revealed to a level of consciousness other than the so-called normal consciousness such as that of the mystics or the prophets. Such was the movement of al-Ghaz□l□'s thought, which though formulated a little artificially in the *Munqidh* was dramatic enough to make out a case for the possibility of a form of apprehension higher than rational apprehension, that is, apprehension as the mystic's inspiration or the prophet's revelation.[22]

Al-Ghaz□l□'s method of doubt or sceptical attitude did certainly have its historical antecedents. The Ash'rites' system of atomism, by reducing all categories except substance (*jauhar*) and quality (*'ard*) to mere subjectivities virtually amounted to a form of scepticism.[23] Even earlier than the Mu'tazilites, like al-Nazzam (d. 231/845) and Abu al-Hudhail (d. 266/840), had formulated the principle of doubt as the beginning of all knowledge.[24] But with al-Ghaz□l□, this was as much a matter of an inherent trait of his intellectual disposition as a principle. On may be tempted to say that his keenly alert and sensitive mind, though, exposed from early youth to all the various intellectual and spiritual movements of the time such as scholasticism, rationalism, mysticism, etc., was not fully captured by any one single movement.

Ambitious and self-confident, he had been, in a way, playing with the various influences rather than affected exclusively by anyone of them. His restless soul had always been trying to reach for what it had not attained. In his sincere and open search for absolute truth, he possibly remained oscillating for a long time between the moments of belief and disbelief, moments when he might have found comfort in his religious convictions with complete submission to the teachings of the Qur'an and the moments when his doubts and scepticism might have over-whelmed him, clamouring for indubitable certainty.

It is certainly very difficult to map the exact usual method of working out the history of the mental development of an author on the basis of the chronological order of his works is not possible in the case of al-Ghaz□l□ for our knowledge of his works is incomplete, both with regard to their extent and relative order, not to speak of exact dating.[25] None of his works, not even *al-Munqidh* which has often been compared with the *Confessions of Augustine* allows us a peep into the inward workings of his soul.[26] It is merely a schematized description of spiritual development and not an existential study of the "phenomenology" of his soul. He has simply arranged in a logical order what must necessarily have come to him in a broken and sporadic form.

Nevertheless, *al-Munqidh* is our most valuable source to determine al-Ghaz□l□'s relative position with regard to the various schools of thought around him. He had been moving through them all these years, studying them very closely in his quest for certainty, and of them he now gives us a critical evaluation in a summary fashion. He divides the various "seekers" after truth into four distinct groups: Theologians,

Mystics, and Authoritarians (Ta'limites), and Philosophers.

His criticism of the theologians is very mild. He himself had been brought up in their tradition and was thoroughly saturated into their system. It is doubtful if he ever parted company with them completely. He did not cease to be a theologian even when he became a mystic and his criticism of the philosophers were essentially from the standpoint of a theologian. Only he was dissatisfied with the scholastic method of the theologians, for it could not bring any intellectual certainty, their doctrines, he deemed, however, to be correct. His belief in God, Prophecy and Last Judgment were too deeply rooted in him to be shaken altogether, his scepticism with regard to them, if at all, was a temporary phase, he very much wanted a confirmation of these fundamental beliefs either on some philosophical grounds or through some sort of first-hand experience.

So far as the mystics were concerned, al-Ghaz□l□ found himself hardly in a position to level any criticism against them except for the extravagantly pantheistic utterances or antinomian tendencies of some of the intoxicated Sufis.27 They were essentially men of feeling (*arbab al-ahwal*) rather than men of words (*ashab al-aqwal*) and he had himself early realized the importance of experiences and states rather than that of definitions and dogmas. The claims of the mystics he knew could not be challenged by one who lacked their experiences.

Al-Ghaz□l□ held a very poor opinion of the pre-tensions of those whom he called the part of *ta'lim* or authoritative instruction also known as Isma'iliyyah and Batiniyyah.28 Theirs was a kind of Muslim popery or Montanist movement. They renounced reason and held that truth can be attained only be a submissive acceptance of the pronouncements of an infallible Imam. This doctrine indeed was a part of the propaganda of the Fatimid Caliphate (297/909 – 555/1160) with its centre in Cairo and, thus, had its moorings in the political chaos of the day. Al-Ghaz□l□'s examination of the Ta'limites was certainly due to his love for thoroughness in search for truth, but perhaps he also wanted to make clear his position with regard to an ideology having political strings behind it.

It was the fourth class of seekers of truth, namely the philosophers, who engaged his attention most of all and troubled his mind more than anyone else.

D. Attack On The Philosophers

1. Introduction

Al-Ghaz□l□'s critical examination of the method and doctrines of the philosophers is the most exciting and important phase of his intellectual inquiry. He was not all against philosophical investigation as such. His early interest in philosophy is evidenced by the treatise that he wrote on logic such *Mi'yar al-'Ilm fi Fan al-Mantiq*, "The touch-stone of Science in Logic" (quite an elaborate treatise) and *Mihakk al-Nazar fi al-Mantiq*, "The Touchstone of speculation in Logic" (a smaller work).

In the history of Muslim thought, his is the first instance of a theologian who was thoroughly schooled in the ways of the philosophers, the doctors of Islam before him either had a dread of philosophy, considering it a dangerous study, or dabbled in it just to qualify themselves for polemics against the philosophers. But al-Ghaz□l□ strongly realized that to refute a system before literally inhabiting it and being thoroughly immersed into its very depths was to act blindly. "A man," he tells us, "cannot grasp what is defective in any of the sciences unless he has so complete a grasp of the science in question that he equals its most learned exponents in the appreciation of its fundamental principles and even goes beyond and surpasses them..."[29] In all intellectual honesty he refrained from saying a word against the philosophers until he had completely mastered their systems.

He applied himself so assiduously to the study of the entire sweep of Greek philosophy current in his time and attained such a firm grasp of its problems and methods[30] that he produced one of the best compendia of it in Arabic entitled as *Maqasid al-Falasifah* (The Intentions of Philosophers). This compendium was such a faithful exposition of Aristotelianism that when it came to be known to the Christian scholastics through a Latin translation made as early as 540/1145 by the Spanish philosopher and translator Dominicus Gundisalvus,[31] it was taken to be the work of a genuine Peripatetic. Albert the Great (D. 679/1280), Thomas Aquinas (d. 673/1274), and Roger Bacon (d. 694/1294) all repeatedly mentioned the name of the author of the "Intentions of the Philosophers" along with ibn Sina and ibn Rushd as the true representatives of Arab Aristotelianism.[32] But never did Arab Aristotelianism find a more vigorous foe than al-Ghaz□l□. His compendium in philosophy was merely propaedeutic to his *Tahafut al-Falasifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers)[33] in which he levelled a devastating attack on the doctrine of the Muslim Peripatetics with a dialectic as subtle as any in the history of philosophy.

Al-Ghaz□l□, for the purposes of his scrutiny, divided the philosophers into three main groups: the materialists (*dahriyyun*),[34] the naturalists or the deists (*tabi'iyyun*), and the theists (*ilahiyyun*). The materialists completely dispensed with the idea of God and believed that the universe has existed eternally without a creator: a self-subsisting system that operates and develops by itself, has its own laws, and can be understood by itself. The naturalists or the deists struck by the wonders of creation and informed of a running purpose and wisdom in the scheme of things while engaged in their manifold researches into the sciences of phenomena, admitted the existence of a wise Creator or Deity, but rejected the spirituality and immortality of the human soul. They explained the soul away in naturalistic terms as epi-phenomena of the body and believed that the death of the latter led to the complete non-existence of the former. Belief in heaven, hell, resurrection, and judgment they considered as old wives' tales or pious fictions.

Al-Ghaz□l□ discussed the theists at length for them, according to him, held a comparatively more final position and exposed the defects of the materialists and the naturalists quite effectively, thus saving him from doing so for himself. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle he listed as theists but concentrated on Aristotle who criticized all his predecessors and even had refuted his own teacher, excusing himself of this by saying, "Plato is dear to us, and truth is dear, too. Nay, truth is dearer than Plato."[35]

As far as the transmission of Aristotle's philosophy in Arabic was concerned, al-Ghaz□l□ found that none of the Muslim philosophers had accomplished anything comparable to the achievements of al-Farabi and ibn Sina. These two were Aristotle's most faithful and capable translators and commentators; the works of others were marked with disorder and confusion. Thus, al-Ghaz□l□ finally came to concentrate on that philosophical thought of his day which had emerged from the writings of these two theistic philosophers (particularly ibn Sina) and applied himself to its examination in a systematic manner.

He divided the philosophical sciences into mathematics, logic, physics, politics, ethics, and metaphysics, and went into their details in order to see if there really was anything false or untenable. He was most scientific in his approach, ready to accept whatever he found to be based on the evidence of factual data or susceptible of proof by argument in conformity with the principles of reason. He had least hesitation in accepting as true much of what the philosophers taught with regard to their sciences of mathematics, logic and physics. He even had no serious quarrel with them in the spheres of politics and ethics. The most grievous errors of the theistic philosophers, he found, consisted in their metaphysical views which, unlike mathematical and natural sciences, were not grounded in compelling reason or positive inquiry but on conjectures and fanciful speculations. Had their metaphysics been so very well grounded in sound reasoning as their mathematical sciences were, they would have agreed amongst themselves on metaphysical issues as they did on the mathematical ones.

But, above all, what al-Ghaz□l□ saw to his dismay was that the philosophies of al-Farabi and ibn Sina, at points did violence without any philosophic warrant or justification to the principles of religion as enunciated in the Qur'an. His empirical and theological spirit revolted very strongly against this. The positive facts of religion could not be sacrificed for sheer metaphysical speculations, nor could they be interpreted externally from the point of view of a pre-conceived system of philosophy. These had to be interpreted intrinsically and reckoned on their grounds.

The Muslim philosophers had failed to take this empirical standpoint. They had also been slow in realizing that notwithstanding a great breadth of outlook that the study of Greek philosophy had brought to the Muslims, there was in the ultimate analysis, quite a gulf between the inspiration of the Qur'anic teachings and the spirit of Hellenism.[36] Carried away by their enthusiasm to bring reconciliation between philosophy and religion, al-Farabi and ibn Sina, according to al-Ghaz□l□, had so compressed the dogmas of Islamic religion within the moulds of Aristotelian and Plutonian systems as to fall either into a morass of inconsistencies to get implicated into heretical positions.

Al this al-Ghaz□l□ brought out with the most accomplished understanding and admirable skill and with a "transcendental" dialectic as subtle as that of Kant's in his *Tahafut al-Falasifah* which indeed is the most important of all his works from the point of view of our present study. Within less than a hundred years it called forth the most stimulating rejoinder (entitled, *Tahafut al-Tahafut*) from the celebrated ibn Rushd and then a rejoinder of a rejoinder from Muslih al-Din Mustafa ibn Yusuf al-Bursawi, generally known as

Khuwaja Zadah, a Turkish theologian who died in 893/1488.[37] These works, particularly the first two taken together epitomize the essential problems arising from the impact of classical philosophy on the teachings of religion.[38]

2. Method and Problems of Tahafut

It is generally believed that al-Ghaz□l□ wrote his *Tahafut al-Falasifah* during the period of his doubts, but in fact, the work is essentially of a polemical nature and shows in him an odd combination of scepticism and ecstatic assurances. The general effect of the teaching of the philosophers, al-Ghaz□l□ felt, was so ruinous to the religious and moral life of the masses that his will-nigh apostolic humanism revolted against it and he dedicated himself to an open warfare against the philosophers. There is no doubt about the theological inspiration and the polemical spirit of the *Tahafut* but then we add most emphatically that neither of them seriously affects the great philosophical value of his work.[39]

The modern reader cannot fail to be struck with clear anticipations of Hume (d. 1190/1776), Schleiermacher (d. 1250/1834), Ritschl (d. 1307/1889), and others, and even of the logical positivists of our day in some of the arguments and the general *motif* of the *Tahafut*. His general position may be briefly described to be that the truth of the positive facts of religion can neither be proven nor disproven, and to do otherwise lead the philosophers to take, more often than not, quite non-sensical positions.

Al-Ghaz□l□ assails the philosophers on 20 points[40] (beginning with creation and ending with the last things) and endeavours to show that their dogmas of the eternity and the everlastingness of the world are false, their assertion that God is the creator of the world, that they fail to prove the existence, the unity, the simplicity and in corporeality of God or God's knowledge either of the universals or of the particulars , that their views with regard to the souls of the celestial spheres, and the spheres' knowledge of the particulars and the purpose of their movement are unfounded, that their theory of causation which attributes effects to the very nature of the cause is false, and that they cannot establish the spirituality of the soul, nor prove its immortality, and, finally, that their denial of resurrection of the bodies in the life hereafter is philosophically unwarranted,. Al-Ghaz□l□ charges the philosophers with infidelity on three counts:

1) eternity of the world,

2) denial of God's knowledge of the particulars, and

3) denial of bodily resurrection.

For the rest, their views are heretical or born of religious indifference. But in all, they are involved in contradictions and suffer from confusion of thought.

The problem which al-Ghaz□l□ considers the most important is that of the eternity (*qidam*) of the world to which he allots the greatest space, almost a quarter of the book. This has been one of the most

challenging and uncompromising problems in the conflict between religion and philosophy. The advocates of orthodoxy considered the eternality of the universe to be the most pernicious thesis of the philosophers and vehemently combated against it. Al-Ash'ari (d. 324/935) wrote a refutation of it in his *Kitab al-Fusul* which probably is the earliest scholastic treatise dealing with this question,[41] and ibn Hazm (d. 457/1064) made the doctrine a dividing line between the orthodox and the heterodox sects.

The orthodox could not possibly concede the philosophers' claim of the eternality of the world, for with them there is nothing eternal but God, all else is created (*hadith*). To make anything co-eternal with God is to violate the strict principle of monotheism, for that infringes the absoluteness and infinity of God and reduces Him to the position of an artificer – a Demi-urge. Virtually, the doctrine drives one to the materialists' position that the world is an independent universe, a self-subsistent system, which develops by itself, and can be understood by itself. All this was hard to swallow for a theologian like al-Ghaz□l□.

The philosophers like al-Farabi and ibn Sina, as Muslims, did not deny that God is an eternal creator of the universe, but as true Aristotelians believed that God's activity consists merely in bringing forth in the state of actuality the virtual possibilities inherent in the prime matter which was alleged to be co-eternal with Him. This was in conformity with the Aristotelian notion of change not as a passage from non-being into being, which would make it unintelligible, but as a process by which what is merely "potential being" passes over, through "form," into "actual being."[42] So God, as an eternal creator, constantly combines matter with new forms, He did not create the universe out of sheer nothingness of a definite time in the past. As a corollary they believed in the infinity of time.

Al-Ghaz□l□, on the other hand, in accordance with the obvious teachings of the Qur'an, firmly holds the position that the world was created by God out of absolute nothingness[43] at a certain moment in the past which is at a finite interval from the present. He created not only forms but also matter and time along with them which had a definite beginning and hence, is finite.

The two positions as outlined above readily remind one of Kant's thesis and anti-thesis in the first antinomy[44] which present an impossible problem in the sense that conditions requisite for their verification or falsification are *de facto* impossible. One is tempted to say that al-Ghaz□l□ does not recognize the impossibility of the problem for he clearly proclaims that he does not intend to defend his own position but only to refute that of the philosophers. This is true in general of all other disputations in *Tahafut al-Falasifah*. The arguments of the philosophers are presented with very considerable plausibility, but the dialectical skill and philosophical acumen the al-Ghaz□l□ employs to refute them are also over-whelming. Though the whole discussion is surcharged with a polemical spirit, yet one cannot fail to see that al-Ghaz□l□'s standpoint throughout remains highly scientific and logical, he does not succumb merely to verbal quibbles. He clearly says that he does not have any quarrel with the philosophers on the usages of terms.[45]

Al-Ghaz□l□'s quarrel with the philosophers is because many of their particular arguments are logically false and the various positions that they take in their system as a whole are inconsistent with one

another, but above all, because some of their basic assumptions are unfounded. These assumptions, al-Ghaz□l□ does not prove most powerfully, can be demonstrated logically, nor are they self-evident through "intuition." Such, for example, is the assumption that every event has a cause or that causes produce their effects necessarily.

The Muslim philosophers have accepted these assumptions merely in the dogmatic tradition of Aristotelian philosophy. The faulty reasonings of the philosophers or the inconsistencies in their positions are remediable but not so the uncritical acceptance of their assumptions. Al-Ghaz□l□ for himself is not prepared to accept any part of the Aristotelian system except the first principles of logic and rules of syllogism – nothing else until and unless it has logical coerciveness about it. On the other hand, he is not prepared to reject any of the doctrines of religion until and unless it is disproved with a similar logical rigour and cogency.

Nothing is "possible" in philosophy until it is logically necessary, and nothing is "impossible" in religion until it is logically self-contradictory. Apparently, this is a double-faced criterion to judge variously the truths of philosophic assumptions and those of religious assumptions, but from the point of view of philosophy of religion, it is perfectly justified. Philosopher *qua* philosopher has to accept the facts of religion as given by religion, the *sin qua non* of any empirical philosophy of religion. Thus, in spite of the fact that al-Ghaz□l□'s whole polemic against the philosophers derives its inspiration from the Ash'rite theology, his method remains in its essentials purely philosophical, fulfilling in its own some of the most important requirements of the modern and even contemporary approaches to the problems of the philosophy or religion.[46]

These few observations with regard to al-Ghaz□l□'s method in the *Tahafut* were necessary before we could enter into some of the detailed arguments which he gives in the refutation of the philosophers' various positions.

3. Eternity of the World

The proof of the philosophers for the eternity of the world starts with certain assumptions with regard to the notions of cause and will. These they take to be true axiomatically:

1. Every effect has a cause.

2. Cause must be the action of some external force other than the effect.

3. Cause or an act of will when executed must immediately lead to the effect.[47]

For the world's coming from non-existence to existence there certainly should have been some cause, this could not be a physical cause for *ex hypothesi* none yet existed. If this cause arose from an act of the will of God at some specific time, then the divine will itself should have been determined by some other cause. This cause, which led God to change His mind, should certainly be outside His mind, but

again this is not possible, for nothing outside Him yet existed. Thus, one is forced to conclude that either nothing ever arose from the being of God, which is not true, for the world does exist or that the world must have been in existence from all eternity, as an immediate effect of His eternal will.

Al-Ghazālī declines to subscribe to any one of the assumptions as stated above and shows that belief in the origination of the world from the eternal will of God at a specific moment of time as chosen by Him involved no violation of the fundamental principles of logic. The assumptions of philosophers, that every effect has a cause and that a cause is a force external to its effect, do not have a logical coerciveness about them. It is quite legitimate to believe that God's will does not have any cause or at least that this cause does not lie outside His will but in itself. Similarly, it is not logically necessary that the effect should follow a cause immediately, for it is not logically contradictory to hold the notion of "a delayed effect."

It is possible to think that God's will is eternal and yet an object of that eternity of God's will and the eternity of the object of His will. God, for example, can eternally will that Socrates and Plato should be born at such and such a time and that the one should be born before the other. Hence, it is not logically illegitimate to affirm the orthodox belief that God eternally willed that the world should come into being at such and such a definite moment in time.

The philosophers point out a real difficulty here. According to them, it is impossible to find out a differentiating principle for God's eternal choice of a particular moment for the creation of the world. All moments of time are completely similar; how is it possible to choose between two completely similar things? Why, in short, was the world not created earlier or later than when it was created? One of the answers to this is that there arises no question of the world's being created earlier or later, for time yet was not, time, too, was created along with the creation of the world, i.e. both world and time are finite in duration. Al-Ghazālī adds further that should one assume with the philosophers that time is infinite, then at any present moment that infinite time has brought to an end and time that has an end is not infinite but finite. It is noteworthy that this is exactly the argument given by Kant in the thesis of his first antinomy.

Al-Ghazālī's real standpoint, however, is that God just arbitrarily chose one particular moment rather than another for the world's coming into being. We need ask no more about this choice, for God's will is completely undetermined. His will does not depend upon distinctions in the outside world, for it is the true significance of God's will. God chooses a particular moment for the creation of the universe as He chooses a particular direction for the movement for the creation of the universe as He chooses a particular direction for the movement of the spheres of the (Ptolemaic) heaven, in some cases from east to west, in others from west to east (as described in the Aristotelian astronomy) even when the reversal of directions would have made no difference. There is no way to explain God's choice either in one case or the other.

The difficulty posed by the philosophers arises because of their misguided attempt to understand the

nature of divine will altogether in the terms of man's will. Certainly, God's will is not like men, as God's knowledge is not like man's knowledge. So far as God's knowledge is concerned, the philosophers avowedly admit that it differs from man's knowledge in so many respects that in their final position it becomes indeed an inexplicable mystery. God, according to them, possesses the knowledge of all the universals without this knowledge necessitating plurality, with its being additional to His essence, and without its multiplying in proportion to the multiplicity of the objects known.

Some of them assert after Aristotle that God is the knower, the knowledge, and the known, and that the three are one. Should we judge all this by what applies to man's knowledge, it will be found to be an utter impossibility. While the philosophers admit that God's knowledge cannot be compared with man's knowledge, they insist upon drawing a comparison between God's will and man's will. This is exactly what al-Ghaz□l□ calls the incoherence of the philosophers and, according to him, their thought-system taken as a whole reveals quite a number of such incoherencies. Indeed the philosophers' very notion of eternal creation is self-contradictory and meaningless. Is it sense to speak of a creation of that which exists eternally? If God and the prime matter are both eternal existents, does it make sense to say that one is the cause of the other? Can the relation between two existents qua existents be regarded as a casual one?

Further, the philosophers put different constructions upon their notions of space and time. They assume time to be infinite and space to be finite, and yet consider time to be co-implicant of movement in space. Al-Ghaz□l□ insists rightly that one who believes in the finitude of space must in consistency assume the existence of finite time, particularly when to one another.[48] And if they insist that it is impossible to think of empty space they should equally realize that it is impossible to conceive of an empty time.

These are just a few of the inconsistencies of philosophers pointed out by al-Ghaz□l□ in the course of his disputation with regard to the eternity of the world and they could be mentioned here only briefly, considering the space at our disposal. One further point of criticism may, however, be added for its importance in the history of modern philosophy. Prior to its origination, the philosophers hold, the world must have either been possible (*mumkin*), or impossible (*mumtani'*), or necessary (*wajib*). It is impossible that it should have been impossible, for that which is impossible in itself is never brought into existence. Again, it is impossible for it to have been necessary in itself, for that which is necessary in itself is never deprived of existence.

It follows then that the existence of the world must have always been possible in itself; otherwise it would never have come to be. This possibility cannot inhere in possibility itself, or in the agent, or in non-substratum, for the possible is that which is in the process of *becoming* actual. Hence, the subject of possibility in some sub-stratum which is susceptible of possibility and this is matter. Now, this matter cannot be considered to have been originated, the possibility of its existence would have preceded its existence. In that case, possibility would have existed in itself, but possibility existing in itself is unintelligible. Hence, matter is eternal and it is only the passing over of the forms to matter which is

originated.

In rebutting this highly sophisticated argument of the philosophers al-Ghaz□l□ points out in Kantian fashion that possibility, like impossibility, is a purely subjective notion to which nothing need correspond in reality. If possibility requires an existent to correspond to it, but avowedly there is no existing thing in concrete ability to which impossibility may be referred. Hence, possibility, like impossibility, is merely a concept, the assumption of an existing sub-stratum to which his concept may be related is to have a metaphysical jump from mere thought to actual existence and to commit as we understand now an ontological fallacy.

4. Theory of Emanation

The entire argument of philosophers with regard to the eternity of the world is, thus, full of contradictions and unproved assumptions, but the most manifest of their inconsistencies and the sheer baselessness of their assumptions become signally conspicuous when they come to explain the origination of the world from the being of God in the terms of Plutonian Theory of Emanation. Plotinus considers the world to be a necessary outflow from the being of God like light from the sun[49] or better as Spinoza described it later like the properties of a triangle from a triangle.[50] Muslim philosophers' subscription to this view according to al-Ghaz□l□ is the clearest evidence that their verbal avowal of creation is a mere dissimulation and duplicity. The problem of emanation with the philosophers, however, arises because of their over-emphasis on the abstract unity and absolute perfection of God.

Creation through an act of volition implies both will and knowledge, and these cannot be predicated of God as attributes apart from His essence without doing violence to His absolute unity. Further both will and knowledge are limitations – will in particular implies a deficiency in a being who wills, for it means that he desires or wants to have that which he lacks. Hence, philosophers elaborated an ingenious theory of emanation which contrives to erect a cosmological staircase between the stable stillness of God's unity and the changing and varied multiplicity of the world. This staircase is constituted of a finely graded series of intelligence superior to that of man had the overwhelming authority of Aristotle[51] and further it was possible and even fascinating ot conceive of them in terms of angels as described by philosophers.

The emanation of Muslim philosophers in the final analysis worked under two governing principles: First, it is unthinkable that, from God, who is a pure unity anything could precede except that which is itself a unity. This gave rise to the formula – from one only one can follow. Secondly, being has two aspects, it is either necessary (*wajib*) or possible (*mumkin*), and it is either essence (*mahiyyah*) or existence (*anniyyah*). In the case of God alone are essence and existence given to them by God.

The first emanation from the existence of the First Principle (*al-mabda' al-awwal*), the Necessary Being (*al-wajib al-wujud*), i.e. God is the first intelligence (*al-'aql al-awwal*) which is numerically one. Its existence is possible in itself and necessary through the First Principle; further, it knows its own essence

as well as the essence of the First Principle. From its twofold existence and twofold knowledge springs a multiplicity of knowledge and existence. The first intelligence, in fact, has three kinds of knowledge. Of the First Principle, of its own essence in so far as it is necessary, and of its possible being. One might ask, "What is the source of this three-foldness in the first intelligence when the principle from which it emanates is one?" The answer is, "From the First Principle only one precedes, i.e. the essence of the first intelligence by which it knows itself."

Now, its knowledge of its principle is evidently necessary, although this necessity is not derived from that principle. Again, being possible in itself the first intelligence cannot owe its possibility to the First Principle but possesses it in its own self. Though only one should proceed from one, yet it is possible that the first effect may come to possess not from the First Principle but by itself certain necessary qualities which express some relation or negation of relation and give rise to plurality. Thus, from the three kinds of knowledge possessed by the first intelligence emanate three beings, but only one from each kind. As it knows its principle there proceeds from it a second intelligence; as it knows its essence three proceeds from it the first soul of the highest sphere (which is the ninth heaven), and as it knows itself as possible in itself there proceeds from it the body of that sphere.

In a similar fashion from the second intelligence emanates the third intelligence, the soul of the stellar sphere and the body of that sphere. From the third intelligence emanates the fourth intelligence, the soul of the sphere of Saturn and the body of that sphere. From the fourth intelligence emanates the fifth intelligence, the soul of the sphere of Jupiter and the body of that sphere. Now there are, according to the then current Ptolemaic system, only nine celestial spheres in all, including the sphere of the fixed stars, all in concentric circles with earth at the centre.[52] So, starting from the First Principle the emanations proceed on until the last or the tenth intelligence appears and with it the last sphere of the moon and its soul.

The tenth intelligence, also called the active intellect (*al-'aql al-fa'al*),[53] acts in our world. It produces the first matter (*hayula*) which is passive and formless but which is the basis for the four elements which all creatures arise. The composition and decomposition of the elements is the cause of general and corruption of all bodies. But all these transformations take place under the influence of the movement of the spheres. As the active intellect is the producer of matter, so it is the dispenser of forms, *dator formarum* (*wahib al-suwar*). It gives to each matter its proper form and it also gives each body a soul (which, in fact, is its form) when the body is ready to receive.

Thus, active intellect is also the source of the existence of human souls. But the human soul does not feel at home in its physical abode and yearns for nothing less than the First Principle Himself. Hence, it starts its spiritual journey back to the original source, traversing through the various stages of the intelligence of the spheres. This is a rounded though brief description of the emanationistic world-view so enthusiastically elaborated by the Muslim philosophers, by ibn Sina, for example, in both his major works on philosophy, viz., *Kitab al-Shifa'* and *Kitab al-Najat* and by al-Farabi in his *al-Madinat al-*

Fadilah.[54]

Determinism implicit in the emanationistic world-view is so opposed the theistic voluntarism of the Ash'arite world-view that al-Ghazālī launches the most vehement attack against it. His strictures against this grand cosmological construction made out of so many various foreign imported ideas are the strongest and the bitterest of all others that may be found in the entire *Tahafut*. All this, he inveighs, is arbitrary reasoning, idle speculation, a wild guess, darkness piled upon darkness. If someone says he saw things of this kind in a dream, it would be inferred that he was suffering from some disease. Even an insane person could not rest satisfied with such postulates.[55] In our times, to say nothing of the scientists, F. R. Tennant, who may be described as the eminent "religious positivist" holds the theory of emanation more or less on the same estimation.[56]

Al-Ghazālī's criticism of the emanationistic argument consists in showing, on the one hand, that it fails to account for the multiplicity and composition in the universe and, on the other that it does not at all succeed in safeguarding the absolute unity of God. If the formula ever so glibly repeated that from one only one proceeds should be observed strictly logically, then all the beings in the world would be units, each of which would be an effect of some other unit above it, as it would be the cause of some other unity below it in a linear fashion. But, in fact, this is not the case. Every object, according to the philosophers themselves, is composed at least of form and matter.

How does a composite thing such as body then come into existence? Does it have only one cause? If the answer is affirmative, then assertion that only one proceeds from one becomes null and void. If, on the other hand a composite thing has a composite cause, then the same question will be repeated in the case of this cause so on and so forth until one arrives at a point where the compound necessarily meets the simple.

This contact between the compound effect and the unitary cause wherever it occurs would falsify the principle that only one proceeds from one. Now, strictly speaking, all the existents in the universe are characterized by composition and only the First Principle, i.e. God alone can be said to possess true simplicity or unity, for in Him alone there is the complete identity of essence and existence. This would lead us necessarily to the conclusion that both the principle of "only one form" fails to account for the composition and multiplicity which is apparent in the universe or that even God does not possess a genuine unity. But the philosophers cloak the issue with their artificial subtleties and the grandiose constructions they put upon their emanationistic foundations.

What earthly and even unearthly relation are there, al-Ghazālī questions rightly, between the first intelligence's having a possible existence and the body of the sphere of the second intelligence which is supposed to proceed from it? Neither logic nor experience can substantiate this wild supposition and as such it is no more than pure non-sense. Further, how is it possible that from two kinds of knowledge of the first intelligence, that is, knowledge of the First Principle and that of itself, should arise two kinds of existence, first, that of the second intelligence and, second, that of the soul of the highest sphere? How

can the knowledge of a thing lead to the existence of a thing (as we would now put it after Kant) without committing an obvious ontological fallacy? How can the knower emanate from the knowing, al-Ghaz□l□ rightly wonders, as does F. R. Tennant, and like him deplores that of all the people, philosophers should believe in such mythical non-sense.[57]

Even if the triplication with which the philosophers characterize the first intelligence should be taken for granted (which indeed cannot be done) it fails to account for all that they want to deduce from it. The body of the highest sphere, which according to them proceeds only from one aspect of the essence of the first intelligence, is surely not unitary in nature but composite and that in three ways. First, as stated above, it is composed of form and matter, as indeed all bodies are according to the philosophers' own admission. True, form and matter always exist conjointly in all bodies, yet they are so different from each other that one cannot be the cause of the other. Hence, form and matter of the body of the highest sphere require two principles for their existence and not one. A unitary aspect of the three-fold character of the first intelligence fails to account for it.

Secondly, the body of this sphere has a definite size. Its having a definite size is something additional to the bare fact of its existence. Certainly, it could have come into existence with a different size, bigger or smaller than what it is. Hence, over and above that which necessitated the existence of the body of the sphere, there should be an additional cause to account for the adoption of this particular size.

Thirdly, in the highest heaven, there are marked out two points as its poles, which are fixed. This fact was admitted by the philosophers in accordance with the Aristotelian astronomy. Now, either all the parts of the highest sphere are similar, in which case it is impossible to explain why two points should be chosen in preference to all the others as its poles, or they are different, some of them possessing properties which are not possessed by the others. Hence, we require yet another aspect in the first intelligence to be the case for differences in the various parts of the highest sphere which differences alone could justify the choice of two points therein to be the poles.

In view of what has been stated above, it is sheer "ignorance" on the part of philosophers to hold that the body of the highest sphere has emanated only from one aspect of the essence of first intelligence. Either the principle that only one proceeds from one is true, in which case the first intelligence which is not a mere triplication but a whole multiplicity remains unexplained, or this principle is an empty formula signifying nothing, and, thus, making it possible that "many may proceed from one." In the latter case the infinite variety and plurality of the world can be directly derived from the unity of God and there is no need to erect an emanationistic staircase between Him and the world.

The above principle certainly collapses when we come to the second intelligence, for it is supposed to be, in one of its aspects, the cause of the sphere of the fixed stars. These are 1200 or so (according to the then Greek or Arab astronomers' reckoning)[58] and are different in magnitude, shape, position, colour, and in respect of their special function in nature etc. Each one of these factors in every single star needs a separate cause as its determinant (*murajjih*). All this necessitates a bewildering multiplicity

in the second intelligence and also indirectly pre-supposes the same in the first intelligence in so far as the latter is the emanative cause of the former.

Should the above arguments fail to convince the philosophers, there is another way to show that the first intelligence is more than a mere triplication. Is the self-knowledge of the first intelligence identical with its essence or other than it? It is not possible that it should be identical, for knowledge is not the same thing as that which is known. Hence, the first intelligence is not a triplication but a quadruplicity, to wit, its essence, its knowledge of itself, its knowledge of the First Principle, and its being a possible existent by itself. To all these four aspects there can be added yet another, namely, its being a necessary being whose necessity is derived from an external cause. All this proves that the first intelligence has five aspects and not three, as arbitrarily assumed by philosophers. Whether the first intelligence has five aspects or three, it certainly is not of purely unitary character according to the philosophers' own admission. This shows that there is something in the effect which is not present in the cause, i.e. the First Principle, and this is scandalous.

Not only does the formula that only one proceeds from one become shame-facedly invalid right at the outset, but further, according to al-Ghaz□l□, the entire emanationistic line of argument does great violence to the concept of God's unity and, thus, nullifies the very purpose for which it is adopted. There is no reason, according to him, that the very arguments which the philosophers advance to establish the triple character of the first intelligence should not be applied to God Himself.

One of the aspects of plurality in the first intelligence according to philosophers is its being a possible existent by itself. It may be asked, "Is its being possibly identical with its existence or other than it?" If it is identical, no plurality would arise from it. If it is other than its existence, then why should it not be possible to say that there is as much plurality in the First Principle, i.e. God Himself, for He only has existence but is necessary in His existence? The necessity of existence as such is other than existence itself. In truth, existence may be considered to be a generic concept divided into necessary and possible. If one specific difference is an addition to existence *per se* in one case, it should be considered so in the other, also. If the philosophers insist that the possibility of existence is other than existence in the case of the first intelligence, through the same argument they should admit that necessity of existence is different from existence in the case of the First Principle.

Similarly, al-Ghaz□l□ asks, "Is the first intelligence's knowledge of its principle identical with its existence and with its knowledge of itself or other than two?" If it is identical, then there will be no plurality in its nature. But if it is other than the two, then such a plurality exists also in the First Principle, for He too knows Himself as well as what is other than Himself. Thus, al-Ghaz□l□ contends that either there can be no plurality in the first intelligence or if it is there, then it is for the same reasons in the First Principle too, and, therefore, the beings characterized by diversity and plurality would directly proceed from Him. Al-Ghaz□l□ forces this conclusion upon the philosophers through their own logic.

For himself al-Ghaz□l□ believes that, "The First Principle is an omnipotent and willing agent, He does

what he wills, ordains as He likes, and He creates the similar and dissimilar things alike, whenever and in whatever manner He wills? The impossibility of such a belief is neither a self-evident truth, nor a matter of inferential knowledge."[59] Al-Ghaz□l□ frankly and rightly confesses that the problem of God's relation with the universe in the final analysis remains every beyond the comprehension of human understanding. The inquiry into the manner in which the world proceeded from God's will, he urges, is "an idle and aimless venture." The *modus operandi of* God's creative activity is wholly inexplicable and this inexplicability is inevitable; indeed, if it were explicable, it would not be "creative." Explanation in all its forms establishes some connection or similarity with what is experienced, whereas God's creativity is an activity through which the experients and what is experienced by them come to be. How can human comprehension envisage the mode of God's creation when it is itself the creature of the act?

Philosophers try to avoid the charge of plurality with regard to the First Principle so far as His knowledge is concerned by affirming that the First Principle does not know anything other than Himself and His self-knowledge is the same thing as His essence, so the knowledge, the knower, and the object of knowledge are all one in Him. This indeed was originally the position of Aristotle according to whom God is describable as thought thinking itself. In Aristotle's own words "...it must be itself that thought thinks, and its thinking is thinking on thinking."[60] This view of God as reflective thought, reflective in the literal sense of turning back upon itself, has been subjected to severe criticism by al-Ghaz□l□.

According to him, self-knowledge of a literal and direct sort is impossibility. He argues with Plotinus that self-knowledge even in the case of God implies an epistemological subject-object dualism and, therefore, would impede the philosophers' thesis of the absolute unity of the First Principle. Not only the Aristotelian conception of God as thought thinking thought does not absolve the philosophers from introducing plurality in the First Principle, but further lends them into many more difficulties with regard to their emanationistic world-view. Consider, for example, the relative positions of the First Principle and the first intelligence in terms of their knowledge. The First principle which is the emanative cause of the first intelligence does not know anything other than Himself, whereas the latter knows not only its cause but further knows itself and three effects which proceed from it, viz., the second intelligence, the soul of the highest sphere, and the body of that sphere.

It is a strange theory, al-Ghaz□l□ observes, which makes the effect have the knowledge of its cause but not the cause of its effect. The necessity of a cause possessing the knowledge of its effect is more compelling than the necessity of an effect possessing the knowledge of its cause. In fact, the philosophers make the first intelligence superior to and "nobler" than the First Principle in so far as from the First Principle, only one thing proceeds, while from the first intelligence three things proceed. Further, the First Principle does not know what proceeds from Him; in fact, He does not know anything other than Himself, while the first intelligence knows itself, its cause, and its three effects. Al-Ghaz□l□ feels as bitter at the Aristotelian conception of God as thought thinking itself that he goes to the length of saying that the philosophers by limiting God's knowledge to the sphere of self-knowledge virtually reduce Him to the status of the dead.[61]

5. God's Knowledge of the Particulars

5. God's Knowledge of the Particulars [62]

Al-Ghaz□l□ is very emphatic and uncompromising with regard to the all-circumscribing knowledge of God, "God knows the creeping of the black ant upon the rugged rock in the dark night, and He perceives the movement of the mote in the midst of the air."[63] Ibn Sina also subscribes to the view that God knows everything, "Nothing, not even as much as a particle of dust in the heavens or on the earth, remains hidden from His Knowledge."[64] Yet, interestingly enough, al-Ghaz□l□ does not hesitate to level a charge of infidelity against him on this score for, according to ibn Sina, though God knows all the particulars, He knows them only in a universal way. This means that God cannot have the perceptual knowledge of particular things but knows them by way of a universal knowledge.

Ibn Sina realizes the difficulty of his position and so adds that the understanding of it needs great intellectual subtlety. The reasons that he advances to deny perceptual knowledge to God are fully recognized by al-Ghaz□l□. Perceptual knowledge is characterized both temporally and spatially, whereas God is above both time and space and so it is not possible to ascribe perceptual knowledge to Him. A particular event occurs at a particular moment of time and suffers change with the passage of time. Change in the object of perception implies a change in the content of perception itself which obviously leads to change of perception implies a change in the content of perception itself, which obviously leads to change in the subject of perception, i.e. in the percipient himself.

But change in God is unthinkable, therefore, perception of a particular event is not possible for Him. Similarly, to distinguish between one particular object and another in space is possible only through the senses and implies a special relation of a sensible thing to the percipient as being near to or far from him or in a definite position, and this is impossible where God is concerned. Hence, it is not possible for God to have *perceptual* knowledge of the particulars. His knowledge can only be that which rises above the particular "now's" and the particular "here's,' that is to say, is of conceptual or universal nature.

Ibn Sina's position as briefly outlined above seems to be very well grounded in sound reasoning and is quite understandable, yet, according to al-Ghaz□l□, it is so pernicious to religion that it altogether demolishes the entire edifice of religious Law (hence his charge of infidelity). The theory implies that God cannot know any new state that emerges in John; He cannot know that John has become an infidel or a true believer, for He can know only the disbelief or the belief of man in general in a universal manner and not in specific relation to individuals.

Yes, God cannot know Mohammad's proclaiming himself a prophet at the time when he did. The same will be true of every other prophet, for God only knows that among men there are some who claim prophecy, and that such and such are their attributes; but He cannot know a particular prophet as an individual, for that is to be known only by the senses. There is certainly a point in what al-Ghaz□l□ says here for it is really difficult to show any relation between the temporal and the timeless, yet the above

criticism of his is a little wide of the mark for it is based on a misinterpretation of ibn Sina's position. By the statement that God does not have *perceptual* knowledge of the particulars, ibn Sina does not mean to say that God does not have the knowledge of the particulars or that His knowledge is restricted only to that of the universals or general concepts. Ibn Sina insists that God does have knowledge of the particulars; only this knowledge comes to Him not through sensuous perception but through intellectual perception, not from moment to moment but eternally.

Ibn Sina starts with the Aristotelian conception that God has only self-knowledge but adds emphatically that His self-knowledge necessarily implies knowledge of all the existent things in the universe in so far as He is the principal or the ultimate source of them all. There is not a single existent particular which does not proceed from Him directly or indirectly and the existence of which does not become in some way necessary through inter-action of the various causes but ultimately all these have to be traced back to the First Cause. God, the First Cause, has the full pre-science of the working of the various causes which originate from Him and knows the effects produced by them and the time involved in their occurrence and recurrence.

Thus, God knows the particular events even when they occur to a single individual under specific conditions and at particular times in so far as they are fully explicable in terms of general laws and all-pervasive causal nexus. This may be illustrated with reference to an analogous human situation. An astronomer who has full understanding of the general laws governing the movements of the heavenly bodies can, through his proper calculations, describe the various phenomena such as the particular eclipses and the conjunctions of the stars. The analogy, however, though helpful, cannot be stretched to an identity, for, strictly speaking, there is nothing in our experience to compare with divine knowledge. Our knowledge is liable to error and it is fragmentary, whereas God's knowledge is infallible and all-embracing, so much so that the whole universe is known to Him in one single congruous manifestation which is not affected by time.

God is immediately aware of the entire sweep of history regarded as an ordered string of specific events in an eternal now. Further, God not only knows but is also the very ground of the objects that He knows. The universe proceeds from the essence of God verily because of His knowledge of the universe; the ideal representation of the universal system is the very cause of its emanation. Had God not known the universe with all its concrete particularities, the universe would never have come into being. This indeed is a very original and quite ingenious theory with regard to God's knowledge of the particulars.

Yet, it is undoubtedly of highly speculative nature and so al-Ghaz□l□ is all out to bring quite an arsenal of criticism against it with a dialectical analyticity and rigour not incomparable to those of the logical positivists of our own day. He is not at all prepared to accept any of the assumptions of the philosophers until and unless they should either be adaptable in the form of analytical propositions or be verifiable through some kind of intuitive experience. The attribution of knowledge to God as it is, but particularly that of "the other," cannot go without jeopardizing to some extent at least His absolute unity and

simplicity which otherwise are so emphasized, rather over-emphasized by philosophers. Above all, the theory, like any of its kind, fails to relate in any satisfactory manner the eternality of God's knowledge with the transiency of human experience, which relation indeed is the very crux of religious experience.

So far as it suffers from the pre-suppositions of the intellectualistic-deterministic world-view of philosophers, al-Ghaz□l□ simply has no patience with it. For one, it suggests a block universe such as makes little allowance if any at all, even for the exercise of God's will. These are just a few general remarks to indicate the mode and the various lines of al-Ghaz□l□ arguments against the philosophers; they may now be substantiated and amplified by listing some of the actual points of his criticism.

The statement that God's self-knowledge necessarily implies the knowledge of all the existent particulars in the universe cannot be logically validated, nor can it be verified on the basis of any analogous human experience. God's self-knowledge and His knowledge of others do not have the relation of logical entailment, for it is possible to imagine the existence of the one without imagining the existence of the other at the same time. Looking to our own experience it would be wrong to claim that man's knowledge of what is other than himself is identical with his self-knowledge and with his essence.

It may be said that God does not know other things in the first intention (*al-wajh al-awwal*) but that He knows His essence as the principle of the universe from this His knowledge of the universe follows in the second intention (*al-wajh al-thani*), i.e. by way of a logical inference. Now, the statement of the philosophers that God knows Himself directly only as the principle of the universe, according to al-Ghaz□l□, is as much an arbitrary assumption as the earlier statement and is exposed to exactly the same kind of criticism. According to the philosophers' own admission, it would suffice that God should know only His essence; the knowledge of His being the principle of the universe is additional to it and is not logically implicated in it. Just as it is possible for a man to know himself without knowing that he is "an effect of God" (for his being an effect is a relation to this cause), even so it is possible for God to know Himself without knowing that He is the principle or cause.

The principle or cause is merely the relation that He bears to His effect, the universe. His knowledge of His relation to the universe is not by any means entailed by His knowledge of His own essence. Do not the philosophers themselves in their doctrine with regard to the attributes of God affirm the possibility only of negative or relational statements about God on the plea that negations or relations add nothing to His essence?65

The knowledge of the relation, therefore, cannot be identical with the knowledge of the essence. Hence, the philosophers' assumption that God knows His essence and thereby also knows Himself as the principle of the universe, remains unproved logically and unverified experientially. Al-Ghaz□l□ raises many more points of criticism of a similar nature which fully bring out the "positivistic" and "analytic" thrusts in his thought. This type of criticism should have been sufficient with al-Ghaz□l□, for it served his purpose of refuting the philosophers quite effectively, but his religious calling and persuasion impel him to launch many more attacks on philosophers. They do not aim so much at the complete smashing of

the philosophers' arguments as to bring out either inconsistencies in their various positions or more so the difficulties of a religious nature in accepting them.

Al-Ghaz□l□ fully appreciates the motive of the philosophers in elaborating their theory with regard to the nature of God's knowledge of the particulars, which is no other than that of safe-guarding the immutability and the unity of God. Granted that God's knowledge remains unaffected by change, for it rises above the distinction of "is," "was" and "will," yet how can God's knowledge remain unaffected by the multiplicity and diversity of the objects that He knows? How can it be claimed that knowledge remains unitary even when the things known are unlimited in number and are different, for knowledge has to conform to the nature of the things known? If the change in the objects of cognition necessarily pre-supposes change in the subject, multiplicity and difference in the former pre-suppose the same in the latter.

"Would that I could understand," says al-Ghaz□l□, "how an intelligent person can allow himself to disbelieve the oneness of the knowledge of a thing whose states are divisible into the Past, the Present and the Future, while he would not disbelieve the oneness of knowledge which relates to all the different genera and species. Verily, the difference and the disparity among the diverse genera and species are more marked than the difference with the division of time. If that difference does not necessitate multiplicity and difference, how can this do so either?"66

Though the philosophers ascribe omniscience and fore-knowledge to God, they make His knowledge a sort of mirror which passively reflects in an eternal now the details of already finished sequence of events just as we in a particular present moment have the memory of a fixed and inalterable sequence of past events. Thus, God's knowledge of time is restricted only to the relational aspect of time, i.e. that of the sequence of before and after or of earlier and later. There is, however, another aspect of time which typically characterizes the human experience and forms its very essence, namely, that of the ever-fleeting, ever-changing now. This is the time which is born afresh at every moment, the time in which the future is perpetually flowing through the present into the past.

Now, according to the philosophers' thesis of God's knowledge as explained above, in God's eternal being there can be no counterpart of the experience of this living time in which we humans move and act. God may know, for example, that my acts of religious devotion are subsequent to my religious conversion, but He cannot know *now* that I am acting or have acted in such and such a way. So God in His supra-temporal transcendence would remain impervious to my religious solicitations, for I am eternally doomed to the tyranny of this ever-fleeting, ever-trembling now.67 Should this be true and should I come to realize it, I may cry in despair, "Of what use is God to me!" Such is the catastrophe to which the philosophers' over-emphasis upon the eternality and changelessness of God's knowledge leads through its very incumbent logic.

The problem of the relation of the eternality of God to the temporality of human experience is almost an impossible problem and the philosophers of all times have stumbled over it. It may suggested, however,

that God is transcendental of both time and change and yet in some mysterious way immanent in it. Viewed superficially, this seems to be an apparent logical contradiction, but, adds al-Ghazālī, the philosophers dare not point this out for they themselves have affirmed with regard to their doctrine of the eternity of the world that the world is eternal and yet at the same time subject to change.

The statement that God not only knows the universe but, further, that this knowledge is the very ground and the cause of the universe, though very significant in itself, is made by the philosophers essentially within the framework of their deterministic-emanationistic world-view and as such, according to al-Ghazālī, involved them into an embarrassing predicament. There is no sense in talking about the knowledge of an agent when his action is a "natural action" in the sense that it follows from him necessarily and is not the result of his volition. We do not say that knowledge of light possessed by the sun is the requisite condition for the emanation of light from the sun, and this, in fact, is the analogy which the philosophers have employed to explain the procession of the world from the being of God.

Further, according to them, the universe has not been produced by God all at once but has preceded from Him though "the intermediaries and the other consequences and the consequences of those consequences all indirectly connected with these intermediaries."[68] Even if it should be granted that the necessary procession of something from an agent requires the knowledge by him of that which proceeds, God's knowledge at best would be only that of the first intelligence and of nothing besides. That which proceeds from something which proceeds from God may not be necessarily known to Him. Knowledge is not necessary in the case of the indirect consequences of volitional actions; how can it be so in the case of the indirect consequences of necessary actions? Thus, the assertion of philosophers that God's knowledge is the very ground that cause of that which He knows loses its entire significance because of its moorings in the Plutonian scheme of emanationism.

Through a strange irony of logic the emanationistic argument of philosophers, instead of building a staircase between God and the world, creates almost an unbridgeable gulf between the two. It certainly leads to the conclusion that God is directly related only to the first intelligence, i.e. the first item of the series of emanations between God and the world. On the other hand, the world is directly related only to the lowest end of the series. Further, the argument makes the world an independent and autonomous system, which can be understood by itself because of its insistence on an inexorable causal necessity such as, pervades the entire scheme of things. This conception of a through and through causally determined universe rooted in the intellectual-emanationistic metaphysics of the philosophers was so radically different from his own dynamic-occasionalistic world-view grounded in the theistic-voluntaristic metaphysics of the Ash'arite tradition that al-Ghazālī declared a complete parting of the way with them. Their world-view, al-Ghazālī declared a complete parting of the way with them.

Their world-view, al-Ghazālī made it clear, militates particularly against the fundamental Islamic doctrine of God's providence and omnipotence, and leaves no possibility for the happening of miracles such as turning of a rod into a serpent, denaturing fire of its capacity to burn, revivification of the dead,

splitting of the moon (all so clearly referred to in the Qur'an).[69] There certainly is no scope for the exercise of God's free-will in a universe in which there is no real becoming and in which the future is already given in the present as its necessary effect. Nor, in view of the reign of the inexorable law of causal necessity in such a universe, is there any possibility for the miracles, except those which can be "naturalized" though scientific explanation.

6. Causality

Al-Ghaz□l□'s desire to vindicate the truth of the religious position mentioned above led him to make a highly critical and acute analysis of the philosophers' concept of causality. The analysis, which bears a strikingly close similarity to that of Hume's, brings[70] out clearly the most remarkable originality and acumen of al-Ghaz□l□'s thought. The problem that engaged him at the outset of his inquiry with regard to the 17th disputation in the *Tahafut* is the problem of the alleged necessity of the causal connection as maintained and insisted on by philosophers. He challenges the validity of this necessity right as he opens the discussion.[71] "In our view,' he asserts, "the connection between what are believed to be the cause and effect is not necessary."

The reason that he offers for the justification of his position is that the relation between cause and effect is not that of logical entailment. The affirmation of the one does not imply the affirmation of the other, nor does the denial of the one imply the affirmation of the other, nor does the denial of the one imply the denial of the other. Neither the existence nor the non-existence of one is necessarily pre-supposed by the existence or the non-existence of the other. The relation between quenching of thirst and drinking, satiety and eating, burning and fire, or light and sunrise, etc. is not a necessary relation, for in no case does the one term logically imply the other. There is nothing logically contradictory in assuming that fire may not burn and drinking may not quench thirst, and so on.

The alleged necessity of the causal connection is not logically warranted because through no amount of logical reasoning can we deduce the effect from the cause. At best, it is based on observation or experience. We observe that objects succeed one another or that similar objects are constantly conjoined. Now, this proves succession, not causation, or conjunction, not connection. The fire which is an inanimate object has no power to produce the effect of burning, "observation shows only the one is *with* the other and not that it is *by* it," i.e. the effect happens *with* the cause and not *through* it (*'indahu la bihi*)*I*.[72] The notion of necessity is valid only in the case of logical relations such as identity, implication, disjunction, etc. In the sphere of mere natural relations necessity has no scope.

In the order of nature, unlike the order of thought, we deal merely with the contingent and logical entities which remain unrelated to each other, only the ideas of them get connected in our mind by association. The relation between fire and burning is not a necessary relation, for it does not belong to the realm of necessity but to that of possibility such as may happen or may not happen depending on the will of God. "It is only," al-Ghaz□l□ enunciates clearly, "when something possible is repeated over and over again (so as to form the norm), that its pursuance of a uniform course in accordance with the norm in the past

is indelibly impressed upon our minds."[73]

Thus, if there is any semblance of necessity in the order of natural relations such as that of cause and effect, it is merely because the two terms which in nature remain extrinsic to each other, through constant repetition become conjoined in our consciousness. Causal necessity is just the habit of our mind: it is merely a psychological necessity in this that its denial like the latter does not involve us in a logical impossibility. Hence, the miracles, such as the fire not burning the body of Abraham when he was thrown into it, are not impossible to think. Al-Ghaz□l□ insists that the denial of miracles can be justified only when it should be proven that they are logically impossible and where such proof is not forthcoming their denial is sheer ignorance and obduracy.

It is interesting to note further that al-Ghaz□l□, in the course of his discussion of the principle of causality and the possibility of miracles, comes close to propounding the notion of the composite nature of a cause and also that of plurality of causes. Cause he understands to be the sum total of many contributory factors, some of which are positive while others negative, and all of which have to be considered in conjunction. Take the case of a man seeing a coloured object, he could possess sound vision, he should open his eyes, there should be no obstruction between the eyes and the object of vision, the object should be a coloured one, the atmosphere should not be dark but have sufficient light, etc. Any one condition by itself cannot be taken to be a cause and a single negative condition such as the blindness of the person or the darkness of atmosphere may make the cause non-operative though logically not impossible.

The relation of cause and effect is based on observation and observation as such does not rule out the possibility that the same effect might follow some cause other than the apparent one. Even where we to recognize that there are many causes for the same effect, we cannot limit the number of causes just to those which we ourselves have observed. So there are many causes for the same effect[74] and a cause is a sum total of many conditions. In view of this it is not possible to negate an effect on the negation of one particular cause but on the negation of all the various causes. This latter possibility, however, is emphatically discounted by al-Ghaz□l□ so far as we are concerned, for it pre-supposes a complete and exhaustive knowledge of all the causes and their conditions, which knowledge we humans can never come to possess. Moreover, causes by themselves are inert entities, will and action cannot be attributed to them. They act only through the power and agency of God.[75]

The only will is the absolutely free-will of God which works unconstrained by any extraneous law or incumbency except the self-imposed law of contradiction. Thus, the things to which God's power extends include mysterious and wonderful facts such as "elude the discernment of human sensibility." Indeed, God's power extends to all kinds of logical possibilities such as turning of a rod into a serpent, or the revivification of the dead. For the same reason, it is not impossible for Him to bring about the resurrection of bodies in the life hereafter and all other things with regard to paradise and hell, which have been mentioned in the Qur'an.[76] To deny them is both illogical and irreligious.

One may add that, according to al-Ghaz□l□, not only all miracles are natural but also all nature is miraculous.77 Nature, however, seems to be pervaded by a causal nexus only because, as a rule, God does not choose to interrupt the continuity of events by a miracle; it is possible, however, that He might intervene at any moment that He deems fit. Such a standpoint may make one sceptical of the phenomena of nature, but it may equally lead one to an acute mystical sense of the presence of God to all things. Scepticism of this kind and mysticism need not always be anti-thetical – the former may as well lead to the latter. This indeed is said to have had happened in the case of al-Ghaz□l□.

1. 1. For al-Ghaz□l□'s role as a renewer of religion, cf. Abu al-Hassan 'Ali, Tarikh-i -Da'wat-u 'Azimat, Azamagrh, 1375/1955, Part 1, pp. 111 – 81 (Urdu); Shibli Nu'mani, al-Ghaz□l□, Lahore, 1956, pp. 279 – 352 (Urdu). Cf. also A. W. Zurhuri (Tr. and Comp.), Makatib-i Imam Ghaz□l□ (Letters of Imam Ghaz□l□), Karachi, 1949 (Urdu). See al-Munqidh, English translation by W. Montgomery Watt in his Faith and Practice of al-Ghaz□l□, London, 1953, p. 75. All references to al-Munqidh are to this translation unless mentioned otherwise.

2. Al-Subki (Taj al-Din), Tabaqat al-Shafi'iyyah al-Kubra, Cairo, 1324/1906, Vol 4, p. 101. See also note No. 10, below.

3. The principal sources of the life of al-Ghaz□l□ are his auto-biographical al-Munqidh, S. Murtada Iuihaf al-Sadah, Cairo, 1311/1893, Vol. 1 (Introduction) pp. 2 – 53, and al-Subki, op. cit., Vol 4, pp. 101 – 82. For the account of al-Ghaz□l□'s life in English, cf. D.B. MacDonald, "Life of al-Ghaz□l□ with Special Reference to His Religious Experience," Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 20, 1899, pp. 71 – 132 (Important); M. Smith, al-Ghaz□l□: The Mystic, London, 1944, Part 1, pp. 9 – 104; W.H.T. Gairdner, An Account of Ghaz□l□'s Life and Works, Madras 1919; S.M. Zwemer A Moslem Seeker after God, London, 1920. An account in Urdu can be found in Shibli Nu'mani, op. cit., pp. 19 – 73; M. Hanif Nadawi, Afkar-i Ghaz□l□, Lahore, 1956, Introduction, pp. 3 – 113; 'Abd al-Salam Nadawi, Hukama'-i Islam, Azarngarh, 1953, pp. 386 – 408.

4. Known as Algazel, sometimes as Abuhamet to Medieval Europe. Some of the Western scholars even now use Algazel (e.g. Bertrand Russell, History of Western, Philosophy, London, 1946, p. 477) or its other variants al-Gazal, Algazali, Gazali, etc. Whether al-Ghaz□l□ should be spelt with a double or single "Z" has been a matter of long and strong dispute. More general practice both with the contemporary Muslim writers and the Orientalises now is to use a single "Z". Cf. Hanif Nadawi, op. cit. pp. 3 – 6; D.B. Macdonald, "The name al-Ghazzali," Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1902, pp. 18 – 22; S. M. Zwemer, op. cit., pp. 63 – 65, 140 – 43.

5. Known thereafter as al-Ghaz□l□ al-Kabir. He is reported to have taught canon-law (Fiqh) to al-Farmadhi, the Sufi guide of our own al-Ghaz□l□; cf. Macdonald, "Life of al-Ghaz□l□ – ... "JAOS, p. 126; also al-Subki, op. cit., Vol, 3, p. 36.

6. Cf. al-Subki, op, cit., Vol 4, p. 102.

7. Ibid., pp. 103, 106

8. Cf. ibn Khallikan, Wafayat al-A'yan (English trans. by de Slane), Paris, 1842 – 1871, Vol. 11, p. 122.

9. It may be recalled that not only theology but medicine and philosophy were also taught in Baghdad and the school of Baghdad from the first was characterized by its scientific spirit and freedom of thought. The city of Baghdad had more than 35 libraries for the use of scholars and the place attracted all sorts of people belonging to different sects and schools.

A few generations back there flourished the association of the Ikhwan al-Safa; its meetings were attended by Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri, said to be the arch-heretic in Islam who died (at the age of 84) only a year before al-Ghaz□l□ was born, Al-Qushairi, the teacher of Farmadhi, yet himself a student of al-'Ash'ari in theology died in 465/1074 when al-Ghaz□l□ was a boy of 17, but then probably this is also the date of the death of Nasir-i Khusrau, the Isma'ili propagandist and philosopher.

'Umar Khayyam (d. c. 517/1123), the great mathematician, astronomer, and the agnostic philosopher (the Lucretius and the Voltaire of Islam in one), enjoyed with al-Ghaz□l□ the patronage of Nizam al-Mulk. Only a year after al-Ghaz□l□'s appointment in the Nizamiyyah Academy, Nizam al-Mulk died (485/1092) as the first victim of the Isma'ili assassins headed by al-Hassan ibn al-Sabbah (483/1090 – 518/1124), the second victim was no less than the king himself (Malik shah) only after an interval of 35 days.

10. He was himself a master of the canon-law and compiled works of the very highest order on it, e.g. al-Basit, al-Wasit, al-Mustasfa, etc. According to Sayyid Murtada (d. 1206/1791), al-Wajlz was commented on by later scholars for about 70 times and that had al-Ghaz□l□ been a prophet he could have claimed this work as his miracle. Al-Ghaz□l□, on his part, considered canon-law only to be 'ilm al-mu'dmalah (knowledge dealing with practical affairs of life) and not 'ilm al-mukashfah (gnosis of Ultimate Reality); cf. M. Hanif Nadawi, op. cit., pp. 92 – 111.
11. For al-Ghaz□l□'s criticism of Kalam, cf. his Iljam al-'Awamm 'an 'Ilm al-Kalam and Risalah fi al-Wa'z wa al-I'tiqad. He, however, approved of Kalam to explain and defend faith; cf. his al-Iqtisad f al-I'tiqad.
12. See note No. 30 below.
13. He is also reported to have gone to Egypt visiting Cairo and Alexandria. There is a good deal of uncertainty about the various places that he visited and the time and order of his journeying (except the first two years of his stay in Syria). These extensive travels must have added considerably to his experience of life in general, to his first-hand contact with the cultures of many lands, and to his involvement with other religions – hence his humanism. For his understanding of Christian religion and involvement with it, cf., J.W. Sweetman, Islam and Christian Theology, London, 1955, Part 2, Vol. 1, pp. 22 – 23, 262 – 309; also L. Massignon in Revue des Etudes islamiques, 1933.
14. The period of al-Ghaz□l□'s rather unduly long retreat coincides with the time when Barkiyaruq ruled as the great Saljuq. In the civil war between Barkiyaruq and his uncle Tutush, al-Ghaz□l□ is reported to have sided with the cause of the latter. To this may be added the fact that in Syria where al-Ghaz□l□ spent some years Tutush, (r. 487/1094 – 488/1095) and his sons were the kings (488/1095 – 511/1117). All this is strongly suggestive of some possible political complications. Cf. Macdonald, JAOS, pp. 71 – 132.
15. An analytical account of the contents of Ihya' can be found in D.M. Donaldson's Studies in Muslim Ethics, London, 1953, pp. 159 – 65. Cf. also Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, London, 1953, Vol. 5. pp. 508a, 509b. A large part of Ihya' has also been analyzed by Miguel Asin Palacios in his Algazel, dogmatic, moral, asetica, Zaragoza, 1901. Ihya is divided into four parts each comprising ten books. Part 3, Book 2; Part 2, Book 7, Part 4, Book 6, have been translated into English by D. B. Macdonald in his Religious Attitude and Life in Islam Chicago, 1909, Lectures 7 – 10, Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, 1901 – 1902, and Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 2, pp. 677 – 80, respectively.

Translation of some of the extracts from Parts 3 and 4 can also be found in Syed Nawab Ali's Some Moral and Religious Teachings of al-Ghaz□l□, Lahore, 1946, pp. 28 – 133. Hans Bauer has made a German translation of some of the "Books" of Ihya', cf. his Islamische Ethik (Three Parts), Halle, 1916, 1917, 1922. For a complete Urdu translation of Ihya', cf. M. Ahsan, Madhaq al-'Arifin, four vols. Lucknow, 1955 (seventh edition).

16. Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal as an auto-biographical work is unique in the whole of Arabic literature for "the keenness and the fullness of its self-revelation." It is the most often referred to book and has been translated and edited a number of times. C. Brockelmann in his Arabische Litteratur, Weimar, 1899, Vol 1, pp. 419 – 26, has given 69 items. For some of the important translations of Munqidh, cf. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Leiden, 1913 – 34, vol. 2, p. 149. For Urdu translations see Hafiz M. Anwar 'Ali, Lecture Imam Ghaz□l□, Lahore, 1311/1893, 111 pp. (with an Introduction, pp. 3 – 108).
17. Cf. al-Munqidh, pp. 20, 21
18. Bukhari (23:80, 93), also the Qur'an (30:30), (25:1). The term fitrah came to be used by the philosophers in the sense of lumen naturale.
19. Cf. al-Munqidh (English translation by Claud Field, The Confessions of al-Ghaz□l□, London 1909, p. 13). This is exactly the first of the four rules mentioned by Descartes in his Discours de la methode and the second rule of his Regulae ad Directionem Ingenii composed as early as 1038/1628; cf. E.S. Haldane and G. R.T. Ross (Trs.), The Philosophical Works of Descartes, Cambridge, 1911, Vol. 1, pp. 3, 92, 191.
20. Haldane and Rose, op. cit., p. 101, where Descartes makes similar observations.
21. Cf. Ihya', Cairo, 1340/1921, Vol. 4, p. 19 where al-Ghaz□l□ refers to a tradition, "People are asleep, when they die, they awake." Cf. also Kimiya-i Sa'adat (Urdu tr. by M. 'Inayat Allah), Lahore, n.d. pp. 738, 740.
22. It is, however, a serious though widespread error of interpretation to consider al-Ghaz□l□ to be an anti-intellectualist. Macdonald's statement in his article "al-Ghaz□l□" in the Encyclopaedia of Islam that "he taught intellect should only be used to destroy trust in itself," is very unfortunate. So also is Iqbal's allegation that al-Ghaz□l□ denied dynamic character to

thought and its self-transcending reference to the infinite (cf. S. M. Iqbal, The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, Oxford, 1934, pp. 4 – 6).

Al-Ghaz□l□ very definitively and explicitly brings out both these aspects of thought in his analysis of intelligence in the Miskhat al-Anwar (cf. English translation by W. H. T. Gairdner, Lahore, 1952, pp. 83 – 91). This section is the Mishkat is quite noteworthy in view of the general opinion that the Mishkat was written by al-Ghaz□l□ at a time very close to the writing of al-Munqidh (probably after it), a period in the spiritual history of al-Ghaz□l□ during which he came to advocate the supremacy of intuition over reason as against an earlier phase say that of Ihya', when he ranked them as equal and made reason go parallel with intuition (e.g. Part 1, Book 1, Chapter Seven).

True, in al-Munqidh al-Ghaz□l□ makes a delimitation of the province of the human intellect by denying it finality in the field of transcendental problems, yet it would not be altogether right to say that Ghazalian epistemology is a mere intuitive critique of knowledge. Keeping other works of his in view, it may be said that his philosophy is mainly directed to the vindication that intellect and intuition must at the end supplement each other. Cf. M. Umaruddin, The Ethical Philosophy of al-Ghaz□l□, Aligarh, 1949, Vol. 1, Part 3, pp. 228 – 259.

23. Cf. M. Fakhry, Islamic Occasionalism, London, 1958, pp. 25 – 48; also D.B. Macdonald, "Continuous Recreation and Atomism," Isis, Vol. 9, 1927, pp. 326 – 44.
24. Cf. S. M. Iqbal, The Development of Metaphysics in Persia, London 1908, pp. 25 – 48; also D.B. Macdonald, "Continuous Recreation and Atomism," Isis, Vol. 1927, pp. 84, 90
25. For the chronological order of al-Ghaz□l□'s works, cf. Louis Massignon Recueil de textes, p. 93, and Introduction to Muurice Bouyges' edition of Tahafut al-Falsifah, Beirut 1927. An allied and quite important, though very difficult, problem for a student of al-Ghaz□l□ is the authenticity of his works. Cf. M. Asin Palacios, La espiritualdidad Algazal, Madrid 1934, Vol. 4, pp. 385 – 90, and W. M. Watt, "The Authenticity of the Works Attributed to al-Ghaz□l□," Journal of the Royal Asiatic, Society, 1952, pp. 24 – 45, along with his article "A Forger in al-Ghaz□l□'s Mishkat?" in the same Journal of the year 1949, pp. 5 – 22. Cf. also Shibli Nu'mani, op. cit., pp. 80 – 84, and M. Hanif Nadawi, op. cit., pp 54 – 58.

A consolidated study of these references shows that there are in all 13 works with authenticity of which is a matter of dispute besides three considerable sections of works otherwise admitted to be authentic. The "problem of authenticity" requires very careful further investigation.

26. Cf. Henrich Frick, Ghazalis Selbstbiographie, ein Verglich mit Augstins Konfessiomen, Leipzig, 1919, esp. p. 80.
27. See next chapter.
28. Isma'ilites or Batinites were known as Ta'limites in Khurasan. Al-Ghaz□l□ wrote quite a number of books against them, those mentioned in al-Munqidh (p. 52) are: 1) al-Mustazhiri, 2) Hujjat al-Haqq, 3) Mufassil al-Khilaf, 4) Durj, 5) Qustas al-Mustaqim. The first work is the most elaborate of them all. For the doctrines of the Ta'limites, of Hanif Nadawi, Sargudhasht-i Ghaz□l□, pp. 19 – 54, also the article "Isma'iliya," Encyclopedia of Islam.
29. al-Munqidh, p. 29. Cf. also preface to Maqsaid al-Falsifah.
30. Ibid. Al-Ghaz□l□'s statement that , in spite of his arduous duty of teaching and engagement in writing he could master all the sciences of the philosophers unaided by an instructor within the span of two years, is perhaps a story to be taken with a grain of salt.
31. The date 1506 CE for the Latin of Maqasid al-Falsifah given in the Encyclopedia Britannica, 14th edition vo. 2, p. 188b, is incorrect. This is the date when it was printed for the first time in Venice.

Gundisalvus' translation under the title Logica et Philosophia Algazelis Arabes was made in collaboration with John of Seville to whose name it is sometimes ascribed. It might have been the case that John translated it from Arabic into Castilian and Gundisalvus from Castilian into Latin; cf. G. Sarton, Introduction to the History of Science, Baltimore, 1931, Vo. 2, pp. 169 – 72.

32. This confusion was caused by the fact that the Latin translation of Maqsaid in circulation among the seventh/13th century Scholastics did not contain the short introduction in which al-Ghaz□l□ speaks disparagingly of the philosophers'

metaphysics and makes it clear that his ultimate purpose to make an objective and dispassionate study of it is to refute it in Tahafut al-Falsifah. It may be added that al-Ghaz□l□ again mentions his intention to write the Tahafut in the ending paragraph of the book. How this was overlooked by the Latin scholastics is anybody's guess.

33. Maurice Bougyes in Introduction to his edition of Tahafut al-Falasifah points out that the word "incoherence" does not give an exact meaning of Tahafut and that al-Ghaz□l□ has used it sometimes with reference to philosophers and sometimes with reference to their doctrines. He, therefore, suggests that it would be better to retain the original word Tahafut.

34. The Dahriyyun are those who teach the eternity of time and matter. It is, however, difficult to give a precise translation of the term; in its actual usage in Arabic philosophy, Dahriyyun are sometimes hardly distinguishable from the Tab'iyyun. Cf. the article "Dahriyyah," Encyclopedia of Islam.

35. Cf. Aristotle's Ethica Nicomachea, Section 6 p. 1096 a 15.

36. Cf. M. Iqbal, The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, pp. 3 – 4. What was really hinted here is the Platonic and Neo-Platonic bias in the Hellenic thought which inculcates a dichotomy between the empirical and the transcendental – the secular and the spiritual.

37. All the three works can be found in one volume published by Matba't al-'Alamiyyah, Egypt, 1302 – 1303/1884 – 1885: al-Ghaz□l□'s Tahafut al-Falsifah, p. 92; ibn Rushd's Tahafut al-Tahafut, p. 141, and Khwaja Zadah's Tahafut al-Falsifah, p 137.

38. For an analytical account of the contents of Tahafut al-Falsifah and Tahafut al-Tahafut, cf. A.F. van Mehren, "Etudes sur la philosophic d'Averrhoes concernant son raport avec cello d'Avicenne at Gazzali," Le Museon, Vol. 7, pp. 613 – 27; vol. 8 pp. 5 – 20, Louvain, 1888 – 1889.

39. Cf. al-Ghaz□l□'s Tahafut al-Falasifah, English translation by Sabih Ahmad Kamali, The Pakistan Philosophical Congress, Lahore, 1958, pp. 1 – 3. All references to the Tahafut are to this translation.

40. It is not noteworthy that Simon van den Bergh has listed 40 contradictions in Aristotle's Philosophy; see his English translation of Averroes' Tahafat al-Tahafot, London 1954 Vo. 2, p. 215.

41. Cf. Ibn 'Asakir, Tabyin Kadhib al-Muftari, Damascus, 1347/1928, p. 128.

42. Aristotle's notion of potentiality fails to solve the riddle of becoming as propounded by the Eleatics and later by the Megarics. W. D. Ross says, "The conception of potentiality has often been used to cover mere barrenness of thought." Cf. his Aristotle London, 1923 pp. 176 – 78. The Ash'arites like the Megarics denied the existence of potentiality. Cf. 8. van den Bergh, op. cit., pp. 37 – 40.

43. For the thesis of creatio ex nihilo, c.f. the Qur'an 2:117, 30:27, 35:1

44. Critique of Pure Reason 2nd ed., pp. 454 – 61.

45. Tahafut, p. 5. It may be noted here that the Muslim philosophers and theologians sometimes used different terminology with regard to the same subject.

46. Cf. M. Saeed Sheikh, "Philosophy of Religion: Its Meaning and Scope," Proceedings of the Fifth Pakistan Philosophical Congress, Lahore, 1958, pp. 37 – 51.

47. Cf. G. F. Hourani, "Alghazali and the Philosophers on the Origin of the World," The Muslim World (1958), vol. 48, No. 3, pp. 183 – 91.

48. Cf. W. D. Ross, op. cit. pp 89 et sqq.

49. Plotinus uses the light metaphor, for he conceived light to be incorporeal after Posidonius of Rhodes (c. 135 – 50 B.C.) who is perhaps the first to propound the notion of emanation.

50. Cf. Spinoza, Ethics, Part 1, Section 17, note.

51. Cf. Aristotle, De Caelo, 285 a 29, 292 a 20, b1

52. The nine spheres are as follows: the first sphere, the sphere of the fixed stars, the sphere of Saturn, the sphere of Jupiter, the sphere of Mars, the sphere of the Sun, the Sphere of Venus, the sphere of Mercury, and the sphere of the moon.

53. Some Muslim thinkers have referred to the Qur'an (78:38) in support of the notion of the active intellect, e.g. al-Baidawi in his Anwar al-Tanzil, ed. H. O. Fleischer, Leipzig, 1846 – 48, Vol 2, p. 383, also Ihya' (Urdu Tr), Vol 3, p. 5, where al-Ghaz□l□ refers to the Tradition that "the first thing that God created was the Intellect."

54. Cf. Kitab al-Shifa', "Metaphysics," section 4, Chapter 6; al-Najat, Cairo, 1331/1912, pp. 448 et sqq; al-Madinat al al-Fadilala, Cairo, 1368/1948, p. 19. For the Aristotelian ingredients in the theory of emanation as explained above cf. W. D. Ross, op. cit., pp. 181 et sqq., A. E. Taylor, Aristotle, London, 1943, pp. 98 et sqq." and A. H. Armstrong, The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus, Cambridge, 1940, by index.

55. Cf. Tahafut, pp. 77, 87

56. Cf. F. R. Tennant, Philosophical Theology, Cambridge, 1930 Vol. 2, pp. 125 et sqq. 153 et sqq.

57. Ibid., p. 154

58. In Ptolemy' Almagest the number of stars mention is 1, 025. This number was generally accepted by the Arab astronomers. 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Umar al-Sufi (291/903 – 376/986), one of the greatest Muslim astronomers, in his work Kitab al-Kawakib al-Thabitah al-Musawwar (Illustrated Book of the Fixed Stars), adds that there are many more stars than 1, 025, but they are so faint that it is not possible to count them.

59. Cf. Tahafut, p. 88, Al-Ghaz□l□, in support of his agnosticism with regard to the modus operandi of God's creativity alludes at the end to tradition, "Think over the product of God's creative activity, and do not think over his essence." Cf. Takhrij al-Hafz al-Iraqi appended to Ihya', Part 4, p. 410; also the Qur'an 17:15, which is referred to by al-Ghaz□l□ earlier, i.e. on p. 80.

60. Metaphisca, p. 1072 b20. Cf. also De Anima, p. 424 a 18.

61. Cf. Tahafut, p. 80.

62. Problem 13th of Tahafut, pp. 153 – 62; cf. also other passages pertaining to God's knowledge by index. For a clear and balanced exposition of the philosopher's position with regard to this problem, see Maqasid al-Falsifah (Urdu trans. by M. Hanif Nadawi, Qadim Yunani Falsafah), Lahore, 1959, pp. 168 – 78.

63. Cf. Ihya', Vol. 2, Book 2, Section 1, English translation by D. B. Macdonald, Development of Muslim Theology, London, 1903, p. 302.

64. Ibn Sina says this in his Kitab al-Shifa', Metaphysics," 8, 6. It is really an allusion to a verse of the Quran (10:61), "...and not the weight of an atom in the earth or in the heaven is hidden from thy Lord..."; also 34:3.

65. Ibid, cf., also al-Najat, pp. 408 et sqq.

66. Tahafut, p. 159. Even though al-Ghaz□l□ is not justified in alleging that philosophers restrict God's knowledge merely to the universals, namely, the genera, the species, and the universal accidents, yet his criticism of the philosophers on this point is not vitiated by this misunderstanding and he is quite right in pointing out the inconsistency in their position.

67. Aristotle's conception of time is essentially intellectualistic and static, whereas al-Ghaz□l□'s stand-point with regard to time in keeping with his theistic occasionalism, in intuitionistic and dynamic much like Berson's duree. Cf. Louis Massignon, Time in Islamic Thought" in Man and Time (Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks), London, 1958, pp. 108 – 14. Also M.F. Clough, Time, London, 1937.

68. Cf. Tahafut, p. 189.

69. Miracles ascribed to the Prophets Moses, Abraham, Jesus and Mohammad respectively; cf. the Qur'an, 20:17 – 23, 38:31, 31:68, 69, 20:124, 37:97, 98, 3:48, 5:110 and liv, 1.

70. Cf. Hume, Treatise of Human Nature, Book 1, Part Three. Cf. also Hanif Nadawi, Sargudhasht-i Ghaz□l□, pp. 62 – 76; also article "Ghaz□l□ ka Nazriyyah-i Ta'lil," Thaqafat (Urdu), Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, uly 1959, Vol. 7, No. 7, pp. 11 – 19.

71. The real starting point of the discussion on causality belongs to the latter part of the 16th disputation. See Tahfut, p. 181.

72. Tahafut, p. 186.

73. Ibid. p. 189

74. Cf. Mill's doctrine of the Plurality of Causes, System of Logic, Book 3, Chapter 10, Section 2.

75. It is interesting to note that Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese call al-Ghaz□l□'s conception of God as Etiolary, i.e. cause-worshipping; cf. their compendium: Philosophers Speak of God, Chicago, 1953, pp. 106 – 11, esp. p. 109.

76. Cf. Qur'an, 8:5, 16:38, 17:49 – 51, 98, 99.

77. In spite of Hume's notorious repudiation of the miraculous (Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Section 10, parts One and Two), his notion of causality through its own logic can be finally resolved to the Ghaz□l□ or better, the Ash'arite

position expressed in this statement. Cf. A. E. Taylor, “David Hume and the Miraculous,” in his Philosophical Studies, London, 1934, pp. 330 – 65; also F. R. Tennant, Miracle and Its Philosophical Pre-suppositions, Cambridge, 1925, p., 84.

Chapter 31: Al-Ghazali Part 2

A. Mysticism

1. Introduction

It will not be quite true to say that al-Ghaz□l□'s final resort to Sufi-mysticism was merely the result of his disillusionment with philosophy and dissatisfaction with scholastic theology. This is only a part of the truth; his confessional statement to this effect in *al-Munqidh* seems to be rather an over-statement of the actual facts. Sufistic influences had all along been working upon his mind right from early childhood. We need only recall that his father was a pious Dervish and his guardian a Sufi devout, where he studied during his youth[1] and even practiced Sufism, first under Yusuf al-Nassaj in Tus and that his own brother, Ahmad al-Ghaz□l□ (d. 520/1126) made a name as a great Sufi.

It is not improbable that he should also learn Sufism from his teacher Imam al-Haramain, for it is reported that the Imam himself had been the student of the renowned Sufi Abu Nu‘aim al-Isfahani (d. 430/1038). So al-Ghaz□l□ eventual adoption of the Sufi way of life was in reality a continuation of these early influences and not simply the consequence of failure to find the philosophical solution of theological problems. Further, it has to be emphasized that, in spite of his explicit official denunciation of philosophy, al-Ghaz□l□ could never completely part company with it. His Sufi-mysticism was as much influenced by his thorough study of philosophy as by theology; in its final development it was the mysticism of a philosopher and a theologian.

There is a marked note of Hellenic though in his mystical doctrines and even the tracings of Neo-Platonism, and yet paradoxical though it may seem they remain circumscribed within the limits of orthodoxy. He is surely a sober kind of mysticism carefully eschewing all kinds of pantheistic extravagances and severely criticizing the antinomian tendencies of the intoxicated Sufis. On the one hand, he tried to make mysticism orthodox and, on the other, orthodoxy mystical. It is the mystical element in religion, he insisted, which is most vital and makes religious life a reality. Both to the philosophers and the scholastic theologians he brought home the fact that the basis of all religious certainty is the first-hand living experience of God. He indeed did his best to vitalize the law and the doctrine of Islam through this emphasis on the living religious experience, and this is evident from the very title of his *magnum opus, Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (Revivification of the Sciences of Religion).

But the mystical teaching of al-Ghaz□l□ found in *Ihya'*, meant for all to read, must be studied in

conjunction with what is given in his other works dealing more specially with the Sufi doctrine such as *Mishkat al-Anwar, al-Ma'arif al-'Aqliyyah, Mukashafat al-Qulub* and the like. The theory developed in these works represents what may be labelled as theosophical mysticism and this cannot be properly understood without reference to al-Ghaz□l□'s specific views about the nature of God and the human soul. From the point of view of our present study his mystical views with regard to God and soul may be profitably compared with those philosophers, i.e. al-Farabi, ibn Sina, and their followers.

2. God

The philosophers have particularly emphasized the absolute unity of God. No positive attributes can be ascribed to God for that leads to the subject-predicate dualism. Even existence can only be referred to Him. He is above all distinctions and above all the categories of thought. The over-emphasis on unity shorn of all qualities reduces God to a mere non-content inanity. He becomes an ineffable, indescribable, unpredictable something. Such is the result of the dialectic of the philosophers' monistic reductionism. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, some (if them, following Aristotle, have described God as thought thinking thought. That which He knows comes into being emanating from the over-effulgence of His Bing, but He does not positively will anything, for willing implies a need – a deficiency. He recognizes only Himself or at best His first eminent, the first intelligence, and, thus, is purely transcendent to this world of change and multiplicity.

Like the philosophers, al-Ghaz□l□ lays stress on the unity of God: God is the sole-existent and the ultimate cause and ground of all being, the only self-subsisting reality. Yet He possesses the fullness of being, all the attributes mentioned in the Qur'an inhere in Him, only the modality of this inherence is rationally unknowable. We should, however, understand that all His attributes are spiritual. He is perfect goodness and perfect beauty, the supreme object of love.[2] He is the light of lights, the eternal wisdom, the creative truth, but above all, He is the eternal will.

To the philosophers God is primarily thought or intelligence, but to al-Ghaz□l□ He is primarily a will which is the cause of creation. "The First Principle," he says, "is an omnipotent and willing agent. He does what He wills and ordains as He likes, and He creates the similar and dissimilar things alike, whenever and in whatever manner He wills"[3] So Ultimate Reality is essentially will. The entire choir of the heavens and the furniture of the earth are the direct work of God, produced out of sheer nothingness simply through His terrific "Be."[4] God has created the universe through His will, sustains it through His will, and one day will let pass away by His will. According to philosophers, God wills the world because He thinks of it. According to al-Ghaz□l□, "God has cognizance of the world because He wills it and in His willing it."[5]HHHH

Like the philosophers, al-Ghaz□l□ also emphasizes the transcendent aspect of God. He is exalted beyond the limitations of space and time, for He is the creator of space and time. He was before time and space, but He is also immanent in this spatio-temporal order, His eternal wisdom and supreme beauty manifests themselves through the wonders and glory of His creation. His eternal will is an action

throughout the universe; it is in the swing of the sun and the moon and in the alternation of day and night. Everywhere around is the touch and working of God.[6] Al-Ghaz□l□'s God is not the Absolute of the philosophers, who is bleak and cold, but a personal God, a living God. He desires inter-course with His creatures and makes it possible for them to enter into fellowship with Him through prayer and contemplation and, above all, through the gift of mystical gnosis.

3. Soul

The difference between al-Ghaz□l□ and the philosophers with regard to the nature of the soul is not very well marked. He only insists, like Kant,[7] that the philosophers through their rational arguments cannot give any conclusive proof for the spirituality, substantiality, unity, immortality, etc., of the human soul. His attack on the philosophers on this issue is as incisive and analytic as that of Kant but probably more violent. He actually smashes one by one al the ten arguments which he himself expounds as forcefully as they could be in favour on their thesis.[8] Like Kant again, he does not disagree with their basic position but only with their method. He even joins the philosophers in their refutation of the position of some of the scholastic theologians, who maintained that the soul is a kind of subtle body or an accident and not a substance.[9]

What is more and rather strange, while determining the place of the soul in the realm of beings, al-Ghaz□l□ talks the very language of the Neo-Platonic philosophers. His cosmological triad of the divine world (*'alam al-malakut*), the celestial world (*'alam al-jabrut*), and the material phenomenal world (*'alam al-mulk w-al-shahadah*) runs closely parallel to that of Plotinus consisting of the universal mind, the universal soul, and matter.[10] Like Plotinus, he seems to vouch-safe that the human soul belongs to 'alam al-Jabarut, i.e. mid-way between the divine world and the material world, and so is neither purely eternal like the former nor merely temporal like the latter but partakes of them both.

Al-Ghaz□l□'s conception of the human soul, however, is essentially based on the teachings of the Qur'an and the Tradition. The interesting thing about this conception is that it runs parallel to his conception of God. Soul, like God, is a unity and like Him, is primarily and essentially a will. Further, as God is both transcendent to and immanent in the universe so is soul with reference to body. "Man is made in the image of God,"[11] is saying of the Holy Prophet and it is twice stated in the Qur'an that "Allah breathed into man of His own spirit."[12] The soul is a mirror illumined by the divine spark reflecting the qualities and even the essence of God. "Not only are man's attributes," says al-Ghaz□l□, "a reflection of God's attributes but the mode of existence of man's soul affords an insight into God's mode of existence..." Knowledge of the self is the key to the knowledge of God, for so is the oft quoted tradition, "He who knows himself knows his Lord." "Both God and soul," al-Ghaz□l□ adds, "are invisible, indivisible, unconfined by space and time, and outside the categories of quantity and quality, nor can the ideas of shape, colour, or size attach to them..."[13]

The soul of man is different from everything else in the sensuous world. There are two worlds: the world of command (*amr*) and the created world (*khalq*).[14] Everything devoid of quantity and dimension belongs

to the world of amr. Soul belongs to the world of amr also because it proceeds from the command of God; “Say, the spirit proceeded at the command of my Lord”15 is God’s instruction of the Prophet. It is the world of amr that rules the created world, the command is the divine force which directs and regulates the world. Thus, soul is a spiritual principle which having life in itself vitalizes the body and controls it and regulates it. Body is the instrument and vehicle of the soul. God is primarily a will and man is akin to God especially in respect of will.

Volo ergo sum is the dictum on which al-Ghaz□l□ builds his mystical psychology and epistemology. The essential element of the soul is not though which in the final analysis is based upon the bodily perceptions and the categories of thought but will which created them both for its own purposes. Man in himself has the infinite spiritual possibilities and it is through his will that he comes to realize them and thus brings himself close to the mind and will of God until God says, “Oh soul at rest, return to thy Lord, satisfied with Him, giving satisfaction unto Him. So enter among My servants and enter My garden.”16 This final encounter of the soul with God through aspirations is attained by walking on a mystic Path, under the guidance of a *Sheikh*, and constitutes what is the very essence and acme of religious experience.

4. Religious Experience and Moral and Intellectual Values

Whatever the essence or inner content of religious experience may be, it certainly is not a mere state of pure contemplation or knowledge as the philosophers proclaim it to be. It is a vital experience which must translate itself into good action. Religion without good works, according to al-Ghaz□l□, is a dead religion. The life of the true mystics is the best life and their character the purest character. “Were the intellect of the intellectuals and the learning of the learned and the scholarship of the scholars...brought together to improve the life and character of the mystics, they would find no way of doing so.”17 Indeed, the source from which the philosophers derive their ethical theories is the lives and teachings of these moral geniuses, i.e. the saints and the mystics.

In the final analysis, the mystics themselves are illuminated by the light of the lamp of the prophetic revelation. But what if you were to doubt the prophethood of a prophet? So close is the relation between the inner religious life and the outer moral expression of it that you can move from one back to the other. The authenticity of a prophet can be attested by applying a moral test, that is, by making a close study of conduct, by assessing the transformations which his creative will has wrought in human history and by evaluating the new socio-politico-legal system that he has introduced and established in a society. Of the truths of religion, we acquire not a theoretical but a moral certainty, the deed is more important than mere idea, the will is more ultimate than pure intellect.

Though the philosophers do not deny the importance of transforming truth values into moral values, ideas into deeds, so far as their theory of prophecy is concerned, yet in pursuance of the dominant Hellenic tradition they seem to hold that knowledge without consequent action has its own intrinsic value. Good deeds are preparatory to correct thinking. The ultimate perfection of the soul consists in God-like

contemplation, in a state of pure knowledge which though not without joy is certainly without action. Al-Ghaz□l□ strongly revolted against this extreme intellectualism of the philosophers, yet he did not remain altogether unaffected by it. It is indeed futile to look for any lifeless consistency in his attitudes which make a happy synthesis of voluntarism, pragmatism, and idealism. He concedes, for example, that a prophet is a person endowed with extra-ordinary intellect prophetic revelation.[18] Like the philosophers, he also affirms that perfection of the soul consists in knowledge, albeit intuitive knowledge, like them, he also shows pre-dilections for knowledge for its own sake. "The ink of the scholar is better than the blood of the martyr."[19]

It is certainly true so far as by knowledge we here understand knowledge of the religious sciences, but it is also in a sense true of all other sciences. Knowledge of the sciences dealing with things that God has made is regarded by al-Ghaz□l□ as a necessary part of the mystic discipline. "If the soul has not been exercised in the sciences dealing with fact and demonstration, it will acquire mental phantasms which will be mistaken by it to the truths descending upon it...Many Sufis remain stuck for years in such figments of imagination, but they certainly would have been saved from these, had they first followed the path of scientific study and acquired by laborious learning as much of the demonstrative sciences as human power could encompass..."[20]

It has almost become a fashion to label al-Ghaz□l□ as an anti-intellectualist and to ascribe to him much of the backwardness of the Muslim community ever since the sixth/12th century, as an its anti-liberalism.[21] It is alleged that al-Ghaz□l□ through his emphasis on fundamentalism and spiritualism initiated a movement in Muslim thought that killed all zest for philosophic inquiry and scientific reflection, if it did not outright create an antipathy for them. The anti-intellectualism or the anti-liberalism of the Muslim community is a highly complex sociological phenomenon and its causes shall have to be explored in a great many areas, it would be too much of an over-simplification of facts to ascribe it to a single name, however great that name may be.

We have only to remember that al-Ghaz□l□ never left philosophy altogether and that he himself was very well acquainted with the scientific knowledge of his day,[22] most of which he accepted as true. The charge of the kind mentioned above may be made only with reference to someone particular work but it cannot at all be justified if the whole course of his works is taken into consideration.

Considering, however, the number and complexity of the subjects with which his works deal, the various levels of readers for whom they were written and the fact of his own spiritual development, it is not always possible to reconcile his various views and attitudes and to defend him against all charges of inconsistency.[23] One such difficulty arises when, after having considered his views about the nature of the soul and God, we have come to formulate his position with regards to relations between the two. Whether his conception of this relation makes an allowance for pantheism, is a question which has puzzled some students of al-Ghaz□l□.[24]

5. Pantheism

Al-Ghaz□l□'s view of God as being both immanent and transcendent, his firm belief in God being a personal God who allows His creatures to enter into communion with Him, his emphasis on God being a creator who created the universe at a specific time through an act of volition, one and all, can hardly fit into any scheme of pantheism. The description of the mystic's experience of God at the higher reaches of his ecstatic flights as identification (*ittihad*) or unification (*wasul*) with God or inherence or in-dwelling (*hulul*) in Him, al-Ghaz□l□ has expressly mentioned as false and erroneous.[25] At best, the mystics can claim only a nearness to or proximity with God and no more. But it has been pointed out that in his doctrine of the soul he makes it resemble God so closely both in essence and qualities that there remains hardly any difference between the two.

Al-Ghaz□l□ is aware of this dangerous deduction and asserts most emphatically that there is one special quality (*akhassu wasfihi*) which belongs to God alone and of which none else partakes and that is the quality of self-subsistence. God is self-subsistent (*qayyum*)[26] while everything else exits through Him and not through its own essence. "Nay, things through their own essence have nothing but non-existence, and existence comes to them only from something else, by way of a loan." But surely there is the lurking danger of pantheism in such a statement if it is stretched to its logical limits. If the contingency of the world should be over-emphasized, it becomes nothing more than a show of shadows having no reality or actuality of its own whatsoever. All actuality is devoured by the being of God.

This conclusion is confirmed by al-Ghaz□l□'s own approval of the pantheistic formula: *la huwa illa huwa* (there is no it but He) to which may be added his statement, "He is everything, He is that He is, none but He has piety or deity at all."[27] To this may be added that al-Ghaz□l□ has taken a very lenient view of some of the obviously pantheistic utterances of the Sufis of extreme type such as "I am the Creative Truth,"[28] "Glory be to Me! How great is My Glory," "Within this robe is naught but Allah,"[29] etc. Statements of this kind clearly indicate a sense of complete self-deification. But al-Ghaz□l□ has no word of condemnation for them except the comment that "the words of passionate lovers in the state of ecstasy should be concealed and not spoken of." True, statements of this kind should not be taken strictly philosophically but only as emotive expressions indicative of a deep inner experience which has many phases and aspects and a language and logic of its own. But then, al-Ghaz□l□ seems to forget sometimes the advice he has so strongly given to those who have attained the mystic state that they should not try to speak the unspeakable and follow the poet who said, "What I experience I shall try to say; call me happy, but ask me no more."[30]

B. Ethics

Al-Ghaz□l□ is the best known Muslim writer on moral subjects. Be there are some critics[31] who have recently made attempts to belittle the importance of his ethical theory by trying to show that it is entirely, or at least mainly, derived from the Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic doctrines and from the writings of the

Muslim philosophers whose systems were Hellenic in spirit. Al-Ghazālī was, undoubtedly, a widely read scholar and was, therefore, well versed in the ethical thought of the Greeks, which did influence him. But it would be basically wrong to say that he was dependent on Greek philosophy for his inspiration. He was, in fact, against the philosophers and their heretical doctrines. Throughout his writings, al-Ghazālī takes his stand upon Islamic teachings and invariably quotes from the Qur'an and the traditions in support of his views.

Following the Qur'an, for example, he lays emphasis on spiritual values like gratitude (*shukr*), repentance (*taubah*), reliance (*tawakkul*), fear (*khauf*) of God, etc. which were completely unknown to the Greeks. Similarly, al-Ghazālī is thoroughly Islamic in taking the perfect human representation of the moral ideal in the Prophet of Islam (peace be on him), whom God Himself testifies to have the highest character.32 Further, we can legitimately say that the notion of love of God as the *summon bonum*, leading directly to the beatific vision in the next world, has nothing like it in Greek philosophy. This is undeniably based upon the Qur'anic teachings. All these assertions will become clearer as we proceed with the detailed discussion.

Asceticism is the spirit that runs throughout al-Ghazālī ethics. He does not deal with the heroic virtues like courage, etc. in detail, and lays greater emphasis on the purification of the heart after one has severed all ties with this world, at least in spirit. He says, "The experienced guide and teacher should bring home to the disciple that he should root out anger and keep up wealth...otherwise, if he gets the slightest hint that an excuse for avarice and self-assertion, and to whatever limits he goes he will imagine that he is permitted as far as that. So he ought to be told to eradicate these tendencies."33 Again, in *Minhaj al-'Abidin*, al-Ghazālī differentiates between two kinds of virtues: positive, i.e. good actions, and negative, i.e. the abandonment of bad ones. The negative side is better and more excellent. To elucidate this point further, he discusses the question in *Ihya'* whether marriage of celibacy is better. After counting the advantages and the disadvantages of both, he ultimately tends to the conclusion that celibacy is better. One may marry, he grants, provided one is at the same time like the unmarried, i.e. lives always in the presence of God. All this has a colouring of other-worldliness.

Avoidance of the world is, however, not put forward as an end in itself. It has been over-emphasized by al-Ghazālī simply to counter-act the tendencies to vice, luxury, and pride, which were so common in his days. The curbing or controlling of passions has been stressed merely to achieve moderation; otherwise, he fully knows the psychology of human nature. He is quite aware of the social spirit of the Qur'an and of the Prophet's teaching that there is no asceticism in Islam.34 Accordingly, al-Ghazālī does sometimes lay emphasis on our duties and obligations to other individuals and to society as a whole. *Jihad* has been mentioned as a necessary obligatory duty, even prayers have to be sacrificed, if need be, during a war.

In the chapter of "Renunciation of the World," in the *Ihya'* he warns against the evils and holds thast renunciation is a grievous sin if a man has dependants who need his support. He defends music by

saying that “gaiety and sport refresh and cheer the heart and bring relief to the tired mind..., rest prepares a man for work, and sport and gaiety for grave and serious pursuits.”35 Further, among virtues, he includes good appearance (*husn al-hai'ah* with adornment which is sensible and has no tinge of ostentation in it. Similarly, there are the virtues of self-respect, dignity, etc. which point to a man's relation with other individuals and pre-suppose a social set-up.

Before discussing al-Ghaz□l□'s theory of ethics we may consider the problem which forms the basis of all ethical systems, viz. the problem of the freedom of the will. The fact that man can change from the state of the insinuating self at peace (*al-nafs at-mutma'innah*) through a good deal of conscious struggle and deliberate effort necessarily suggests that he is free in his will. The Mu'tazilites had taught that the freedom of the will is an *a priori* certainty, that man possesses power (*qudrah*) over his actions and is their real author. The Ash'arites, who represented the orthodox reaction, however, held that “Man cannot create anything. God is the only creator, nor does man's power produce any effect on his action at all.

God creates His creature power (*qudrah*) and choice (*ikhtiyar*). He then creates in him action corresponding to the power and choice thus created. So the action of the creature is created by God as to initiative and as to production, but is *acquired* by the creature. By acquisition (*kasb*) is meant that it corresponds to the creature's power and choice previously created in him, without his having had the slightest effect on the action.”36 This position comes very close the “pre-established harmony” of Leibniz. It, thus, gives us at the most, only a consciousness of freedom, and not freedom in the real sense of the term.

Over this question al-Ghaz□l□ finds himself on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, God is represented as the disposer of everything. He is the unmoved mover of the material world and the only efficient cause of all creation. Whatever happens in the heavens or on the earth happens according to a necessary system and a pre-determined plan. Not even a leaf can move without His decree, His law is supreme everywhere. “Whomsoever God wishes to guide, He expands his breast to Islam, but whomsoever He wishes to lead astray He makes his breast tight and strait.”37 On the other hand, man is shown to be responsible for his actions and for deserving place either in hell or in heaven. This implies complete moral freedom.

Al-Ghaz□l□ seeks to reconcile both these tendencies on the basis of an analysis of the human mind. The heart or of the soul man, according to him, is furnished with two kinds of impressions. Either there are sensations through which one gets the sensible qualities of the outside world, or there is reflection or internal sense which supplies the mind with its own operations. These impressions, which al-Ghaz□l□ calls *khwatir* (Locke would call them “simple ideas” and James Ward would term them “presentations”), are, according to him, the spring and fountain-head of all activity.

Whatever the heart intends, resolves etc. must come to it as knowledge in the form of such impressions. These impressions or ideas have an inherent tendency to express themselves in overt movements. They have a motive part of their own and are capable of exciting a strong impulse or inclination (*raghbah*) in

the first instance. This inclination must, if the action is to take place, be followed by decision or conviction (*i'tiqad*). (These three stages correspond pretty closely to what psychologists call respectively appetite, desire, and wish.) Conviction, in turn, is followed by resolution or the will to act (*irahda*). Will excites power and then the action comes.

The first two stages of this process, viz impression and inclination, are recognized to be beyond man's complete control; if an individual merely thinks intently of falling forward, swaying forward begins. So "the conclusion would be that, while the occurrences of a strong desire or inclination may come without man's responsibility, his reason is free to make a decision and his will is free to accept the decision of reason as good and to implement the complete control of his desire would be beyond his power."38 Thus, al-Ghaz□l□ tries to reconcile the positions of the determinists and the indeterminists.

In fact, al-Ghaz□l□ recognizes three stages of being. The lowest is the material world where the absolute necessity of God's will is all in all. Second is the stage of the sensuous and the physical world where a relative sort of freedom is recognized. Lastly, comes God who is absolutely free. But His freedom is not like that of a man who arrives at decisions after hesitation and deliberation over different alternatives. This is impossible in the case of God, "To speak of choice between alternatives is to suggest that other than the best might be chosen and this would be inconsistent with the idea of perfection.39

Thus, having established human freedom and responsibility and having justified his discussion of ethical questions, al-Ghaz□l□ goes on to present before us his notion of the moral ideal and the means that are to be adopted for its realization. The path is long and difficult and needs a great deal of patience and perseverance on the part of the seeker. Slowly and steadily, by leading a virtuous life, he has to take his soul towards perfection so that it might be able to attain the knowledge of God and consequently divine love, which is the *summum bonum* or the Highest Good in this world. This will lead to the beatific vision in the world. It should, however, be remembered that man cannot move a single step forward without the help of God. He is guided throughout by the gift of God (*taufiq*). *Taufiq* manifests itself in various forms:

1. Guidance from God (*hidayah*) is the very condition of all virtues. It stands for the telling of the moral from the immoral, the good from the bad and the right from the wrong. Unless these distinctions are clearly seen, we cannot be supposed to do any good action or avoid evil.

2. Direction (*rushd*). Mere knowledge of good actions might be necessary but is not sufficient for their performance. We should also have the will to do them. This is "direction."

3. Setting aright (*tasdid*). It is the power from God which makes the body obey the will in order to realize the end.

4. Confirmation (*la'ad*). It makes circumstances congenial for the actualization of the will.

Helped by God in this way the individual proceeds to exercise virtues which gradually raise the heart

higher and higher up towards the ideal.

Before taking up this enterprise, however, the soul or the heart is to be subjected to a thorough surgical operation and cleansed of all impurities. “He will indeed be successful who purifies it and he will fail to corrupt it.[40] It is only when the heart has thus been freed of its fetters and the veils of darkness and ignorance have been rent asunder that anything positive can be attempted. Al-Ghaz□l□ explains it by an allegory. Once, the Chinese and the Greeks held a contest on the art of drawing and painting. One part of a big room was given to the Chinese and the other to the Greeks. In between was hung a curtain with many rare colours, but the Chinese proceeded to brighten their side and polish it.

When the curtain was raised, the beautiful art of the former was reflected on the latter’s wall and in its original beauty and charm. Such is the way of the saints who strive for the purification of their heart to make it worthy of the knowledge of God Most High. But what are these impurities and what are they due to? What is that which darkens and casts gloom upon the soul of man? Al-Ghaz□l□’s answer is, love of the world, the root from which all the multi-farious sins and vices spring. The pious people avoid it and seek loneliness. “Be in the world as if you are a stranger or on a journey upon the road.”[41] On seeing a dead goat, the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) is reported to have said, “The world has lesser value in the eyes of God than this goat has for its owner.”

Let us now discuss briefly al-Ghaz□l□’s enumeration of the main kinds of vices that result from the love of the world, the removal of which from the heart is incumbent up us.

First, there are those vices which are connected with a particular part of the body. Hunger is one of them. It is no, doubt, a very important biological function and, thus, indispensable for the preservation of life. But when it transgresses its limits and becomes gluttony, it is the cause of immense evil and disturbance. “Eat and drink,” says God, “but be not prodigal. Verily He loves not the prodigal.”[42] Over-eating dulls the intellect and weakens the memory. It also causes too much sleep which, besides being a waste of time, slackens the mind; the light of wisdom is dimmed and once becomes unable to differentiate good from evil.[43] Further, the glutton forgets what need and hunger are. Gradually, he becomes oblivious of, and unsympathetic to, the poor and those who have really nothing to eat. So, one should eat only as much as is barely sufficient to sustain oneself, out of one has earned honestly.[44]

The second group of vices belonging to this category are those arising out of the sex instinct. This instinct is supposed to be the most powerful in man,[45] and so are its distractions from the right path. The sex appetite must always be directed, controlled, and managed by reason and should not be allowed to run wild: adultery is a moral and social as well as religious evil. Further, says al-Ghaz□l□, the seeker after the ideal should not marry in earlier stages of his search, for the wife and children may prove a hindrance. But if, in spite of wilful determination, he is not able to control himself, he may marry and then perform all his duties as a husband.

Lastly, we come to the vices of speech, which are many. Talkativeness, using indecent words, ridiculing,

abusing, cursing, etc. belong to this kind. Similarly, lying is also a heinous sin, “A painful doom is theirs because they lie.”[46] Lying, however, loses its immoral sting in special circumstances when the end in view is good. We can, for instance, legitimately make use of it as a war tactic. “War is deception itself,”[47] goes the tradition. Slandering and tale-bearing are also very prominent vices of speech. “Don’t back-bite one another,”[48] says God. Similarly, we have been prohibited from making false promises because it is the characteristic of hypocrites (*munafiqun*).[49]

Next, there are vices arising out of self-assertion. When working in its proper limits, this instinct is, no doubt, natural. But the lack or excess of it makes it an evil. A person, who has no self-assertion, has no self-respect. He is disgracefully meek and silent and dare not make his personality felt. Excessive self-assertion, on the other hand, degenerates into vices like anger (*ghadab*), malice (*hiqd*), pride (*kibr*), and vanity (*‘ujb*).

Man is roused to anger when some desire of his is not fulfilled, when another person possesses the thing which, he thinks, should rightfully belong to him. When not gratified, anger often turns into malice, which consists in the desire that the desired thing should be lost to the feeling of pain but simply a strong desire that one should also possess a thing like the one the other has. This is known as emulation (*ghibtah*) and is not undesirable. We can overcome the vices of excessive self-assertion by forbearance, mildness, forgiveness, humility, etc.

Anger, malice, and emulation are aroused when man is not in possession of the objects of his desire. Pride and vanity, on the contrary, occur when he has secured such objects. Vanity is a sense of self-admiration. The individual regards his possessions as great, has no fear of losing them, and forgets that they are merely gifts of God. It he is vain about his intellect, wisdom, and opinion, all development in knowledge ceases and all progress is congealed.

A proud man, on the other hand, actively compares himself with others, is rightly or wrongly aware of some religious or worldly perfection in him, and feels elated and raised above them. He looks down upon them and expects respect from them as a superior. Learned men, worshippers, and devotees are very much prone to this evil. The cure of pride lies in recognizing God and one’s own self. By this he would come to know that pride becomes God and greatness belongs to Him alone. Further, he should remember his humble beginnings and recognize the filthy stuff he is made of. Let him consider the origin and end of his forefathers and of the proud persons like Pharaoh and Nimrud tried to equal God Almighty. Let him consider also that beauty, wealth, and friendship are all transitory and unreliable.

To the third category of vices belongs the love of wealth (*hub al-mal*) and of position (*hub al-jah*), hypocrisy (*riya’*) and willful self-deception (*ghurur*). Wealth in itself, however, is not bad. It is the use of it that makes it so. Wealth can be spent on the poor and the needy to alleviate their sufferings, but can also lead directly to sins or can supply means for them. Those who love money often forget God and He, in turn, prepares and reserves for them a painful doom.[50] Love of wealth may lead to avarice: the more one has, the more one desires. It can also lead to miserliness, which means not spending even where

one is duty-bound to spend. The cure of all these evils is to give away all that is superfluous and keep only as much as is essential for supporting life and getting peace of mind. We must further be convinced in our hearts that wealth, like shadows, is a transitory affair and that God is sufficient for us and our children. We should hasten to spend when occasion demands, setting aside the checks and hesitations arising within.

Love of position means the desire to win and dominate the hearts of others. It is generally gained by creating in others a conviction that one possesses the so-called qualities of perfection such as beauty, strength, ancestry. Real perfection, however, lies in knowledge and freedom: knowledge of God and spiritual values, and freedom from the vices and the rebellious nature of passions. Just as wealth is allowed if used as a means for some good, so may we win the admiration of those whose help is necessary to realize the ideal. But if position is sought for its own sake, it is a vice and should be eradicated. One must impress upon oneself that position is not everlasting and that death is a leveller. One should also know that a prominent person creates enemies very easily.

The lover of position generally falls into hypocrisy and tries to deceive people that he possesses something which actually he does not. An individual, for example, may pretend to be a pious man by a thin, lean, neglected body, long prayers, virtuous and humble talk, and so on. In religious matters, hypocrisy has been condemned very much by both the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This deadly disease must be cured, otherwise all the so-called virtuous actions, the inner spiritual basis being absent, will be entirely useless and unacceptable to God. One must perform all good actions, including the religious observances and acts of worship, in secret. We may perform them in the open if our sincere intention is that others may also be persuaded thereby to do the same.

Love of position also gives rise to self-deception. The individual is convinced that he has something which he really does not have. Four classes of people among the believers are, according to al-Ghaz□l□, very likely to involve themselves in this evil. They are, for example, such religious devotees as do not have the real sense of values. They do not realize what is more important and what is less important and by performing the latter, they assume themselves to be exempt from the former. For instance, they take greater care in the correct pronunciation of the words of the Qur'an than in understanding their true meanings. Instead of helping a hungry neighbour, they would go on pilgrimage to Mecca. Some dress themselves poorly and meekly and think they have become saints. All these persons are deceiving themselves as the true nature of things.

Similar is the case with the Sufis. Some of them learn only the terminology of the real Sufis and think they are likewise able to see God. Some are always wondering about the power and majesty of God and do nothing more. Some do actually try to cleanse the heart and perform good actions but wrongly think that they have passed most of the stages and are the true lovers of God. Again, there are some who make a distinction between *Shari'ah* and *tariqah* and regard themselves above *Shari'ah*. They give the performance of obligatory duties and religious observances. The same is the case with the learned and

the rich, who are generally involved in one kind of self-delusion or another.

Thus, we end the brief and synoptic survey of al-Ghaz□l□'s account of the main vices of character. Now we turn to virtues, which are the redeeming qualities (*al-munjiyat*) and represent the positive efforts of the seeker towards God. Al-Ghaz□l□ has given us a detailed, interesting, and illuminating discussion on this topic in the fourth quarter of his "Revivification of Religious Sciences." The virtues that, speaking chronologically, come first are repentance, abstinence, poverty, and patience. Repentance belongs to the purgative period of life which is an indispensable pre-requisite for the higher stages. It means abandoning the sins of which man is conscious and resolving never to return to them. It is a sort of spiritual conversion. "Those who repent and believe and do righteous work, for such Allah will change their evil deeds to good deeds."[51] The penitent knows that his heart has been shrouded in the mist and darkness of sins, feels contrition and shame, and abandons them forever.

Love of the world, which is the root of all vices, has, however, to be removed first; the passions have to be subjected to a strict control and the devil within has to be turned out, "...the ascetic who renounces what is sensual and material knows that what is abandoned is of small value in relation to what is gained, just as the merchant knows that what he receives in exchange is better than what is sold, otherwise, he would not sell."[52] Al-Ghaz□l□ compares the ascetic with a person who is prevented from entering into the palace by a dog at the gate. He throws a morsel towards it and thus, by distracting its attention, enters and gets his desires from the king. The dog is like Satan, who prevents him from going towards God, and the morsel of bread is like the world by the sacrifice of which we can get something better.

This brings us to the virtue of abstinence (*zuhd*). Repentance is simply turning away from something, whereas abstinence includes turning away from as well as towards something better and more excellent. As a term in Sufistic literature, it signifies severing the heart's attachment from all worldly things, purging it of the rubbish, and then adorning it with the love of God. Abstinence can, in fact, have three grades. We might be inspired and motivated by the love of God itself, by the hope of reward, or by the fear of punishment. The highest grade is the love of God which makes us sacrifice all considerations of heaven and hell for the sake of God. This is absolute abstinence (*zuhd al-mutlaq*). We are reminded here of the fable of a saint who was carrying in one hand a flame and in the other a glass of water with the alleged purpose of burning heaven with the one and quenching the fire of hell with the other, so that everyone acts sincerely to attain nearness to God.

The individual who renounces the world is a poor man (*faqir*) in the terminology of al-Ghaz□l□ and, in fact, of all the mystics. So poverty is to be wilfully cultivated. The *faqirs* are of various kinds: the abstinent (*zahid*), who is pained when wealth comes to him, the satisfied (*radi*), who is neither pleased at the possession of wealth nor pained at its loss, and when it comes to him he does not positively hate it, the contented (*qani'*), who wants to get wealth but does not actively pursue this desire, the greedy (*hares*), who has a very strong desire to get property but is somehow or other unable to do so, the

constrained (*mudtar*), who, being in a state of want such as starvation or nakedness, is ill at ease and in consternation,. The first of these, i.e. one in the state of being a *zahid*, is the best. The *zahid* is the one who, being busy in enjoying the love of God is indifferent to all worldly losses and gains.

All the virtues considered above – repentance, abstinence, poverty – demand an immense amount of courage and steadfastness. They are not possible to attain without unswerving passion, which is doubly more difficult to cultivate, impatience being in the very nature of man.[53] It, however, does not mean toleration of things that are illegal and against religion. If a man wrongs us, we may pay him back in the same coin, if he strikes us, we can strike him, too (though forgiveness is also commendable). Patience in the real sense of the term has three grades: patience in performing a religious duty, patience in avoiding actions prohibited by God and patience over sufferings and difficulties in the arduous path towards Him. The last grade is the noblest.

Gratitude (*shukr*), too, is a necessary virtue and also so difficult that only few can exercise it.[54] It is, according to al-Ghaz□l□, complementary to patience, "He who eats until he is satisfied and is thankful is in the same station as he who fasts and is patient." Further, gratitude is based upon man's knowledge that all that comes to him comes from God and upon the feeling of joy over it. If one is pleased with the gift only, without any reference to the Giver, is no gratitude, "Gratitude is the vision of the Giver, not the gift." Secondly, we may be pleased with the Giver over a gift because it is a sign of His pleasure. This is gratitude, no doubt, but of a low variety. The highest stage is reached when we are pleased with the Giver and determine to use His gift in order to attain greater and greater nearness to Him. "If you give thanks," says God, "I shall give you more, but if you are thankless, My punishment is dire."[55]

After repentance from sin and successful renunciation of the world, the individual directs his attention towards his own self with a view to making it submissive and obedient to the will of God. The process has various steps and stages: assigning the task to the self (*musharatbah*), watching over the self (*muraqabah*), taking critical account of the self (*muhasabah*), punishing the self (*mu'aqabah*), exerting the self (*mujahadah*), and upbraiding the self (*mu'atabah*). The whole affair, which results in self-mastery, is so difficult that it has been called the bigger *jihad* (*al-jihad at-akbar*). We have to constantly keep a vigilant eye on our thoughts and actions and check ourselves at every step. We have to convince our hearts of the omnipresence of God and His omniscience, that God knows even what lies hidden in the innermost depths of our being. Such a conviction creates in the soul an all-pervading reverence for God. Single-mindedness (*ikhlas*) is the fruit of the self thoroughly mastered and trained. A fashioned soul has only one motive force, and that is the desire for the nearness to God, the lesser purposes are weeded out.

Single-mindedness leads to the virtue of truthfulness (*sidq*). Truthfulness is there in words, intentions, and actions. Truthfulness in words consists in making a statement which is unequivocal and clear and is not aimed at deceiving others. We can, however, in some cases, make ambiguous and false statements if thereby we are aiming at the betterment of society. Such special cases may be war tactics, restoration

of happy relations between husband and wife, amity among Muslims, and so on. Further, our intention must be rightful and true. The right direction of intention is very important because actions are judged only by intentions,[56] if our intention is good and the result incidentally turns out to be bad, we are not to blame. Conversely, if our intention is evil, we are culpable, whatever its outcome.

Lastly, truthfulness in actions lies in the fact that the inward state of a person is literally translated into outward behaviour without any tinge of hypocrisy. The highest truthfulness which is at the same time most difficult to attain is the complete realization of the various attitudes of the soul towards God, e.g. trust, hope, love, etc.[57]

Fear (*khauf*) and hope (*raja'*) also mark stages in moral progress. Fear may be of the wrath and the awe-inspiring attributes of God, or it may be produced in man by the consciousness of his guilt and the apprehension of divine displeasure. A nobler kind of fear is aroused by the feeling of separation from God who is the ultimate goal of all our aspirations. Hope, on the other hand, is a pleasant tendency. It consists of the expectation, after the individual has tried his best, of the divine love in the world and of the beatific vision in the hereafter. Fear is the result of knowledge – the knowledge of our infirmity as compared with the supremacy of our ideal, hope is the result of assured faith in the loving kindness of our Lord in acceding to our requests and prayers. It lies at a higher plane because it strengthens love and enables man to realize the goal.

The highest virtue, according to al-Ghaz□l□, is reliance (*tawakkul*), which is based on the knowledge of God's oneness or unification (*tawhid*). Those who profess belief in unification may be classified into three groups: those, including hypocrites, who confess the unity with the tongue only, those who believe on the basis of some so-called reliable authority, and those who, on the evidence of their direct, intuitive perception, believe that God is the unmoved mover of the material world and the ultimate cause of all creation and that He alone has real or absolute existence of their direct, intuitive cause of all creation and that He alone can abandon himself to God in complete trust and merge his will in the divine will. The servant no longer finds his own powers and personality to be self-sufficient and has allowed God to dominate his life...he considers himself as a dead body moved by the divine decree and is content that the divine strength should replace his own human weakness."[58] Reliance, therefore, is the casting of the soul into self surrender and the withdrawal of it from self assertion.

The moral soldier who is sincerely set upon his task must also form the habit of meditation and reflection. He has to reflect on the works of God, on the alternation of day and night, on the waxing and waning of the moon, on the rise and fall of nations, and on the general management of his cosmological scheme. For that purpose seclusion away from the active hustle and bustle of society is absolutely necessary. A heart pre-occupied with worldly things has no place for the knowledge of God. The true significance of meditation is a firm conviction in the omnipresence of God, which results from the realization that He is aware of what we do under cover of darkness and of what lies buried in the inner-most depths of our hearts. Further, from meditation and reflection the soul is led on to contemplation,

which is of three kinds:

i. contemplation *bi al-haqq*, i.e. the seeing of things pointing towards divine unity,

ii. contemplation li al-haqq, i.e. seeing signs of the Creator in created things, and finally,

iii. the contemplation of God Himself. This form of contemplation surely and undeniably leads to His love, the final aim of all moral endeavours.

The last stage of contemplation and the love of God are not, however, the results of, but are simply occasioned by our concentration and thinking. There is nothing like a casual necessity here. The sacred knowledge is direct and immediate – and is due to God only. The Sufi has the impression that something has dropped upon him "as gentle rain from heaven," a gift of God due to His grace and mercy.

The highest contemplation is the valence of love, absorption of all human attributes in the vision of God, and then annihilations of the everlastingness of God. But why, in the first instance, should mere contemplation lead to His love? In answer, al-Ghaz□l□ explains at length how God is the ultimate and absolute source of all the causes because of which objects are loved. The sentiment of love is, broadly speaking of four kinds.

i. Self love. An egoistic tendency is ingrained in the very nature of man. Instincts and the so-called organic need points towards that fact. Our soul, life, or the pure ego is, certainly, the dearest to us, but beyond that we also love what William James would call our material and social selves.

ii. Love of a benefactor for the benefits received from him. This is also a sort of self love, though an indirect one. We love others because they promote our own cause in one way or another. We love the physician because he looks after our health and the engineer because he beautifies our material environments and, thus, make our lives comfortable and happy.

iii. Love of beauty. Beauty has almost universally been recognized as a thing of intrinsic value. It means the orderly and systematic arrangement of parts, and this is not the quality of material things only, it lies in the activities and the behaviour of man and in his ideas and concepts. Whatever is beautiful is loved by us for its own sake.

iv. Love due to the harmonious inter-action and secret affinity between two souls. A thief loves a thief and a noble person loves a noble friend.

Now, if love exists for all these separate causes, will not the individual be loved who holds all these in their supreme and perfect form? Such an individual is God Himself, the possessor of the most lovable qualities. It is to Him that we owe our very existence. He is the only real benefactor and from Him all benefits are received. If we get something from a human being, it really comes from God. Had he willed otherwise, we would not have been able to get it. Thirdly, God also possesses the attributes of beauty. There is beauty in His design and in His creative behaviour. "God is beautiful and loves beauty,"[59] said

the Holy Prophet. Lastly, the human soul has affinity with its divine source: God has created man after His own image. So, once we know God with all these attributes and also know where we stand in relation to Him, our love for Him becomes a necessity. And then He loves us too. "Verily Allah loves the repentant and those who purify themselves."[60]

But the lover who claims to love the Most Lovable must show some signs. The first sign, according to al-Ghaz□l□, is that the lover has no fear of death, for it means meeting the Beloved face to face and having a direct vision of Him. This world is a hindrance and a barrier which obstructs the lover's path. The sooner it is done away with, the better. Another mark of the true love is that the remembrance of God ever remains fresh in his heart. Once the fire of love is kindled, it cannot be extinguished. It remains ever ablaze and the flames go on rising higher and higher. The lover, in fact, feels happy in this condition. This is why he often seeks undisturbed loneliness to brighten these flames by contemplation and one-sided thought. Further, the lover sacrifices his will for that of the Beloved. His likes and dislikes, his behaviour and his ways of life are entirely directed and controlled by God. Lastly, the intensity of love for God demands that we should love all His activities. So, also, we should love our fellow-men for they are all His servants and creatures.

Love includes longing (*shauq*), for every lover pines to see the beloved when absent. The lover of God craves for the vision of God which would be the noblest grace and the highest delight held out to him. Again, love results in affability (*uns*), which, according to al-Ghaz□l□, is one of the most glorious fruits of love and signifies the feeling of pleasure and delight consequent upon God's nearness and the perception of His beauty and perfection. Thirdly, successful love means satisfaction (*rida'*). This includes the satisfaction of God with men and the satisfaction of men with Him. "God is satisfied with them and them with him."[61] This is the stage of the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-mutma'innah*). "Oh tranquil soul!" God will say, "Return to thy Lord well-pleased (with Him) and well-pleasing (Him), so enter among My servants and enter into my Garden."[62]

Now, because love is consequent upon the knowledge and contemplation of God, the lover is the gnostic (*'arif*). Gnosis (*ma'rifah*), however, is a gem, a precious thing which is not to be wasted, "The sun which enlightens the heart of the gnostic," says al-Ghaz□l□, "is more radiant than our physical sun, for that sun sets and may be eclipsed, but the sun of gnosis knows no eclipse nor does it set. It is an invaluable gift to be given only to those who deserve it and to be given more or less according to the degree of self-mortification to which they attain. The limited human mind is not capable of grasping the entire expanse of divine majesty. The more one knows of God, the more one loves Him. The height of contemplation is reached when plurality passes away entirely, when there is complete cessation of conscious perception of things other than the Beloved, and the individual sees God everywhere. It was in this state that one said, "I am the Truth," and another, "Glory be to Me! How is My majesty," and another, "Under this robe is naught but God." This is the state of absolute unity and identity.

The gnostic and the lover of God in this world will see God in the next world. The Mu'tazilites had denied

the beatific vision because it involved a directing of the eyes on the part of the seer and the position on the part of the seen. They said that because God is beyond space, the question of limiting Him to a particular place and direction does not arise. But al-Ghaz□l□ meets their objection by saying that this vision, like meditation, will not have any references to the eye or any other sense-organ. It will be without their mediation. Similarly, just as the conception of God is free from the implication of spatial and temporal characteristics, so will the vision of Him be beyond all such limitations and boundaries.

C. Influence

Al-Ghaz□l□'s influence within Islam has been both profound and the most wide-spread; his works have been and still are being read and studied from West Africa to Oceania more than those of any other Muslim writer, and his teaching has been accepted and made a rule of life more than that of any other theologian. It has been claimed and rightly so that "al-Ghaz□l□'s influence taken singly, on the Muslim community has been perhaps greater than that of all the scholastic theologians."

But we hasten to add that, like any other original thinker in the world, al-Ghaz□l□ did not go without his share of criticism. The unprecedented attempt on his part to make orthodoxy mystical and mysticism orthodox, and both philosophical, naturally incurred suspicion and criticism from all schools of thought and all stages of opinion both before and after his death. Liberals have criticized him for his conservatism, and conservatives for his liberalism; philosophers for his orthodoxy, and the orthodox for his philosophy.

Al-Ghaz□l□'s constant use of philosophical language and his mode of argument and pre-occupation with Sufism led Tartushi (d. 520/1126), al-Mazari (d. 536/1141), ibn Jauzi (d. 597/1200), ibn al-Salah (d. 643/1245), ibn Taimiyyah (d. 728/1328), ibn Qayyim (d. 751/1350) and other famous theologians of the orthodox school to denounce him publicly as "one of the misguided." Ibn Jauzi is reported to have once exclaimed, "How cheaply has al-Ghaz□l□ traded theology for Sufism!"63 Ibn Taimiyyah on the other hand has accused him of having traded "theology" for philosophy.

Qadi Abu 'Abd Allah Mohammad ibn Hamdin of Cordova went so far as to issue a decree (*fatwa*) against al-Ghaz□l□'s works, with the result that all his books including the *Ihya'*64 were burned and destroyed throughout Spain and the possession of them was forbidden on the threat of confiscation of property or even on that of death. The destruction of his philosophical and even theological writings was also ordered in North Africa during the reign of the Marrakush Sultan 'Ali ibn Yusuf ibn Tashifin (477/1084 – 537/1142), who was fanatically orthodox in his religious views. Both of these incidents, however, bear ample testimony to the fact that al-Ghaz□l□'s writings had gained a very wide circulation in the Muslim West even as early as that.

Amongst the philosophers, al-Ghaz□l□'s most renowned and bitterest critic was ibn Rushd (520/1126 – 595/1198). He took a point-by-point refutation of al-Ghaz□l□'s arguments against the philosophers as given in the *Tahafut* and named his own work *Tahafut al-Tahafut* (576/1180). Ibn Rushd's defence of the

philosophers is as subtle and vigorous as is al-Ghaz□l□'s attack against them. Ibn Rushd indeed handles his arguments with accomplished understanding and ingenious skill, yet, in the considered opinion of those who are competent to judge, al-Ghaz□l□'s arguments are in the final analysis more telling than those of his adversary.65

Ibn Rushd in the course of his discussion accuses al-Ghaz□l□ of hypocrisy and insincerity by saying that his polemics against the philosophers was merely to win the favour of the orthodox;66 there is nothing to substantiate this charge. He also accused al-Ghaz□l□ of inconsistencies in his thought. He alleges, for example, that in the *Mishkat al-Anwar* al-Ghaz□l□ lends whole-hearted support to the theory of emanation which he had so vehemently criticized in the *Tahafut*.67 Al-Ghaz□l□'s teaching, according to him, is sometimes detrimental to religion and sometimes to philosophy and sometimes to both. It is said, on the report of ibn Taimiyyah, which ibn Rushd was so struck by the duplicity of al-Ghaz□l□'s thought that he would often quote the following verse with reference to him, "One day you are Yemenite when you meet a man from Yemen. But when you see someone from Ma'add you assert you are from 'Àdnan!"68

The charge of inconsistency against al-Ghaz□l□ has also been made by another Muslim philosopher, namely ibn Tufail (d. 501/1185), who says that in his works meant for general readers al-Ghaz□l□ is "bound in one place and loose in another and has denied certain things and then declared them to be true." In spite of pointing out certain contradictions in Ghaz□l□'s works, ibn Tufail had on the whole great admiration69 for his teaching, and the influence of it can be seen in his own greatly admired philosophical romance *Hayy Bin Yaqzan*.

Indeed, the amount of criticism levelled against al-Ghaz□l□70 is itself proof of his wide-spread influence. The number of al-Ghaz□l□'s followers and admirers who accepted his teaching and spread it is immensely greater than that of his critics; it is neither possible nor useful here to give a long catalogue of names. One fact, however, becomes conspicuous that it includes mostly people of two types, namely, the orthodox theologians and the Sufis, or those who were equally qualified as both. This makes it clear that the influence of al-Ghaz□l□ within Islam expressed itself simultaneously in two different traditions, i.e. those of mysticism and orthodoxy, and thus, along with the other forces of history went a long way in determining the permanent attitudes in the religious consciousness of the Islamic community, namely, the attitudes of spiritualization and fundamentalism.

Ihya' indeed is still the most widely read of all the works of al-Ghaz□l□ in all sections of the community, if not in its entirety at least in the form of fragments and summaries which are available in large numbers.71 It has been so eulogized by some that they have not hesitated to call it the second Qur'an, and the theologians and traditionalists have not tired in writing voluminous commentaries on it.

But it is not within Islam only that Al-Ghaz□l□'s influence exerted itself so strongly, it also had its impact on Western, particularly Jewish and Christian, thought, and indeed has flowed right into the most modern of our philosophical fascinating subject. It will be dealt with in the next volume in the chapter on

“The Influence of Muslim Philosophy on the West.”

Bibliography

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1. *Maqasid al-Falasifah*, Second edition, Egypt, 1355/1936 (statement of the teachings of the Muslim Peripatetics); *Mi'yar al-'Ilm*, Cairo, 1329/1911 (an elaborate treatise on logic); *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, ed. M. Bouyges, S. J. Beyrouth, 1927 (against the philosophers); *Mihakk al-Nazar*, Cairo (a smaller work on logic); *al-Mustazhiri*, Leiden, 1916 (against the Batinites); *al-Iqtistad fi al-I'tiqad*, Cairo, 1327/1909 (on speculative theology); *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, 15 vols, Cairo, 1356/1937 – 1357/1938 (*magnum opus*, a compendium of al-Ghaz□l□'s whole system); *Bidayat al Hidayah*, Cairo, 1353/1934, 47 pp. (on religious conduct, the authenticity of the closing section, pp. 40 – 47, doubtful); *al-Hikma fi Makhluqat Allah*, Cairo, 1321/1903 (on evidence of God's wisdom in His creation); *al-Maqsad al-Asna fi Asma' Allah al-Husna*, Cairo, 1322/1904 (an exhortation to imitation of the divine qualities); *al-Imla' 'an Ishkalat al-Ihya'* (reply to attacks on *Ihya'*, can be found on the margin of Sayyid Murtada's *Ittihal al-Sadah*, Vol. 1, pp. 41 – 252, (the definitions of the Sufi terms in the introduction are perhaps not authentic); *al-Madnun bihi 'ala-Ghairi Ahlihi*, Cairo, 1309/1891 (an esoteric work to be kept from those unfit for it); *Jawahir al-Qur'an*, Egypt (an exposition of the faith of the orthodox on the basis of the Qur'an); *Kitab al-Arba'in*, Cairo, 1328/1910 (a second part of the preceding work); *Kimiya-i Sa'dat* (in Persian), lithograph edition, Bombay (a summary of *Ihya'*, to be distinguished from a spurious work of the same title in Arabic); *al-Qustas al-Mustaqim*, Cairo, 1318/1900 (a smaller work against the Batinites); *Iljam al-'Awamm 'an 'Ilm al-Kalam*, Egypt, 1309/1891 (a work on the science of dogmatics); *Ayyuha al-Walad*, Egypt, 1343/1924 (advice in the sphere of theology); *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*, Damascus, 1358/1939 (auto-biographical); *Mishkat al-Anwar*, Egypt, 1343/1924 (on mysticism: an exposition of the light verse in the Qur'an, the authenticity of the veil section at the end is questionable; cf. note No. 24. above).

2. *Al-Durrat al-Fakhirah Koshf 'Ulum al-Akhirah*, ed. Gauthier, Leipzig, 1877; *Risalah Ladunniyah*,

Cairo, 1343/1924 (English translation by Margaret Smith): *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1938, pp. 177 – 200, 353 – 74; *Rawlat al–Taliban wa 'Umdat al–Salikin* in *Fara'id al–La'ali*, Cairo, 1343/1924, pp. 121 – 261; *Sirr al–'Alamain wa Kashi ma fi al–Darain*, Cairo, 1328/1910; *Kimiya' al–Sa'adah* (Arabic) in *al–Jawahir al–Ghazali*, Cairo 1343, 1924; *al–Najkh al–Taswiyyah* (referred to by Sayyid Murtada in *Ittahal*); *al–Madnun al–Saghir*, also known as *al–Ajwibah al–Ghazaliyyah fi al–Masa'il al–Ukhrawiyyah*, Cairo, 1309/1891; *Mankhul* (refutation of the *Fikh* of Abu Hanifah; referred to in *Kashf al–Zunan*); *Me'raj al–Salikin* in *Fara'ad al–La'ali*, Cairo, 1343/1924, pp. 1 – 99; *Mukashafat al–Qulub*, Cairo, 1328/1910.

3. (A) Books – S. A. Kamali, *al–Ghaz□/□'s Tahafut al–Falasifah* (English translation), The Pakistan philosophical Congress, Lahore, 1958; W. M. Watt, *The Faith and Practice of al–Ghaz□/□* (English translation of *al–Munqidh min al–Dalal* and *Bidayat al–Hadiyah*), George Allen and Unwin, London, 1953; Mohammad Hanif Nadawi, *Qadim Yunani Falsafah* (Urdu translation of *Maqasid al–Falasifah*), Majlis–i Taraqqi–i Adab, Lahore, 1959; *Sargudhasht–i Ghaz□/□* (Urdu translation of *al–Munqidh min al–Dalal* with an Introduction), Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, 1959; *Afkir–i Ghaz□/□* (al–Ghaz□l□'s teachings with regard to knowledge and faith based on *Ihya'* with an Introduction), Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, 1956 (Urdu); M. Ahsan, *Madhaq al–Arifin* (Urdu translation of *Ihya'*), four vols., Matba'ah Tejkumar, Lucknow, 1955 (seventh edition); M. 'Inayat Allah, *Kimiya'i Sa'adat* (Urdu translation), Din Mohammadi Press, Lahore. n.d. (revised edition); Sayyid 'Abd al–Quddus Hashimi Nadawi, *al–Murshid al–Amin* (summary of *Ihya'* in Urdu), Urdu Manzil, Karachi, 1955; Syed Nawab Ali, *Some Moral and Religious Teachings of al–Ghaz□/□* (English translation of extracts from Parts Three and Four of *Ihya'* with Introduction by Alban G. Widgery), Sheikh Mohammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1946; Claud Field, *The Alchemy of Happiness* (English translation of some parts of *Kimiya–Sa'adat*), Sh. Mohammad Ashraf, Lahore, n.d. (reprint from the Wisdom of the East Series); W. H. T. Gairdner, *Mishkat al–Anwar*, Sh. Mohammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1952 (new edition); Sulaiman Dunya, *Tahafut al–Falsifah li al–Ghaz□/□*, Cairo, 1947; *al–Haqiqah fi Nazar al–Ghaz□/□*, Dar Ihya' al–Kutub al–'Arabiyyah, Cairo, 1947; *al–Hiqah fi Nazar al–Ghaz□/□*, Dar Ihya' al Kutub al–'Arabiyyah, Cairo, n.d.; A.W. Zuhuri, *Makatib–i Imam Ghaz□/□* (Letters of al–Ghaz□l□ in Urdu), Karachi, 1949; M. Umaruddin, *The Ethical Philosophy of al–Ghaz□/□*, four parts, published by the author, Muslim University, Aligarh, 1949 – 1951; *Some Fundamental Aspects of Imam Ghazzali's Thought*, Irshad Book Depot, Aligarh, 1946; Nur al–Hassan Khan, *Ghaz□/□ ka Tasawar–i Akhlaq* (Urdu translation of Dr. Zaki Mubarak's *al–Akhlaq 'ind al–Ghazzali*), al– Maktabat al–'Ilmiyyah, Lahore, 1956; Shibli Nu'mani, *al–Ghaz□/□* M. Thana Allah Khan, Lahore 1956 (Urdu); Simon van den Bergh, *Averrose' Tahafut al–Tahafut* (English translation with extensive notes), two vols., Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1954. An Urdu translation of ibn Rushd's *Tahafut al–Tahafut* is under preparation, to be published by the Board for Advancement of Literature, Lahore.

(B) Sections of Books – 'Abd al–Salam Nadawi, *Hukama'–i Islam*, Azamgarh, 1953, Vol. 1 pp. 386 – 408 (Urdu); Abu al–Hassan 'Ali, *Tarikh–i Da'wat–u 'Azimat*, Azamgarh, 1375/1955, Part One, pp. 111 – 81 (Urdu); Majid Fakhry, *Islamic Occasionalism*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1958, chapter two and by index; M. M. Sharif, *Muslim Thought: Its Origin and Achievements*, Sh. Mohammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1951, pp. 75 – 80; F. Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1958, pp. 94 – 99; M.

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1. In the Munqidh al-Ghaz□l□ expressly mentions that he had studied the Qut al-Qutub of Abu Talib al-Makki (d. 386/996), the works of Harith al-Muhasibi (d. 243/857), and the fragments of al-Junaid (d. 298/910), al Shibli (d. 334/945) and Abu Yazid al-Bistami (d. 261/875). At the end he adds that he had read the discourses of all the leading Sufis. In al-Ghaz□l□'s works, indeed, there are references to be found to all the great mystics of Islam. For al-Ghaz□l□'s Sufistic sources, cf. Margaret Smith, Al-Ghaz□l□: The Mystic, London, 1944, pp. 123 – 32. For a comparison of Qut al-Qulub and Ihya' cf. Shibli Nu'mani, Al-Ghaz□l□, Lahore, 1956, p. 107; for the comparison of Muhasibi's Kitab al-Wasaya and Munqidh, cf. A. J. Arberry, Sufism, London, 1950, pp. 47 – 50.
2. Cf. Ihya', Cairo, 1340/1921, Vol. 4, p 259 et.sqq.
3. Tahafut, p. 88, see note 38 in the preceding chapter.
4. Qur'an 2:117, 26:40.
5. T. J. de Boer, The History of Philosophy in Islam, English trans. by E. R. Jones, London, 1933, p. 163.
6. Cf. Qur'an 3:189, 190, 6:100, 10:5, 6, 13:3, 4, etc., cf. also al-Ghaz□l□'s al Hikmah fi Makhtuqat Allah, Cairo, 1321/1903.
7. Cf. M. Saeed Sheikh, "Kant's Critique of Rational Psychology and Its Paralogisms," Proceedings of the Sixth Pakistan Philosophical Congress, Lahore, 1959, pp. 185 – 93.
8. Cf. Tahafut, pp. 200—20. For a comparison of al-Ghaz□l□'s and ibn Sina's views with regard to soul, cf. Sulaiman Dunya, al-Haqiqah fi Nazr al-Ghaz□l□, Egypt, 1367/1947, pp. 356 – 455.
9. Cf. article "Nafs," Encyclopaedia of Islam, esp. sections 9 and10; also Maqasid al-Falasifah (Urdu translation) by M. Hanif Nadawi, Lahore, 1959, pp. 323 – 32.
10. See Ihya', Cairo 1340/1921, p. 54. Cf. also D. B. Macdonald, Development of Muslim Theology..., London, 1903, pp. 234, 235, and A. J. Wonsinek, The Relation between al-Ghaz□l□'s Cosmology and His Mysticism, Amsterdam, 1933.
11. See Kimiya-Sa'dat, Urdu Trans. by M. 'Inayat Ullah, Lahore, n.d., pp. 8, 36. Also cf. Qur'an, 30:30.
12. Qur'an, 15:29, 38:72.
13. Kimiya-i Sa'adat, English trans. by Claud Field, The Alchemy of Happiness, Lahore, n.d. pp. 19, 35.
14. See Kimiya-i Sa'dat, Urdu trans. p. 10.
15. Qur'an 37:85
16. Ibid, 49:27 – 30.
17. Munqidh, p. 60; see note no. 1 in the preceding chapter.
18. Cf. F. Rahman, Prophecy in Islam London, 1958, p. 96.
19. Ihya' Urdu trans. by M. Ahsan Siddiqi, Lucknow, 1955, Vol. 1, pp. 11 et sqq.

20. Cf. Mizan al-'Amal, Cairo, 1342/1923, pp. 35, 36; also Ihya', Part 1 Book 1, Section 7 on 'Aql (Intellect).
21. Cf. P. K. Hitti, History of the Arabs, London, 1949, p. 432; Max Meyerhof, The Legacy of Islam, ed. T. Arnold and A. Guillaume, Oxford, 1931; and Will Durant, The Age of Faith, New York, 1950, pp. 256, 257, 332.
22. He himself wrote a treatise on astronomy. Cf. Sarton, Introduction to the History of Science, Baltimore, 1927, Vol 1, p. 753.
23. The charge of esotericism, in the narrow sense of the theory of two-fold truth against al-Ghazali, is however, unfounded. Cf. W. Montgomery swat, "A Forgery in al-Ghaz□l□'s Mishkat," Journal of royal Asiatic Society, 1949, pp. 5 – 22; also article "al-Ghaz□l□," (section 3), Encyclopedia of Islam. This question is connected with the problem of the authenticity of al-Ghaz□l□'s works.
24. Cf. M. Iqbal, "...to this day it is difficult to define with accuracy, his view of the nature of God. In him, like Borger and Solger in Germany, Sufi Pantheism and the Ash'arite dogma of personality appear to harmonize together, a reconciliation which makes it difficult to say whether he as a Pantheist or a Personal Pantheist of the type" (The Development of Metaphysics in Persia, p. 75).

Also C. R. Upper, "Al-Ghaz□l□'s Thought Concerning the Nature of man and Union with God," The Muslim World, 1952, Vol 42, pp. 23 – 32. C. R. Upper ends this article by a significant remark, "Al-Ghaz□l□'s occasional pantheism is indubitable, yet is orthodoxy is impeccable. How this can be ist he secret between the various positions. cf. S. R. Shafiq, "Some Abiding Teachings of al-Ghaz□l□," The Muslim World, Vol 54, No. 1, 1954, pp. 43 – 48.

25. Cf. Munqidh, p. 61.
26. Cf. Qur'an, 2:255.
27. Cf. Miskhat al-Anwar, English translation by W. H. T. Gairdner, Lahore, p. 62.
28. Saying of al-Hallaj (executed 309/922). Cf. R. A. Nicholson, The Idea of Personality in Sufism, Cambridge, 1923.
29. Sayings ascribed to Abu Yazid al-Bistani, who is probably the first of the intoxicated Sufis.
30. Munqidh, p. 61.
31. Margaret Smith, Dr. Zaki Mubarak, and others.
32. Qur'an 58:4.
33. Al-Ghaz□l□ Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din part 3, p.50.
34. Hadith, Ahmad b. Hanbal, Vo. 4, p. 226
35. Al-Ghaz□l□, Ihya', Pate 2, Chap. on Music.
36. D.B. Macdonald, Development of Muslim Theology, p. 192.
37. The Qur'an, 6:125.
38. Donaldson, Studies in Muslim Ethics, p. 156.
39. W. R. Sorley, Moral Values and the Idea of God, p. 446.
40. The Qur'an, 90:9 – 10.
41. Ibn Hajr, Bulugh al-Maram, "Bab al-Zuhd w-al-War'."
42. The Qur'an, 7:31.
43. Al-Ghaz□l□, Ihya', Part 3, p.72.
44. Ibid., p. 66
45. Ibid., p. 85.
46. The Qur'an, 2:10.
47. Jama' Tirmidhi, Matba'ah Mujtaha'i, p. 201.
48. The Qur'an, 49:12.
49. Al-Mishkat al-Masabih, "Bab al-Kaba'ir wa 'Alamat al-Nifaq."
50. Qur'an, 9:34.
51. Ibid. 25:70
52. Margaret Smith, Al-Ghaz□l□: The Mystic, pp. 167 – 68.
53. The Qur'an 70:19.
54. Ibid. 34:13.

55. Ibid. 14:7.
56. The opening hadith in al-Sahih al-Bhkhari.
57. Al-Ghaz□l□, Ihya', Part 4, pp. 334 – 35.
58. Margaret Smith, op. cit. pp. 167 – 68.
59. Al-Mishkat al-Masabih "Bab al-Ghadab w-al-Kibr."
60. Qur'an 2:222.
61. Ibid. 98:8.
62. Ibid. 89:27 – 30.
63. Cf. Jamal al-Din ibn al-Jauzi, al-Namus fi Talbis Iblis, Cairo, 1340/1921, p. 377.
64. For the theologians' various objections to Ihya' and an answer to them, see M. Hanif Nadawi, Afkar-i Ghaz□l□, Lahore, 1956, pp. 61 – 73.
65. Cf. e.g. Majid Fakhry, Islamic Occasionalism, London, 1958, pp. 103 et sqq.
66. Cf. also ibn Rushd, al-Kashf 'an Manahij al-Adillah, Cairo, 1319/1901, pp. 57, et sq.
67. Cf. Mishkat al-Anwar, English translation by W. H. T. Gardner, Lahore, pp. 17 – 21.
68. Quoted by F. Rahman, op. cit. London, 1958, p. 112. It is significant to note that S. van den Bergh concludes in his introduction to Averroes' Tahafut al-Tahafut that resemblances between Ghaz□l□ and Averroes seem sometimes greater than their differences, pp. 35, 36.
69. Cf. ibn Tufail, Hayy Bin Yaqzan (Urdu trans. by Zafar Ahmad Siddiqi), Aligarh, 1955, pp. 26 – 30.
70. For a modern criticism of al-Ghaz□l□ cf. M. Zaki 'Abd al-Salim Mubarak, al-Akhlaq 'ind al-Ghazzali, Cairo, 1924 (Urdu trans. by Nur al-Hassan Khan, Lahore, 1956). Very recently F. Rahman in his short treatment of al-Ghaz□l□'s vies on prophecy in the above cited work has made a very strong charge of inconsistency against him.
71. With the exception of al-Ghaz□l□'s own Kimiya-i Sa'dat (in Persian), the first of such summaries was written by al-Ghaz□l□'s own brother, Ahmad al-Ghaz□l□ (d. 520/1126), under the title Lubab al-Ihya'. A list of these may be found in Sayyid Murtada's Ittihaj al-Sadah, Cairo, 1311/1893, p. 41.

Chapter 32: Fakhr Al-Razi

A. Life, Signficance Of Thought And Works

The intellectual life of Islam after the attacks of Ash'ari and Ghaz□l□ upon rationalistic philosophy can be largely described as the gradual transition from rationalism of Aristotelian philosophy toward the intuitive and illuminative wisdom of Ishraqis1 and Sufis. Although Islam began to weaken politically and culturally during the latter part of the 'Abbasid Caliphate, Muslim thought, especially in the Shi'ah world continued the process of divorcing itself from the categories of Peripatetic philosophy. One of the most influential and colourful figures in this movement, who played a major role in the attack against the rationalists, was Fakhr al-Din Razi, who is considered to be the reviver of Islam in the sixth/12th century as Ghaz□l□ was in the fifth/11th century.2 Razi is, in many ways, a second Ghaz□l□; in fact, he may, without exaggeration, be considered to be one of the greatest Muslim theologians.

Abu al-Fadl Mohammad ibn 'Umar, known as Fakhr al-Din Razi and also as Imam Fakhr ibn al-Katib, and *Imam al-Mushakkikin* (the Imam of Doubters),3 was born in Rayy in northern Persia in 543/1149 to

a family of scholars who came originally from Talbaristan. His father, Dia' al-Din, was a well known scholar in Rayy and was Imam Fakhr's first teacher. Later, Fakhr al-Din al-Jilli (the latter being also the teacher of Sheikh al-Baghawi and Majd al-Din Suhrawardi) and theology with Kamal al-Din Simnani in Rayy and Maraghah, and soon became a master of all the sciences of his time, including mathematics, medical and natural sciences.[4]

Having completed his formal studies, Imam Fakhr set out for Khwarizm to combat the Mu'tazilites, and from there journeyed to Transoxiana and was warmly accepted at the Courts of Ghur rulers, Ghiyath al-Din and his brother Shihab al-Din. This stay terminated soon due to opposition and jealousy of certain scholars and courtiers. Consequently, Imam Fakhr left Qhur Court for Chaznah, where he taught for a while, and finally, settled in Herat where, under the patronage of Khwarizm Shah 'Ala al-Din, a special school was built for him. There he spent the rest of his life as a teacher and preacher in comfort and honour among a large number of disciples and students who came from all over the Muslim world to study under him. He passed away at the height of fame and glory in 606/1209.[5]

The career of Imam Fakhr is, in many ways, a repetition of that of Ghaz□l□'s. Like his great predecessor, he was of the Shafi'i school, well versed in all the sciences and philosophy and yet opposed to many aspects of the Greek heritage, a critic of the Muslim philosophers, and drawn towards Sufism.[6] In theology, in which he followed the Ash'rite school, he was certainly influenced by Ghaz□l□ and Imam al-Haramain. In philosophy he came under the influence of his compatriot, Mohammad Zakariyya Razi, as well as ibn Sina and in physics his master was, without doubt, Abu al-Barakat al-Baghdadi. Like a series of anti-Aristotelian philosophers before him, Imam Fakhr tried to reconcile religion and rational philosophy by reliance upon ideas derived more from the *Timaeus* of Plato than the Physics of Aristotle.[7]

Imam Fakhr's main role in the intellectual life of Islam was to support the orthodox policy of the Caliphate of his time, to suppress rationalistic philosophy in favour of theology. In the unified view of Islam, politics, religion and intellectual life have never been divorced, so much so, that the political struggle of minorities in the Caliphate, whether they were opposed to Arab domination or, like the Shi'ahs, to the 'Abbasid Caliphate as such, was reflected clearly in the intellectual and religious activities of the period. As the Caliphate supported the Orthodox Sunni theologians against the rationalists, the philosophers sought refuge in the courts of those minor dynasties that were opposed to the central authority of the Caliphs. So we see such figures as ibn Sina and Khuwaja Nassir al-Din Tusi seeking favour of rulers opposed to the authority of Baghdad, and especially of Shi'ah princes.[8]

On the other hand, there appeared a series of great scholars and sages, mostly theologians and Sufis, of whom the most important were Ghaz□l□, Imam Fakhr, and the Sufi masters, like Shihab al-Din 'Umar Suhrawardi, who lifted their pen in support of the Caliphate and used both theology and Sufism in order to combat rationalistic philosophy.[9] The works of Imam Fakhr were, above all else, dedicated to his cause. Sunni theology reached its height in his works and weakened considerably with the fall of the 'Abbasid Caliphate, which came to an end about 50 years after his death.

The writings of Fakhr al–Din Razi, of which nearly a hundred are known deal almost with every aspect of Muslim intellectual life and include all the sciences of his time.[10] Some of these, like the commentary upon the *al–Isharat w–al–Tanbihat* of ibn Sina and upon his *'Uyun al–Hikmah* and the *Mabahith al–Mashriqiyyah*, are written as criticisms of Muslim philosophers, especially ibn Sina, and on general problems of philosophy.[11] Others deal with the many branches of the intellectual sciences including logic, mathematics, metaphysics and the natural and esoteric sciences.

Still another set of books deals with theology, of which the most famous are the *Kitab al–Arba~in fi Usul al–Din, Laudami' al–Bayyinat*, and the *Mubassal*, a classic among writings of the *Kalam*. Fakhr al–Din also wrote a large number of works on particular sciences, like the commentary upon the syntax of Zamkhshari, *Kitab al–Sirr al–Maktum* on astrology and astronomy, *Manaqib al–shifi'i* on history, the commentary upon the *Qanun* or *Canon* of ibn Sina, and many other treatises dealing with medicine, geometry, physiognomy, agriculture, theurgy, etc. Besides these writings, Imam Fakhr composed a large number of works on the purely Islamic sciences of exegesis and jurisprudence, of which the most famous are the *Mafatih al–Ghaib*, the voluminous commentary upon the Qur'an and *al–Ma'alim fi Usul al–Figh* on the principles of jurisprudence.

Throughout these writings, the character of Imam Fakhr as a critic and "doubter" is evident. He criticizes not only the philosophers, but also theologians like Ash'ari and historians like Shahrastani, when he accuses of plagiarizing Baghdadi's *al–Farq bain al Firaq* in his *al–Milal wa–al–Nibal*.[12] Imam Fakhr's particular genius for analysis and criticism is evident in whatever field he turns his attention to, so that in the annals of Muslim thought he has quite justly become famous as one who is a master in posing a problem but not in solving it, in entering into a debate but not in concluding it.

B. Theology (Kalam)

Muslim theology, known as *Kalam*, began as a reaction against the rationalistic school of the Mu'tazilites, and only gradually developed into a complete science. In the earlier centuries the theologians, following the lead of Abu al–Hassan al–Ash'ari, tried to use logic, the instrument of their enemies, in order to defend the truths of revelation. From the fourth/tenth century onward, this defence itself became more subtle and systematic, reaching its height in the works of Imam al–Haramain Abu al–Ma'ali 'Abd al–Malik al–Juwaini, such as the *Irshad* and the *Shamil*.[13] With Ghaz□l□ *Kalam* took a new turn, as opposed to what it was at the beginning to the school of philosophers, it now began to employ the syllogistic method, intellectual ('aqli) evidence and certain theses of the philosophers, thus laying the foundation of the school of philosophical *Kalam* of the later theologians.

Imam Fakhr is the greatest master of this later school of theology, surpassing in many ways even the more illustrious Ghaz□l□. With Imam Fakhr philosophical *Kalam* reaches its zenith of power and perfection; his works became consequently a continuous source of influence over their later theologians, whether they were Sunnis like al–Iji and al–Taftazani or Shi'ahs like Khuwaja Nasr.[14] Properly speaking,

Razi must be credited with the foundation of a new school of *Kalam*, and certain writers have even considered him to be the Third Teacher after Aristotle and Farabi.[15] Actually, he composed works characteristic of both the first period of Muslim theology – marked by a revolt against the philosophers and yet by a dependence upon their methods and even some of their ideas – and the second period, after Ghaz□l□, in which theology became a more independent science and lost much of its defensive and apologetic quality. Among the first type of writings one may name *Muhassal* and *al-Arabi fi Usul al-Din* and among the second *Asas al-Taqdis* and *Lawamial-Bayyindt*.

The theology of Imam Razi is marked by the integration of theological themes with other sciences. For example, in his Persian treatise, *Asrar al-Tanzil*, he combines theology with ethics, and in the *Lawami' al-Bayyindt*, theology with Sufism, giving theology a fragrance of spirituality and a beauty detailed and profound discussion concerning *dhikr*, the invocation of one of the interior forms of *dhikr* he writes, "The third kind of *dhikr* is that man of creation should contemplate the creatures of God until each particle of the essence of creation becomes a polished mirror before the unmanifested world so that when he looks into this mirror with the eye of wisdom the ray of the eye of his should will fall upon the world of Majesty. This is a station without end and a sea with limit."[16] In this way, Imam Razi raises theology to a height approached only by Ghaz□l□, far surpassing the usual level of this study.[17]

To understand Razi's approach to theology, it is enough to analyze the structure of one of his treatises. We take as an example perhaps the most famous of his theological works, the *Muhassal*, which became a classical source book on the *Kalam* almost from the moment of its composition.[18] Here, Imam Razi divides theology into four parts (*arkun*): preliminaries, being and its divisions, rational theology (*ilahiyyat*), and traditional questions (*sam'iyyat*). The preliminaries include the principles of logic, the sufficiency of demonstration (*dalil*) to prove the existence of God, and the obligation upon each believer to prove God's existence.[19] The section on Being and its divisions considers the questions of Being and Non-being, the relation of the One to the many, cause and effect, etc. Rational theology, which is interlaced with passages from the Qur'an, concerns the Necessary Being, His attributes, acts and the divine names. Finally, the traditional questions, which are exclusively scriptural, concern prophethood, eschatology, the Imamate, the faith and other related subjects. As a whole, therefore, Imam Razi's theology combines the transmitted or traditional elements of revelation (*naqli*) and the intellectual and rational evidence concerning religious and metaphysical questions (*'aqli*) into a science which takes into account the problem of religion while participating in many of the discussions of philosophy.

In the method and problems of theology, Imam Razi followed the Ash'rites. As he writes in his *Kitab al-Arb'in*, "We (the Ash'rites) believe that God is neither body nor substance, and that He is not in space, yet, we believe that we can see God." But to show his independence of judgment he goes on to assert, "Our companions (the Ash'rites) have given an intellectual reason for the possibility of seeing God, but we have brought 12 objections against it which cannot be answered. Therefore, we only say that we can see God by appealing to transmitted reasoning, i.e. the Qur'anic text."[20]

Imam Razi also criticized Ash'ari on the question of atomism which is such an essential aspect of the Ash'rite theology. Razi rejected atomism in his earlier works like the *Mabahith al-Mashriqiyyah* and wrote his *Kitab al-Jauhar al-Fard* to refute it, but later works like the great Qur'anic commentary, the *Majafih al-Ghaib*, he accepted it once again. (Atomism does not play a major role in his theology as it does in the system under other Ash'arites like Baqillani.) This change of position occurs also in the rejection of infinity the void, and the plurality of worlds in the earlier writings and their acceptance in later works like the *Mafahh.*

There are several points in Imam Razi's theology which are of special interest in so far as his particular point of view is concerned. One relates to the question of faith in which he joins most theologians in regarding faith as the necessary and sufficient requirement for being saved. Hell is not for those who have committed evil acts accidently, but for the infidels who have no faith. Man is, of course, responsible for his work but ultimately all is determined by the divine will. Imam Razi is very emphatic in his determinism and over-throws even the theory of acquisition (*kasb*) of the Ash'arites. His Qur'anic commentary is full of arguments for determinism, which he defends more openly and ably than any other theologian. God is the creator of both good and evil, faith and impiety, benefit and injury, all these qualities are decreed by the determination of the divine will (*qada wa qada*). Yet, none of the divine acts can be considered to be inappropriate or blameable since God is the creator and ruler of the world, and whatever He does in His kingdom is His own affair and is as such, appropriate.

According to Imam Razi, "God's attributes and names must be interpreted symbolically (*ta'wil*) in order to be understood." He follows the method of Imam al-Haramain in applying *ta'wil* to the Qur'an, especially to those verses in which God is attributed with such anthropomorphic qualities as sight, hearing, etc. This does not mean that Razi tries to overcome the rational difficulties of certain principles of faith by *ta'wil*, as did many of the philosophers. For example, on the question of resurrection, unlike the philosophers who believed only in the resurrection of the soul, Imam Razi asserts that at resurrection God will create for each soul in the same body, made of the same elements as those it possessed in this life.

On the question of knowledge and the process of reasoning, Imam Razi is of the view that reason is neither the cause of which knowledge is the effect nor the source which produces knowledge. There is an intelligible succession between the two; God creates a reasoning which knowledge follows necessarily.[21] He accords a definite value to the rational faculty; his aim in theology is, in fact, to create a science which combines and harmonizes reason and revelation, *'aql* and *naql*. In his Qur'anic commentary, he calls those who have succeeded in integrating these two elements the Muslim sages (*hukma' islamiyya*), and praises them greatly. His own importance in Muslim theology lies in his success in establishing the school of philosophical *Kalam*, already begun by Ghaz□□, in which both intellectual and revelational evidence played important roles.

C. Philosophy

The importance of Imam Razi in philosophy lies more in his criticism of the philosophers than in the establishment of a new school. Influenced by the writings of Ghaz□l□, he studied philosophy to such an extent that he became a definite master of it. Unlike the theologians who rejected Greek philosophy totally or the Peripatetics who followed it strictly, Imam Razi criticized many points of Greek philosophy while accepting certain others.

In the introduction to the *Mugahith al-Mashriqiyyah*, the most important of his philosophical works, he writes, "Our associates belong to two groups: one consisting of those who imitate the Greek philosophers, permit no one to discuss their thought and take pride in being able to understand their sayings, and the other comprising those who reject all their ideas with exception. Both of these groups are wrong. We have delved deep into the writings of the previous philosophers and have affirmed the true and rejected the false. We have added certain principles to this philosophy and have put forth some new ideas."22

The new ideas of which Imam Razi speaks are mostly those pertaining to the rejection of certain basic elements of Aristotelianism and in some cases of Platonis. In the *Mabahith* he rejects the Platonic ideas, since in the Ash'arite perspective all infinite modes of Being are absorbed in the Absolute. He also criticizes the Platonic notion of knowledge as reminiscence and the most important and penetrating discussions involves criticism of the principle that from Unity only unity can issue forth, *ex uno non fitnisi unum*, a principle held by nearly all medieval philosophers. Imam Razi puts this view to the test of his severe judgment and criticizes it with his usual genius for analysis. He asserts, on the contrary, that from Unity multiplicity can issue forth, but does not pursue the proof of this assertion very far.

The *Mabahith* deals with many other subjects treated in the well-known texts of Muslim philosophy like those of ibn Sina. In each case it is the acute criticism of commonly held Peripatetic notions that is of interest. In his commentary upon the *al-Isharut w-al-Tunbihat* of ibn Sina, which after the *Mabihith* is his most important philosophical work, this type of criticism and doubts about Peripatetic philosophy continue – doubts with his student Nassir al-Din Tusi, tried to answer in his own commentary upon the *Isharut*. Ever since these works were written, nearly every student of Peripatetic philosophy in the Muslim world, especially in Persia, has reached this philosophy through the criticism of Imam Razi, so that the thought of Imam Razi has become a permanent heritage of Muslim philosophers.

His other philosophical works, like the commentary upon the *'Uyun al-Hikmah, Lugab al-Iskarut* and many treatises on logic and metaphysics, are also significant, but his greatest philosophical importance lies in the criticisms and doubts cast upon that school but opened the horizon for the other modes of knowledge like *ishraqi* philosophy and gnosis, which are more intimately bound with the spirit of Islam.

D. The Sciences

There have been very few Muslim theologians who have had a lot of knowledge of the mathematical and natural sciences as Imam Razi. His pre-occupation with the sciences is itself of great interest, because, usually the Sunni theologians and doctors of law shunned any discipline outside the sphere of the strictly religious sciences. Imam Razi, on the contrary, studied all the *awa'il* sciences, that is, the sciences inherited from the Greeks, and was considered by many of his contemporaries to be the greatest authority of his time on them. There is hardly a science in which he did not compose a treatise, although he never occupied himself with the study of nature in the manner of ibn al-Haitham or Biruni. His main importance in the sciences was in considering their principles and their relation to theology and to the spirit of Islamic revelation.

A field in which Imam Razi excelled is medicine, a discipline the mastery of which one hardly expects from a theologian. He wrote several treatises on health, pulse, and anatomy, and a medical encyclopedia entitled *al-Jami' al-Kabir* or *al-Tibb al-Kabir*, which he never completed. His most important medical work was his commentary upon the *Qanun* of ibn Sina, which he often criticized, basing himself on the opinions of Galen and the Muslim physicians, especially Mohammad Zakariyya Razi. The commentary is sufficient evidence that Imam Razi did not learn medicine by reading one or two manuals but studied it thoroughly and was well versed in it. He was, in fact, famous in Herat for his ability and exactitude in diagnosis.

Imam Razi also wrote several treatises on geometry, astronomy, agriculture, politics, history, and comparative religion.[23] Also of interest are his works on the esoteric sciences (*'ulum gharibah*), to which he devoted much attention. There remains among his writings treatise on theurgy (*talismat*), geomancy (*raml*), physiognomy (*firusah*),[24] astrology, and other similar subjects. It is curious that Imam Razi wrote all these treatises, although he was opposed to certain of these subjects like astrology which he attacked throughout his writings.[25] He was, however, more sympathetic to the study of esoteric sciences than either the theologians or the philosophers, as is illustrated by his defence of alchemy against the charges of ibn Sina.[26]

Of particular interest to the history of Muslim sciences is the scientific encyclopedia of Imam Razi, the *Jami' al-'Ulum*.[27] This work offers a good source for the names, definitions, scope, and major principles of the various Muslim sciences. Imam Fakhr begins with a discussion of traditional religious sciences such as theology, jurisprudence, dialectics, comparative religion, inheritance, will and testament, Qur'anic commentary, and reading of the Qur'an and Hadith, and then passes on to the linguistic sciences dealing with grammar, syntax etymology of words, prosody and poetic metre, and, after that to history.

Having considered the transmitted (*naqli*) sciences, he devotes the rest of the book to the intellectual (*'aqli*) sciences which include natural pharmacology, the science of the occult properties of things,

alchemy, theurgy, agriculture, geometry, science of weights, arithmetic, algebra, optics, music, astronomy, astrology, metaphysics, ethics and its various branches, and even chess and other games.

Imam Razi describes the principles, scope and major problems of each science. Despite the fact that his discussion is always general and characteristic of an encyclopaedists and never penetrates too deeply into any single science, the work is perfect evidence of his vast erudition and encyclopedic knowledge. In this respect Imam Razi is similar to the Isma'ili of whom, like Sheikh Baha al-Din Amili, took great interest not only in philosophy but also in all the cosmological and mathematical sciences. Imam Fakhr's importance in the Muslim sciences is, therefore, mostly in bringing closer together the theological and cosmological traditions which, until his time, had been far apart, and in studying nature with a view of discovering God's wisdom in creation, as was done by many other Muslim scientists.[28] In this case, as in so many others, he advanced upon a path already trodden by Ghaz□l□.

E. Commentaries Upon The Qur'an

Imam Razi's fame in the Muslim world lies as much in his commentaries on the Holy Qur'an as in his theological works. He was greatly devoted to the Qur'an as in his theological works. He was greatly devoted to the Qur'an from childhood and studied Qur'anic commentary with his father. His study of all the other sciences by no means reduced his love for the Qur'an. As he wrote in old age, "I have experienced all the methods of theology and all the ways of philosophy, but I did not find in them the benefit which could equal the benefit I derived from reading the exalted Qur'an.[29]

Imam Razi's Qur'anic commentaries include the *Tafsir al-Fatihah, Tafsir Surat al-Baqarah, Asma' Allah al-Husna* and *Risalah fi al-Tanbih 'ala ba'd al-Asrur al-Mau'izah fi al-Qur'an*, which last is a theological commentary combined with Sufi ideas in which metaphysics (*ilahiyyat*) is based on the chapter (*surah*) *al-Ikhlas*, prophecy on the chapter *al-A'la*, resurrection on the chapter *al-Tin* and the recording of human actions on the chapter *al-'Asr*. The most important of Imam Razi's commentaries is the voluminous *Majatih al-Ghaib*, known as the "Great Commentary" (*Tafsir al-Kabir*), which was collected and organized by ibn al-Khu'i and Suyuti after his death. This work is the most important theological commentary ever written on the Qur'an.

Imam Razi makes this also an occasion to expose his encyclopedic knowledge in that he inter-mingles history, geography, and other branches of knowledge in the commentary of the Qur'anic text wherever possible. He mentions and praises often in this work the Muslim sages who combine intellectual principles with the principles of Islamic revelation.

He also analyzes the stories of the Qur'an and interprets their theological and metaphysical meanings. Despite its volume and the number of topics which do not seem very relevant to the immediate subject-matter, the *Mafatih* is an impressive theological Qur'anic commentary. It its intellectual interpretation and the combining of *'aql* and *naql*, or reason and authority, and in the understanding of the sacred Scripture it remains one of the major commentaries upon the Qur'an.

F. Jurisprudence (Fiqh)

Although primarily occupied with theology, Imam Razi occasionally devoted himself to jurisprudence as well. The few works like *al-Mahsul fi al-Usul al-Figh, al-Ma'alim*, and *Ihkam al-Ahkum* bear evidence to his mastery of jurisprudence which he interpreted according to the school of exegetes. As already mentioned, he belonged to the Shafi'i school of which he was considered to be one of the *'ulama'* and authentic interpreters. Imam Razi was particularly well versed in the principles of jurisprudence (*Usul*), which he treated in a manner similar to theology. This subject has in fact never been able to divorce itself from *Kalam*, and is still studied almost as if it were one of its branches. The importance of Imam Razi in Shafi'i jurisprudence lies more in his contribution to the theoretical principles of *Fiqh* than in their actual application embodied in the *fatwas* of the various Shafi'i *'ulama'*.

G. Dialectic, Rhetoric, And Poetry

Following the example of Ghaz□l□, Imam Razi became a dialectical theologian and, as his works testify, excelled in dialectics. He was famous for his eloquence in persuasion and argumentation, for the quickness of his intelligence and keenness of wit. These gifts were combined with a rhetorical power which made him the most famous preacher in Herat. Hardly would a scholar dare enter into debate with him; those who took sides against him would soon feel the thrust of is dialectical and rhetorical weapons.

The *Munazarat* bears ample evidence of these traits. In its pages one sees Imam Razi as a tiger that pounces mercilessly upon his helpless adversary and has little regard for softness in discourse. Much of his energy throughout life was spent in attacking bitterly the small sects which arose against the main orthodoxy, such as the Karramlyyah, who probably finally poisoned him.30 As the *Sheikh al-Islam* of Herat, his main duty was to preach and defend Islam, and he took the opportunity of using his remarkable gifts of rhetoric and dialectic in a manner which made him one of the most famous of Muslim preachers.

Imam Razi also had the gift of poetry, and many verses both in Arabic and Persian are attributed to him. As in the case of many other sages like Khayyam, poetry became for Imam Razi the vehicle for the expression of gnosis and the form of "ignorance" which lies above all formal knowledge. In a quatrain in Persian he writes:

"My heart was never deprived of science,

There are little of the mysteries that I did not understand.

For 72 years I thought night and day,

Yet I came to know that nothing is to be known."

H. Sufism

There is little doubt that Imam Razi was sympathetic to Sufism, especially in later life, when he wrote most of his poems like the one mentioned above. Moreover, many of his works are, like his Qur'anic commentary, full of Sufistic ideas, and in *Laudmi' al Bayyinat* he outlines the degree of knowledge in a manner very similar to the Sufi treatise of Suhrawardi, *Safir–i Simurgh*.31 He is altogether a theologian with sympathies towards Sufism.

What is difficult for us to discover is whether Imam Razi was a practicing Sufi or not. Certainly Sufism is not as evident in his writings as in Ghaz□l□'s and his life, rich in worldly fame and wealth, had none of the ascetic elements of the life of his great predecessor. There is even an extant letter from the master of gnosis, the Anadalusian Sufi, Sheikh al–Akbar Muhyi al–Din ibn 'Arabi, advising Imam Razi to leave dialectic and discursive thought and try to reach the stage of gnosis and contemplation, telling him that in heaven medicine and geometry will do him little good.32

Moreover, in his writings as in his life, Imam Razi displayed aggressiveness and fighting quality hardly characteristic of the lives and writings of the Sufis.

Yet, despite all this negative evidence, some of his later writings do show the clear influence of Sufism upon him, and it may be that, because of his social position, even after joining the circle of the Sufis, he, to a large extent, his has sympathies and affiliations in order to avoid any external opposition. His own poems and his great love for the blind Arab poet Abu 'Ala' al–Ma'arri, the gnostic who often appears like a sceptic to the uncritical eye, on whose *Diwan* he is said to have commented, point to the fact that Imam Razi was not an ordinary theologian, but knew that there is another form of knowledge, gnosis, which lies above all rational sciences like theology. Whether he actually participated in this knowledge in an effective way, is a question too difficult to answer from either historical evidence or internal evidence from his own writings.33

There is a poem of Imam Razi which is in itself almost sufficient evidence for his Sufism. In the original Arabic it is so beautiful and effective that hardly any of his biographers has failed to mention it. Written in old age by a man who was the leading scholar and theologian of his day and who enjoyed all the comfort and glory of the life of this world, it is a vivid reminder that beyond the sphere of all human life and knowledge there is another reality which man must seek in order to remain faithful in his own intimate nature. The poem begins with these verses:

"Our souls fear our bodies as if they want to separate from them.

The result of our life in this world has been nothing but pain to others and sin."

I. The Significance And Influence Of Imam Razi

The many sided genius of Imam Razi, to which the previous pages bear partial witness, makes him one of the most colourful figures in Islam. Following the example of Ghaz□l□, by whom he was profoundly influenced and whose retreat in Tus he visited, Razi spent a life time in combating the rationalistic aspect of Greek philosophy. Although not of equal stature to Ghaz□l□ in Sufism and ethics, he, nevertheless, exercised as much influence, especially in theology, as did his more famous predecessor. Possessed of a special gift for posing problems and for analyzing philosophical questions, he left an indelible mark upon all later Muslim philosophers, especially upon Khuwaja Najr al–Din Tusi, his student, who was the reviver of Muslim philosophy after Imam Razi, and was also the most famous of Shi'ah theologians.

Imam Razi's role in Muslim intellectual life, besides establishing the school of philosophical *Kalam* begun by Ghaz□l□, was to intensify the attack against Peripatetic philosophy, thereby preparing the way for the propagation of the metaphysical doctrines of the Ishraqis and Sufis who, like Imam Razi, opposed the rationalism inherent in Aristotelianism. With the method of doubt in which was the greatest master in Islam, he analyzed and criticized Peripatetic philosophy in a way hardly ever equalled by anyone except Ghaz□l□. Yet, he was a theologian also interested in the cosmological, natural and esoteric sciences.[34]

Imam Razi played an important role in bringing theology closer to the sciences and even to Sufism, with which he flavoured this theological works. In the centuries when the Muslim world was turning away from Peripatetic rationalism toward modes of thought more akin to its own spirit, Imam Razi played a major role in this transformation. He remains as one of the most arresting figures among Muslim theologians, a figure the power of whose thought spread over the whole Muslim world at the very moment when the Mongol onslaught was putting an end to the caliphate, to the survival of which his work was to a large extent dedicated.

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1. For the definition and description of this term refer to the chapter on "Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi Maqtul."
2. According to a hadith, in each century God sends a great sage and scholar into the world to strengthen Islam. Muslim historians, following the hadith, have searched during each century for the fittest person to receive this honour.
3. He was given this title because he doubted so many of the views of previous philosophers and even of theologians.
4. In the Wafayat al-A'yan, ibn Khallikan writes that Imam Razi was the greatest authority on the Greek sciences ('ulum al-awd'il) in his time. The best sources for the biography of Razi are ibn Abi Usaibi'ah, 'Uyan al Anba', ibn al-Qifti, Tarikh al-Hukama', ibn Khallikin, Kitab Wajaydi al-A'yan, Shams al-Din Shahrazuri, Nuzhat al-Arwah wa Raudat al-Afrah, and ibn Taqi al-Din al-Subki, Tabaqat al-Shafi'iyyat al-Kubra
5. Al-Subki, Tabaqat al-Shafi'iyyat al-Kubra, Matba'at al-Husainiyyah, Cairo, 1324/1906, vol. 5 pp 33 – 40.
6. Although not a great Sufi figure like Ghazali, Imam Razi was, nevertheless, sympathetic towards Sufism, especially in the latter period of his life. Subki, op. cit., p. 35, writes that Razi was himself a Sufi and some of his poems and frequent quotations from the Sufi masters like Hallaj and Abu Sa'id certainly pointed in this direction.
7. For an outline of the ideas of the group of Muslim thinkers who were influenced by Platonic physics, see S. Pines, Beitrage zur islamischen Atomenlehre, Berlin, A. Heine Gtubh, Grufenheinichen, 1936.
8. It is far from accidental that the philosophy and the sciences which were connected with the Greek heritage flourished, especially in the fourth/tenth century, when most of the Muslim world was governed by the Shi'ah Buwaibids and Fatimids.
9. The opposition of this group to Greek philosophy was primarily against its rationalistic and syllogistic aspects. The cosmological and certain metaphysical doctrines of the Greeks were not only criticized but were also openly accepted by them. So we see a Ghazali using Hermetic symbolism or a Fakhr Razi writing numerous treatises on the cosmological sciences.
10. For a bibliography of his works, see Subki, op,.cit., pp. 33 – 40 and Imam Razi's I'tiqadat Farq al-Muslimin w-al-Mushrikin, Maktabat al Nahdat al-Misrtyyah, Cairo, 1356/1937, Introduction by Sheikh 'Abd al-Razzaq, pp. 27ff.
11. Imam Razi's student, Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi, wrote many works answering his teacher's criticism of ibn Sina and other philosophers.
12. See Fakhr al-Din Razi, Munazarut, Dairatul-Maarif-il-Osmania, Hyderabad, 1355/1936, where he also criticizes certain parts of Ghazali's Tahafut al-Falasifah on the motion of planets. See also P. Kraus, "Les 'controverse' de Fakhr al-Din, Razi," Bulletin de l'Instiut d'Egypt, t. 29, 1936-37, pp. 187 – 214.
13. For a history of Muslim theology, especially of the Sunni school, see Shibli Nu'mani, Tarikh 'Ilm-i Kalam, tr. M. Fakhr Da'i Gilani, Rangin Press, Teheran, 1328/1910, and L. Gardet and M. M. Anawati, Introduction a la theologie musulmane, Librarie Philosophique J.Vrin, Paris, 1948.
14. The theological masterpiece, the Tujrid of Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi, who is the greatest of the Shi'ah theologians, is to a large extent, influenced by Imam Razi's Masa'il al-Khamzun.
15. This title, however, is more commonly given to Mir Damad, the master of theology and philosophy during the Sufawid period.
16. Fakhr al-Din Razi, Lawami' al-Bayyandi, Library of Imam Rida, Meshed, MS. Cat. No. 233
17. Imam Razi, like the Christian theologians, considered Kalam to be the queen of the sciences and sub-ordinated all the other rational sciences like philosophy and the mathematical and natural sciences to it.
18. For a more detailed discussion of this work, see L. Gardet and M.M. Anawati, op. cit., pp 162 – 64.
19. In all Muslim theology it is considered obligatory upon each Muslim to prove the existence of Good according to his intellectual ability. See F. Schuon, "Nature et arguments de la foi," Etudes Traditionelles, vol. 54, Dec. 1953, pp 344 – 63.
20. Fakhr al-Din Razi, Kitab al-Arba'in fi Usul al-Din, Dairatul-Maarif-il-Osmania, Hayderabad, 1333/1934, p. 190
21. Many theologians before Razi considered this relation between reason and knowledge to be custom ('ddah), but he explicitly rejects this notion.

22. Fakhr al-Din Razi, al-Mabahith al-Mashriqiyya, Dairatul-Masarif-il-Osmania, Hyderabad, 1343/1924, vol. 1, p.4
23. His historical works include Kitab Fada'il al-Sahabah and Kitab Monaqib al-Imam Shafi'i and his work on comparative religion, the I'tiquadat Farq al-Muslimin w-al-Mughrikin.
24. See Y. Mourad, La physiognomonie arabe el le Kitab al-Firasah de Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, Librarie Orientaliste, Paul Geuthner, Paris, 1939.
25. See Munzarat, pp. 20 – 24.
26. See Mabahith..., p. 214.
27. This work Imam Fakhr wrote for Khwarizm Shah Abu al-Muzaffar ibn Malik al-Mu'azzam. It has always been a popular scientific encyclopedia and was printed in a lithographed edition in Bombay in 1323/1905.
28. Imam Fakhr's wrigitngs are full of passages in which he appeals to various natural phenomena as "signs" of the different divine qualities and names. She his Asrar al-Tanzil, Teheran, lithographed edition, 1301/1883, pp. 68ff.
29. Ibn Abi Usaibi'ah, Usaibi'ah, 'Uyun al-Anba' fi Tabaqat al-Atibba', Matba'at al Wahabiyyah, Cairo, vol. 2, p. 27.
30. There is a story told of Imam Razi's opposition to the Isma'ilis. He used to attack them bitterly in public, accusing them of having no proofs for their doctrines. One day, one of their agents, posing as a student, found Imam Razi alone in his library, pulled out a knife and pointed it to his chest saying, "This is our proof."

Henceforth, Imam Fakhr never attacked the Isma'ilis inn public. One day, the disciples asked him why he no longer spoke against this group – the group which he had opposed so bitterly before. he replied, "Because I have seen their proof." This story appears in nearly all the biographies of Imam Fakhr which we have already mentioned and is characteristic of his wisdom in public life.

31. See the chapter on "Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi Maqtul."
32. See Fakhr al-Din Razi,k al-Risalat al-Kamaliyah fi al-Haqa'iq al-Ilahiyyah, Tehran University Press, 1335 Solar, Introduction by Sayyid Mohammad Baqir Sabziwari, p. (kt)
33. There is a story told that Imam Razi met the Sufi Najm al-Din Kubra in a gathering and boasted of his religious knowledge and said that he knew a hundred proofs for the existence of God. Najm al-Din answered, "Is not each proof due to some doubt? God has placed in the heart of the Sufi a light of certainty which dispels all doubt so that he no longer has need of proofs." Imam Razi, upon hearing this answer, surrendered himself to the Sheikh and was initiated into Sufism.
34. It is of great interest that not only in the Muslim world but also in medieval Christianity and in China, many of those who pre-occupied themselves with the science of nature, like the Taoists, Ikhwan al-Safa, and the Franciscans, were opposed to philosophical rationalism and accepted some form of esoteric and metaphysical doctrine based on intellectual intuition and revelation.

Part 5: Political Thinkers

Chapter 33: Political Thought In Early Islam

In this chapter we try to elucidate the political thought which laid the foundations of society and State in the early days of Islam, and the changes that crept into it during the first century and a quarter of the Hijrah.

A. Principles of Islamic Polity

Muslim society that came into existence with advent of Islam and the State that it formed on assumption of political power were founded on certain clear cut principles. Prominent among them and relevant to our present discussion were the following:

1. Sovereignty belongs to God and the Islamic State is in fact a vicegerency, with no right to exercise authority except in sub-ordination to and in accordance with the Law revealed by God to His Prophet.[1]

2. All Muslims have equal rights in the State regardless of race, colour or speech. No individual, group, class, clan or people are entitled to any special privileges, nor can any such distinction determine anyone's position as inferior.[2]

3. The *Shari'ah* (i.e. the law of God enunciated in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, the authentic practice of the Prophet) is the supreme Law and everyone from the lowest situated person to the Head of the state is to be governed by it.[3]

4. The government, its authority, and possessions are a trust of God and the Muslims, and ought to be entrusted to the God fearing, the honest, and the just, and no one has a right to exploit them in ways not sanctioned by or abhorrent to the *Shari'ah*.[4]

5. The Head of State (call him Caliph, Imam or Amir) should be appointed with the mutual consultation of the Muslims and their concurrence. He should run the administration and undertake legislative work within the limits prescribed by the *Shari'ah* in consultation with them.[5]

6. The Caliph or the Amir is to be obey ungrudgingly in whatever is right and just (*ma'ruf*), but no one has the right to command obedience in the service of sin (*ma'siah*).[6]

7. The least fitted for responsible positions in general and for the Caliph's position in particular are those that covet and seek them.[7]

8. The foremost duty of the Caliph and his government is to institute the Islamic order of life, to encourage all that is good, and to suppress all that is evil.[8]

9. It is the right, and also the duty, of every member of the Muslim community to check the occurrence of things that are wrong and abhorrent to the Islamic State.[9]

B. Early Caliphate and its Characteristic Features

The rule of the early Caliphs that followed the Prophet was founded on the foregoing principles. Each member of the community, brought up under the guidance and care of the Prophet of God, knew what kind of government answered the demands and reflected the true spirit of Islam. Although the Prophet

had bequeathed no decision regarding the question of his successor, the members of the community were in no doubt that Islam demanded a democratic solution of the issue. Hence, no one laid the foundations of a hereditary government, used force to assume power, or tried to have himself installed as Caliph. On the contrary, the people, of their own free will, elected four persons one after another to this august office.

Elective Caliphate

Abu Bakr was proposed Caliph by ‘Umar, and accepted by the inhabitants of Medina (who for all practical purposes represented the country) of their free will and accord, and they swore him allegiance. Abu Bakr, nearing his end, wrote a will in favour of ‘Umar, then, collecting the people in the mosque of Medina, he addressed them thus, “Do you agree on him whom I am making my successor among you? God knows I have racked my brain as much as I could, and I have not proposed a relation of mine to succeed me, but ‘Umar, the son of Khattab. Hence, listen to him and obey.” Upon this the people responded, “Yes, we shall listen to him and obey.”[10]

In the last year of ‘Umar’s reign a man declared during the pilgrimage that when ‘Umar died he would swear allegiance to so and so. Abu Bakr’s installation, he said, had also been so sudden, and succeeded well enough.[11] When ‘Umar came to learn of it, he resolved to address the people about it and “warn them against those who designed to impose themselves upon them.”

Alluding to it in the first speech he made on reaching Medina, he gave a lengthy account of what had transpired at Banu Sa‘idah’s Meeting House and explained how in the exceptional circumstances which then prevailed he had suddenly risen to propose Abu Bakr’s name and offered allegiance to him. “If I had not done so,” he said, “and we had dispersed that night without settling the issue, there was a great danger that people might take a wrong decision overnight, then it would be difficult for us to accept it, and equally difficult to reject it.”

“If that was successful,” he continued, “let it not be made a precedent. Who among you is there to match with Abu Bakr in stature and popularity? Now, therefore, whoever will swear allegiance to another without consultation with other Muslims, he and the one whose allegiance is sworn, shall both stand to die.”[12]

When ‘Umar approached his end, he appointed an Elective council to decide the issue of succession. Elucidating his principle enunciated above, he asserted that whoever attempted to impose himself as Amir (ruler) without the consultation of the Muslims deserved to die. He also barred his son from election[13] lest the Caliph’s office should become a hereditary right, and constituted the Elective Council to comprise those six persons who in his opinion were the most influential and enjoyed the widest popularity. This council in the end delegated its power of proposing a person for the Caliph’s office to one of its members, ‘Abd al-Rahman bin ‘Auf. ‘Abd al-Rahman moved among the people to find out as to who commanded their confidence most and left no stone unturned to ascertain the people’s verdict.

Even the pilgrim parties returning home after the pilgrimage were consulted. It was after this "plebiscite" that he concluded that the majority favoured 'Uthman.[14]

When 'Uthman was killed, a few people tried to install 'Ali as Caliph. But he said, 'You have no authority to do so. This is a matter for the Consultative Council (*ahl al-shura*) and those that fought at Badr (*ahl al-Badr*). Whomsoever the Consultative Council and the people of Badr will choose, the Caliph will be Caliph. Therefore we shall gather and deliberate."[15] In al-Tabari's version, 'Ali's words were, "I cannot be elected secretly, and it must be with the consultation of the Muslims."[16]

When 'Ali lay dying it was asked of him, "Shall we offer allegiance to al-Hassan (your son)?" His replied, "I do not ask or forbid you to do so. You can see for yourself."[17] When he was addressing his last words to his sons, a person interposed saying, "Oh Commander of the Faithful, why do you not nominate your successor?" His reply was, "I will leave the faithful in the condition in which the Prophet of God left them."[18]

It is evident from these facts the early Caliphs and the Companions of the Prophet regarded the Caliph's office as an elective one, to be filled with mutual consultation and consent of the Muslim community. They did not regard hereditary succession or one acquired by force of arms as anything valid.

Government by Consultation

The first four Caliphs did not perform their administrative or legislative functions without consulting "the wise" (*ahl al-ra'y*, lit., those that are able to give advice) of the community. They also realized that those consulted had the right to give their candid opinion without any fear. 'Umar expressed the official policy in this regard in his inaugural speech before a Consultative Council in this way, "I have called you for nothing but that you may share with me the burden of the trust that has reposed in me of managing your affairs. I am but one of you, and today you are the people that bear witness to truth. Whoever of you wishes to differ with me is free to do so, and whoever wishes to agree is free to do that. I will not compel you to follow my desires."[19]

The Exchequer, a Trust

The treasury (*Bait al-Mal*) was to them a trust from God and the public. They did not consider it permissible to receive into it or expend from it a sum which the Law did not authorize. To use it for the personal ends of the rulers was, according to them, simply unlawful. 'Umar in a speech remarked, "Nothing is lawful for me in this trust of God save a pair of clothes for the summer and a pair of clothes for the winter, and subsistence enough for an average man of the Quraish for my family. And after that I am just one of the Muslims."[20]

In another speech he said, "I do not regard anything correct in respect of this trust of yours but three things: that it should be taken by right, that it should be expended by right, and that it should be withheld from wrong. My position regarding this property of yours is the same as that of an orphan's guardian with

the orphan's property. So long as I am not needy I will take nothing from it. When I am needy I shall take as it befits one to take from an orphan's property under his care."[21]

When 'Ali was at war with the Mu'awiyah he was exhorted by some to use the treasury to win adherents against him who was drawing large numbers to his side by giving sumptuous rewards and gifts. But 'Ali declined to take that counsel saying, "Do you want me to win success by unfair means?"[22] His brother, 'Aqil, wished to have some help from *Bait al-Mal*, but he refused him, saying, "Do you wish your brother to give you the money of the people and take his to hell?"[23]

Ideal Government

What their idea of government was what they thought of themselves, of their status and duties as rulers, and what policy they followed – questions like these and others were answered in the various speeches addressed by them from the Caliph's pulpit. Abu Bakr, in the first speech he made following the oath of allegiance to him in the Mosque of Medina said, "I have been made a ruler over you though I am not the best of you. Help me if I go right; correct me if I go wrong. Truth is faithfulness and falsehood is treachery. The weak one among you will be strong with me until I have got him his due, if God so wills, and the strong one among you will be weak with me until I have made him pay what he owes, if God so wills. Beware when a nation gives up its endeavours in the way of God. He makes no exception but brings it low and when it allows evil to prevail in it, undoubtedly He makes it miserable. Obey me as long as I obey God and the Prophet, if I do not obey them, you owe me no obedience."[24]

And 'Umar said in his speech, "No ruler holds so high a position as to have the right to command obedience in defiance of God. Oh people, you have rights on me whom I shall relate before you, and you may take me to task over them. I owe you this that I do not receive anything from your revenue or the *fai'* (lands or possessions that accrue to Muslims in consequence of their collective dominance, not as booty in war) given to us by God except in accordance with the law, and nothing that accrues to us in these ways should go from the treasury but rightfully."[25]

Al-Tabari quotes 'Umar giving instructions to all persons whom he sent out as governors in the wise, "I have appointed you governor over the followers of Mohammad (on whom be peace) not to make you masters of their persons and properties but to enable you to lead them to establish prayer, dispose of their affairs with justice, and dispense their rights among them with equity."[26]

'Umar once declared in public, "I have not sent my governors that they may whip you and snatch your property, but that they may instruct you in your faith and the way of your Prophet. If there be any who has been treated otherwise, let him bring me his complaint. By God, I will see that this wrong is avenged."

Upon this 'Amr bin 'As, Governor of Egypt, stood up and asked, "What, when a man is appointed ruler and he chastises someone, will you take revenge on him?"

‘Umar replied, “Yes, by God, I will take revenge on him. I have seen the Prophet of God himself allowing people to take revenge on him.”[27]

On another occasion ‘Umar collected all his governors at the annual pilgrimage and announced in a general congregation of people that if there was a person who had a charge of injustice against anyone of them, he should come forward to make his complaint. One person rose from the multitude and complained that he had been undeservedly given a hundred stripes by ‘Amr bin ‘As. ‘Umar asked him to come forward and square the account with. ‘Amr bin ‘As protested, beseeching ‘Umar not to expose his governors to this humiliation, but ‘Umar reiterated that he had seen the Prophet of God himself allowing men to avenge themselves upon him, and asked the aggrieved man to step forward and take his revenge. ‘Amr bin ‘As saved his skin only by appeasing the man with a pair of crowns for each stripe that was to fall on his back.[28]

Rule of Law

The “Right-going” Caliphs did not regard themselves above the law. On the other hand, they declared that they stood at par with any other citizen (Muslim or non-Muslim) in this respect. They appointed judges, but once a person was appointed a judge he was free to pronounce judgment against them as against anybody else. Once ‘Umar and Ubayy bin Ka‘ab differed in a matter, and the dispute was referred to Zaid bin Thabit for a decision. The parties appeared before Zaid and he rose and offered ‘Umar his own seat, but ‘Umar sat by Ubayy. Then Ubayy preferred his claim which ‘Umar denied. According to the procedure, Zaid should have asked ‘Umar to swear an oath but Zaid hesitated in asking for it. ‘Umar himself swore an oath and at the conclusion of the session remarked that Zaid was unfit to be a judge so long as ‘Umar and an ordinary man did not stand equal in his eyes.[29]

The same happened between ‘Ali and a Christian whom he saw selling his (‘Ali’s) lost coat of mail in the market of Kufah. He did not seize it from the fellow with a ruler’s might, but brought the case before the magistrate concerned, and as he could not produce adequate evidence to support his claim, the decision of the court went against him.[30] Ibn Khallikan reports that once ‘Ali and a non-Muslim citizen (*dhimmi*) appeared as parties in a case before Judge Shuraih. The judge rose to greet ‘Ali, who was Head of State at that time. Seeing this ‘Ali said to Shuraih, “This is your first injustice.”[31]

Absence of Bias

Another distinctive feature of the early days of Islam was that everybody received an equal and fair treatment exactly in accordance with the principles and the spirit of Islam, the society of those days, being free from all kinds of tribal, racial, or parochial prejudices. As the Prophet of God passed away, the tribal jealousies of Arabs rose again like a held-up storm. Tribal prejudice formed the main impulse behind the claims to prophethood and large-scale apostasy that immediately followed the Prophet’s demise. One of Musailimah’s followers said, “I know Musailimah is a false prophet, but a false one of the (tribe of) Rabi‘ah is better than the true one of the (tribe of) Mudar.”[32] An elder of the Banu Ghatafan,

similarly taking sides with another false prophet, Tulahah said, “By God, it is easier for me to follow a prophet of one of our allied tribes than one from the tribe of Quraish.”[33]

But when the people saw that Abu Bakr (r. 11 – 13/632 – 634), and in his wake ‘Umar (r. 13 – 23/634 – 644), dispensed exemplary, even handed justice not only among the various Arab tribes but even among the non-Arabs and non-Muslims were once more inspired with that cosmopolitan outlook which Islam sought to inculcate in them. Abu Bakr and ‘Umar’s attitude in this respect was most exemplary.

Towards the end of his reign ‘Umar became apprehensive lest these tribal currents which, despite the revolutionizing influence of Islam, had not succumbed altogether should shoot up again and cause disruption after him. So, on one occasion talking to ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abbas regarding his possible successors, he said about ‘Uthman, “If I propose him as my successor I fear he would suffer from the sons of Abu Mu‘ait (the Umayyads) to ride the necks of the people, and they will practice sin among them. God knows, if I do so, ‘Uthman will do this, and if ‘Uthman does this, they will surely commit sins, and people will rise against ‘Uthman and make short work of him.[34]

This apprehension clung to him even in the hour of his death. Summoning ‘Ali, ‘Uthman, and Sa’d bin Abi Waqqas to his bedside, he said to each one, “If you succeed me as Caliph do not allow members of your clans to ride the necks of other people.”[35] Besides that, among the instructions which he left for the Elective Council of Six, on which devolved the task of electing the new Caliph, was that the new incumbent was to be asked to give a pledge that he would not show discrimination in favour of his own clan.[36] Unluckily, however, the third caliph, ‘Uthman (r. 23 – 35/644 – 656) failed to keep up the standard by his predecessors and inclined towards favouring the Umayyads. This was regarded by him as “good office to the kindred.” Thus, he used to say, “‘Umar deprived his kin for the sake of God, but I provide for my kin for His sake.”[37] The result was the ‘Umar had apprehended. There was a rising against him, which led to his murder and rekindled the sleeping embers of tribal bias into a fire that consumed the whole edifice of the “Right-going” Caliphate.

After the death of ‘Uthman, ‘Ali (r. 35 – 41/656 – 661) tried to recapture the standard set by Abu Bakr and ‘Umar. He had no bias in him and showed himself remarkably free from it. Mu’awiya’s father, Abu Sufyan, had taken note of it when he tried to excite this passion in him on Abu Bakr’s accession. He had asked him, “How could a man of the humblest family in Quraish become Caliph? If you prepare to rise, I will undertake to fill this valley with horsemen and soldiers.” But ‘Ali had coldly retorted that this spoke for his enmity for Islam and the Muslims and so far as he was concerned, he regarded Abu Bakr truly fit for that office.[38] Therefore, when he became Caliph he treated the Arabs and non-Arabs, gentlemen and poor born, Hashimites and others, all alike. No distinction was made between them, and not received preference over others undeservedly.[39]

C. Theological Differences and Schisms

The period of the "Right-going" Caliphate, described above, was a luminous tower towards which the learned and the pious of all succeeding ages have been looking back as symbolic of the religious, moral, political, and social orders of Islam *par excellence*. Abu Hanifah, employed at elucidating the Islamic ideals in the fields of politics and law, as we shall presently see, also reverted to it as the ideal epoch to take instance from. We have, therefore, devoted a good deal of space to it, that the reader may be able to comprehend his work in the true background.

But before attending to his work we have also to take a brief view of the reactionary movement that had set in towards the end of the "Right-going" caliphate and reached its height by the time Abu Hanifah appeared on the scene. As his efforts were mainly devoted to countering this reaction, it is necessary to take stock of it and the problems that sprang from it, to be able to grasp the true significance of his work.

Differences among Muslims had sprung up during the last years of 'Uthman's reign leading to his murder, but they had not yet assumed theological or philosophical shape. When, after his death in the reign of 'Ali these differences raged more furiously than ever and led to a civil war resulting in bloodshed, as in the Battle of the Camel (36/656), the Battle of Siffin (37/657), the "arbitration" (38/659), and the battle of Nahrawan (38/659), questions like "Who is in the right in these battles and how?" "Who is in the wrong and why?" "If some regard both sides wrong, what is their ground for holding this?" naturally cropped up and demanded to be answered. These questions led to the framing of certain opinions and justifications that were essentially political in the beginning, but as each group sought to strengthen its position by calling theological support in aid of its particular stand, these political factions gradually changed into religious groups.

Then, the bloodshed which accompanied these factional feuds in the beginning and continued during the rules of the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids, did not allow these differences to remain only theological; they went on growing ever more acute and menacing until they threatened the national unity of the Muslims. Every house was a place of controversy, every controversy suggesting ever new political, theological, and philosophical offshoots. Every new question that cropped up gave birth to a number of new sects which sub-divided themselves into further sects over minute internal differences.

These sects were not content to fill themselves with bias against one another, their polemics often ended up in quarrels ad riots. Kufah, the capital of Iraq, where Abu Hanifah was born, was the chief centre of these quarrels. The battles of the Camel, Siffin and Nahrawin had all been fought in Iraq. The heart-rending murder of Hussain (61/680), the Prophet's grandson, had also taken place here. It was the birth place of most of these sects and the field where both the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids used the maximum of coercion to repress their opponents. The time of Abu Hanifah's birth (80/699) and growth coincided with these factional hostilities at their height.

The large number of sub-sects that grew out of these factions had their roots in four main sects: the

Shi‘ah, the Khawarij, the Murji’ah, and the Mu‘tazilah. We shall give here a brief account of the doctrines of each of them before proceeding further.

The Shi‘ah

They were the supporters of ‘Ali and called themselves the Shi‘ahs (party) of ‘Ali. Later (the word of ‘Ali was dropped and) they began to be called the Shi‘ahs.

Although a section of the people of Banu Hashim and a few others regarded him superior to the other Companions particularly to ‘Uthman, and others considered him to be more entitled for the Caliphate because of his relationship with the Prophet, yet up to the time of ‘Uthman these opinions had not assumed the form of a creed or religious belief. Nor were the people who held these opinions hostile to the first three Caliphs.

On the other hand, they acknowledged and supported their succession. As a separate party with clear cut views on these matters, they emerged in ‘Ali’s reign during the battles of the Camel, Siffin, and Nahrawan. Later, the cold-blooded slaughter of Hussain rallied them, fired them with a new wrath, and shaped their views into a separate creed. The indignation provoked among the general Muslim populace by the vile deeds of the Umayyads and the sympathy excited in their breasts for the descendants of ‘Ali on account of their constant persecution in both the Umayyad and the ‘Abbasid regimes, lent extra-ordinary support to Shi‘ite propaganda. They had their stronghold at Kufah. Their beliefs were as follows:

1. The Imam’s office (particular Shi‘ite term for the Caliph’s office) is not a public office the institution of which may have been left to the choice of the public (*ummah*). The Imam is a pillar of the faith and the foundation stone of Islam. Therefore, it is one of the main duties of the Prophet to institute somebody as Imam instead of leaving the matter to the discretion of the community.40

2. The Imam is impeccable, i.e. free from all sins, great and small. He is immune from error. Everything that he says or does is inviolate.41

3. The Prophet had conferred the Imamate on ‘Ali and nominated him as his successor. Thus ‘Ali was the first imam by ordinance.42

4. As the appointment of the imam is not left to be made by public choice, every new imam will be appointed by an ordinance from his predecessor.43

5. All the Shi‘ah sects are also agreed that the Imam’s office is the exclusive right of the descendants of ‘Ali.44

Beyond this general agreement, however, the various Shi‘ahs sects differed among themselves. The moderate among them held that ‘Ali was the best created man. He who fought or bore malice against him was an enemy of God to be raised among infidels and hypocrites and destined to live in hell. “If ‘Ali

had refused to recognize their Caliphate as legitimate and expressed displeasure with them, Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthman who preceded him as Caliphs would also have deserved that doom, but as ‘Ali recognized them and swore allegiance and offered prayers behind them, we cannot take exception to what he took as right. We do not differentiate between ‘Ali and the Prophet except that the latter was endowed with prophethood, for the rest ‘Ali was worthy of the same esteem as the Prophet.45

The fanatical among them held that the Caliphs before ‘Ali were usurpers and those who elected them were ill-guided and unjust, as they belied the Prophet’s will and deprived the rightful caliph of his due. Some went further and pronounced anathema against the first three Caliphs and declared them and their electors ex-communicated.

The softest of them were the Zaidiyyah, followers of Zaid (d. 122/740) son of ‘Ali, son of Hussain. They regarded ‘Ali as superior to others, but allowed the choice of those who were inferior to him. Moreover, they held that the Prophet’s decision in favour of ‘Ali was not unequivocal; hence, they accepted the Caliphate of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar. All the same, they preferred the choice of an able person from the descendants of Fatima (the Prophet’s daughter) as imam, provided he claimed that position and challenged the title of “the kings” to it.46 Abu Hanifah was closely connected with Zaid, as we shall see in the course of this chapter, although he did not contribute to the Zaidite doctrine.

The Khawarij

In direct opposition to the Shi‘ahs the Khawarij stood at the other extreme. They suddenly grouped together during the battle of Siffin. Until then they were among the staunch supporters of ‘Ali, but when, during that engagement, he consented to submit his quarrel with Mu‘awiya to the decision of two arbiters, they abandoned him asserting that he had turned infidel by accepting to submit to the verdict of human arbiters instead of God. After that they drifted farther and farther away and being fanatical hot heads, who believed in waging war against those who differed from them and against “unjust government” wherever one was found, they indulged in war and bloodshed for a long time until their power was finally crushed under the ‘Abbasid rule. They, too, were most influential in Iraq, their camps being mainly centred in al-Bata’ia between Kufa and Basra. Their beliefs briefly were as follows.

1. They acknowledged Abu Bakr and ‘Umar as Rightful Caliphs but ‘Uthman, in their opinion, had, towards the end of his reign, erred from the path of justice and right conduct and hence deserved to be deposed or killed. ‘Ali also committed, according to them, a major sin when he accepted the “arbitration” of “one besides God.” The two arbiters (‘Amr bin ‘As and Abu Musa al-Ash‘ari), their choosers (‘Ali and Mu‘awiya), and all those who agreed to arbitration were sinners. All those who participated in the battle of the Camel, including Talhah, Zubair, and A’ishah, the Prophet’s wife, had been guilty of grievous sin.

2. Sin, with the Khawarij, was synonymous with infidelity. Anyone who committed a major sin (and did not repent and revert) was placed outside the pale of Islam. All the personages mentioned above were declared infidels. Anathema was pronounced against them, and they were considered fit to be censured.

The Muslims in general were pronounced infidels, first, because they were not free from sins, and, secondly, because they not only regarded these persons as Muslims but also acknowledged them as reliable guides, and deduced and verified the law from traditions reported by them.

3. The Caliph, according to them, should be elected by the free vote of the Muslims.

4. The Caliph need not be a member of the tribe of Quraish. Whomsoever they elected from amongst the honest Muslims would be a rightful caliph.

5. A caliph was to be obeyed faithfully as long as he acted rightly and justly, but if forsook the path of right and justice; if he was to be fought against and deposed or assassinated.

6. The Qur'an was recognized as the authoritative source of law but their views on Hadith (the Prophet's Tradition) and *ijma'* (the agreement of Muslims in respect of a rule of Law) were different from those of the majority.

A large group of them, which called itself al-Najdiyyah, did not believe in the very need of a State. The Muslims, they said, should of themselves abide by the right. However, if they needed a Caliph to direct their affairs, there was no harm in choosing one.

Their major section, the Azariqah, dubbed all Muslims, expecting themselves polytheists. The Khawarij, according to them, could not go for prayer in response to any but a Kharijite's call. They could neither take the meat of an animal slaughtered by non-Kharijites, nor marry among them, nor could a Kharijite and a non-Kharijites inherit each other's possessions. They considered war on all other Muslims to be a religious duty and sanctioned the killing of their women and children and the looting of their property. They declared those of their own sect as infidels if they shirked this duty. The allowed treachery with their opponents and were so malicious that a non-Muslim would find himself safer in their midst than an average Muslim.

The most tolerant of them were the Ibadiyyah who refrained from declaring the other Muslims as polytheists although they put them outside the pale of Islam and described them as non-believers. Their evidence, the Ibadiyyah said, was to be accepted, marriages with them and inheritance to and from them allowed. Their territory, too, was not to be called *dar al-kufr* (the land of the infidels) or *dar al-harb* (the land of the people at war) but *dar al-tawhid* (the land of the people of one God) although they excepted the centres of their government from it. They disallowed secret assaults on other Muslims, although open warfare with them was not repugnant.[47]

The Murji'ah

The conflicting principles f the Shi'ahs and the Khawarij were responsible for the birth of another sect, called the Murji'ah.

Apart from the people who had flung themselves violently in support of ‘Ali or against him during his wars, there was a section which had remained neutral either wisely avoiding to indulge in war, which they had deemed a curse to being unable to decide which side fought for the truth. These people quite realized that it was a veritable curse for Muslims to indulge in bloodshed and mutual slaughter, but they were not prepared to blaspheme any of the belligerents, and left it to God to decide the affair between them. He alone would tell, on Judgment Day, which of them struggled for the right cause and in general, but when the Shi‘ahs and the Khawarij raised questions as to what was faith and what constituted infidelity ushering in an era of doctrinal wrangling and polemical contests, this neutral group evolved some theological doctrines in support of its position. Briefly stated, they were as follows:

1. Faith comprises belief in God and the Prophet. One’s action does not form an integral part of one’s faith. Hence, a believer will remain a believer though he should eschew his duties or commit grave sins.

2. Salvation depends on faith alone. No sin will hurt one who has faith. It is enough for a man’s redemption that he should abstain from polytheism and die as a monotheist.[48]

Some of the Murji’ah, taking it a step further, affirmed that short of polytheism, all sins, even the worst, would be forgiven.[49] A few, taking a further leap in that direction, asserted that if a man cherished faith in his heart but worshipped idols or adopted Jewish or Christian doctrine and spoke heresy in the Islamic State where he lived under no fear, he would yet be quite fast grounded in faith, remain a friend of God, and deserve to go to Paradise.[50]

Another view closely comparable with the one mentioned above was that if one’s duty to uphold the right and stem the wrong (*amr bi alp-ma‘ruf* and *nahi ‘an al-munkar*) required one to bear arms, it was a “trial” to be avoided. It was quite right to check others on wrong conduct, but to speak loud against the tyranny of government was not allowed.[51] Al-Jassas was very bitter on these things and asserted that they strengthen the hands of tyrants and greatly demoralized the Muslims’ power of resistance against the forces of evil and wickedness.

The Mu‘tazilah

This tumultuous period was responsible for the birth of yet another sect known to Islamic history as “the Seceders.” Although it did not owe its origin, like the former three, to purely political factors, like them it contributed its share of opinions to the political issues of the day and entered the arena of theological disputes that raged in the Islamic world at that time, particularly in Iraq. The leaders of this group, Wasil bin ‘Ata (80 – 131/699 – 748) and ‘Amr bin ‘Ubaid (d. 145/763) were both contemporaries of Abu Hanifah, and Basra was the centre of their religious contests in the beginning.

Their political views were briefly these:

1. The appointment of an Imam (or, in other words, the institution of the State) was a religious urgency. Some Mu‘tazilites, however, opined that the Imam’s was a superfluous office. No Imam was needed if

the community followed the right path.[52]

2. The choice of the Imam, according to them, rested with the community, and only the community's choice validated his appointment.[53] Some of them held that the choice should be unanimous, and in the event of differences and dissensions the appointment should be suspended and held in abeyance.[54]

3. The community could choose any morally qualified and efficient person as Imam. The condition of his being a Quraishite, an Arab, or a non–Arab was irrelevant.[55] Some of them actually preferred the appointment of a non–Arab, it was better still if he could be a freed slave, for he would have fewer devotees, and it would be easy to depose him if he turned out to be a tyrant.[56] They would rather have a government which was weak and easy to depose than one that was bad but strong and firmly established.

4. According to them, the Friday or other congregational prayers could not be held behind an unrighteous Imam.[57]

5. *Amr bi al–ma'ruj w–al–nahi 'an al–munkar* (enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong) was among their fundamental principles., It was a duty with them to rise in arms against an unjust government provided they had the power to do so and hoped to raise a successful *coup*.[58] Thus it was that they rose in arms against the Umayyad Caliph Walid bin Yazid (r. 125 – 126/743 – 744) and tried to replace him by Yazid bin Walid who espoused their doctrine of succession.[59]

6. On the question of the inter–relation of sin and infidelity, over which the Khawarij and Murji'ah were at logger–heads, their verdict was compromising. A sinful Muslim was neither a believer nor a disbeliever, but one in the middle state.[60]

In addition to these principles, the Mu'tazilah pronounced bold verdicts upon the differences among the Prophet's Companions and upon the issue of caliphate. Wasil bin 'Ata declared that one of the two opponents in the battles of Camel and Siffin was surely a "transgressor" although it was hard to say who. It was for this reason that he said that if 'Ali Talhah and Zubair came before him to give evidence on a vegetable knot, he would not accept it of them since there was a possibility that they had been guilty of transgression. 'Amr bin 'Ubaid pronounced both sides as "transgressors."[61]

They also attacked 'Uthman vigorously and some of them did not spare even 'Umar.[62] Besides this, many of them practically rejected the Hadith (the Prophet's Tradition) and *ijma'* (the consensus of opinion) as authoritative sources of Islamic Law.[63]

The Major Section

In the midst of these violent, wrangling groups the large majority of Muslims went along subscribing to the orthodox principles and doctrines, accredited as authoritative since the days of the "Right–guided" Caliphs, principles and precepts which the Prophet's Companions and their successors and Muslims in

general had commonly regarded as Islamic. However, nobody, from the time of the inception of the schism down to the days of Abu Hanifah, had vindicated the stand of the majority in these matters of violent divergences, and presented it methodically in a compact, doctrinal form, although learned men, traditionists and scholars of repute and integrity had from time to time been bringing one or another aspect of it to light by word of mouth or action, or embodying it in their behaviour or sacred pronouncements as opportunity afforded itself.

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1. Qur'an, 4: 59, 105, 5:44, 45, 47, 7:3, 12: 40, 14: 55, 23: 36.
2. Tradition: "Muslims are brothers to one another. None of them has any preference over another, except on grounds of piety." (ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, Matba'ah Mustafa Mohammad, Egypt, 1937, 4, p. 217).

"Oh men, beware, your God is one. An Arab has no preference over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab, nor a white over a black nor a black over a white, save on grounds of piety" (Alusi, Ruh al-Ma'ani, Idarat al-Taba'at al-Muniriyyah, Egypt, 1345-1926, 26, p. 148; ibn al-Qayyim, Zad al Ma'ad, Matba'ah Mohammad 'Ali Sabih, Egypt, 1935, 4, p. 31).

`Whosoever declares that there is no god but God, and faces our qiblah (direction of prayer), and offers prayer as we offer, and eats of the animal we slaughter, is a Muslim. He has the rights of a Muslim, and the duties of a Muslim." (Bukhari, Kitab al-Salah, Ch. 38).

"A Muslim's blood is like another Muslim's blood. They are one as distinguished from others, and an ordinary man of them can offer dhimmah (i.e. stand surety) on their behalf." (Abu Dawud, Kitab al-Diyat, Ch. 11; Nasa'i, Kitab al-Qasamah, Chs. 10 – 14).

"A Muslim is exempt from poll-tax." (Abu Dawud, Kitab al-Imarah, Ch. 34).

3. Tradition: "Nations before you were destroyed because they punished those among them of low status according to law, and spared the high ranking. By God, who holds my life in His hand, if Fatima, daughter of Mohammad, had committed this theft, I would have chopped off her hand." (Bukhari, Kitab al-Hudud, Chs 11, 12).

Says 'Umar, "I myself have seen the Prophet of God allowing the people to avenge themselves on him." (Abu Yusuf, Kitab al-Kharaj, al Matba'at al-Salafiyyah, Egypt, 2nd ed. 1352/1933, p. 116; Musnad, Abu Dawud al-Tayalisi, Tr. No. 55, Dairatul-Maarif, Hyderabad, 1321/1903)

4. Qur'an, 4:58

Tradition: "Mind, each one of you is a shepherd and each one is answerable in respect of his flock. And the chief leader (i.e. the Caliph) is answerable in respect of his subjects." (Bukhari, Kitab al-Ahkam, Ch 1; Kitab al-Imarah, Ch. 5).

5. Qur'an (13:38)

Tradition: "'Ali reports that he asked the prophet of God (on him be peace), 'What shall we do if we are faced with a problem after you die about which there is no mention in the Qur'an nor have we heard anything concerning it from your lips?' He answered, 'Collect those of my people (Ummah) that serve God truthfully and place the matter before them for mutual consultation. Let it not be decided by an individual's opinion.'" (Alusi, op, cit, 25, p.42)

6. Tradition: "It is incumbent on a Muslim to listen to his Amir and obey, whether he likes it or not, unless he is asked to do wrong. When he is asked to do wrong, he should neither listen nor obey." (Bukhari, Kitab al-Ahkum, Ch. 4; Muslim, Kitab al-Imrah, Ch, 8; Abu Dawud, Kitab al-Jihad, Ch. 105; Nasa'i, Kitab al-Bas'ah, Ch. 33; ibn Majah, Abwab al-Jihad, Ch. 40).

"There is no obedience in sin against God. Obedience is only in the right." (Muslim, Kitab al-Imarah, Ch. 8; Abu Dawud, Kitab al-Jihad, Ch. 95; Nasa'i, Kitab al-Bai'ah, Ch. 33).

“Do not obey those of your rulers that command you to disregard the order of God.” (Ibn Majah, Abwab al-Jihad, Ch. 50).

7. Tradition: “Verily, we do not entrust a post in this government of ours to anyone who seeks or covets it.” (Bukhari, Kitab al-Ahkam, Ch. 7).

“The most trustworthy of you with us is he who comes forward to seek position in the government.” (Abu Dawud, Kitab al-Imrah, Ch. 2).

The Prophet of God said to Abu Bakr, “Oh Abu Bakr, the best fitted person for the government is he who does not covet it, not he who jumps at it. He who knows its responsibility and tries to shun it deserves it most, not he who proudly advances to collect for himself. It is for him to whom you could say, “You most deserve it,” not for him who says of himself, “I am most deserving.” (al-Qalqashandi, Subh al-A‘sha, dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah, Cairo, 1910, 1, p. 240).

8. Qur’an 22:41
9. Tradition: “Whoever of you sees an evil thing let him undo it with his hand. If he cannot, let him check it with his tongue. If he cannot do even this, let him despise it with his heart and wish it otherwise, and this is the lowest degree of faith.” (Muslim, Kitab al-Iman, Ch. 20; Tirmidhi, Abwab al-Fitan, Ch. 20).

“Then the undeserving will take their place who will say what they will not do, and will do what they are not asked to do. Therefore, he who strives against them with his hand is a believer, and he who strives against them with his tongue is a believer, and he strives with his heart is a believer, and there is no degree of faith below this.” (Muslim, Kitab al-Iman, Ch 20.)

“The best of jihad (endeavour towards God) is to say the right thing in the face of a tyrant.” (Abu Dawud, Kitab al-Malahim, Ch. 27; Tirmidhi, Abwab al-Fitan, Ch. 12; Nasa’i, Kitab al-Bai‘ah, Ch. 36i; ibn Majab, Abwab al-Fitan, Ch. 20).

“When the people see a tyrant and do not seize his hand, it is not far that God should afflict them with a general ruin.” (Abu Dawud, Kitab al-Malahim, Ch. 17; Tirmidhi, Abwab al-Fitan, Ch. 12).

“Some people are going to be rulers and not after me. He who supports them in their wrong and assists in their tyranny has nothing to do with me, nor Have I anything to do with him.” (Nasa’i, Kitab al-Bai‘ah, Chs. 34, 35).

10. Al-Tabari, Tarikh al-Umam w-al-Muluk, al-Matba’at al-Istiqamah, Cairo, 1939, Vol 2, p. 618
11. The reference was to the abrupt rising of ‘Umar from his place during the meeting at Banu Sa‘idah’s Meeting House when he proposed Abu Bakr’s name as the Prophet’s successor and extending his hand to him offered him allegiance. There has been long deliberation before electing Abu Bakr to be Caliph.
12. Bukhari, Kitab al-Muharibin, Ch. 16; Ahmad, Musnad, Third edition, Dar al-Ma‘arif, Egypt, 1949, 1. Tr. 391. According to this version, the words are as follows, “Whoever swears allegiance to an Amir without the consultation of Muslims offers no allegiance, and he who receives allegiance from him receives no allegiance.” In another version the following words are reported, “He who is offered allegiance with consultation, it is not lawful for him to accept it.” (Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bari, al-Matba‘at al-Khairiyyah, Cairo, 1325/1907, Vol, 2, p. 125)
13. Al-Tabari, op. cit., Vol 3, p. 292; ibn al-Athir, Idarat al-Taba‘at al-Muniriyyah, Egypt, 1356/1937, Vo. 3, pp 34, 35.
14. Al-Tabari, op, cit., Vol 3, p. 295 – 96; ibn al-Athir, Idarat al-Taba‘at al-Athir, Vol. 3 pp. 36 – 37. Also ibn Qutaibah, al-Imamah w-al-Siyasah, Matba’at al-Futuh, Egypt, 1331/1912, Vol. 1, p. 23.
15. Ibn Qutaibah, op. cit., p. 41
16. Al-Tabari, op cit., Vol. 3, p. 450
17. Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 112; al-Mas‘udi, Muruj al-Dhahab, al-Matba‘at al-Bahiyyah, Egypt, 1346/1927, Vol. 2 p. 42.
18. Al-Mas‘udi, op. cit. p. 42.
19. Abu Yusuf, op. cit.. p.25
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25. Abu Yusuf, op. cit., p. 117.
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35. Al–Tabari, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 264
36. Ibn Qutaibah, op. cit., Vol 1, p. 25
37. Al–Tabari, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 291
38. Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 449, ibn 'Abd al–Barr, op. cit., p. 689
39. Ibn Abi al–Hadid, op, cit., pp. 180, 182
40. Ibn Khaldun, Muqaddimah, Matba'ah Mustafa Mohammad, Egypt, p. 196; al–Shahrastani, Kitab al–Milal w–al–Nihal, London, Vol. 1, pp. 108, 109.
41. Ibn Khaldun, op. cit., p. 196; al–Shahrastani, op. cit., p. 109
42. Al–Shahrastani, op. cit., p. 108; ibn Khaldon, op, cit., pp. 196 – 97.
43. Ibn Khaldun, op. cit., p. 197, al–Ash'ari, Maqalat al–Islamiyyin, Maktabat al–Nadat al–Misriyyah, Cairo, 1st ed., p. 87; al–Shahrastani, op, cit., p. 109.
44. Al–Shahrastani, op. cit., p. 108
45. Ibn Abi al–Hadid, op. cit., Vol 4, p. 520
46. Al–Ash'ari, op. cit., Vol, 1 p. 129; ibn Khaldun, op, cit., pp. 197 – 98; al–Shahrastani, op. cit., pp. 115 – 17.
47. 'Abd al–Qahir Baghdadi, al–Farq bain al–Firaq, Matba'at al–Ma'arif, Egypt, pp. 55, 61, 63, 64, 67, 68, 82 ,83, 99, 313, 315; al Shahrastani, op. cit., pp. 87, 90 – 92, 100; al–Ash'ari, op cit., pp 156 – 57, 159, 189, 190; al–Mas'udi, op. cit., p. 191.
48. Al–Shahrastani, op.cit., pp. 103, 104; al–Ash'ari, op. cit., pp. 198, 201.
49. Al–Shahrastani, op. cit., p. 104
50. Ibn Hazm, al–Fasl fi al–Milal w–al–Nihal, al–Matba'at al–Adabiyyah, Egypt, 1317/1899, Vol 4, p. 204
51. Al–Jassas, Ahkam al–Qur'an, al–Matba'at al–Bahiyyah, Egypt 1347/1928, Vol 2, p.40
52. Al–Mas'udi, op. cit., p. 191
53. Ibid
54. Al–Shahrastani, op. cit., p. 51
55. Al–Mas'udi, op. cit., p. 191.
56. Al–Shahrastani, op. cit., p. 63.
57. Al–Ash'ari, op. cit., p,. 124
58. Ibid., p. 125.
59. Al–Mas'udi, op. cit., pp. 190, 193; al–Suyuti, Tarikh al–Khulafa', Government Press, Lahore, 1870, p. 255
60. Al–Baghdadi, op, cit., pp. 94 – 95.
61. Ibid., pp., 100, 101; al–Shahrastani, op. cit., p. 34.
62. Al–Baghdadi, op. cit., pp. 133 – 34; al–Shahrastani, op. cit., p. 40
63. Al–Baghdadi, op. cit., 138 – 39.

Chapter 34: Abu Hanifah and Abu Yusuf

A. Abu Hanifah

Life

It was under the circumstances explained at the close of the preceding chapter that Abu Hanifah appeared on the scene and began his work. His original name was Nu'man bin Thabit. Born in Kufah, capital of Iraq, in 80/699 according to authentic reports, in the reign of 'Abd al-Malik bin Marwan, when Hajjaj bin Yusuf ruled over Iraq, he lived the first 52 years of his life in the Umayyad regime, the latter 18 in the 'Abbasid reign. He was 15 years old when Hajjaj left the stage, at the time of 'Umar bin 'Abd al-'Aziz when he was a youth. The stormy days of the rule of Yazid bin Muhallab, Khalid bin 'Abd Allah al-Qasri and Nasr bin Sayyar, over Iraq, passed before his eyes.

He himself was a victim of the persecution of ibn Hubairah, the last Umayyad governor. He saw the rise of the 'Abbasid movement with its centre at Kufah, his home town, which remained virtually the main stronghold of the new born 'Abbasid State before the founding of Baghdad. His death occurred in 150/767 during the reign of Mansur, the second 'Abbasid Caliph.

Abu Hanifah's ancestors belong to Kabul. His grandfather, Zuta (according to some, the pronunciation is Zauta), came to Kufah as a prisoner of war, accepted Islam, and settled there under the friendly protection of Banu Taim Allah. Zuta was a trader by profession and was known to 'Ali, the "Right-going" Caliph; in fact, he was close enough to him and sometimes entertained him with gifts.[1] Abu Hanifah's father, Thabit, also owned a business at Kufah. According to a report coming from Abu Hanifah, he owned a bakery there.[2]

Abu Hanifah's own account of his education describes him as applying himself first to recitation (reading the Qur'an properly), Hadith (Tradition), grammar, poetry, literature, philosophy and other subjects in vogue in those days.[3] Then he turned to specialize in dialectical theology and mastered it to such a degree that people looked to him as an authority in that science. His student, Zufar (bin al-Hudhail), reported that his master told him that at first he took such an interest in theology that people would lift their fingers towards him.[4] In another report Abu Hanifah says that at one time he was a past master in the art of controversy and spent most of his time in debates. As Basra was the main venue of these contests, he had been there about 20 times, occasionally staying there for six months or so at a stretch and remained engaged in controversies with the different sects of Kharijites, the Ibadiyyah, the Sufriyyah, and Hashwiyyah.[5]

It may be easily concluded from this that he was well versed in philosophy, logic, and theological divergences of the numerous sects without which a man cannot enter the field of controversy at all. The

beautiful use that he later made of reason and common sense in the interpretation of Law and the resolving of abstruse legal problems won him immortal fame and a great deal to the intellectual training which he had received earlier from these exercises of logical argumentation.

After keeping himself busy in polemical controversies for a long time and growing sick of them, he turned to *Fiqh*, i.e. Islamic Law. Here, with the strength of mind that he possessed, he could not interest himself in the Traditionist school (*ahl al–hadith*). He, therefore, joined the Iraqi school of reason with its centre at Kufah. This school of law traced its origin to ‘Ali and ibn Mas‘ud (d. 32/652), after whom their disciples Shuriah (d. 78/697), ‘Alqamah (d. 62/681), and Masruq (d. 63/682) became its accredited leaders, followed in their turn by Ibrahim Nakh‘i (d. 95/714) and Hammad (d. 120/737). Abu Hanifah took Hammad for his master and kept him company for 18 years, until the latter’s death. Frequently, he also consulted other learned masters of Law and Tradition in the Hijaz on the occasions of pilgrimage, and acquainted himself also with the Traditionist school of thought.

On Hammad’s death he was chosen to succeed him. He occupied that place for 30 years, delivering lectures and discourses, issuing legal verdicts, and doing the work which formed the foundation of the Hanafi School of law named after him. In these 30 years he answered some 60,000 (according to other estimates, 83,000) legal queries, all of which were later compiled under different heads in his lifetime.[6] Some seven to 800 of his students spread to different parts of the Islamic world and filled important seats of learning. They were entrusted with issuing legal opinions and guiding the education of the masses, and became objects of heartfelt veneration for the multitudes. About 50 of them were appointed judges after his death during the ‘Abbasid reign. The law was codified by him was adopted as the law of the great part of the Muslim world. The ‘Abbasids, the Saljuqs, the Ottomans, and the Mughuls accepted it and with millions of people still following it today.

Abu Hanifa, like his forefathers, earned his living by trade. He dealt in a kind of cloth, called *khazz*, in Kufah. Gradually, his business flourished until he had a factory where this cloth was manufactured.[7] The business was not restricted to Kufah; his goods had a good market in far off places. The growing recognition of his integrity converted his firm into a bank where people deposited huge sums of money on trust. These deposits ran to 50 million dirhams at the time of his death.[8]

Extensive experience of financial and commercial matters gave him a deep insight into various aspects of law such as seldom falls to the lot of a theoretical lawyer. Later on, when he set himself to the task of codifying the Law of Islam this personal experience proved of immense help to him. A further testimony to his deep understanding and proficient handling of practical affairs is provided by the fact that when in 145/762 Mansur undertook the task of constructing the new city of Baghdad, he appointed Abu Hanifah to supervise the work and for four years it remained under his supervision.[9]

In his private life he was most pious, a man of known integrity. Once he sent out his partner in business to sell some merchandise. A part of the goods to be sold were defective and he instructed his partner to let the buyer know the defect. The partner, however, forgot to do so, and returned after selling the whole

without apprising the buyer of the defect. Abu Hanifah did not keep the money. He gave away the whole of it (and it amounted to 35,000 dirhams) to charity.[10]

His chroniclers have recorded occasions when ignorant people would come to his firm selling goods at lower rates than what they were worth. Abu Hanifah would tell them that their wares were worth more than what they would put them at, and bought them at their actual rates.[11] All his contemporaries speak highly of his honesty. The famous learned divine, 'Abd Allah bin Mubarak[12] said, "I have yet to see a more pious man than Abu Hanifah. What will you say about the man to whom they offered the world and its wealth and he kicked it away, who was flogged and remained steadfast, and who never accepted those posts and honours which people hankered after."

Justice ibn Shubrumah said, "The world followed him but he would have none of it. As for us, the world would have none of us and we run after it."[13] According to Hassan bin Ziyad, Abu Hanifah never accepted a gift or favour from the rich.[14]

He was also very generous, never sparing in spending, particularly on the learned and the scholarly. A part of his profits was ear-marked for them and expended throughout the year, and whatever of it was left over was distributed among them. Extending them such help he would say, "Be pleased to spend it on your needs, and thank none but God for it. I do not give you anything of mine for it is a bounty from God. He has given it to me for your sake."[15] A number of his students depended entirely on him, particularly Yusuf. He met all the expenses of the latter's house since his parents were poor and wanted their son to give up studies and take to some work to earn a living.[16]

That was the man who tackled in the first half of the second/eighth century the knotty problems arising from the awkward circumstances that followed the "Right-guided" Caliphate.

Abu Hanifah's Pronouncements and Opinions

First of all, we shall take those problems about which his opinions as recorded by himself are available to us. He has no prolific writer, therefore, in order to know his views we have to generally resort to other reliable sources. But on certain issues, mainly raised by the above-mentioned sects (the Shi'ites, the Kharijites, the Murji'ites, and the Mu'tazilites) he has written, against his wont, with his own pen, drawing up in brief but eloquent words the creed and doctrine of the *ahl al-sunnah w-al-jama'ah* (lit., the followers of the Prophet and his Companions' tradition) who formed (as they still do) by far the largest section of the Muslim community. Naturally, in an estimate of his work the first place must be given to what flows from his pen.

Al-Fiqh al-Akbar

We have already stated in the preceding chapter how the differences that cropped up among the Muslims during 'Ali's reign and the first years of the Umayyad regime led to the birth of four big sects in the community, which not only expressed but also adopted as tenets of faith contradictory opinions on

certain vital issues affecting the constitution of Muslim society, the Islamic State, the sources of Islamic Law, and the decisions in regard to these matters was clear; it was embodied in the practice of the great divines and men of learning. But nobody had drawn up in clear cut words and put it into the form of a treatise. Abu Hanifah was the first person to put down perspicuously in his famous work, *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*,17 the Sunni point of view regarding matters of divergence against the doctrines of other sects.

The first question relevant to our discussion answered by him in the book is regarding the position of the "Right-guided" Caliphs. The dissenting sects had posed the question about some of them whether they were rightly raised to the office of the Caliphate. Some wanted to know who were superior to whom, and whether there was any among them who could not be called a Muslim at all. These questions were not merely queries regarding some personages of old history; in fact, they mooted another fundamental question, viz., whether the way these Caliphs were elected to their office was to be recognized as the constitutional way of electing the Head of the Islamic State or not. Moreover, if the title of anyone of them proved doubtful, the question would be raised whether the decisions taken by "consensus of opinion" in his regime would form part of the Islamic Law or not, whether his own decision would continue to form precedents in law or cease to operate as such.

Besides that, the questions whether they were entitled to the Caliphate, whether they were endowed with faith at all, and whether some of them were superior to others, naturally gave rise to another question of a very vital import, and that was, whether the Muslims of later times could repose any trust in either the members or the collective decisions of the early Islamic community brought up under the direct care and supervision of the Prophet of God, the people through whom the teachings of the Qur'an, the Prophet's Tradition, and the Islamic Law came to be transmitted to later generations.

The second question related to the position of the Prophet's Companions. One of the sects, the Shi'ah, called the vast majority of these Companions sinners, gone astray and even infidels, because they had selected the first three Caliphs to rule them, and a fair number were put outside the pale of faith or declared "transgressors" by the Kharijites and the Mu'tazilites for reasons of their own. This, too, was not a purely historical question, for it naturally led one to ask whether the laws and traditions transmitted by persons of doubtful *bona fides* to posterity would remain authentic sources of Islamic Law or not.

The third basic question dealt within the book relates to "faith," its definition and distinction from disbelief, and the consequences of sin, issues of grave controversy and debate in those days among the Kharijites, the Murji'ites, and the Mu'tazilites. This again was not merely a theological question but one that was closely related to the constitution of Muslim society and its answer affected the civic rights and social relations of Muslims. A question that closely followed from it was whether in a Muslim State governed by the sinful and the wrong-doer, it was possible to perform correctly such religious duties as the Friday and other prayers, or political functions like dispensing justice or participating in war.

Abu Hanifah's answers to these questions embodying the Sunni creed are as follows:

1. “The best of men after the Prophet of God (on who be peace) was Abu Bakr. After him was ‘Umar, after him ‘Uthman, and after him ‘Ali. They were all just men and abided by the right.”[18] *‘Aqidah Tahawiyyah* further explains it like this, “We believe Abu Bakr (with whom God be pleased) to be the best of men after the Prophet of God (on whom be an everlasting peace). We recognize his title as the Caliphate as prior to that of others, then ‘Umar’s, then ‘Uthman’s, then ‘Ali’s – and they are the Right-guided Caliphs and the ‘Right-going leaders.’”[19]

It is a matter of interest to note that personally Abu Hanifah loved ‘Ali more than ‘Uthman,[20] and believed that neither of them should be ranked above the other.[21] Formulating the creed, however, he accepted whole-heartedly the decision of the majority of his day in choosing ‘Uthman as Caliph after ‘Umar, and agreed that in the ranking of the “Right-guided” Caliphs the order of their Caliphate was also the order of their superiority to one another.

2. “The Companions of the Prophet are not to be spoken of but respectfully.”[22] *‘Aqidah Tahawiyyah* elucidates it further, “We treat all the Companions of the Prophet respectfully. We do not love anyone of them beyond measure, nor censure anyone of them. We do not like one who bears them or mentions them with disrespect. We mention them in none but a good way.”[23]

Abu Hanifah did not hesitate to express his opinion on the mutual war of the Companions, and said unambiguously that in the war between ‘Ali and his adversaries (and evidently the participants of the battles of the Camel and Siffin are included among them) ‘Ali stood by right more than they,[24] yet he altogether refrained from inflicting reproach on the other side.

3. “Faith is synonymous with owning and believing. To have faith is to own and believe (in God and his Prophet).”[25] In *al-Wasiyyah* it is explained in these words, “To have faith in something is to own it with the tongue and believe in from the heart,” and further, “Faith is not owning alone, nor believing alone.” In another place we find, “Action is something different from faith, and faith is different from action. Often a man is exempt from a certain action but he is not exempt from faith. For instance, it may be said that a poor man is exempt from the payment of *zakat* (prescribed charity), but it cannot be said that he is exempt from bearing faith, also.”[26] Thus, Abu Hanifah refuted the Kharijite theory that action formed part of faith and hence sin was synonymous with disbelief, or, in other words, that a crime necessarily meant treason.

4. “We do not ex-communicate a Muslim for any sin, however grave it may be, unless he affirms that it is ‘allowed.’ We do not divest him of belief. We call him a believer. A believer may be a transgressor, without being an infidel.”[27]

In *al-Wasiyyah* he writes, “The sinners among the followers of Mohammad (on whom be peace) are all believers, not infidels.”[28] *‘Aqidah Tahawiyyah* elucidates further, “A man does not go out of the pale of faith except by denying the creed that had put him inside it.”[29] A discussion of the Kharijites with Abu Hanifah over this issue throws further light on this doctrine and its social consequences. A large part of

them once came to him and said, “There are two biers at the gate of the Mosque. One is of a drunkard who died drinking, the other of a woman who had gotten herself illicitly pregnant and too her own life in shame.”

“To which community did they belong? Jews were they?” he asked.

“No,” they said.

“Christians, then, or Majusis?”

“No,” they answered again.

“Then, to which community did they belong?” he asked.

“To the community which bears witness to the creed of Islam,” they replied.

“Is that one–third of the faith or one–fourth of faith?” he asked.

They said, “There is no one–third or one–fourth of faith.”

“After all, what part of faith is this bearing witness to the creed of Islam?” he said.

“The whole faith,” they said.

“When you yourself call them faithful, what is it you want of me?” he asked.

“We ask whether they would go to heaven or hell.”

He replied, “If you ask me that, I will say about them what the Prophet of God, Abraham, said about sinners worse than they, ‘Oh God, he who follows me is mine, and he who disobeys – Thou art the Forgiving, the Compassionate’, or what the Prophet of God, Jesus, said about sinners worse than they, ‘If You punish them they are Your creatures, and if You forgive them, Thou art All–powerful and wise’, or what the Prophet of God, Noah, said, ‘Their reckoning rests with God, would that you understood, and I do not wish to turn my back upon the believers.’”[30]

Hearing this, the Kharijites felt out–witted and avowed their mistake.[31]

5. “Prayers can be offered behind any of the faithful, good or bad.”[32] *‘Aqidah Tahawiyyah* elucidates it further like this, “The pilgrimage and *jihad* (war) will continue to be performed to the Day of Judgment under the rulers of the faithful, whether they be good or bad. Nothing will make them unlawful or discontinue them.”[33]

Al–Jassas has more clearly explained Abu Hanifah’s point of view in this matter. “Some people,” he writes, “suppose that Abu Hanifah approves the Imamate or Caliphate of the corrupt. If it has been deliberately invented, the misunderstanding probably springs from this that Abu Hanifah (and not he

alone, all the learned scholars of Iraq whose opinions are widely known are one with him in this) says that if a judge is himself just, his decisions will be accepted, no matter how corrupt a master has appointed him, and prayer may be lawfully offered behind corrupt masters despite their corruption. This attitude is absolutely correct in its own place, but it does not mean that Abu Hanifah finds no fault with the Caliphate of the corrupt."[34]

These elucidations make it clear that Abu Hanifa, unlike the Kharijites and Mu'tazilites, differentiated between Caliphs *de jure* and Caliphs *de facto*. A necessary corollary to the position taken by the above-mentioned sects was that in the absence of a just and pious ruler, i.e. a Caliph *de jure*, all functions of Muslim society and State would remain suspended. There would be no pilgrimage and no Friday or other congregational prayer, the courts would stop, and there would no other religious, social, or political work. Abu Hanifah, on the other hand, contended that if at a time the Muslims were deprived of a Caliph *de jure*, the functions of their society would continue to be exercised lawfully under a Caliph *de facto*, though his right to caliphate may be disputable. In the pages to come we shall point out what, according to him, were the essential pre-requisites of a lawful Caliphate and what he thought of corrupt and unjust Caliphs.

6. "We do not say that sin does not do a believer any harm. We neither say that a believer will never go to hell, nor that he will live eternally in hell if he is a transgressor.[35] "We also do not say, like the Murji'ites, that our good deeds will be certainly rewarded and our bad deeds undoubtedly forgiven."[36]

'Aqidah Tahawiyyah has a further addition to it, "We decide in respect of no believer that he is destined to go to heaven or to hell. We do not accuse any Muslim of infidelity, polytheism, or hypocrisy, unless we see him actually engaged in them. As for intentions and motives we leave them to God to judge."[37]

Thus, Abu Hanifah steered a middle course through the opinions held by the Murji'ites, the Kharijites, and the Mu'tazilites, and formulated a doctrine of balance which, on the one hand, preserves the Muslim society from disintegration through mutual hatred and violence, and, on the other, insures against its falling into moral indiscipline and getting emboldened to commit sins with impunity.

Abu Hanifah on State and Caliphate

The opinions mentioned above related to issues which had cropped up in consequence of the political turmoil of the day and vitally affected the legal system and the political turmoil of the day and vitally affected the legal system and the political and social orders of Muslim society. Now, let us examine Abu Hanifah's views concerning the State and Caliphate. Since there is no work of his own touching these matters, we have to resort to the following two kinds of sources for information: first, his opinions quoted in the traditions and books of the Hanafi School and, secondly, the attitude he adopted towards his contemporary governments of the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids. The latter also includes a number of spoken words coming from his mouth during the course of his struggle with these governments, and these throw further light on his points of view under discussion.

The Problem of Sovereignty and Legislation

Abu Hanifah's views on sovereignty were identical with the generally known basic view of Islam on this issue, namely, 1) that the true sovereign is God, 2) that the Prophet is to be obeyed as God's accredited vicegerent, and 3) that the *Shari'ah*, i.e. the Law of God and His Prophet, is the supreme Law to which all must submit with demur or reservation. Abu Hanifa, pre-eminently a jurist, has stated this doctrine rather in terms of law than of politics. He says, "When I find an order in the Book of God, I take it from there. When I do not find it there I take from the accredited practice, word, or tradition of the Prophet, coming down to us through reliable sources. When I do not find it either in the Book of God or in the Prophet's Sunnah, I follow the (agreed) opinion of the Prophet's Companions. In case of difference of opinion among them I adopt the opinion from outside...As for others, I have as much right to sift and draw conclusions as they have."38

Ibn Hazm states, "All his students are agreed that Abu Hanifah's practice was that even a weak tradition was to be preferred to (one's own opinion formed by analogical reasoning (*qiyas*) or private judgment (*ra'y*)."39

This leaves absolutely no doubt that Abu Hanifah regarded the Qur'an and the Sunna as the final authority. Legal sovereignty, according to him, rested with God and the Prophet, and reason and judgment (*qiyas* and *ra'y*) were to be employed in the service of legislation only in matters where they had given no instruction. The precedence given by him even to an "isolated" opinion of the Companions was also based on the possibility of their being aware of some instruction from the Prophet (about the matter under reference) which may have been the basis of the opinion.

That was also why, when he saw a difference among the Companions, he accepted the opinion of some of them rather than differ with all of them – he would avoid the danger of going against the Sunnah, even inadvertently. In any case, he employed to the utmost power of reasoning and judgment to find out whose opinion seemed best to approximate the Sunnah.

The charge that he preferred to his own discretion to a clear ordinance (*nass*) was laid at his door even in his life-time but he refuted it say, "God knows that he who stated that I preferred my own discretion to 'ordinance' told a lie and accused me unjustly. How can we dare use our discretion when we have an 'ordinance?'"40 The Caliph Mansur once wrote to him saying that he had heard that he (Abu Hanifah) gave precedence to deductions from analogy over the Prophets tradition. In reply, he wrote, "Oh Commander of the Faithful, what you have heard is incorrect. I go first by the Book of God, then by the Sunnah of the Prophet, then the decisions of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, and 'Ali and then the decisions of other Companions, but when I find disagreement among them, I resort to discretion".41

Establishment of the Caliphate

Regarding the Caliphate his views were most clear cut and unambiguous. According to him, to seize

power by force and later regularize it by exacting allegiance under duress was no lawful way of being chosen for it. A Caliph should be chosen after consultation and in conference with the wise that are entitled to give opinion (*ahl al-ra'y*). Abu Hanifah expressed this opinion in face of the peril of losing his life. Mansur's Chamberlain, Rabi' bin Yunus, relates that the Caliph summoned Malik ibn Abi Dhi'b and Abu Hanifah before himself and asked, "What do you say about this power that God has given me over the people, am I not deserving of it?"

Malik answered, "Had you not deserved, God would not have conferred it on you."

Said ibn Abi Dhi'b, "God grants the kingdom of the world to whom He pleases, but the kingdom of the hereafter is given to him who strives for it and is helped by God to make way to it. The help of God will attend you if you obey him; in case you disobey, it will keep away from you. As for the Caliphate, the truth is that only a conference of the God-fearing can institute it, and one who seizes it by force has no righteousness in him. You and your associates are deprived of the help of God, and have turned aside from truth. Now, if you ask the Almighty to grant you peace and try to gain nearness to Him with deeds of piety, you may win His grace, otherwise, you are only a self-seeker."

Abu Hanifa tells us that when ibn Abi Dhi'b spoke those words, Malik and he folded their clothes about them expecting his head to be off his shoulders that very moment and his blood to fall on these clothes. But Mansur turned to Abu Hanifah and inquired, "What say you?"

He replied, "The man who sincerely seeks the right path to guide himself eschews wrath. If you consult your conscience you will see that you have not invited us for the sake of God but make us say, out of dread, something that suits you and that should reach the people. The truth is, you have become a Caliph without even a couple of men from amongst the *ahl al-fatwa* (those whose opinion is respected as authoritative) agreeing to it, whereas a Caliph should be chosen with the conference and concurrence of Muslims. You know, Abu Bakr refrained from making decisions for six months until the (news of the) Yemenites' allegiance arrived."

Then all three rose and went their way. Mansur dispatched Rabi' after them with a bag full of coins for each with instructions that if Malik accepted it, it should be made over to him, but if Abu Hanifah or ibn Dhi'b accepted it, he should bring their heads to him. When the gift was offered to Malik he took it, but when Rabi' offered it to ibn Abi Dhi'b he said that he did not consider it lawful for Mansur himself, how could it be lawful for him. And Abu Hanifah said, "I will not touch it, not even if you cut off my head." When Mansur heard it, he said, "Their contentment has saved their lives."[42]

A Caliph's Qualifications

Until Abu Hanifah's time the qualifications which entitled a man to Caliphate were not described at length as they were complied later by scholars like Mawardi and ibn Khaldun. They were for free, and well versed in religion, and sound body and mind. Two things, however, were doubtful and needed

clarification: first, whether a ruthless or corrupt person could be a Caliph or not; secondly, whether it was necessary for a Caliph to belong to the tribe of Quraish.

Abu Hanifah's opinion with regard to the first was that a Caliph must be a just person. One who is cruel and corrupt cannot be a Caliph, a judge, a governor, a pronouncer of legal verdict (Mufti), or an arbiter. If such a person comes to office, his Caliphate will be null and void and the public owes him no obedience. However, notwithstanding his usurpation of power, all the social dealings and obligations executed by Muslims under him in accordance with the *Shari'ah* will have legal sanction and the just decisions of the judges appointed by him will take effect.

Abu Bakr al-Jassas, a well-known Hanafi jurist, has explained this point in greater detail. He observes, "It is not lawful that a cruel or corrupt person should be a prophet or his successor (*Khalifah*) or a judge or hold any office by virtue of which he should be in a position to impose his will on the people in matters relating to religion; he cannot, for example, be a Mufti or a witness or a reporter of the Prophet's traditions. The Qur'anic verse, ***"My covenant does not extend to the wrongdoers"***[43] shows that all those people who come to the helm of affairs in matters connected with religion must be just and virtuous.

This verse categorically proves that the Caliphate of the corrupt is unlawful. No person of wicked reputation can be a Caliph. If any of that character should install himself in that office, the people are under no obligation to follow or obey him. The same was meant by the Prophet of God (on whom be peace) when he said that none among the created was entitled to command obedience in defiance of the Creator. The verse is also conclusive that no corrupt person can become a judge, a governor, or a magistrate, and if he becomes one, his orders will not be valid. Nor can his evidence be acceptable, nor his transmission of a report from neither the Prophet of God, nor the verdict (*fatwa*) of which he is the pronouncer."[44]

Al-Jassas further affirms that this was Abu Hanifah's opinion. He regrets how unjust it is to accuse him of allowing the Caliphate of the corrupt. We have already alluded to that controversy and need not repeat it here.

Al-Dhahabi also affirms this to be Abu Hanifah's view. According to him, Abu Hanifah held that the caliph who misused public money (*fay'*) or gave unjust orders was not entitled to remain Caliph and his orders were not valid.[45]

About the second question Abu Hanifah's opinion was that the Caliph should belong to the tribe of Quraish.[46] Not this alone; it was the agreed view of all the Sunnites.[47] However, they held this view not because the Caliphate was constitutionally the exclusive right of one tribe, but because in the particular circumstances of those days only a Quraishite Caliphate could hold all Muslims together. In other words, this opinion was based on political expediency of time and not on any legal constitutional right of the Quraish. Ibn Khaldun explains in detail that in those days the Arabs were the mainstay of the State and

there were far more chances of the Arabs agreeing on a Quraishite Caliph than on anyone from some other tribe.

The chances of strife and rift that lay in the choice of a non-Quraishite Caliph were so many that none could afford to put the Caliphate in that peril.[48] That incidentally unfolds the wisdom and implications of the Prophet's timely instruction that the Imams should be chosen from the Quraish.[49] Had the Caliph's office been forever forbidden to the non-Quraishite, 'Umar would not have said at the hour of his death, "If Hudhaifa's freed slave Salim, were alive, I would have proposed him my successor."[50]

The Prophet, while instructing the Caliphate should go to the Quraish; he had made it clear that this office would be held by the Quraish as long as they retained certain merits.[51] This clearly implied that when the Quraish became bereft of those merits, the Caliphate should devolve on the non-Quraish. This was the essential difference between the view of the Sunnites, including Abu Hanifah on one side and that of the Kharijites and Mu'tazilites on the other. The latter allowed Caliphate for the non-Quraishites irrespective of all conditions. Not only that, they went a step further and said that the non-Quraishites had a better title to it. Their main anxiety seemed to be democracy, even though it might lead to confusion and disintegration. With the Sunnites, democracy and the stability of the State were equally important considerations.

The Exchequer and the Public's Right of Ownership

The most reprehensible of all indulgences of the Caliphs of his day in eyes of Abu Hanifah were their reckless waste of public exchequer and their illegal seizure of people's properties. As we have already quoted al-Dhahabi, according to Abu Hanifah, oppression and illegitimate use of public money in a ruler rendered his title to Caliphate void. Not only that, he even did not allow the tokens of goodwill and presents received from foreign States to be made the personal property of the Caliph. These things were also deposited into the treasure, not with the Caliph or his family, for the obvious reason that had he not been the head of State and thereby become conspicuous in the international world, none would have sent him those presents.[52] He also objected to the Caliph's squandering of public money and his giving gifts out of it. This was one of the main reasons why he himself accepted no gifts from the Caliphs.

Separation of the Judiciary from the Executive

His views on the position of the judiciary *vis-a-vis* the executive were unequivocal. If justice was to be ensured, he said, the judiciary must be independent of the executive. Not only that, the judge must also be able to enforce his decree against the Caliph if the latter encroached upon the rights of people. Towards the close of his life when he was sure that the Government would not let him live any more, he gathered his disciples and addressed himself to them. Among other important things, he gave them this instruction, "If the Caliph is guilty of encroachment upon the rights of the people, the judge next to him in rank (i.e. the Chief Justice) should make him submit to the rule of Law."[53]

The main thing which prevented him from accepting an official position, particularly of a judge during the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid rule was that he did not see the judiciary as independent. There was no chance of making the Caliph submit to the rule of law. On the other hand, he feared that he would be made an instrument of injustice and asked to give wrong decisions, and that not only the caliph himself but also those attached to the palace would interfere with his work.

Yazid bin ‘Umar bin Hubairah was the first of the Umayyad governors of Iraq who pressed Abu Hanifah to accept office. This was in 130/747 when the upsurges in Iraq against the Umayyad regime were rising with a speed that completely overthrew that government within a couple of years. Ibn Hubairah wanted to enlist the support of influential men of learning and use them to the advantage of the Umayyad cause. He invited ibn Abi Laila, Dawud bin Abi al-Hind, ibn Shubrumah, and others and gave them lucrative appointments. Then summoning Abu Hanifah, he said, “Here I give you me seal. No order will be enforced here until you put the seal on it, and no money will be drawn from the treasury without your sanction.” But Abu Hanifah declined to accept the responsibility. Yazid put him in prison and threatened him with whipping.

Then the other learned men came round Abu Hanifah and requested him to take compassion on himself. “This service is as repugnant to us,” they said, “as it is to you. But we have accepted under duress, so should you.” Abu Hanifah replied, “Ah! Had he asked me to count the gates of the mosque of Wasit, I would not have done it for his sake. Then how can I agree that he should write the death warrant of an innocent person and I should put the seal on that order? By God, I will accept no share of his responsibility.” Ibn Hubairah then made him other offers but found him cold. At last, he decided to appoint him the Chief Judge of Kufah and swore that if Abu Hanifah declined the appointment he would have him flogged. Abu Hanifah swore in return saying that the flogging of this world was easier for him to endure than the flogging of the hereafter, reiterating that he would never accept it, even though that would cost him his life.

At last the tyrant gave him 20, or (according to another report) 30, blows of the stripe on the head. According to some accounts, he kept it up with ten stripes daily for about 11 days, but found his victim firm like a rock. Then someone informed him that he was likely to die. Ibn Hubairah replied, “Is there none to counsel this man to ask me for a reprieve?” When Abu Hanifah heard of this he asked to be set free for Mecca, not to return to it before the final wiping out of the Umayyad dynasty.[54]

In the ‘Abbasid period, again Mansur insisted he accept the office of a judge. As we shall presently see, Abu Hanifah, having openly participated in a revolt launched against Mansur by al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah and his brother Ibrahim, Mansur cherished such malice against him that in al-Dhahabi’s words, he was all but consumed in the fire of wrath.[55] However, it was not easy to lay hands upon a person of Abu Hanifah’s eminence. Mansur knew how the murder of Husain had provoked feelings of wrath against the Umayyads and how easily had they been uprooted on that account.

Therefore, instead of killing him, he would rather lure him into a cage of gold and use him to advance his

ends. With this in view he offered him the post of a judge again and again, in the end asking him to become the Chief Justice of the whole of the ‘Abbasid Empire, but Abu Hanifah always put him off under one pre-text or another.[56]

Ultimately, seeing him persist too much he told him frankly the reason why he was unable to accept these offers. On one such occasion he excused himself politely saying, “None can be fit to become a judge unless he has strength enough to impose law on you, your princes, and your commanders. I have not that strength in me. I am so built that whenever you call me, I cannot breathe easily until I leave your presence.”[57] On another occasion the talk took a harsh turn.

Addressing the Caliph, he said, “Even if I accepted this office willingly, not reluctantly, sure enough I would not prove worthy of your trust. If I decided a case against your desire and you wanted me to alter the decision on pain for being pushed into the Euphrates to drown, I would rather drown than alter my decision. When talks like these led Mansur to conclude that this man could not be caught in a cage of golden bars, he resorted to open persecution. He had him whipped and flogged, put him in jail where they subjected him to tortures of hunger and thirst. Later, he was confined in a cell wherein he died, according to some, a natural death, according to others, of poisoning.[58]

Freedom of Expression: A Right and a Duty

According to Abu Hanifah, freedom of expression in a Muslim society and in an Islamic State is of as much importance as the independence of the judiciary. The Qur’an terms this freedom as *amr bi al-ma‘ruf* and *nahi ‘an al-munkar* (enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong). No doubt, an unqualified right of freedom of expression may sometimes assume an unbecoming, mischievous, immoral, or even offensive form which no law can tolerate. But the Qur’an, by using the above-mentioned term for this freedom, clearly distinguishes it from all other kinds of freedom and, thus, circumscribing it within well-defined limits, declares it to be not only an inalienable right but also a duty of the public.

Abu Hanifah was particularly conscious of this right and duty because the political order of his day had rid the people of this right to such an extent that they actually doubted if it had anything of the nature of a duty about it. We have pointed out elsewhere that the Murji’ites, by preaching ultra-liberal doctrines were emboldening people towards sin. The Hashwiyyah professed that “Enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong” where the government was involved was mischievous and the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid governments crushed the spirit of the people to raise a voice against the corruption and high-handedness of the ruling cliques. Abu Hanifah, with both speech and action, attempted to resurrect this spirit among the people and elucidated the extent to which it could be exploited. This is clear from Abu Hanifah’s answer to a question from Ibrahim al-Sa’igh related by al-Jassas.[59]

Abu Hanifah asserted the right of freedom of expression against law courts in the same manner, as well. If any court of law gave a wrong decision, he would not hesitate to point out whatever flaws of law or procedure he found in it. With him the respect of the courts did not mean letting the courts give wrong

decisions. He was forbidden to pronounce verdicts on this account for a long time.[60]

He was zealous in the matter of freedom of expression that he did not consider it lawful to imprison or otherwise punish a person who spoke ill, even of a legitimate ruler or his just government, not even it he went to the extent of abusing the Caliph and expressing an intention to kill him, until there was resolve on his part of an armed revolt or breach of peace. He argued this from an incident during the Caliphate of ‘Ali. Five people were arrested and brought before him on the charge of abusing him openly in the streets of Kufah. One of them was also accused of saying that he would assassinate him. ‘Ali ordered their release. It was said, “But they intended to kill you.” He asked in reply, “But should I kill them only for expressing the intention to kill me?” It was added, “But they also abused you.” He said, “If you like you may also abuse them.”

The Question of Rebellion against Tyrannical Rule

Another important question that baffled the people of those days was whether or not it was lawful for the Muslim to rise in revolt against a ruler who perpetrated tyranny or transgressed the limits of *Shari‘ah*. The Sunnis themselves were divided on this. A large section of the Traditionists (*ahl al-hadith*) allowed that they could raise voice against his tyranny and speak their mind before him but they could not rise in rebellion, even though he should seize upon their lawful rights and indulge in unjust bloodshed and open transgression.[61] But Abu Hanifah’s creed in this matter was that the Caliphate of an unjust incumbent was basically wrong and insupportable, and deserved to be overthrown, that people not only had the right, but it was their duty to rise in rebellion against it, that such a rebellion was not only allowed but obligatory, provided, however, that it promised to succeed in replacing the tyrant or transgressor by a just and virtuous ruler, and not fizzle out in mere loss of lives and power.

Private Council and Codification of Islamic Law

Abu Hanifah’s greatest work which won him lasting eminence in the history of Islam was that he filled, on his own initiative, the vast gap caused in the Islamic legal system by the discontinuance of the *shura* (the Consultative Council) after the “Right-guided” Caliphate. We have already alluded to the consequences that followed this ill-happening. The loss resulting from this state of affairs lasting over a century was a matter of grave concern to every thinking person. The State had extended its boundaries from Spain to Sind, taking in its fold scores of peoples with various cultures, customs, rites, and habits of their own.

Facing it at home were problems relating to finance, commerce, agriculture, industry, marital relations, and the rest. There were civil and criminal cases to decide and ever-new constitutional, legal and procedural problems to solve. Abroad, the relations of this large State with the other States of the world, and issues like war, peace, diplomatic relations, foreign trade, communications (by land and sea), customs, etc., demanded urgent attention.

As the Muslims were a people with a distinct ideology, and claimed to guide themselves by principles

and law of their own, it was necessary for them to solve their problems in the light of that ideology and those laws and principles.

But the institution of *Shura* having been discontinued there was no other properly established body or institution in which the trusted scholars, jurists, and lawyers of the community should meet to deliberate and devise such an authentic solution of every outstanding legal issue, as should be recognized as the accredited and uniform law of the land throughout the State. Thus, Islam was faced with a mighty challenge and there was no machinery to meet it.

The loss was being felt all round, from the Caliph to the governors and judges. It was not easy for every judge, lawyer, or head of a department to decide the innumerable problems that rose every day, there and then, on the strength of his own knowledge or by dint of his own understanding. Not only that, such individual decisions also conflicted with one another and created confusion. But a body was verdict carried authority could be established only the Government which, unluckily, lay in the hands of such people as knew for certain that they enjoyed no esteem or confidence with the public, nor were they prepared to face, nay, even endure, the learned, who, they feared, would confront them with things they would not like. They also knew that laws enacted under their patronage could never be accepted as parts of the Law of Islam.

Ibn al–Muqaffa‘ proposed to Mansur that in order to stop this gap he should convene a council of the learned lawyers of all schools of thought who should sit together and express their opinions on the various problems at hand. After hearing these opinions the Caliph himself should pronounce his decision on every case and that decision should be adopted as law. But Mansur knew his own position too well to make this mistake. His decisions could not equal decisions of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar. They could, at best, have the whole realm that would respect and willingly follow a law enacted by him. He could make a secular law all right, but he could not make a law which would become incorporated in the Islamic juridical code.

In these circumstances it struck Abu Hanifah to try an entirely new path to redeem the loss, and this was to institute a private legislative body, on his own initiative, independent of the Government. Only a far–sighted person like him could think of such a plan and only he could dare the adventure who trusted his own resources, character, and moral prestige well enough to be sure that the laws passed by a body raised under his auspices would enforce themselves by dint of their excellence in sufficiency, precision, adaptability, and the moral influence of their devisers, even without any political sanction behind them, and they would be adopted by the people of their own accord, and recognized by the different governments of their own free–will.

Abu Hanifah was no seer of the hidden future to perceive the results which his efforts produced within half a century of his departure, but he knew himself and his colleagues well enough. He knew the collective temperament of his community and had an eye on the circumstances of this day. With the perfect eye of a man of sharp intelligence and foresight he gauged that he could fill the yawning gap with

his private endeavour if he would, and that surely it would be filled satisfactorily.

Abu Hanifah's own students, trained under his care and guidance in his college of law for years in deliberating over legal questions, looking into them in the proper scientific spirit, and arriving at conclusions with arguments, formed the members of this council. Almost all of them had learned the Qur'an, literature, history, and *Sirah* (biography of the Prophet) not only from Abu Hanifah, but also from many other learned scholars of the day. Many of them had specialized in certain branches.

Some had made a name in the field of "arguing conclusions by analogy," others for incomparable knowledge of the Prophet's traditions and precedents set by the Companions, judges, and Caliphs of old. Others yet had a reputation for interpreting the Qur'an or for being skilled in a particular branch of law or in grammar on *Sirah*. Abu Hanifah himself once described them by saying, "These are 36 men of whom 28 are fit to be judges, six to pronounce legal verdicts, and two good enough to teach judges and jurists."62

The procedure of work adopted in this council as reported by the authentic chroniclers of Abu Hanifah should be described in their own words. Al-Muwaffaq bin Ahmad al-Makki (d. 568/1172) writes, "Abu Hanifah framed his legal system with the consultations of his learned students. His passion to do all that he could for the sake of his religion and his love of God, the Prophet, and the believers did not allow him to undertake his work by himself to the disregard of his student colleagues.

He put every problem before them, threw light on its various aspects, carefully heard all that each one of them had to say on it and put forth his own point of view for their consideration. These deliberations and discussions were so exhaustive that some questions took a month or even more to decide. At last, when unanimity was achieved, Abu Yusuf recorded it in the fundamental compilations of Hanafi Law."63

Ibn al-Bazzaz al-Kardari (d. 827/1424), author of *Fatawa Bazzayyah* in his *Manaqib al-Imam al A'zam*, "His students debated each question to their heart's content and discussed it from every point of view. Abu Hanifah, all the while, sat quietly listening to the discussion. When it was his turn to speak, there was such a silence in the house, as if there was none other present."64 "Abd Allah bin Mubarak tells that once the discussion on an issue lasted three days. On the evening of the third day he heard cries of *Allah-u Akbar* (God is most Great) from within and understood that a solution had been achieved.65

It is recorded by another student, Abu 'Abd Allah, that when Abu Hanifah had his views recorded on an issue, he had them afterwards read out to him to ensure their correctness. His own words are, "I read out the Imam's words to him. Abu Yusuf (in recording the proceedings) used to record his own views, too, therein. Hence, I tried to read out the Imam's words only, leaving out those of Abu Yusuf. Once I made a slip and read the other view, also. The Imam at once cut in, 'Whose view is this second?'"66

Another thing that we gather from al-Makki is that the work of classification of this council's decisions under different heads and chapters also was completed in the life-time of Abu Hanifah. He says, "Abu Hanifah is the first man to gather the knowledge of the *Shari'ah* (Islamic Law). None before him had

done this work – Abu Hanifah compiled it in books, under different heads and chapters."[67]

This council recorded decisions on about 83,000 legal issues. These embraced not only those questions with which the public or the state was currently or had formerly been confronted but also others that might arise in the future. Possibilities were conceived and discussed freely to ensure that if ever they turned into actualities there should be laws ready to meet them. They related to almost all branches of law, internal (covered under the term *al-siyar*),[68] constitutional, civil, criminal, of evidence, of procedure, laws governing different aspects of economic life, marriage, divorce, and inheritance, personal, and aspects of economic life, and those dealing with worship. We can find all these subject-heads among the contents of books compiled by Abu Yusuf and later by Mohammad bin Hassan al-Shaibani from the material provided by the deliberations of this "legislative council."

This regular codification of law soon deprived individuals of the confidence they enjoyed in its absences in their efforts at law-making. The opinions and verdicts of scattered individuals, be they doctors or judges of repute, could not carry weight before the wholesomely judicious and precise decisions arrived at in council of legists presided over and guided by a man of Abu Hanifah's foresight and calibre, after thorough sifting of the Qur'anic injunctions and the Prophet's Tradition and keeping in view of precedents and the verdicts of the scholars of old, drawn as they were with thoughtful and steady labour, bearing in mind the principles of *ijtihad* (deducing conclusions with thorough discretion) in the light of the *Shari'ah*, embracing all aspects of life, and able to meet all exigencies. Therefore, as soon as it came to light, the common people, the rulers, the judges, all felt forced to turn to it. It answered the demand of the day. As a matter of fact, it was the long awaited help which everybody had been seeking.

The famous legist Yahya bin Adam (d. 203/818) tells that the opinions of other jurists paled into insignificance before those of Abu Hanifah, his ideas spread everywhere, the judges, rulers, and officers of every place decided their cases in accordance with his law; in short, everything went according to it.[69] By the time of al-Mamun (198 – 218/813 – 833) it had acquired such popularity that one day Premier Fadl bin Sahl was advised by a jurist who was hostile towards Abu Hanifah, to issue orders to stop the use of Abu Hanifah's code. Fadl invited the wise and prudent man to advise him on this. They told him not to take this step for it would not succeed. On the other hand, the whole country, they said, would turn against the Government, adding that the man who had given him the counsel was surely a fool. The Premier agreed with them, saying that he himself did not see any wisdom in the course, nor was the Caliph likely to agree to it.[70]

Thus came about the historical reality that a system of law was devised by a private legislative council became the law of countries and empires on the strength of its merits and the moral prestige of those who framed it. It had also another important consequence in that it opened up for Muslim thinkers' new lines for codification of Islamic Law. The chief legal systems devised later may have differed from it in their methods of deduction and in their results, but they were all inspired by and based on this model.

B. Abu Yusuf

In Abu Hanifah's lifetime, the relations between the Hanafi School of Law and the 'Abbasid rulers were strained, owing to his political creed and non-co-operation with the Government. The effect of this lasted for a long while after his death. The leaders of this school stuck to their policy of indifference towards authority. Thus, when after the death of Abu Hanifah, his great student Zufar bin Hadhail (d. 158/775) was asked to accept the post of a judge, he flatly refused it and fled to find safety in concealment.[71] On the Government's side, was also the tendency from the days of Mansur to the early years of Harun's reign was to resist the influence of this school of thought.

Mansur and his successors earnestly desired that the gap in the legal system of the State, detailed in our previous discussion, should be filled by some other system of codification. Both Mansur and Mahdi in their respective reigns endeavoured to bring Malik to the fore.[72] Harun also in 174/791, on the occasion of the pilgrimage, expressed his desire to make his book *al-Muwatta'* the law of the land.[73] At long last, a man of great strength and character belonging to the Hanafi School of Thought rose to bring this state of affairs to an end. With his great ability and personal influence he delivered the Empire from a continued state of legal chaos. The Hanafi code was made the law of the land which gave the whole Empire a uniform system of law. This man was Abu Yusuf, the ablest of the disciples of Abu Hanifah.

Brief Life Sketch

Abu Yusuf's (b. 113/731) personal name was Ya'qub. His father came from an Arab tribe of Bajilah, his mother of the Ansars of Medina with whom his father was also connected by ties of alliance; hence his family was known as Ansar. He chose to specialize in law after completing his elementary education and took his lessons from 'Abd al-Rahman bin Abi Laila.

Then he joined the school of Abu Hanifah and became permanently attached to him. His parents were extremely poor and did not want their son to continue his education. When Abu Hanifah came to know of it, he undertook to defray all the expenses not of the boy alone, but of the whole family. He himself said that Abu Hanifah never gave him occasion to express his want before him. On and off, he would send so much money to his family as would relieve him of worry on that account.[74]

From the beginning, Abu Hanifah was very optimistic about his ward. When his father wanted to withdraw him from the school, the Imam told him not do so, for, if it pleased God, the lad promised to turn out to be a great man.[75]

Apart from Abu Hanifah, Abu Yusuf learned a good deal from other famous scholars of the day and made himself well acquainted with Tradition, Qur'anic commentary, biography of the Prophet, history, language, literature, and scholastic theology. Particularly well versed in traditions, he knew them by heart, and men like Yahya bin Mu'in, Ahmad bin Hanbal, and 'Ali bin al-Madini declared him *thiqah*[76](dependable – a particular term used for a person of known veracity on whom reliance is placed

in the transmission of traditions). His contemporaries all agreed that he was the outstanding among the disciples of Abu Hanifah.

Talhah bin Mohammad says, he was the greatest jurist of his age, none excelled him.77 Dawud bin Rashid thinks that it would have been enough source of pride for Abu Hanifah if he had produced only this one disciple.78 Abu Hanifah himself had great respect for him. He used to say that all of all his students the most acquisitive and adorned with learning was Abu Yusuf.79 Once he was very ill and little hope was left of his life. Abu Hanifah, when coming out of the house after inquiring after his health, deplored that if the youth died he (Abu Hanifah) would not leave behind him a scholar more learned than himself.80

For 16 years after the death of Abu Hanifah, he, too, in keeping with traditions of his school, remained indifferent to the Government. Nevertheless, he continued the intellectual and educative work of his master, adding to it the compilation of several books on almost all branches of law, and recording the decisions of Abu Hanifah's times supplemented with his own opinions.81

When these books spread throughout the country, they not only influenced the intellectual circles, but also impressed the courts and high officials connected with various government departments in favour of the Hanafi School of Thought, since there existed no other classified code of law to satisfy their wants as these books did. Malik's *al-Muwatta'* had come into the field long before, but it was not sufficiently comprehensive and elaborately classified to meet the needs of a government.82 Thus, Abu Yusuf's intellectual and literary work took hold of the minds of people before he came to power. It lacked only formal political sanction to enforce it as the law of the land.

Had Abu Yusuf's position been economically sound, he might have followed in the footsteps of his master and lived in continued indifference towards the Government. But he was a poor man and Abu Hanifah's death had robbed him of his generous support. Reduced by poverty to live a miserable existence, he was obliged one day to sell off a girder of his wife's house, for which he was reproached by his mother-in-law in a manner he could not endure, and this forced him to look for employment. He made for Baghdad and arrived there in 166/782, saw the Caliph al-Mahdi who appointed him the judge of eastern Baghdad, an office he continued to hold until the end of al-Hadi's reign.

When Harun al-Rashid became Caliph Abu Yusuf steadily gained such influence that he at last appointed him Chief Justice of the whole 'Abbasid Empire. This was the first occasion that such a post was created in the Muslim State. None before Abu Yusuf had held the post of Chief Justice of the State in either the "Right-guided" Caliphate or the Umayyad and 'Abbasid rule.83 His position was not only that of the head of the Supreme Court of the realm, as we may conceive from the practice of our modern institutions, it also invested him with the authority of the Minister of Law, that is to say, he did not merely have to judge cases and appoint judges for the lower courts, he had also to advise the Government on all legal matters, internal as external.

Abu Yusuf's appointment to this office bore three far-reaching results. In the first place, instead of a college where he lectured students, or a study from which he issued books, a vast field of work now engaged his attention – a field in which he dealt practically with the affairs of the biggest empire of the day. This provided him with opportunities of applying the Hanafi law to the actual affairs of life, thus making it, in fact, a practical system of low. Secondly, as the appointment and removal of judges was now entrusted to his charge, scholars connected with the Hanafi School were appointed judges in most of the places, and through them the Hanafi law automatically became the law of the realm. Thirdly, with the help of his great moral and intellectual influence he converted the Muslim State, which had assumed an autocratic character since the time of the Umayyads and was going, in a way without a constitution, into a State guided to a large extent by the constitution. Nay, he actually wrote a book of constitution for it, which has luckily come down to us intact in the shape of *Kitab al-Kharuj*.

Before we speak of this work on constitution, it is necessary to remove a widespread misunderstanding. Abu Yusuf's biographers have described such stories about him as often present him as the reader as one given to flattery and skilled wresting the law to suit the desires of Kings. But if we make the events recorded in history relating to Abu Yusuf's attitude to the Caliphs and their ministers and generals, it becomes impossible for us to believe that a mere flatterer could dare have it. In Hadi's time, when he was the judge of eastern Baghdad, he decided a case against the Caliph himself.84

In Harun's time an old Christian filed a suit for a garden against the Caliph. Abu Yusuf not only heard the case, both confronting each other, but also asked the Caliph to deny on oath that he refused to accept the claimant's title to it. Even after this he was sorry for the rest of his life why he did not make the Caliph stand side by side with the suitor.85 He declared 'Ali bin 'Isa, Prime Minister of Harun al-Rashid, an unreliable witness because, he said, he had heard him call himself the Caliph's slave. "If he is a slave in fact," he contended, his witness cannot be accepted. If he is not and calls himself so for flatter, he is a liar and cannot be trusted."86 The same punishment he gave to a general of Harun's forces.87

'Abd Allah bin Mubarak states that he used to go to Harun's palace riding right up to the private enclosures (where even the Premier must go on foot) and the Caliph was always the first to greet him.88 Harun was once asked why he had raised Abu Yusuf so high. He replied, "In whatever branch of knowledge I tried him I found him perfect. Besides, he is upright and a man of solid character. If there is another like him I would be please to see him."89

When he died (182/798) Harun himself accompanied the funeral procession on foot, led the funeral prayer, buried him in his own family graveyard and said it was a bereavement on which all the believers should condole with one another.90 But nothing bears out all that has been said above so well as his work *Kitab al-Kharaj*. A perusal of its introduction alone will tell that it is just beyond an adulator to say such things as he did while addressing a king.

Kitab al-Kharaj

In Harun al-Rashid, Abu Yusuf found a king of the most conflicting disposition and humours, at once a fierce soldier, a luxurious monarch, and a God-fearing man. Abu al-Faraj Asbahani describes him in a sentence, "He would most easily melt into tears in response to an exhortation or admonition, but would be most unrelentingly cruel in response to something that kindled his wrath."[91]

Abu Yusuf, prudently avoiding to touch upon the Caliph's failings, skilfully set to work on his religious sentiment bringing to bear his great moral and intellectual influence to the task, and pursued this steadily until the Caliph's heart was won and he proposed for him the assignment of preparing a constitution for him according to which he should guide the affairs of the State. This was how *Kitab al-Kharaj* came to be written.

The name of the book misleads one into thinking that its scope is limited to matters of revenue only. As a matter of fact, it deals with almost all the affairs of the State. Leaving aside all other details, we shall here examine its contents with only a view to seeing its basic conception of the Islamic State and its constitutional character.

Reversion to the "Right-guided" Caliphate

The first thing that strikes the reader who follows *Kitab al-Kharaj* closely is that Abu Yusuf desires the Caliph to give the Byzantine and Iranian traditions followed by the Umayyad and 'Abbasid kings and revert faithfully to the traditions of the "Right-guided Caliphs. Although he has not directly asked him to give up following his forefathers, yet he has never lapsed even into quoting the conduct or the decisions of the Caliph's forefathers as precedents worth following, much less those of his Umayyad predecessors. In every matter he bases his argument, either directly on the Qur'an or the Sunnah or else quotes precedents from Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman and 'Ali.

If he has ever quoted a precedent from a later period it is not from Mansur's or Mahdi's but from that of the Umayyad Caliph 'Umar bin Abd al-Aziz. In preparing this book, he completely ignored the conventions and precedents of the whole 132 years of Umayyad and 'Abbasid reigns, except those of the two and half years of 'Umar II's reign. Abu Yusuf's work may not have meant much, had it been done by some ingenious lawyer in his private capacity as a holy sermon for those who might like to follow it. But done as it was by the Chief Justice-cum-Law Minister of the State in his official capacity, at the express instance and request of the Caliph, it becomes something extra-ordinarily significant.

At the beginning of the book Abu Yusuf lays down the basic conception of the State before the Caliph in these words, "Oh Commander of Believers, God, the sole deserver of praise, has placed on you a heavy responsibility which carries with it a great reward and a great punishment. He has committed to your charge the affairs of this community, so that yours is the duty to work for a large number of people day and night. He has appointed you a guard over them, given you their trust, and tried you by them, for you

are to conduct their affairs for them. An edifice founded on anything except fear of God does not take long to crumble. God shakes it to the foundation and makes it fall on its builders, and on them that helped in its construction... Kings will be called to account by God as a shepherd is called to account by the owner of the flock... Take not the crooked path, lest your flock should follow in your footsteps... Treat everybody alike in the Law of God, whether one is akin to you or not... Go not into the presence of God as one who has been committing excesses, for the Ruler of the Day of Retribution will judge men by their actions, and not by ranks. Guard against wasting the flock entrusted to your care, lest the owner of the flock take you to task for every little sheep of it."[92]

After this he continues to press it on the Caliph everywhere in the book that he is not the owner of his kingdom but the Owner's Caliph (lit. deputy),[93] and that if he proved a just ruler he would see the best imaginable end, but if he proved unjust he would meet the worst punishment.[94] At one place he puts before him the words of 'Umar wherein he says, "None who enjoys the right of commanding obedience has risen so high as to ask anyone to obey him in disobedience of God."[95]

Spirit of Democracy

Abu Yusuf conceives the Caliph to be answerable not only to God but also to the public, and has quoted at several places from the sayings of the Prophet and the Companions to prove that the Muslims have an unquestionable right to criticize their rulers and that such criticism contributes to the good of the people and the State.[96] "Enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong is an inalienable right and a duty and its negligence in a community is equivalent to inviting the wrath of God upon its head."[97] It is the duty of rulers to have forbearance for truth being spoken before them, as nothing is more hurtful in a ruler than this being short-tempered and intolerant of criticism,[98] and the Muslims have a right to call him to account in respect of their lawful rights on him and of their properties that have been entrusted to his care.[99]

Duties of the Caliph

The following duties of the Caliph have been specifically mentioned: To establish the rights of God and enforce the limits prescribed by him, to determine correctly the rights of other right holders and ensure their enjoyment of their rights, to revive the conventions of virtuous rulers (that have been discarded by the wicked rulers of late),[100] to check injustice and redress the grievances of people after proper scrutiny,[101] in pursuance of orders of God, to command people to obey Him and stay away from the commission of sin, to apply the Law of God on himself and others alike, without regard to who suffers by it,[102] and to make only lawful exactions from people and expend them in lawful ways.[103]

Duties of Muslim Citizens

As opposed to these, the duties of the Muslims toward their rulers, as described in this book, are the following: They have to obey them, not to commit acts of disobedience, not lift arms against them, nor

reproach them (unnecessarily), nor deceive them. They have to put up with excesses, to be sincerely helpful to them, to try to check them from wrong things and to co-operate with them in all that is good.[104]

The Exchequer

He calls the exchequer a trust of God and the people instead of its being the Caliph's property. Off and on he reminds the Caliph of the words of 'Umar wherein he compares the Caliph's position in relation to the orphan's property, and states that if he is well-to-do, he should not take anything from it, in deference to the advice of God, and manage it for Him without any consideration, and if he is needy, he may take from it an amount which everybody will recognize as just and proper.[105]

He also draws his attention to 'Umar's example in spending from the exchequer more sparingly than one would from one's private purse. He illustrates his point by reference to another instance where 'Umar, appointing a judge, a governor, and a revenue officer for Kufah, allowed them to take a goat everyday for the expense of their board, adding at the same time that a land from which the officers will pick up a goat everyday would soon be impoverished.[106] The Caliph is also asked to forbid his officials to spend public money for their private needs.[107]

Principles of Taxation

Abu Yusuf prescribes the following principles of taxation: Only the surplus wealth of people should be taxed and the burden of taxes should fall upon the people with their consent. The tax should vary according to the capacity of the tax-payer. Nobody should be taxed more than they can pay. The tax should be collected from the wealthy and spent on the poor.[108] Rates of tax should not be fixed so as to suck the blood of the people, nor should the tax be realized by coercive methods.[109] Government should refrain from extorting taxes which are not warranted and also forbid its officers and landlords to make such exactions.[110] Non-Muslims who accept Islam should not be charged poll-tax.[111]

The practice of the "Right-guided" Caliphs is quoted as authority in this connection. He refers, for example, to the incident related to 'Ali that while in public he advised his officials to realize every penny of revenue from the payers and not to be at all lenient to them in this matter, but calling them apart he instructed them to be careful not to beat anybody or make them stand in the sun or press them so hard that they should be obliged to sell their cattle or clothes or utensils to pay the tax.[112] Or the fact that 'Umar used to examine thoroughly his revenue officers to satisfy himself that the farmers were not dealt with too harshly in the exaction of revenue, and when the collections actually came in, the representatives of the common people were summoned to bear witness that no Muslim or non-Muslim peasant was unjustly made to pay the tax.[113]

Rights of non-Muslim Subjects

With regard to the rights of non-Muslim subjects in the Islamic State, three principles are quoted again and again on the authority of ‘Umar:

1. Whatever agreement is made with them has to be faithfully observed.

2. The responsibility for the defence of the State does not lie on them, but on the Muslims alone.

3. They should not be burdened with excessive poll-tax and land revenue.[114]

Then it is said that the poor, the blind, the old, the recluse, workers at the houses of worship, women, and children are exempt from poll-tax, that there is no *zakat* (prescribed charity) chargeable on the wealth and cattle of non-Muslims, that none is allowed to resort to beating or inflicting other physical tortures on them for exacting the capitation, as the maximum punishment for its non-payment is only simple imprisonment. To realize more than the fixed amount from them is unlawful, and the poor and the cripple among them are to be supported from the State exchequer.[115]

Historical incidents are related to make the caliph see that it is for the good of the state to be kind and generous to the non-Muslim subjects. It was, according to him, magnanimity of the Muslims that in the days of ‘Umar won for them the hearts of the Syrian Christians to such a degree that they loved them more than their co-religionists, the Romans.[116]

Land Settlement

Abu Yusuf disallows the feudal system that of settlement in which the government, in order to realize the revenue from the farmers appoints a person to over-lord them, allowing him to exact from them whatever he likes and as he likes so long as he guarantees the payment of government dues. He condemns it as a most tyrannous system that is bound to lead to the ruin of the country and vehemently advocates that it must be shunned at all costs.[117]

He also calls it unlawful for the government to appropriate somebody’s land and bestow it upon another. He says, “The Caliph is not authorized to dispossess any person, Muslim or non-Muslim, of anything that belongs to him unless a proved or valid right stands against him in law. To snatch from one to make over to another is like committing robbery for the sake of distributing alms.[118] Gifts of land are allowed only if uncultivated, not owned, or not inherited pieces of land are distributed within reasonable measure for purposes of cultivation or as rewards for some real, useful social service. Such donations, too, are to be withdrawn if the donees fail to cultivate such land within three years.[119]

Redress of Wrong

After this he tells Harun al-Rashid that it is not lawful for him to appoint tyrants and corrupt people to office of State or to employ them as officers of departments or governors of districts. If he did so, he

would surely share the retribution of the wrongs that they do.[120] He asks him again and again to employ honest, righteous, and God fearing people to state services.

He emphasizes that in addition to their efficiency the government should also satisfy itself with regard to the moral character of its servants, and constantly keep a watch on them through its intelligence department, and if they tend to be corrupt or fall into cruel or cunning ways the caliph should know of the conduct and call them to account.[121]

He also tells Harun that the Caliph should listen regularly to the grievances of the people himself, and that occurrence of injustice could be made to stop if he has open court even once a month, where every grieved person is allowed to put his grief before the caliph and the officers are made to realize that what they do may one day reach the Caliph's ear.[122]

The Judiciary

The judiciary, according to him is meant to dispense justice, pure and undiluted. To punish one who is not guilty or to let one who is guilty go unpunished are alike unpardonable. But not should be punished on doubt. To go wrong in forgiveness is better than going wrong in awarding punishment. There should be no interference in the course of justice, nor should anybody's recommendation, position, or status count.[123]

Personal Liberty

Abu Yusuf also maintains that nobody can be incarcerated on a mere accusation. The accused person must be given a regular trial, and witnesses examined. If he proves guilty, he may be imprisoned, otherwise, he should be set free. He advises the Caliph that the cases of those who lie in person should be examined and those that are found to have been put there without sufficient proof or witness should be released. For the future all the governors should be instructed not to imprison anybody on the basis of mere allegation or suspicion without giving him a fair trial.[124] He also holds that it is illegal to beat or flog an accused person. Every person's back is immune from punishment unless a court declares him worthy of the lash.[125]

Jail Reforms

In the reforms that he has suggested for the improvement of prisons, he affirms that every prisoner has a right to receive his board and clothing from the Government Exchequer. He severely condemns the Umayyad and 'Abbasid practice of daily taking out the prisoners handcuffed and in chains to beg for their food and clothes. He requests the Caliph to put a stop to it and proposes that clothes suited to the season and sufficient food should be given to every prisoner by the Government.

The practice of burying the deceased heirless prisoners without wash and coffin, or without the funeral prayer, is also condemned in vigorous terms. "It is a matter of great shame for the Muslims," he says.

The proper wrapping and burial of these prisoners should be a Government charge. He has also recommended that no prisoner except those guilty of murder should be kept in fetters inside the prison.[126]

These are, in brief, the constitutional proposals which Abu Yusuf, as Law Minister and Chief Justice of the realm, placed before an autocrat 12 centuries ago. Placed beside the basic principles of an Islamic State and the traditions of the "Right-guided" caliphate, or compared with the teachings of his own master Abu Hanifah, they look far short of them indeed. There is no trace in them of the ideal way of choosing a Caliph. There is no mention of the advisory body, called the *shura*, guiding the administration of State affairs, nor of the idea that the wicked and the corrupt have no right to rule and if they come in, the public have a right to rise in revolt against them.

Not only that, many other important things also are missing and, judged from these and other such considerations, these proposals fall short of the true conception of an Islamic order. But this should not lead us to infer that Abu Yusuf's conception of the Islamic State was restricted to the limits of these proposals of *Kitab al-Kharuj* and that he did not want anything more than what he put down there.

On the contrary, what we find here describes what he, as a practical thinker, conceived as the maximum that was possible and worthy of achievement in the particular circumstances of that period of the 'Abbasid regime. In fact, the idea was not to present a theoretically perfect plan without regard to whether it was capable of being translated into practice or not. His intention was to draw up a constitutional plan which in addition to satisfying the minimum conditions required for the making of an Islamic State, should promise to be workable in the circumstances.

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11. For an instance of this see al–Makki, op. cit., pp. 219 – 20.
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15. Al–Khatib, Vo. 13, p. 360; Al–Makki, Vol 1, p. 262
16. Ibn Khallikan, Vol 5, pp. 422 – 23; al–Makki, Vol 2, p. 212
17. Before gaining currency as a term of the scholastics, the term Fiqh covered beliefs, general principles, law – in fact, everything under it. The differentiation was made by calling beliefs and general principles Fiqh al–Akbar, the fundamental or the main Fiqh, and Abu Hanifah gave the name to his compendium.

Recently, some scholars have doubted the authenticity of some parts of this book; they believe them to have been included later. However, the authenticity of those parts which we discuss here is undoubted, as whatever other sources we tap to collect Abu Hanifah’s opinions on these matters, we find these tallying with them.

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47. Al-Shahrastani, Vol. 1, p. 106; 'Abd al-Qahir Baghdadi, p. 340.
48. Muqaddimah, pp. 195 – 96.
49. Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bari, Vol. 13, pp. 93, 96, 97; Ahmad, Musnad, al-Matba'at al-Maimaniyyah, Egypt, 1306/1888, Vol. 3, pp. 129, 183; Vol. 4, p. 421; Abu Dawud al-Tayalisi, Musnad, Dairatul-Maarif, Hyderabad, 1321/1903, Tr. No. 926, 2133.
50. Al-Tabari, Vol. 3, p. 192.
51. Ibn Hajar, Vol. 13, p. 95.
52. Al-Sarakhsi, Sharh al-Siyar al-Kabir, vol. 1, p. 98.
53. Al-Makki, Vol. 2, p. 100
54. Ibid., pp. 21 – 24; ibn Khallikan, vol. 5, p. 41; ibn 'Abd al-Barr, al-Intiqa', p. 171.
55. Manaqib al-Imam, p. 30.
56. Al-Makki, Vol. 2 pp. 72, 173, 178.
57. Ibid., Vol 1. p. 215
58. Al-Makki, Vol. 2, pp. 173, 174, 182; ibn Khallikan, Vol. 5, p,. 46; al-Yafi'i, vol. 1, p. 310
59. Ahkam al-Qur'an, Vol. 1, p. 81
60. Al-Kadari, Vol. 1, pp. 160, 165, 166; ibn 'Abd al-Barr, al-Intiqa', pp. 152, 153; al-Khatib, Vol. 13, p. 351
61. Al-Ash'ari, Vol. 2, p. 125
62. Al-Makki, Vol. 2. p. 246.
63. Ibid., p. 133.
64. Al-Kardari, Vol. 2, p. 108.
65. Al-Makki, Vol. 2, p. 54.
66. Al-Kardari, Vol. 2, p. 109
67. Al-Makki, Vol. 2, p. 136
68. People of the present day labour under the wrong impression that International Law is a thing of themodern times and its founder is Grotius of Holland (991 – 1055/1583 – 1645). But whoever has seen al-Siyar of Abu Hanifah's student Mohammad bin Hassan al-Shaibani (132 – 189/749 – 805) knows that the codification of this law was accomplished by Abu Hanifah 900 years before Grotius, and that if, on the one hand, his discussions hardly leave any aspect of it untouched; on the other, they encompass the finest and most vital issues., This has recently been acknowledged by a group of scholars and a Shaibani Society of International Law has been founded in Germany.
69. Al-Makki, vol. 2 p. 41
70. Ibid, pp. 157 – 58; al-Kardary, Vol. 2, pp. 106 – 07.
71. Al-Kardari, Vol. 2, p. 183; Tash Kubrazadah, Miftah al-Sa'adah, Vol. 2, p. 114.
72. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, al-Intiqa, pp. 40 – 41.
73. Abu -Na'aim al-Asbahani, Hilat alpAuliya', al-Matba'at al-Sa'adah, Egypt, 1355/1936, Vol. 6, p. 332; Tash Kubrazadah,

op. cit., Vol 2, p. 87.

74. Al-Makki, Vol. 2, p. 212

75. Ibid, p. 214

76. Ibn Khallikan, Vol. 5, p. 422; ibn 'Abd al-Barr, al-Intiqa', p. 172.

77. Ibn Khallikan, Vol, 5, p. 423.

78. Al-Makki, vol. 2, p. 232

79. Al-Kardari, Vol. 2, p. 126

80. Ibn Khallikan, vol 5, p. 424; al-Kardari, vol. 2, p. 126.

81. Ibn al-Nadim, al-Fihrist, al-Matba'at al-Rahmaniyyah, Egypt, 1348/1929. Ibn Khallikan (Vol. 5, p. 242) writes on the authority of Talhah bin Mohammad that Abu Yusuf was the first man to compile books on all fundamental branches of Law in accordance with the Hanafi creed, and thus spread Abu Hanifah's knowledge to all corners of the world.

82. It must be understood that the codification of Islamic law according to the Maliki principles enabling it to serve the needs of a government took place later on the model of Mohammad bin Hassan al-Shaibani's books.

83. Al-Makki, Vol. 2, pp. 211 – 39; ibn Khalikan, Vol. 5, p. 421.

84. Al-Kardari, Vol. 2, p. 128.

85. Al-Sarakhsi, Kitab al-Mabsut, Vol. 16, p. 61; al-Makki, Vol. 2, pp 243 – 44.

86. Al-Makki, Vol. 2, p. 226 – 27.

87. Ibid., p. 240.

88. Ibid,; Mulla 'Ali Qari, Dhail al-Jawahir al-Mudiyyah, p. 526.

89. Al-Makki, Vol 2, p. 232.

90. Al-Karadari, Vol. 2, p. 120.

91. Kitab al-Aghni, Vol. 3, p. 178.

92. Kitab al-Kharaj, pp. 3, 4, 5

93. Ibid., p. 5

94. Ibid., p. 8.

95. Ibid., p. 117

96. Ibid., p. 12

97. Ibid., p. 10 – 11

98. Ibid, p. 12

99. Ibid, p. 117.

100. Ibid., p. 5.

101. Ibid., p.6.

102. Ibid., p. 13.

103. Ibid., p. 108.

104. Ibid., pp. 9, 12.

105. Ibid., pp. 36, 117.

106. Ibid., p. 36.

107. Ibid., 186.

108. Ibid., p. 14.

109. Ibid., pp. 16, 37, 109, 114.

110. Ibid., pp. 109, 132.

111. Ibid., pp. 122, 131.

112. Ibid., pp. 15, 16.

113. Ibid., pp. 37, 114.

114. Ibid., pp. 14, 37, 125.

115. Ibid., pp. 122 – 26.

116. Ibid., p. 139.

117. Ibid. p. 105

118. Ibid., pp. 58, 60, 66
119. Ibid., pp. 59 – 66.
120. Ibid., p. 111.
121. Ibid., pp. 106, 107, 111, 132, 186.
122. Ibid., pp. 111, 112.
123. Ibid., pp. 152 – 53.
124. Ibid., 175 – 76.
125. Ibid, p. 151.
126. Ibid., pp. 149, 151.

Chapter 35: Al-Farabi

A. Society And Its Goal

An account of the life and philosophical thought of Abu Nasr Mohammad ibn Tarkhan al-Farabi (d. 339/950) has already been given in a previous chapter. The reader must have noted that, while recasting the philosophical views of Plato, Aristotle, and other Greek thinkers, al-Farabi always keeps in view the Islamic tenets which have formed the inner links of his writings. In his political philosophy, he has followed the same line. Under the influence of Plato and Aristotle he evolves his own system which markedly differs from the system of the Greeks, the Iranians, as well as the Indians.

This will be shown in these pages which have been prepared in the light of 1) *Kitab Ara' Ahal al-Madinat al-Fadilah* (Book on the Views of the People of the Excellent State), 2) *Kitab al-Siyasat al-Madaniyyah* (Book on Caution on the Path of Administration), 3) *Kitab Tahsil al-Sa'adah* (Book on the Achievement of Happiness, 4) *Kitab al-Tanbih 'ala Sabil al-Sa'addah* (Book on Caution on the path of Happiness), and 5) the Bodleian manuscript of his *Fusul al-Madini* (Chapters on the Civilian).

The City State

According to al-Farabi, the City State (*Madinah*) and the Family State are places that contain inhabitants, no matter whether their dwellings are constructed of wood, mud, wool or hair.[1]

The house or family is limited to only four relationships: husband and wife, master and slave, father and son, and property and proprietor. He who makes them unite in co-operation and aims at providing for them an abode with the best facilities and maintenance, is called the master of the family. He is in the house what the administrator of the city is in the city.[2]

Necessity of Society

Men are naturally so constituted that they need many things for their best achievements. Hence, they

need mutual help and co-operation – everyone doing his best for obtaining a particular kind of object. Thus, by uniting their individual efforts for different objects they organize different societies.[3]

The greater the society, the better are the facilities it achieves for its individuals. The grouping of men is not confined to a house. It extends to lanes, localities, villages, towns, and cities. Men work for the welfare of society and in the long run serve the State. The people living in a state are called a nation (*Ummah*). One nation can be distinguished from another by natural character, temperament, habits, and language.[4]

Human societies are either perfect or imperfect. The perfect society may be great, middling, or small. The great human society is the one consisting of several nations uniting themselves in one unity and helping one another. The middling one is the society of one nation in a part of the world, and the small is the society of the people of a city.[5]

The imperfect society is that of the people of a village, a locality, a lane, or a house, the last being the smallest.

Now, the highest good and perfection are primarily achieved through volition and will. Similarly, evil finds its scope by volition and will. The City-State can, therefore, develop by mutual help and efforts to attain some evil purpose or to attain happiness. The city in which the members of the society co-operate to attain happiness is in reality the ideal City-State (*al-madinat al-fadilah*), the society, the ideal society, and the nation.[6] In this State the citizens help one another to achieve qualities of the greatest life perpetually.[7] But if they help one another to obtain the bare necessities of life and its preservation, this City-State is evidently the necessary State.[8]

How to Achieve Happiness

Al-Farabi speaks of happiness both of this world and hereafter. He explains that when human factors or the four excellences – speculative virtues (*al-jada'il al-nazariyyah*), theoretical virtues (*jada'il al-fikriyyah*), the moral virtues (*fada'il al-khuluqiyyah*), and the practical arts (*al-sana'at al-'amaliyyah*) – form the qualities of a nation or of the people of a city, their worldly happiness in this life and the lasting happiness in the next are insured.

Speculative virtues (*al-fuda'il al-nazariyyah*) represent those sciences which aim at the highest object, knowledge of existing things including all their requirements. These sciences are either innate in man, or they are achieved by effort and learning.[9]

Now, the principal factors of existing bodies and accidents, as explained by al-Farabi, are of six kinds with six grades: The first cause in the first grade, the secondary causes in the second grade, active intellect in the third grade, soul in the fourth grade, form in the fifth grade, and matter in the sixth grade. The first grade is confined to one individual only; it cannot have more than one. But other grades can have more than one occupant. Out of this six, three, viz. the first cause, the secondary cause, and the

active intellect, are neither bodies nor are they contained in bodies. The other three: soul, form and matter are not bodies, but exist in bodies.

As for bodies, they are of six types: the heavenly bodies, rational animals, irrational animals, plants, minerals and the four elements. All these six bodies as a whole form the universe. The first to be believed in is God, the Almighty, who is the immediate cause of the existence of the secondary causes and the active intellect. The secondary causes are the causes of the existence of heavenly bodies and their substance. The secondary causes should be called the spirits, the angels, and so on.

The function of the active intellect is to attend the rational animal, man, and to enable him to attain the highest perfection he can reach. The highest perfect of man consists in his highest happiness which he achieves when he raises himself to the stage of the active intellect by abstracting himself from bodies, matter, and accidents, and continues to enjoy this perfection perpetually. In essence, the active intellect is one but in gradation it includes all that is purified from the rational animal and attains to happiness. The active intellect should be called the Holy Spirit (*al-ruh al-Amin* or *al-Ruh al-Qudus*) or the like and its grades be called the spiritual realm (*al-malakut*) or the like.

Souls have three grades: souls of celestial bodies, souls of the rational animal, and souls of the irrational animals. The souls of the rational animal are the rational faculty, the appetitive faculty, the imaginative faculty, and the perceiving faculty. The rational faculty equips man with sciences and arts, and enables him to distinguish good from evil manners and actions. Through this faculty man inclines to do good and avoid evil and realizes the useful, the harmful, the pleasant and the unpleasant.[10]

1) The rational faculty is either speculative or practical; the first is that through which man obtains the knowledge of all that he is not at all supposed to know by his own effort, and the second is that through which he knows all that he can know if he wills it so. The second is again divided into that through which arts and crafts are obtained (*mahaniyyah*), and that through which imagination and insight concerning doing or not doing a thing are achieved (*marwiyyah*).

2) The appetitive faculty manifests the human inclination of wanting something or running away from something, of desiring or not desiring something, of giving preference to something or avoiding something. All psychological feelings – hatred, affection, love, friendship, enmity, fear, anger, passion, mercy, etc. – are expressed by this faculty.

3) The faculty of imagination retains the impression of the sensible objects after they have disappeared from sense-perception, unites some of them with some others, or separates some of them from some others both in wakefulness and sleep producing true or false propositions. This faculty also perceives the useful, harmful, pleasant, and unpleasant manners and action.

4) The faculty of sense-perception obviously perceives the sensible through the five sense-organs – the pleasant and the unpleasant, without discriminating between the harmful and the useful, and without distinguishing good from evil.

The three faculties other than the rational faculty are available to animals, imaginative faculty serving them as the rational faculty serves man. Some animals, however, possess only the sensible and the appetitive faculties.

The celestial souls are different from the animal souls in so far as the former are actual souls that understand the intelligible, whereas the latter are at first potential and then become actual.[11]

Having explained the gradation of cosmos and the relation that the different grades have with the First, al-Farabi emphasizes the point that the whole cosmos depends for its existence on God, the First Necessary Being.

Man, however, understands and realizes happiness only through the speculative rational faculty. The imaginative and the sensitive faculties help the rational faculty in moving man towards those actions which lead to happiness. The good is characterized as "voluntary." But if the rational faculty feels happiness only by making an effort to perceive it, while other faculties do not perceive it, then sometimes man considers the pleasant and the useful to the ultimate ends of life.

Again, when one becomes indifferent or slow in accomplishing the sensitive rational part and does not feel happiness in doing so, one hastens to attain to it by exercising one's appetitive faculty in aiming at and making all effort to achieve things other than happiness, and in this effort one is assisted also by the faculties of imagination and sense-perception, and produces what may be rightly called voluntary evil.

Similarly, he produces only evil who attains to happiness which he does not recognize as his aim, does not desire it, or desires it with the faint desire, and adopts something other than happiness at his end, and exerts all his faculties to achieve that end.[12]

Since man has been created to achieve happiness which is the highest perfection that remains perpetually, it is possible to obtain it through the active intellect which gives primarily the first intelligible or the first objects of knowledge. But men differ in their capacity to receive the primary intelligible.

B. Human Nature

Human nature is not the same in all individuals; it varies in accordance with the physical qualities of individuals. Some can easily grasp the first intelligible or the first known things, some do not receive them directly. Again, some of them do not receive anything from the first intelligible in a natural way at all, and some others receive them in a way different from theirs. There are still others who receive them in respect of their own selves.

Human beings in this third group are free from defect, their nature being homogeneous, prepared to receive intelligible which are common to them and through which they advance to the affairs and actions that are common to them. After this stage, they differ from one another, as some receive those intelligible which are peculiar to them, and are not common to others. Those belonging to this group

endeavour towards a particular genus without allowing anything else to share it.

Similarly, human beings excel one another in the faculties through which they derive the objects of one genus, some having the ability of deriving all the individuals of a genus and others perceiving only a few individuals thereof. Again, sometimes it so happens that two individuals do not prove to be equal in their capacity of deriving the external objects, one being swift and the other slow, or one being swift in deriving the genus of the greatest excellence and the other in deriving the basest of the genus. It is also possible that both are equal in power, but one is able enough to teach what one has derived, and can offer guidance to others, but the other has no such power of teaching and guiding others. They also differ in performing corporeal deeds.

Natural dispositions do not oppose one another, nor do they insist on action, but they facilitate performance, and are not moved by anything external towards opposite actions. Even if they are moved in opposite directions they resist and offer hindrance.

All these natural dispositions require a suitable teacher. Hence, they are trained in matters that prepare them to be in their highest or nearly highest perfection. Some are trained in mean things which produce excellent actions from a mean genus.[13]

People have different calibres by nature, and they vary in ranks in accordance with the ranks in genus, arts, and sciences for which they have naturally been prepared. They also differ in the capacity of training and giving guidance. Some are stronger than others, and, hence, they differ in receiving and training. For some can be trained for a part of the genus only. Now, he who is an expert in imparting training and guidance is called the *chief*.[14]

C. Education

Man has been created to attain to the highest happiness (*sa'ddah*). He should, therefore, know what happiness is and should make it the aim of his life. He, then, needs to know those factors and arts through which he can achieve happiness. He will have to exercise all those arts which will enable him to attain to it. But since it has been explained that human individuals differ in nature, it is not in the nature of every man to know happiness or those factors which enable him to reach it by himself. He, therefore, needs a teacher, a guide.

Some people require less guidance and teaching, and some need more. It is also not necessary that one should learn all that one is taught, or receive all the guidance one is given. Hence, some people require constant teaching and guidance to urge them to do what they have been taught to do.[15]

Teaching (*ta'lim*) means creating speculative excellences in nations and cities, while upbringing (*tadib*) is the method of creating and developing moral virtues and scientific arts in nations. Teaching is possible only be expressing; *tadib* or discipline is to make nations and citizens habituated to the deeds done

through scientific habits. That is, their resolutions will move them to perform those actions, so much so that these resolutions will dominate their souls, and they will become devoted to those actions.

To exert one's resolution to do something is possible either by expression or by performance. While al-Farabi agrees with Plato in the system of education and in learning from childhood, he emphasizes that speculative sciences are learned either by kings and leaders (*imams*) or by those who preserve these sciences and teach kings and leaders in several ways. First of all, they should know the primary axioms, and the first known object in every genus of speculative sciences, and then they should know the various forms of premises and their arrangement through which they can lead to conclusions. After they have completed their education, and have accustomed themselves to logical methods, they will be made kings in each of the partial States, and will be promoted little by little until the stage of the great State is achieved.

Speculative sciences must be taught through convincing methods. Men very often understand these sciences by a process of thinking, because they understand them after realizing many known principles which are not corporeal. The common people can understand their images by the method of convincing only.

The teacher should also distinguish what should be imparted to a particular nation and how to make it common to all nations or to all the people of every city. He should also know what should be taught to the entire nation, or city, and what only to a particular group in the city. All these distinctions can be made by the imaginative virtue which enables one to achieve the speculative virtues.

As for practical virtues and practical arts, people must habituate themselves to practising them by two methods. First, the teacher should train them by convincing and effective expressions to engender the values of these actions and habits perfectly in their hearts so that their convictions may move them to perform them submissively. Secondly, he should use the method of force which is employed for the disobedient and revolutionary citizens, and those who do not move to righteousness meekly on their own accord or by persuasion.[16]

The virtuous teachers and artists can be divided into two groups in respect of the above-mentioned two methods – one group teaching and training those who are obedient, the other group teaching the disobedient. In both respects, the king is the teacher of nations whom he trains to achieve virtues, and the master of the house is the teacher of the people of the house. Similar is the case with one who is in charge of children or the youth.[17]

The Imaginative Virtue

The imaginative virtue enables a man to think of an exceedingly useful purpose which is common to the comity of nations, to a nation, or to a city. This virtue is called the civil imaginative virtue. But if this virtue is common to a group of citizens or the members of a house only, then it is ascribed to that particular

group and is called family imaginative virtue, or State imaginative virtue. Sometimes this virtue is further divided. Since it is derived from what is most useful and beautiful in respect of a particular art or profession for a limited time, it is divided into the various kinds of arts and professions. The most accomplished one in this virtue is the strongest one who succeeds in creating a great State.

The imaginative virtue confined to different aspects of the State – defence, finance, and so on – is followed by moral virtue which is related to the imaginative virtue as the imaginative virtue is related to different arts, professions, or families. This virtue is, first of all, needed for organizing and maintaining the army. The moral virtue alone impels the warriors to display their bravery, and the best kind of valour. It also urges citizens to earn the wealth of the State with honesty and legal means. In fact, it plays a major role in all departments of the State.[18]

D. The Chief

It is evident that every man cannot be the chief. People differ in their intellectual capacity, in physical strength, in the exercise of virtuous deeds, and in the acquisition of excellent habits of thinking, feeling, willing, and doing. In every department of life and arts the strongest person, of excellent manners, who also knows, acts, and directs, is the chief of that department, the rest being the subjects. The chief is either one of the first rank who is not sub-servient to anyone, or he is of the second rank, dominating some, and being dominated by some others. Such ranks develop in relation to the forms of art, e.g. cultivation, trade, medical profession, or in respect of all kinds of human beings.[19]

The first chief in general is he who needs no help from anyone. Sciences and arts are his property in actuality, and he needs no guidance from any person in any respect.[20]

The first chief of the excellent (ideal) city is one who is chief in all respects. His profession must excel all the rest in attaining to perfection, and in intending by all actions of the ideal state to achieve the highest happiness. This man is not sub-servient to any other. He is a man accomplished in all virtues, and, therefore, he is intellect and intelligible in actuality, having his imaginative faculty naturally so perfected as to be able to receive particulars from the active intellect either in themselves, or as images in sleep, or in wakeful state. His passive intellect receives the intelligible in complete perfection, so that nothing which has become an intellect in actuality is denied to him.

Whosoever invests his passive intellect with intelligibles becomes intellect and intelligible in actuality. His understanding of himself is more perfect, more separable from matter, nearer to the active intellect, and is called the derived intellect. This derived intellect has a rank between the passive and the active intellect. The passive intellect is, therefore, like matter and sub-stratum for the derived intellect which is like matter and sub-stratum for the active intellect.[21]

The rational faculty[22] which is the natural form, supplies material sub-stratum for the passive intellect and makes it the actual intellect. The actual intellect is the first stage at which man is called man and

being human becomes common to all human beings. When the passive intellect and the natural form become one in the same way as the composite of matter and form becomes one and the same thing, and man receives human form, the actual intellect is achieved; and when the natural form becomes the matter of the passive intellect which has thus becomes the actual intellect, it becomes the matter of the derived intellect, which in its turn becomes the matter of the active intellect, and all of these become like one thing, then man enjoys the presence of the active intellect in himself.

If the active intellect is present in both parts of the rational faculty – the speculative and the practical – then man receives revelation in his imaginative faculty. Allah, the Exalted and Sublime, sends revelation to him through the active intellect. If the active intellect extends what it receives from Allah to his passive intellect through his derived intellect and then to his imaginative faculty, then man, through what descends upon his passive intellect, becomes a wise philosopher and possessor of perfect understanding, and through what descends upon his imaginative faculty, a prophet, a warner against what is going to take place, and an informer of what particulars exist, as he understands them for God. This man is in the most perfect stage of humanity and in the highest place of blessing, his soul being perfect, united with the active intellect in the manner described. This the man who is aware of every action that would enable one to achieve grace and is the chief, the leader, who cannot be led by anybody else.

E. Characteristics Of The Chief Of The Ideal State

The Imam or the chief of the ideal State is the chief of the ideal nation, and for the matter of that, of the whole inhabited part of the earth. This position is only attained by a man who naturally possesses the following 12 characteristics as his second nature:

1. Sound health, and perfect organs, performing their functions with ease and facility and in harmony will faculties.

2. Intelligence and sagacity, so as to be able to grasp the intention of a speaker in his particular situations and circumstances.

3. Good memory, so as to retain in his mind all that he understands, sees, hears, and perceives.

4. Prudence and talent, to understand a problem from the perspective in which it has been presented to him.

5. Eloquence, so that his tongue may assist him in expressing in a perfect manner all that is in his mind.

6. Devotion to education and learning, and submission to receive knowledge with ease without feeling any annoyance.

7. No greed for food, drink and sex, avoidance of play, and dislike of pleasures caused by these.

8. Friendliness towards truth and truthful persons and condemnation of falsehood and those who are inclined to falsehood.

9. Bigness of heart, loving nobility, and natural magnanimity without any trace of meanness.

10. Indifference to *dirham* and *dinar* and other forms of wealth.

11. Devotion by nature to justice and just people, abhorrence of injustice and oppression and unjust and oppressive people, offering half of one's possessions and those of one's family to help the oppressed, and urging others to do the same, helping everything good and beautiful, and being easy to bend to justice but difficult to oppression and evil.

12. Strong resolution, courage, and promptitude without any sign of fear or psychological weakness.

If a person possessed of these qualities happens to live in an ideal State he is the chief.

It is, however, impossible to have all these qualities in one man. People are scarcely equipped with all of them. If no one having these qualities is found in the State, the laws promulgated by the former chief or his successors should be kept in force.

The second chief who succeeds the first should fulfil at least the following six requirements:

1. He should be wise and philosophical.

2. Learned and abreast with the laws, customs, rites and rituals adopted by his predecessor to discharge the function of the ideal State with all perfection.

3. He should be an expert in deriving principles in case he does not find any law.

4. He should be far-sighted, possessing an insight to frame rules and regulations in accordance with the conditions and circumstances he finds himself in, and capable of keeping up the reforms he introduces.

5. He should also be well experienced and eloquent in giving directions to urge the people to follow him in accordance with the *Shari'ah*.

6. In addition, he should be skilful in physical display of exercises needed in warfare, and in the use of arms, ammunition, and other equipments.

In other words, this ruler must have insight to derive inferences from the possessed records of the customs, rites, and rituals, and accurate opinion in understanding the events that take place and may increase the prosperity of the State. He must have the power to convince others and struggle hard. This sovereign is called the king of the tradition, and the State is called *al-mulk al-sunnah* the country of traditions and customs.

If all the conditions described for the chief are not found in one man, and are available in two persons – one wise and the other possessing other qualities – then both will be the chiefs of the State. If, however, these conditions are scattered in a group of people agreeable to work together, then these members will be the ideal chiefs. But if wisdom does not form a part of the State while other conditions are fulfilled entirely, the city will be best without a sovereign, but it will be exposed to destruction. The State without a philosopher to whom it may be entrusted will perish in no time.[23]

F. The Ideal State

The sovereigns of an ideal State who succeed one another are all like one soul, as if there were one king who continued all the time. Similar is the case with a group of people who administer the State together at a time in one or more than one city. The whole group is just like one sovereign, their souls being like one soul. Uniformity is found in every stage and in every part of the State, and people flourishing at different times look as they were one soul working at all times in the same way. If there is continuity and harmony at a particular stage, even different groups of people, whether of one or more than one State, would appear as one soul.[24]

The people of the ideal State have something common to all of them in their learning and acting, but different groups of people belonging to different ranks and stages have some sciences and deeds peculiar to them. Through both of these, people achieve happiness, and by displaying these they obtain an ideal physical form. This form grows stronger and stronger and better and better by constant performance of those deeds. For example, the art of writing has some pre-requisite performances. The more they are executed by the expert, the greater is the excellence of his art. Not only that, the scribe enjoys his art by repeating his exercises, and grows in love for it.

The same is the case with happiness, which increases with the constant practice of deeds that lead to it. The soul grows in happiness to such a degree that it becomes free from matter. It does not perish with matter, for it is no longer required for its existence. At this stage, being separated from matter, the soul frees itself from all corporeal qualities so much so that even movement and rest cannot be ascribed to it. As this state is very unusual, it is very difficult to form an idea of it.

G. Arts And Blessings

As art has three grades, happiness or bliss is also divided into three grades in respect of species, quality, and quantity. There are such species of art as weaving, cloth-trading, perfumery, and sweeping, or as dancing, jurisprudence, philosophy, and rhetoric. Thus, arts excel one another in different species.

The artists of the same art excel one another in skill and efficiency. Two scribes, for example, differ in their skill, because, besides a good hand, their art requires some knowledge of lexicon, rhetoric, and arithmetic. Now, one may be an expert in good hand and rhetoric, another in good hand, lexicon, and rhetoric, and yet another in all the four arts. Again, two scribes may differ in the quality of their art, for

one of them maybe better than the other. Similarly, happiness excels in species, quantity, and quality.

The people of an imperfect State have but little virtue. They have evil psychical forms and their actions are not good. The greater their activity, the more does their profession display defect and imperfection. In consequence, they become ill inasmuch as they do not enjoy edibles, and become annoyed with beautiful and excellent things. Some of them even regard themselves as healthy and perfect, though they are actually not so, and do not pay any heed to the advice of the physician or the well-wisher.

H. Inhabitants Of The Ideal State

The excellent or the ideal State consists of five kinds of people: the excellent, the linguists, the secluded, the struggling, and the steady. The excellent people are the philosophers, the intellectuals, and "the People of Opinion" in great affairs. As for linguists, they are the orators, speakers, poets, musicians, writers, and the like. The secluded people are the mathematicians, statisticians, physicians, astronomers, and the like. The struggling people are the fighters, the defenders, and all those who take their place. The steady are those who earn money in the city, for example cultivators, traders, and those engaged in other pursuits.[25]

I. Imperfect States

The excellent State as explained above is the State administered by the best and most talented who aim at prosperity and happiness for all and sundry. If its constitution fails to provide the people with prosperity, and the rulers do not possess the qualities of ideal rulers, then the State ceases to be excellent and is called the evil-doing State (*al-madinat al-fasiqah*), the ignorant state (*al-madinat al-jahilah*) or the astray going State (*al-madinat al-dallah*). People in the evil doing State are like weeds in a field. They are no better than savages and can have no organization worthy of a State.[26]

As for the people of the ignorant State, they possess their own constitution and culture. But their civic organization varies. They look after the necessities of life in a necessary State; organize the society of the contemptible in the contemptible State, the society of the vile in the vile State, the society of the extravagant in the extravagant State, the society of the dominant in the dominant State, or the society of the free in the social State.

The necessary organization is the State which endeavours to earn what is evidently necessary for the constitution and the upkeep of the body.[27] The State of the contemptible is the one which tries to achieve wealth in abundance, and the money which they hoard due to the love of wealth and niggardliness is spent only for the needs of the body. The vile state broods over sensuous pleasures and achieves the best means for the sake of pleasure only. This State is the most coveted one.

The extravagant State is the organization of the profusely generous in which the individuals help one another to reach nobility in expression and action. The people of this State are called generous either by

themselves or by the people of other States.[28] This is the best State among all the States of the ignorant.

The state of the dominant people tries to over-power others in power and wealth; they shed blood, subjugate others, and indulge in all sorts of pleasures. The State of the dominant excels the State of the generous in showing power.[29] As for the social State, everybody is free in it to do whatever he likes, and believes that no man has any superiority over others by any means. But independence often leads to extremes, and, therefore, there arise in this State different rites and rituals, customs and manners, and people are misled by evil propensities. Thus, this State splits into different groups and parties.

In all these States there is always unrest prevailing among the people, as everybody tries to become the chief and, by virtue of his wits, to lead the State of prosperity and happiness.

The evil doing States differ from the States mentioned above in so far as the people of these States believe in the principles held and the forms of happiness conceived by the people of the excellent State, and also invite others to do the same, but they themselves do nothing to achieve their object, nor do they try by action to attain the happiness they believe in. On the contrary, they incline to their own whims and propensities, that is to say, they like to enjoy power, nobility, and domination, and direct their actions towards their achievement. In activities, these States are like the States of the ignorant. In manners, their peoples resemble the peoples of the said States. The peoples of these two States differ only in belief. None of these states ever achieve happiness and prosperity.

The astray going States are those whose people suffer from some delusion. They adopt such principles, actions, and deeds as appear to them to be those of the excellent State, but in fact are not. The same is true of their goal of happiness and prosperity which they conceive to be so but which actually is not so.

The offspring of societies which develop in these States are of various types and all of them aim at personal gain and victory and not at real happiness and true prosperity.[30]

J. Conclusion

According to al-Farabi, the chief of the state should be physically free from all defects, and should have a sharp intellect, memory, and wit. He should be devoted to sciences, truth-loving, and not easily upset by difficulties, contented, without greed for things to eat, and disinclined towards sensuous pleasures. He should abhor falsehood and liars, be ambitious with lofty ideals, a lover of justice, without thought of wealth or worldly position, and should have strong resolution, boldness, and courage. Plato's philosopher king has also been described as truth loving, fond of the knowledge of existents, one who keeps away from vice, is free-thinking, intelligent, sagacious, witty, and ambitious. But the state of al-Farabi is international in character.

While the State of Plato is only a City-State, that of al-Farabi can be as vast as a World-State. Plato

wants to entrust the affairs of the State to a group of philosophers and names the organization “aristocracy.” Al–Farabi not only calls the Head of State Imam but identifies him with prophet. It is in the absence of the Imam or the second chief who has the necessary qualities to follow the tradition of the Imam that he entrusts the affairs of the State of the chief. It is, therefore, not true to say that al–Farabi has based his theory entirely on the *Republic* of Plato, or that he is simply Aristotelian in his thought.

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Chapter 36: Al-Mawardi

A. Life And Works

Abu al-Hassan al-Mawardi was born in Basrah (c. 364/974) which was then one of the principal seats of learning and education in the Muslim world. He, therefore, got all his education here and rose in literary renown at an early age. He especially prepared himself for the judicial profession and obtained an appointment in the State service. As a judge he served at various places and was finally posted in Baghdad. In the year 429/1037, the Caliph, al-Qadir, summoned four jurists representing the four schools of Islamic Law to write a legal epitome. Al-Mawardi was chosen to represent the Shafi'ite school and he wrote *Kitab al-Iqna'*; al-Quduri produced his famous *al-Mukhtasar* for the Hanafites. The other two books were of no importance.

The Caliph, however, recognized al-Mawardi's work as the best and in appreciation of his merit appointed him as the *Aqda al-Qudat*. This designation was objected to by many leading jurists like Abu al-Tayyib, al-Tabari, and al-Simyari, who said that it did not become anyone except God. But al-Mawardi took no notice of these objections and retained the designation until his death in 450/1058, because the same jurists had previously approved the title of *Malik al-Muluk al-A'zam* for Jalal al-Daulah, the Buwaihid chief.

Although al-Mawardi was a staunch Sunnite and Shaf'ite jurist, he had the good fortune of being equally favoured by both the Buwaihids and 'Abbasids. But the Shi'ite Buwaihids favoured him out of diplomacy, because he was often helpful in settling their everyday quarrels with the palace, for, writes Yaqut, "He was held in great esteem by the Buwaihid Sultans who deputed him to negotiate between them and their opponents, and were pleased with his mediation, and affirmed his settlements."

Al-Mawardi was acclaimed as one of the ablest men of his age. He was not only a distinguished judge but also a distinguished author. He wrote mostly on law and politics. His well-known extant works are: *Kitab al-Hawi, al-Iqna', Siyasut al-Mulk, Qawanin al-Wizarah, Adab al-Dunya w-al-Din*, and *al-Ahkum al-Sultaniyyah*. But it is this last work on which his fame chiefly rests. In Muslim history it is one the first

scientific treatises on political science and State administration. A detailed discussion of this will be taken up in the following pages.

Here, a note of explanation seems to be necessary. Ibn Khallikan quotes a report that none of al-Mawardi's writings were published in his life-time because the author had grave doubts as to whether he was really honest and correct in his speculations. This report cannot be accepted as true, particularly with reference to *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah*, because there exists another book with the same title by Abu Ya'la al-Farra', who was a contemporary of al-Mawardi and who died in 458/1066.

Abu Ya'la's book is almost an exact replica of al-Mawardi's work so far as its pattern and subjects of discussion are concerned. Even the language and arguments are almost the same as in al-Mawardi in most places. It is, therefore, certain that Abu Ya'la had seen the published work of al-Mawardi while the latter was still alive, because the dates of their deaths are so approximate to each other and because it is not proven that Abu Ya'la had personal relations with al-Mawardi. This conclusion is further strengthened by the fact that Yaqut, who died in 626/1229, does not mention this story, and the authority of ibn Khallikan, who died in 681/1282, cannot be accepted in this matter.

B. Political Theory

Al- Mawardi's main political thought is embodied in his *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah*. Only a small portion of the work is, however, devoted to political theory, the rest of it discusses the details of public administration and rules of government. But his small portion is extremely important because it is the first attempt in Muslim history to evolve a comprehensive theory of the State and because it has left an enduring influence on the course of Muslim political thought up to our own day.

Further, although we know that al-Mawardi profited a good deal from previous sources in the elaboration of his theory, for he says that it is the epitome of the views of various schools of jurisprudence, we do not posses in our hands today any sources in the elaboration of his theory, for he says that it is the epitome of the views of various schools of jurisprudence, we do not possess in our hands today any source discussing comprehensively the problem of the Caliphate dating back beyond the fifth/11th century. The *Usul al-Din* of 'Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdadi gives theologically a more copious discussion of the Imamate than al-Mawardi's book, but al-Baghdadi (d. 429/1037) was a contemporary of al-Mawardi. Hence, the conclusion is that most of al-Mawardi's ideas are partly a heritage of the past and partly a clever manipulation of the opinions current in his time.

A closer examination of his work, however, discloses that he is not a mere recorder of facts handed down to him but a shrewd statesman and diplomat. There is enough historical data to sanction the view that on many fundamental questions al-Mawardi's opinions were dictated by the exigencies of his time and the special circumstances of his life. In the preface of his *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah* he writes,

"Since these principles of royalty are mainly concerned with the conduct of rulers, and since the direct

application of these principles to the entire business of government prevents the rulers from an inquiry into their true nature, and because these rulers are too engrossed in State affairs and diplomacy, I have brought out a separate book discussing all of them, in obedience to the behest of one whose allegiance is essential in order that he may be informed of the different schools of law and may know what the people owe to him so that he may demand its fulfillment, and what he owes to them so he may fulfill it. [And he has asked to be informed about these things] out of love for justice in his enactments and decisions and for the sake of equity in his imposts and rewards."[1]

The mention of authority in this passage refers to the Caliph, especially because al-Mawardi had been raised to the high office of *Aqda al-Qudat*,[2] and represented the Caliph in his negotiations with the Buwaihids.

Further, it is necessary to point out that the declining power of the Buwaihids in the beginning of the fifth/11th century because of internal conflicts and insurrections in the army and because of Mahmud of Ghaznah's solicitations for the 'Abbasids, made the Caliph al-Qadir and his son al-Qa'im aspire to regain the lost glory of their fore-fathers. The first step in this direction was the legal definition and exposition of the powers and prerogatives of the Caliph which had well-nigh been forgotten and had fallen to oblivion.

The historical situation explains al-Mawardi's efforts to propound a theory of the caliphate in which everything depends on the authority of the Caliph, in an age in which the prestige of the Caliphate had fallen to its lowest ebb. Al-Mawardi's endeavours have been supposed to be directed to the theoretical discussion of an ideal State. This view is however, untenable on account of the fact that al-Mawardi is, truly speaking, not a philosopher, and is least interested in abstract thinking. He is a jurist and builds on the opinions of his forbears, gives a wider scope to these opinions, and uses his own wisdom to apply them intelligently to the special conditions of his own times.

His greatest merit, therefore, lies in the fact that he abstains from abstract speculation and correlates the opinions of the jurists to the historical perspective of his age. Similarly, as already remarked, he is not a mere compiler or interpreter and expresses views opposed to the views of earlier authorities, or gives out opinions altogether original.

Now, it will be useful to pick up the main points in al-Mawardi's theory and compare them with the contentions of the ancient jurists, on the one hand, and with the contemporary political conditions, on the other. This will give us a true estimate of al-Mawardi's achievements.

1. The institution of the Imamate is a necessary requirement of the *Shari'ah* and not of reason. The appointment of an imam by the consensus of the Muslim community is obligatory.[3] There is a similar passage in al-Baghdadi,[4] who remarks that this is al-Ash'ari's opinion is opposed to the Mu'tazilite view.

2. The Imamate is instituted by means of election. The Electoral College shall consist of persons with special qualifications.[5] Also, the candidates for the Imamate must fulfil certain conditions.[6] This elective

principle of the Imamate is obviously opposed to the Shi'ite claim of bequeathal or divine nomination. Al-Mawardi, however, does not discuss the election of a licentious person as Imam. Al-Baghdadi says that his election will be void, even if it has taken place through a properly constituted Electoral College. Al-Mawardi's omission is deliberate, being a concession to the Buwaihids, who appointed the Caliphs to suit their selfish ends.

3. The right of franchise is enjoyed not only by the people living in the capital. The Caliph is, however, traditionally elected in the capital because the death of the previous Caliph is first known there, and political considerations require the immediate appointment of a new Caliph, and also because most people possessing the necessary qualifications for the Imamate generally reside there.[7] This principle was hotly contended by the Khawarij who believed in complete democracy and universal franchise.

4. Among the seven conditions which according to al-Mawardi must be fulfilled by a candidate, the seventh one, that is, the Quraishite descent is very important. Al-Mawardi lays great stress on it and says that if anyone objects to it on the ground that it excludes non-Quraishites from the Caliphate, such an objection would not be considered, because it was this Quraishite descent that was presented by Abu Bakr as an argument for preference in the election of Saqifah Bani Sa'idah.[8]

5. The Imam is appointed in one of two ways:[9] (a) He may be elected by the Electoral College, or (b) he may be nominated by the ruling Imam.

In the first case some scholars say the Imam must be elected by all the members of the Electoral College in all the cities. Others oppose this view and say that Abu Bakr was elected only by the citizens of Madinah. Still others assert that only five persons are sufficient to elect the Imam, as happened in the case of Abu Bakr and 'Uthman. In al-Mawardi's opinion, even one person is enough to elect the Caliph.[10] He cites the tradition of 'Abbas as evidence. 'Abbas said to 'Ali, "Stretch your hand, I will sear my allegiance to you, and when people come to know that the Prophet's uncle has sworn his allegiance to his nephew, nobody would object to your Imamate." This opinion has also been corroborated by al-Ash'ari.[11]

6. The above extreme opinion has been advocated by al-Mawardi to advance another important opinion given in the next section, where he discusses the case of two candidates equally qualified for the Imamate. He says that the Electoral College may nominate anyone of the two as Imam without assigning any reason.[12]

7. The election of a less qualified person in the presence of a more qualified person is perfectly legal, provided the former fulfils all the conditions of the Imamate.[13] It was this principle under which most of the worthless caliphs took refuge. It was also directed against the Shi'ahs, who believe that an inferior person cannot have precedence over a superior one. They coined this theory to assert that since 'Ali and his descendants in the Fatimid line were superior to the rest of mankind, anyone who assumed the Caliphate power was a mere usurper. The refutation of this dogma was essential to establish the above

doctrine. But al-Mawardi is not alone in this respect, for this is the agreed opinion of Sunnite jurists and theologians.

8. If there is only one suitable candidate for the Imamate, he automatically becomes the Imam, and election is required.[14] Al-Mawardi seems to be inclined to this view; the jurists and scholars, however, assert that election must be held even if there is only one candidate for it; otherwise the Imam cannot acquire legal status. This insistence on election is obviously directed against the Shi'ite theory of divine appointment.

9. The existence of two Imams contemporaneously is illegal.[15] Al-Ash'ari opposes this view and says that two Imams at a time are possible if their territories are far-flung and widely separated by an ocean, which hinders easy communication between the two. But al-Mawardi insists in his view to rule out the Fatimids and the Umayyads of Spain.

C. Succession

1. The ruling Imam can nominate his successor. There is complete consensus on this point in the Muslim community.[16] The Muslims accepted 'Umar as caliph not on the *suggestion* of Abu Bakr but in *obedience* to his order as Caliph.[17] Similarly, when 'Umar appointed a limited council to elect his successor it was an order from the Imam and there was no choice for the Muslims to do otherwise.[18]

2. The Imam can nominate any suitable person as his successor, provided he does not happen to be his father or son. The concurrence of the *ahl al-hall w-al-'aqd* is not necessary;[19] but if he nominates his son, the concurrence must be obtained.[20] Also, he can nominate any other relation without requiring the concurrence.[21]

It was this theory of nomination that cut at the very root of democratic ideals in Islamic polity. It has been persistently resorted to be every Muslim ruler after the days of the pious Caliphate, to perpetuate dynastic and despotic rule among the Muslim peoples. Thus, apparently the structure of the Caliphate was maintained by the Umayyads, the 'Abbisids, the Fatimids, and the Turks, but the spirit of Islamic democracy was cast away with the shedding of the blood of 'Uthman, the third successor of the Prophet.

Al-Mawardi's contention that Abu Bakr's nomination of 'Umar could not be challenged by the Companions, for it was the valid enactment of a valid Imam, is nothing but historical fiction having no basis in historical fact. One of the earliest and most reliable authorities on that period, ibn Qutaibah, reports in his *al-Imamah w-al-Siyasah* that when symptoms of death approached Abu Bakr, he became very anxious as to who should succeed him to the Caliphal authority.

After much deliberation he decided to nominate 'Umar to succeed him. He called 'Uthman to his bedside and dictated to him the deed of succession. When the news spread, people flocked to him from every quarter and began to question his choice. Thereupon he said, "If God asked me about this matter, I

would tell Him that I appointed over them one whom I considered to be the best of them."

After this he ordered a general assembly of the people, and when they gathered together, he addressed them and said, "If you so desire, you may sit together and elect a person whom you like, but if you wish that I should use my discretion in the matter on your behalf, then I assure you by One other than whom there is no God, I will spare no pains in doing you the best service." He then stopped and wept and the people wept with him and said, "You are the best and most informed amongst us, so you choose for us." And when the crowd dispersed he called for 'Umar and gave him the deed of succession and said, "Go to the people and inform them that his is my suggestion, and ask them if they hear it and obey it." 'Umar took that document and went to the people and addressed them. They all said, "We are all ears and obedience to it."22

This testimony of ibn Qutaibah is most unequivocal and decisive. It completely abrogates al-Mawardi's theory of nomination. It is quite obvious that Abu Bakr did not deprive the people of their democratic right to elect the head of the State freely. He simply gave his personal opinion. The people could accept his opinion as well as reject it. There was no political bar in their way, no Caliphal decree to prevent the exercise of their right of franchise.23

Al-Mawardi's second argument in support of his thesis that the limited college of electors prescribed by 'Umar had the sole right of nominating the new Caliph,24 is nothing but a deliberate effort to interpret ancient practice to justify later historical phenomena. In fact, 'Umar did nominate the limited council at the suggestion of 'A'ishah to prevent civil strife after his death.25 He knew full well that the probable candidates for the Caliphate were the very people whom he had nominated for it. Not only that, he was perfectly sure that either 'Uthman or 'Ali would be elected.26

Therefore, to facilitate the new election he fixed a procedure that was least pregnant with evil and the best guarantee against civil discord. The stern warnings which he gave to the dissentient members of the Electoral College and the strict directions which he issued about the conduct of the election were but the last symbols of his great over-riding authority over the hearts and minds of people, by means of which he so wonderfully ruled half the world for 12 years. But he did not lay down a permanent principle of Islamic polity, for this he could not do, since there was no warrant for it in the Qur'an or the Sunnah.

Even Abu Bakr could not devise the theoretical foundations of the Caliphate, for during the last moments of his life he said that the one great regret he had was that he could not ask the Prophet to enlighten him on three problems. Regarding two of these, he said, "I should have asked who would succeed him in political power after him? If he nominated anyone, nobody could challenge his nominee on this issue. And I should have asked him whether the Ansars were entitled to any share in political power."27

Umar's arrangement was, therefore, dictated by purely prudential considerations. A proof of this assertion is that he categorically declared that the Ansars were not entitled to any share in the sovereign power,28 although Abu Bakr was doubtful on this issue, and although many of the later jurists did not

accept ‘Umar’s ruling on this point. The truth is that ‘Umar took this extra-ordinary step for the defence of the State and not for the defence of a principle, for there was no clear principle before him. Hence, the construction of a political theory out of his ruling can be neither justified nor appreciated as an achievement in political thought.

But al-Mawardi was not very concerned about theory. He was a leading Sunnite legal doctor of the Shafi‘ite school, and was intimately associated with the ‘Abbasids; hence, his chief interest lay in emancipating the Sunnite Caliphate from the Shi‘ite tyranny of the Buwaihids. This explains why he gave the stamp of validity to the monarchical system of the ‘Abbasids. He had already before him the precedent of the Umayyads. Moreover, the jurists had, by the force of circumstances, reconciled themselves to the imperialistic order of the day, and given it to the form and sanction of religious authority.

Al-Mawardi, therefore, found no difficulty in taking his cue from the prevailing ideas of his time. His main contribution to Muslim political thought lies in the transformation of these ideas into a system, directly related to historical practice. He was not a visionary and idealist like the jurists or the scholastics, and like them did not sit to speculate a vacuum. He was a man of the world; he tried to solve its problems as best as he could.

3. The nomination of a person as heir apparent becomes effective only when he declares his consent to it. The Imam cannot withdraw the nomination until there occurs in this heir apparent some important change which invalidates him legally. So, also, an Imam cannot be deposed until a similar change occurs in him.[29] Now, these are only logical deductions from the fundamentals of the *Shari‘ah* for there are no historical precedents to vouch-safe them.

4. The Imam can appoint the Electoral College as well as the persons who may contest for the Imamate.[30] This opinion is based on the election of ‘Uthman by means of a limited *shura* appointed by ‘Umar, the derivation of a general principle out of it is certainly most dangerous to sound polity and to the stability of the State. The piety, honesty, intelligence, and statesmanship of ‘Umar could well be relied upon. The same cannot be said of another personality after him in the Muslim history.

Notwithstanding this, historians have held that ‘Umar was mistaken in taking this step.[31] It is a well-known fact that most of the members of the *shura*, who came out unsuccessful in the contest, at once started plotting against ‘Uthman and began to aspire for the Caliphate.[32] Apart from this historical fact, if the right of nominating the electorate as well as the candidates is conceded to the Imam, it is bound to make him absolute and despotic. In truth, it was this theory that developed into divine right with ‘Alids and the ‘Abbasids. And it was this theory that throttled the growth of democracy in Islamic polity.

5. The Imam can nominate two or more heirs apparent to succeed him one after the other. The argument has been derived from the battle of Mutah, in which the prophet appointed Zaid bin Harithah as the Commander of the Muslim forces and said that if he fell in fighting he was to be succeeded in

command by Ja'far bin Abi Talib who was to be succeeded by 'Abd Allah bin Rawabah. If ibn Rawabah also fell, then the Muslims could choose anyone from among themselves as their commander. Apparently, the citation of this incident in support of a fundamental issue, like that of the Caliphate, is but fake reasoning.[33]

This practice of appointing two or more heirs apparent proved to be the greatest political evil in Muslim polity. It often engendered palace intrigues and gave rise to internecine wars and dynastic feuds.

D. Designation And Privileges

1. When a person is duly elected as Imam, the people should entrust all their affairs to him and must give him their unquestioning obedience. The Imam may not consult them in the affairs of the State, yet they must obey him.[34]

2. The Imam may be addressed as the *Khalifat Allah*, but the majority of jurists say that this title is forbidden, for no human being can represent God on Earth, since man is mortal and imperfect. Hence the Imam may either be a mere *Khalifah* or *Khalifat al-Rasul Allah*.[35] Once when Abu Bakr was addressed as *Khalifat Allah* he exclaimed, "Do not address me as *Khalifat Allah* but as the *Khalifat al-Rasul Allah*."

E. Duties And Functions Of The Imam

The Imam has the following ten principle duties to perform:

1. The safeguard and defence of the established principles of religion as understood and propounded by the consensus of ancient authorities. If anyone innovates an opinion or becomes a sceptic, the Imam should convince him of the real truth, correct him with proper arguments, and make him obey the injunctions an prohibitions of the *Shari'ah*, so that the people at large may be saved from the evil effects of heresies.

This is undoubtedly the foremost duty of the Imam under the *Shari'ah*. But unfortunately it is under the cover of this pre-text that throughout the last 13 centuries, adventurers and self-seekers have striven to carve out political fortunes for themselves. The second civil war of Muslims was fought by the Umayyads, the Hashimites, and the Zubairites under the same pre-text.

When the 'Abbasids, the Fatimids, and the Safawids came to power they called themselves the Defenders of Faith, and crushed every political dissentient in the name of religion. Even today there can be evinced a great effervescence for religious revival in all the Muslim lands, but everywhere the undertone is political, not religious.

Al-Mawardi's enumeration of these duties, however, was very effective and timely, since it came out as a stern warning to the Buwaihids, who had over-powered the Caliph in Baghdad, and who professed a

heretical faith.

2. The dispensation of justice and disposal of all litigations in accordance with the *Shari-ah*. The Imam should curb the strong from riding over the weak and encourage the weak to take their due in face of the strong.

3. The maintenance of law and order in the country to make it possible for the people to lead a peaceful life, proceed in their economic activities freely, and travel in the land without fear.

4. The enforcement of the criminal code of the Qur'an to ensure that the people do not outrage the prohibitions of God, and that the fundamental rights of men are not violated.

5. The defence of the frontiers against foreign invasions to guarantee the security of life and property of Muslims and non-Muslims alike in the Islamic State.

6. The organization and prosecution of religious war against those who oppose Islam or refuse to enter the protection of the Islamic State as non-Muslim subjects. The Imam is bound to be the covenant of God to establish the supremacy of Islam over all other religions and faith.

7. The collection of *kharaj* and *zakat* taxes in accordance with the laws of the *Shari'ah* and the interpretation of the jurists, without resorting to extortion by pressure.

8. The apportionment of allowances and stipends from the State treasury (*Bait al-Mal*) to those who are entitled to them. This money should not be expended with extravagance or stinginess, and must not be either pre-paid or delayed.

9. The appointment of honest and sincere men to the principal offices of State and to the treasure to secure sound and effective administration and to safe-guard the finances of the State.

10. The Imam should personally look into and apprise himself of the affairs of his dominions so that he may himself direct the national policy and protect the interests of the people. He should not entrust his responsibility to others and engross himself in luxury or religious devotion.

And when the Imam has carried all these duties efficiently, the people must offer him two things, obedience and help.

This enumeration of the ten-fold functions of the Imam is arbitrary. Number ten has been chosen particularly because it is an auspicious and mystical number. The notable fact here is that, while his predecessors and successors lay great emphasis on the first two points, viz, the safe-guard of religious principles and the dispensation of justice, as the principal duties of the Imam, al-Mawardi lays the main stress on the administrative responsibility for the carrying out of justice but also the greatest social organization to help promote the corporate life of men.

In other words, the management of the State machinery is of basic importance to him. This explains why he devotes only one-tenth of his book to the exposition of the theory of the Caliphate and uses the rest of his work to elaborate the detailed apparatus of government which hinges on the central authority of the Caliph.

The nebulous nature of the dispersion of State power had led to the dreadful tussle between the Buwaihids and the ‘Abbasids. The Buwaihids, who had no legal claim to sovereignty, and who had not clarified their position, had long been intriguing to over-throw the Caliphate outright. Al-Mawardi’s attempt, therefore, at defining in detail the responsibility and scope of Caliphal powers in relation to normal administration, was most plausible and a direct hit at the Buwaihids.

Further, he made his treatise an inviolable document by reinforcing it with the argument of earlier historical practice, dating back to the time of the Prophet, and by basing it on the opinions of the leading jurists of Islam. It is significant to note that al-Mawardi hardly quotes anywhere any of these jurists, but since he was the greatest judge of Baghdad, his declaration in the preface was taken as sufficient guarantee of his veracity. There is no ground to question his *bona fides*, yet it would have been more commendable if he had given the actual authorities.

F. Deposition Of The Imam

Al-Mawardi has given detailed consideration to the subject of an Imam’s deposition. In the first place, arguing on the basis of legal deduction from the fundamentals of the *Shari‘ah* he says that once a person is elected as Imam, he cannot be removed from that office until there has occurred some definite change in him.[36] Then after discussing the duties of the imam, he reverts to the subject and dilates on it at length. He says that the Imam loses his title and authority on account of one of the following reasons:

1. If there occurs a change in his moral status, technically known as *‘adalah* (sense of justice). The moral change is of two kinds:

(a) The one connected with the body, that is, if he becomes a slave to his inordinate desires and flouts openly the prohibitions of the *Shari‘ah*. In such an event, a person can neither be elected as Imam nor continue as such.[37] Abu Ya‘la rejects this opinion and holds the opposite view.[38]
(b) The one connected with his faith, that is, if a person holds opinions contrary to the established principles of religion, or holds such twisted opinion as amount to an abrogation of the accepted principles, he can neither be initiated as Imam nor continue to hold that office.[39] In this there is a clear denunciation of the stand of Buwaihids and of the Shi‘ite and Fatimid claims to the Caliphate.

2. If there occurs a change in the person of the Imam. It is of three kinds: loss of physical senses, loss of bodily organs, and loss of ability to supervise and direct the affairs of the State.

(a) Among the defects which occur in the physical senses, the two most important ones which preclude

a person from election to the Imamate or make unfit to continue in office are the loss of mental faculty and the loss of eyesight. The first case is obvious and needs no comment. But the second has had a profound bearing on the course of Muslim history. The practice of putting out the eyes with hot iron to prevent a person from wearing the imperial purple was undoubtedly borrowed from the Byzantine Empire; the opinion of the Muslim jurists on the issue, however, gave it an added importance as an instrument of tyranny in Oriental lands.

The dreadful effect of this foul practice can be gauged from the fact that about two dozen ‘Abbasid Caliphs were thus blinded to be dethroned from the Caliphal seat. The juridical opinion referred to above is that a blind person is unqualified to give witness or sit as a judge in a court of law; he is, therefore, much more unqualified to serve as the Head of the State.[40]

(b) Loss of bodily organs. It is of various kinds. If it does not hinder the performance of normal duties, and does not disfigure the features or the external beauty of the body, it will be of no account.[41]

In certain cases when the loss of organs renders a person helpless and makes him incapable of doing anything, he can neither be elected as Imam nor can he continue in that office. Such is the loss of the two hands or of the two feet.

Al-Mawardi discusses the details of other losses too, but they are not pertinent to our purpose here.

(c) The loss of personal ability to supervise and direct is of two kinds:

(i) If the Imam is over-powered by one of his counsellors and assistants, who appropriates all authority to himself, but does not openly defy the Imam, the Imam will continue in his office, provided the usurper rules in accordance with the injunctions of the *Shari‘ah*, and in deference to the accepted norms of justice. This is to ensure that the functions of the Imamate should continue to be performed, and that the people do not fall prey to the ways of evil on account of the non-enforcement of the laws of the *Shari‘ah*.[42] But if his conduct is opposed to the principles of religion and justice, he will not be tolerated in that status, and the Imam shall have to seek the help of a person who can oust the usurper and restore supreme authority to the Caliph.[43]

This principle has been elaborated by al-Mawardi with great care and legal acumen. In the next chapter he takes it up again and discusses it in full detail.[44] This principle which had no sanction in ancient authority or in the opinions of the jurists, was dictated by the force of circumstances in which the ‘Abbasid Caliphate had been placed during the two centuries preceding the death of al-Mawardi.

The Buwaihid usurpation in Baghdad and falling of the Caliphal power into insignificance necessitated the evolution of a formula which suited the exigencies of the times and covered the *de facto* relation that existed between the Buwaihids and the ‘Abbasids. This was a clear departure from the principle of the Caliphate enunciated by al-Mawardi in the earlier part of his book. But he devised a *via media* to remove this glaring contradiction.

If the absolute governor or the usurper (*Amir bi al-Istila'*) declares his allegiance to the Caliph and promises to maintain the unity of the Caliphate, enforces the laws of the *Shari'ah* which cannot be let go by default, and because of the unavoidable condition created by the act of usurpation.[45]

In this theory there is, on the one hand, an overt recognition of the situation prevailing in Baghdad and, on the other an unconcealed warning to the Buwaihids that if they transgressed their limits they could be brought to book with the help of the Ghaznawid power which was an open ally of the 'Abbasid caliphate. In a passage, al-Mawardi says that in case the usurper shows an uncompromising and rebellious attitude, the Caliph can call in the help of one who can relieve him of the straits. The person referred to is none but Mahmud of Ghaznah.

There is little doubt that al-Mawardi was influenced by the circumstances of his environment in the enunciation of this theory, but the deviation from the original principle completely nullified the true conception of the Imamate as demonstrated in the days of the Caliph 'Umar. Nay, it contributed directly to a political theory which encouraged adventurous and ambitious men to impose them on the will of the people with brute force and sheer might. Further, if it served as one of the main incentives for the dismemberment of the 'Abbasid Empire, it also greatly influenced the suppression of democratic thought and practice in the Muslim world. Al-Mawardi may have been well-intentioned but the legacy he left completely changed the concept of Muslim polity in the centuries that followed. And the charge that occurred was simply un-Islamic, undemocratic and vicious.

(ii) If the Imam falls a prisoner to the hands of an enemy it will be the duty of the entire Muslim people to endeavour to emancipate him,[46] and as long as there is any hope of his deliverance he will continue as Imam and another person may be elected to officiate in his absence. But if all hope is lost, he will be deemed to have relinquished his office, and a new election shall take place.

If the Imam is captured by a Muslim rebel army, and the rebels have not appointed an Imam of their own, the captured Imam shall continue to command the loyalty of the people, and an acting Imam shall be appointed by him, if possible, or by the Electoral College. But if the rebels have appointed an Imam of their own, the existing Imam shall forfeit his claim to the Imamate, and the responsible men (*ahl al-hall w-al-'aqd*) shall elect a new Imam according to their discretion.[47] Al-Mawardi's wording in this passage is full of meaning. He means to say that a victorious rebel leader does not automatically become the Imam.

G. Conclusion

Al-Mawardi's great contribution to political thought was that he gave a detailed account of the administrative machinery of the Government of his time and in formulating his political theory he took full cognizance of historical facts and, unlike the jurists and the scholastics, did not indulge in empty speculation, but with all the good things that can be said about al-Mawardi, he had one short-coming – he could not evolve a philosophic conception of the State. He did not discuss the meaning, scope,

jurisdiction, and obligations of the State, gave no conception of sovereignty, and were completely ignorant of the idea of a constitutional democracy. Lack of constitutional theory not only reduced the value of his work, but also adversely affected the later development of Muslim Political thought.

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1. Al-Mawardi, al-Akham al-Sultaniyyah, p. 1.
2. Literally "the greatest Judge," but paradoxically enough the office was sub-ordinate to that of the Qadi al-Qudat, the Chief Justice (Yaqut, Vol. 5, p. 407).
3. Al-Mawardi, op. cit., p. 3.
4. Al-Baghdadi, Usul al-Din, p. 272.
5. These qualifications are three: justice with all the conditions pertaining to it, knowledge of religion and the interests and policy of the nation, and wisdom (al-Mawardi, op. cit., p. 4).
6. These conditions are: justice, learning, integrity of physical senses, wisdom, bravery, and Quraishite descent (ibid., p. 5).
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 7.
11. Al-Baghdadi, op. cit., pp. 275 – 77.
12. Al-Mawardi, op, cit., p. 9.
13. Ibid., p. 10.
14. Ibid, pp. 10 – 11
15. Ibid.. 11.
16. Ibid., p. 13.
17. Ibid., p. 14.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., p. 15.
21. Ibid.
22. Al-Imamah w-al-Siyasah, pp. 19 – 23.
23. In one of his pilgrimage to Mecca 'Umar heard a report that a person was saying, "By God, if 'Umar died I would declare my allegiance to so and so, and by God, Abu Bakr's election was certainly defective, but it was made effective later on." 'Umar became enraged at this report, and wanted to take immediate action, but at the advice of 'Abd al-Rahman bin 'Auf, returned to Medina and ordered all the judges, governors, and chiefs of the army to proceed to the capital. When all hd come, a public assembly was held where the Caliph delivered one of the most important addresses of his life.

    After saying many important things on this occasion, he said, "Let not anyone be deceived to say that the election of Abu Bakr was defective and that it became effective later. And among you there is none like Abu Bakr towards whom the people

may look with love and reverence, therefore, if anyone of you swears allegiance to a person without consulting the general body of Muslims, such a person shall not be deemed as elected, and the likelihood is that both these persons may be beheaded." (Ibn Hisham, al-Sirat al-Nabawiyyah, Vol. 4, pp. 308 – 09).

24. Al-Mawardi, op. cit., pp. 13 – 14.
25. Ibn Qutabibah, Kitab al-Ma'arif, p. 23.
26. Ibid., p. 25.
27. Ibid., p. 19.
28. Ibid., p.24.
29. Al-Mawardi, op. cit., p. 16.
30. Ibid., p. 21.
31. Rafiq Bek, Ashhar Mashahir al-Islam, Vol. 1.
32. Ibn Qutaibah, op, cit., p. 48.
33. Al-Mawardi, op. cit., p. 22.
34. Ibid., p-. 27.
35. Ibid., pp. 27 – 28.
36. Ibid., p. 16.
37. Ibid., p. 31.
38. Abu Ya'la, p. 4.
39. Al-Mawardi, op. cit., p. 32.
40. Ibid., p. 33.
41. Ibid., p. 35.
42. Ibid., p. 37.
43. Ibid., p. 38.
44. Ibid., pp. 67 – 70.
45. Ibid., p. 68.
46. Ibid., p. 38.
47. Ibid., p. 40.

Chapter 37: Political Theory Of The Shiites

The death of the Prophet of Islam ushered an era which is known as the period of the Orthodox Caliphate (11 – 41/632 – 661).

The supporters of 'Ali the fourth Caliph in the chronological order 35 – 41/646 – 661), were known as the Shi'ah which literally means a faction, a supporting group in the sense that they supported 'Ali's claim to succession after the death of the Prophet, both as a temporal ruler and a religious leader.

It may be stated authoritatively that 'Ali's claim to the Caliphate was not regarded by his supporters and adherents as a political ambition. On the contrary, it was considered that he had been ordained by Providence to succeed the Prophet and the Prophet himself had placed the question of succession beyond any doubt by his testament, as it were, at Ghadir al-Khumm.[1]

During the Caliphate of ‘Uthman, ibn Saba’ of Yemen, who had settled ultimately in Egypt, openly preached that the first three Caliphs were usurpers as distinguished from ‘Ali who was divinely ordained to succeed the Prophet as his executor or plenipotentiary (*wasi*). The extreme Shi‘ites (Ghulah) believed that the Prophet himself was reincarnated in the form of ‘Ali and “that the divine spirit which dwells in every prophet was transferred at Mohammad’s death to ‘Ali and from ‘Ali to his descendants who succeeded him in the Imamate.”

It would be pointless, so far as we are concerned, to access and evaluate the truth of the claim made by the Shi‘ites that ‘Ali had been designated as the Prophet’s successor by the Prophet himself in accordance with the command of God, but it is necessary to point out that the Shi‘ites, whether holding moderate or extreme views, refused, as it were, from the beginning to concede with the *ijma‘* has any authority to confer any person the right to govern a Muslim State. They maintained that at all times a living descendant of ‘Ali, whether concealed (*mastur*) or unconcealed, demands and receives allegiance from the Muslims and is in point of fact the only rightful Caliph (temporal ruler) and Imam (religious leader) of the Islamic peoples.

It may perhaps be added that the term Shi‘ah was invested with all its dogmatic connotations after the coming into power of the ‘Abbasids. In the Beginning the word only meant a group of people which were in favour of the succession of ‘Ali to the Caliphate.

With the rise of the Umayyads the pure Arabs found greater favour with the rulers than the clients of the subject races. This policy which, most probably, had been initiated by the third Caliph, no doubt, for justifiable reasons, would not have proved disastrous in itself if Yazid had not perpetrated the horrible deeds which are known as the tragedy of Karbala. The old rivalry of the Umayyads and the Hashimites, which had remained subdued during the life-time of the Prophet, now manifested itself in many ways.

All these factors led to what is known as the ‘Abbasids propaganda carried on in collaboration with the Shi‘ites in the name of Hashim who was acceptable both to the supporters of ‘Ali and the descendants of ‘Abbas as against the Umayyads who had taken possession of the State and were living in luxury, while their more celebrated Quraish brethren were forced to act merely as spectators of the splendour of the rival branch.

The relationship of the Hashimites and the ‘Alids with the Umayyads would appear from the following genealogical tables.

The ‘Abbasid propaganda ultimately bore fruit and the House of ‘Abbas, mainly with the help of the Iranians who had flocked to Abu Muslim, an Iranian leader of great courage and patriotic fervour, succeeded in their machinations. The Umayyads were over-thrown; Marwan, the last Caliph was slain on the 15th Dh. H. 132/August 5, 750, followed by a general massacre of the members of the Royal House of the Umayyads, and Saffah ascended the throne 132/750.

After the revolution had become an accomplished fact, the Shi‘ites who disillusioned and sadly

disappointed, were under the impression that a member of the House of ʻAli would be enthroned. The treacherous murder of Abu Muslim (138/755) further convinced the Shiʻites, if such conviction was needed, that their ʻAbbasid cousins were no less hostile to them and their claim than the Umayyads and it was during this period of bitter frustration, disappointment, and stark disillusionment that the term "Shiʻah" was invested with its basic political and religious connotations.

The Shiʻites claimed that the House of ʻAbbas had usurped the Caliphate as the Umayyads and the three Orthodox Caliphs had done. They contended that, although *de facto* sovereignty vested in the ʻAbbasids, legal sovereignty remained with the descendants of ʻAli who were divinely ordained to be the temporal and religious leaders of the Islamic peoples.

The Orthodox Shiʻites (*Ithna ʻAshariyyah*), as contra–distinguished from other sects who were either extremists in their beliefs or had made a drastic departure from the tenets of their orthodox brethren, believed that the Imamate had descended from Mohammad, the Prophet, to ʻAli and his descendants according to the table given below.

According to the Shiʻite traditions, the 12th Imam, namely, Mehdi (the expected one), was born in Samarra in 255 or 256/ 868 or 869. At the time of the death of his father, he would have been only four or five years of age. He was designated as Imam a few days before the death of his father and very soon after his death he disappeared or went into concealment which consists of two periods, short (*sughra*) and long (*kubra*). For a period of 70 years he was represented by four *wakils* (agents or advocates), namely, ʻUthman ibn Saʻid, Abu Jaʻfar, Abu al–Qasima and Abu al–Hassan.

The last named refused to nominate an agent on his behalf and died saying, "Now the matter is with God." Accordingly, the period when the hidden Imam was represented by the *wakils* is known as the lesser concealment and this period extended to 329/940. Since that time the Shiʻite Mehdi or the hidden Imam has been in "the great concealment" and he is expected to return near the end of time.

The political theories of the Orthodox Shiʻites depend on three fundamental precepts, namely, (1) the divine right of the descendants of ʻAli to succeed to the Imamate, (2) the sinlessness of all the imams, and (3) the return of Mehdi, the 12th Imam.

The first precept means that democratic election, i.e., consent of the people or any other method of choosing a successor to Prophet Mohammad is manifestly and palpably wrong and, as a matter of fact, sinful. Sovereignty, with all responsibilities that it entails for its holder as a temporal ruler and duties that it entails for him as a religious chief, is a gift from God which is conferred only on those who have descended from Mohammad through ʻAli and Fatima. (The descendants of ʻAli not born of Fatima has no right to the Caliphate or the Imamate.) The Shiʻite theologians obviously contend that the divine right of the Imam to become the Commander of the Faithful depends on the word of God as conveyed by the Prophet to ʻAli and by ʻAli to his descendants.

It has been conjectured, however, that the theory of the divine right of the Imams, which was analogous

to the theory of the divine right of kings, was evolved and developed by the Persian supporters of the House of ‘Ali who had witnessed the rise and fall of great empires wherein the emperors more often than not laid claims to Godhead.

In all great Eastern empires of the remote past, the kings at some time or another claimed to be gods or semi-gods at least, perhaps in order to stabilize the State and to keep the subject races unified through the worship of the sovereign. When we consider that the Shi‘ite theologians and historians have accepted it as a fact that a daughter of the last Sassanian King of Persia was married to Hussain (all Imams being descendants from her), it becomes easy enough to appreciate the position of the Persian adherents of ‘Ali in relation to the Caliphate and the Imamate. The fact that many of the Shi‘ah sects believed in the Godhead of ‘Ali further lends support to the theory that the concept of the divine right of the Imams to succeed the Prophet and infiltrated into Arabia through Persian channels.

Once we accept that the Imams are divinely ordained to rule the Faithful, we must accept the fact that the State as envisaged by the Shi‘ite theologians is a theocracy in the most rigid sense of the word, in which the ruler – temporal head as well as a religious chief – cannot be deposed even if he palpably commits sins and crimes of a most serious nature.

This is the logical conclusion of the acceptance of the theory of divine right because the supporters of this theory would contend that “what our limited knowledge visualizes as a crime or as a sin is really virtue.” We, with our limited knowledge and understanding, cannot appreciate or assess the significance of an act of the Imam. This logical conclusion was accepted by the Isma‘ilites specifically and categorically, although the Orthodox Shi‘ites contented themselves with saying that it is not possible for the Imam to commit a sin or a crime.

The concept of sinlessness is a logical corollary of the acceptance of the first precept.

It would follow, therefore, that in theocracy as envisaged by the Shi‘ites, the Caliph who is also the Imam can neither be deposed nor interfered with in any matter of administrative or religious nature. From the purely political point of view, this theocratic State has elements of stability and strength which are peculiarly its own, but it may not appeal to those who believe that sovereignty vests really in the people ultimately and that the negation of the right to depose, irrespective of the fact whether the ruler is just or unjust and cruel, is contrary to all principles of equity and justice inherent in all constitution-making.

The Shi‘ite theologians may reply that the Imam, being divinely ordained, is capable of committing a sin or crime and will exercise his authority in a benevolent manner, and although he will be sovereign in every sense of the word, he will be bound by the restrictions imposed upon him by the Qur’an, the traditions of the Prophet as narrated by the Imams and the examples of the Imams’ lives.

The belief that the 12th Imam, Mehdi, is bound to return is most significant in the sense that the Shi‘ite theologians are in a position to encourage their adherents whenever they are passing through dangerous or chaotic periods and ask them to stand fast since the advent of the Mehdi will be the end of

all tyranny, despotism, suffering, misery, wretchedness, and sinfulness and the beginning of a new era of prosperity, bliss, happiness, and ecstasy never experienced before by humanity.

It is obvious that temporal and religious problems are to be solved during the concealment of the 12th Imam. The ideal theocratic Shi'ite State envisages the existence of righteous, erudite, competent, learned, and virtuous persons who administer the Law and solve all theological problems and juristic questions by *ijtihad* (effort). These competent persons are known as *mujtahids* and are supposed to derive their wisdom and acumen from the representatives of the hidden Imam who is in contact with them.

The *mujtahids* have always exercised very great influence in the Shi'ite States and have been considered to be the Caliphs of the Imam. It is of course possible to visualize periods when wide powers are misused and unlimited authority is converted into tyranny. Human nature is frail and whenever human beings are vested with unlimited powers, they are apt to misuse them at some time or other.

It may be stated therefore, that Shi'ite envisaged their ideal State as a rigidly theocratic one, with the concealed Imam as the arbiter of the destines of the Faithful working out a pattern of society through the *mujtahids*, who derived their power to adjudicate from the Imam himself or his representatives with whom they are in contact. All persons, sovereigns, rulers and pontiffs, wherever they may be are usurpers if they do not derive their right to rule from the commands of the Imam or from his representatives.

The chaotic conditions which prevail will be set right by the advent or emergence of the Mehdi who will establish this ideal theocratic State, holding away over the whole world and laying the law for all creatures who inhabit it.

Political Theory Of The Ismailites

The sixth Imam of the Shi'ites, namely, Imam Ja'far Sadiq (the Truthful) is justly considered to be one of the greatest authorities on Law and tradition. He is regarded as one of the most celebrated of the jurists. He instructed some of the greatest traditionists known to the Muslim peoples and also known as the originator or, at least, the greatest exponent of the occult science known as *jafar*.

Curiously enough, it was during his life–time that the Shi'ite world was torn asunder and there emerged upon the scene a new group or sect of the Shi'ites, known by many names, for example, the Isma'ilites, as the latest research has established beyond any doubt. It is the term "Isma'ilites" which is indicative of the true origin of the sect, other appellations being either misleading or based on hostility to this sect in general and to Orthodox Shi'ites in particular.

Form the tangle of conflicting evidence, contradictory claims and inconsistent theories, the basic facts relating to the origin of this sect appear as follows:

It is admitted by all concerned that Imam Ja'far died in 148/765. Before his death he had designated his son Isma'il to his successor and the rightful Imam. Now this Isma'il died sometime between the year 136/753 and 146/763. It is clear that he could not have died before 136/754 – the year that the 'Abbasid Caliph, Mansur, ascended the throne, because we find it stated on unimpeachable authority that the fact of his death was reported to the Caliph, who, obviously, watched the movements of the Shi'ite Imams carefully and sometimes with great anxiety, because almost all the movements which aimed at the over-throw of the 'Abbasid Caliphate used the name of the reigning Shi'ite Imam as a cloak.

The 'Abbasid Caliphs, therefore, even when convinced that the Imam themselves were not in any way associated with the movement in question, very carefully kept them under State observation. According to the Shi'ites, they were, for all practical purposes, prisoners of the State and their movements were restricted by "political expediency," the seriousness or the significance of which was determined by the corresponding seriousness of the revolt or the movement which gave birth to it.

Again, this is admitted by all concerned that before the death of Isma'il, Imam Ja'far had revoked the authority of succession of the case of Isma'il and had in his place Imam Musa Kazim as the rightful successor and Imam of the Shi'ites.

The reasons, which led the Imam to take this step which caused the Shi'ite community to be torn asunder and divided into hostile groups, cannot be determined at this stage. The Orthodox Shi'ites – and Sunni authorities are not lacking in support thereof – assert that Imam Isma'il was, one unfortunate day, found drinking wine and thus committing an action which is admittedly a sin. Imam Ja'far – so the story goes – thereupon repudiated Isma'il and designated his brother as his successor.

This repudiation of sanction or authority, technically known as *nass* was not and could not be accepted by some of the Shi'ites because it opposed and falsified the fundamental postulates of the Shi'ites in general.

Those who would not accept this repudiation and revocation argue as follows:

The sinlessness of the Imam is an established fact. Isma'il was declared to be the Imam-Designate by Ja'far. He, therefore, was incapable of committing any sin or perpetrating any crime. The allegation that he was found drinking wine was either incorrect or related to one of those mysterious acts of the Imam-Designate the significance of which is known to him only. Since he was incapable of committing a sin, his drinking must have been a cloak for some other activity. In other words, drinking was an appearance (*zahir*), the reality (*batin*) of which was known only to the Imam or to those in whom he confided.

The supporters of Isma'il also contend that he was appointed Imam-Designate by Imam Ja'far in accordance with divine command. God is infallible. It is impossible to conceive that God was not aware that Isma'il one day would be found drinking. If, therefore, he allowed Isma'il to be declared as the successor of Imam Ja'far, the story that Isma'il was found drinking wine must either be untrue or must be considered and treated as an act innocent in itself, the significance of which is known only to God, the

Imam, and his successor.

They contend that it was quite possible that the wine drinking of Isma'il may have been considered expedient by God and since all actions of the Imam flow from God, no action of Isma'il, however sinful it may have appeared, can be considered to be unjustified and condemned, since it is in fact an act performed as ordained by Providence.

During the lifetime of Imam Ja'far, the controversy and the ferment consequent upon the revocation of authority remained subdued, but as soon as he died the supporters of Isma'il came forward and contested the succession of Imam Musa Kazim. Since Isma'il had died during the lifetime of his father, it was contended that the *nass* (sanction, authority) had been transferred from Isma'il to his son Mohammad who had from then on become the rightful Imam, the spiritual and temporal leader of the Shi'ites and the rightful ruler of all territorial possessions.

There are some who believed that Isma'il had not really died and was the last rightful Imam, but they were in a minority. Slowly but steadily the supporters of Mohammad, the son of Isma'il gained ascendance and laid the foundation of the Isma'ili sect which culminated in the establishment of one of the greatest Muslim empires of the East – the Empire of the Fatimids of Egypt.

DeGoeje and Dozy have it "that a certain 'Abd Allah b. Maimun, an occulist (*qaddah*) by profession and a Persian," was inspired by religious fervour, political ambition, and inveterate hatred against the "Arabs and Islam," to "bind together in one association the conquered and the conquerors, to combine in one secret society, wherein there should be several grades of indication, the free thinkers who saw in religion only a curb for the common people and the bigots of all sects, to make use of the believers to bring about the reign of the unbelievers and of the conquerors to overthrow the empire which they had themselves founded, to form for himself, in short, a party, numerous, compact, and schooled to obedience, which, when the moment was come, would give the throne, if not to himself, at least to his descendants. Such was the dominant idea of 'Abd Allah b. Maimun, an idea which, grotesque and audacious though it was, he realized with astonishing tact, incomparable skill, and a profound knowledge of the human heart."

There is a very significant old adage that if you fling sufficient mud some is bound to stick. This is exactly what happened in the case of Maimun and his son 'Abd Allah. The Orientalists – nay even such an erudite Iranian scholar as Mohammad Qazwini, the editor of *Tarikh-i Jahan-Gusha* by 'Ata Malik Juwaini – were misled by the voluminous 'Abbasid propaganda, hostile commentary of the Orthodox Shi'ites, and the specious argument of those opposed to the Isma'ilites, into thinking that Maimun and his son 'Abd Allah were opposed to the tenets of Islam or were inspired by the hatred for the Arabs. As a matter of fact, as the latest research has established beyond any doubt, Maimun was the name adopted by Imam Mohammad when he went into concealment (*ghaibah*). In other words, during the period of concealment those who were in his confidence knew Imam Mohammad to be Maimun.

No doubt, this is a daring postulate but, once we accept it, all conflicts are resolved, all inconsistencies removed, and all confusions laid to rest. It is quite evident that when the Orthodox Shi'ites assert that Maimun was a narrator of traditions under Imam Baqir and Imam Ja'far, they are speaking the literal truth. So are the Isma'ilites when they say that Maimun and his 'Abd Allah were the staunchest supporters of the Isma'ilite cause.

It is clear that the Orthodox Shi'ites were not taken into confidence by the supporters of Imam Mohammad when he was in concealment and were, therefore, unable to appreciate that Maimun and Mohammad are one and the same person. By accepting this postulate we are also in a position to appreciate and understand the attitude adopted by the 'Abbasid Caliphs in relation of both Maimun and his son 'Abd Allah. It is quite likely that some of the spies of the 'Abbasids might have brought to the notice of the Caliph that Maimun was the concealed Imam, and political expediency might have forbidden the broadcasting of this highly significant and equally dangerous information.

The stream of invectives poured upon the head of Maimun and his son 'Abd Allah by the 'Abbasid caliphs, the Orthodox Shi'ites, and the Sunni historians in general, is in itself significant and tends to support the theory that both these persons were not only supporters of the Isma'ilites' cause but were the pivots and props thereof.

After the death of Ja'far, Mohammad went into concealment adopting the name of Maimun. He spent some time at Kufah and Rayy. The 'Abbasid Caliph being informed that Mohammad was laying the foundation of a powerful organization even in concealment and sending out preachers to different parts of Persia made some efforts to seize, but it would appear that either these efforts were half-hearted or they failed.

Ultimately, 'Abd Allah al-Mehdi in direct line of descent from Mohammad, the son of Isma'il succeeded in laying the foundation of an enviable empire in Egypt, the rulers of which are known to history as the Fatimids or the descendants of Fatima though 'Ali.

At this juncture it is perhaps expedient to state in the most explicit terms that the Carmathians were not associated with the Isma'ilites, nor were they identical with them as it is sometimes wrongly supposed.

Hollister has ascertained their position as follows. "We find the word Carmathian used, (1) as an equivalent for Isma'ilis in general, (2) for the dissident groups of Isma'ilites who joined in the invasion of Syria and came very close to capturing Damascus and establishing there a Fatimid Kingdom somewhat earlier than that established in North Africa, (3) for the followers of Hamdan Qarmat and 'Abdan, his brother-in-law, who seceded from the Isma'ilites, and (4) for the Qarmatians of Bahrain. The more recent studies, support by Isma'ilite authorities, have made it clear that only this last group is really entitled to the name Qarmatian (Carmathian)."

The Fatimid Caliphs (297 – 567/909 – 1171), broadly speaking, tried to establish a theocratic State and were, on the whole, just rulers and efficient administrators. One of them, al-Hakam, however, claimed

divinity for himself. In other words, he not only claimed to be the Imam, but further contended that the divine light had entered his body so that he had become identical with the Creator. His claim was laughed out of Egypt, but the Druze of Lebanon up to this day believe in his divinity and look forward to the return confident that he merely disappeared as an Imam often does, and would reappear in due course as the herald of a new era of prosperity, righteousness, and godliness on Earth.

Amazingly enough, the Isma'ilites were destined to be split again into two powerful groups. Al-Mustansir died in 428/1036 and the Imamate should have been transferred to his eldest son Nizar who, his supporters claimed, had been properly designated as Imam. However, he was not in Cairo when his father died, and before he could take effective steps, his brother al-Musta'li, ascended the throne and Nizar was faced with a *fait accompli*.

Nizar never succeeded to the throne, but he found a very staunch supporter in Hassan Sabbah who had come to Persia during the reign of al-Mustansir. This Hassan Sabbah was really an amazing person, learned, erudite, ambitious, outwardly pious, wily, and blessed with administrative ability and infinite capacity to work.

In order to further his own ends, he supported the cause of Nizar as the rightful Imam and the ruler of the Islamic world, and in his name took possession of many fortresses in Persia, including the famous Alamut (the Eagle's Nest), which, in due course of time became the centre of Hassan's activities.

The movement initiated by Hassan is known as *Da'wat-i Jadid* or New Propaganda. The Nizaari Imams of Alamut, beginning with Hassan Sabbah, held sway in certain parts of Persia until the last Imam Khurshah was killed by the Mongols in the seventh/13th century. The Nizari branch of the Isma'ilites recognizes the Agha Khan as its head and their members are known in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent as Khojas. The adherents of Must'li are known as Bohras.

According to the Isma'ilites as to the Orthodox Shi'ites, the only rightful State is a theocratic one which has as its Head the Imam who, as we have already emphasized, is divinely ordained to hold his office.

The Imam of the Head of State never becomes *functus officio* in the sense that when he is concealed his representatives become operative and spread the light. As a matter of fact, both sects, the 12ers and the Isma'ilites, believe in the continuity of the office of the Imam. There can be no vacuum so far as the performance of the functions pertaining to the Imamate is concerned. There may be and sometimes a long period between the death of one prophet and the birth of another, but during this period the Imam continues to perform his functions in the light of revelation.

It is believed that every Prophet had an Imam to whom he revealed the truth. Technically, the Prophet is called *natiq* and the Imam as *sumit*.

It is admitted that, although revelation is only vouchsafed to the prophet, it is interpreted and enforced by the Imam, since the esoteric meanings of the revelation are known to him alone. During the Fatimid

period, ‘Ali, the fourth Caliph, was given the place of *asas* or the foundation of the Imamate and was, thus, raised to a position above all other Imams.

In the theocratic State envisaged by the Isma‘ilites every Imam has a chief minister who is termed *Bab* (the door, the gate). He is the intermediary between the Imam and the inner circle of preachers. All information sought to be conveyed to the Imam is conveyed through the *Bab* and all orders passed by the Imam are communicated to the persons concerned by the same *Bab*. It is on record that Hassan Sabbah claimed that he had been refused permission to see the Imam on account of the fact that Badr, the *Bab*, and the minister of Mustansir would not allow him to do so.

The Isma’ilite creed emphasizes the importance of cycles. Obviously, one source of revelation is not sufficient to lead humanity to the true path. Therefore, there have been cycles of revelations, each introduced by a prophet or *natiq* succeeded by six Imams. The seventh initiates a new cycle and really ranks as a prophet.

This is the reason why Isma‘il is held in such reverence by the Isma‘ilites: he completes the cycle which began with Prophet Mohammad and introduces a new one.

Salvation of mankind depends upon recognizing the basic principle that must identify the Imam and take the oath of allegiance (*bai‘ah*) to him. Those who do not recognize the Imam remain in a state of sin.

It has been mentioned that the Shi‘ites believe in the doctrine of the sinlessness of the Imam. It has also been stated that Isma‘ilites, more than any other Shi‘ite sect, accept unflinchingly the conclusions which are attendant upon this belief. In other words, if it be proved beyond any shadow of doubt by unimpeachable evidence that Isma‘il was observed drinking wine, the Isma‘ilites would argue that since the Imam is incapable of committing a sin his wine–drinking must be considered to be an act which is capable of an esoteric interpretation (*ta’wil*).

As a matter of fact, the basis of the Isma‘ilite creed, as it crystallized under Fatimids of Egypt, is the belief that there are two aspects of knowledge, namely, the apparent or manifest (*zahir*) and the esoteric or inner (*batin*). The *zahir* of the Qur’an is *tanzil* while the *batin* is the *ta’wil*. The exoteric meaning is known to the Prophet who imparts knowledge to his Imam. The Imam then spreads the light through his representatives, “Every person who wishes to belong to the *Da‘wat* enters into covenant with him (the Imam), on behalf of God. This is called *bai‘ah*. Man and woman must both take a like oath in a ceremony known as *mithaq*. They must quite justly oppose everything that is unlawful…and keep secret those things and the religious knowledge which are entrusted to them. Obedience to all the dictates of religion is the most important duty of the Faithful. Salvation can be attained only through obedience completed in word, action, desire and thought.”

Whereas the Sunnis and the 12ers (*Ithna ‘Ashariyyah*) have commentaries relating to the meaning of the Qur’an, the Isma‘ilites do not and cannot possess any such works.

Ivanow has it that in Isma'ilism there is no such thing as a work of *Tafsir* (commentary on the Qur'an). It would appear that the passages which seem obscure or ambiguous can only be referred to the Imam and whoever has the good fortune to learn the esoteric meaning from the Imam or his representatives is bound to keep such information confidential and secret on account of the oath of allegiance taken by him.

All subjects of a theocratic State, as envisaged by the Isma'ilites, therefore, are initiated in the mysteries of religion in accordance with their intelligence, capacity, integrity, and loyalty. It is needless to add that if a subject of this theocratic State breaks the oath of allegiance and becomes a convert to any other religion, he is severely punished (provided he is captured).

Until the Fatimid regime came into power the Isma'ilites, like other Shi'ite sects, were anxiously waiting for the advent of the Mehdi who would bring peace and prosperity to the world. After the establishment of the Fatimids, the conception of a personal Mehdi as *al–qa'im* was changed. Every Caliph of the Fatimid dynasty was named *al–qa'im* and thus "the idea of Mehdi became merged, so to speak, in the Imamate, in the dynasty whose mission comes to include the objects which Mehdi was to effect, if not under an Imam, then under one of his successors."

The theocratic state of the Isma'ilites enjoins upon all the subjects to wage a holy war (*jihad*) against the people "who turn away from religion." The duty to wage war is obligatory, but it is restricted by an important condition: it can be justified only under the guidance either of the Imam or of his accredited representative.

All subjects of this theocratic State believed in the expediency of dissimulation (*taqiyyah*) although its necessity was reduced almost to nothingness during the regime of the Fatimids. Still *taqiyyah* is an accepted fact and whenever the Imam is in concealment, his disciples are obliged to practise it so that they may come to no harm. Before the Fatimid regime, even the Imams themselves, practiced *taqiyyah*, according to authentic evidence endorsed by the Isma'ilites.

It has been mentioned that the sect of the 12 as well as the Isma'ilites believe that the only rightful ruler of all territorial possessions of the world is the Imam. Since at a given moment a theocratic Isma'ilite State may or may not exist, it is the duty of all Isma'ilites to encourage the preaching of their creed.

The Fatimids paid great attention to the intellectual equipment of a preacher (*da'i*). The *da'i* was supposed to answer any question that a student or an opponent might ask. He was, therefore, made to study jurisprudence, all branches of Tradition, the philosophical interpretation of the Qur'an, *ta'wil* or allegorical meanings, and the art of controversy and dialectics.

The theocratic Stare of the Isma'ilites established under the Fatimids encouraged the acquisition of knowledge. In a way, it aimed at rationalization of the precepts of religion. It was by arousing the curiosity of the people that the Isma'ili preachers ultimately succeeded in winning them over. It is paradoxical, indeed, that the Isma'ilites, who believed that mere knowledge is not sufficient for the

achievement of salvation and that one has to recognize an Imam and follow unstinted in all matters, established seats of learning, schools and universities where the students were encouraged to think for themselves. The Azhar University of Cairo was built by the Fatimids and has continued since then to be regarded as the outstanding educational institution in the entire Muslim world.

The Fatimids also established observatories and libraries and these institutions were accessible to all peoples and classes irrespective of religion or creed. Public gatherings were addressed by learned men in robes which may be regarded as forerunners of the academic gowns worn by professors today. All costs pertaining to these institutions were borne by the Government and for the teaching of different sciences; learned professors were imported from Spain and from the farthest parts of Asia.

It may be said, therefore, that a theocratic State, rigid in its framework and immutable in its convictions, gave birth to rational movements aimed at the correlation of religious precepts with scientific and philosophic truths as known at the time. It became the harbinger of rational thinking, and by encouraging the pursuit of knowledge it gave to learning and letters a new impetus. If we believe Nasir Khusrau, and we have no reason to disbelieve him, the State which was established by the Fatimids had become the centre of all learning and knowledge and from it radiated waves and movements towards different parts of the Muslim world encouraging others to pursue knowledge, to think for themselves, and to ponder over religious matters in the light reason.
It is an amazing co–incidence of history that a theocratic State should give birth to rational thought and should encourage the study of philosophy even collective mental state which is opposed to the rigidity of a truly theocratic State. The Fatimids deserve all honour, therefore, for advancing the cause of their own State and sealing their own doom.

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1. "A spring between Mecca and al-Medina where the Shi'ite tradition asserts the Prophet declared, 'Whomsoever I am lord of, his lod is 'Ali also.'" Ibn Sa'ad, Vol. 5, p 235; Mas'udi, Tanbit, pp. 225 – 56; Philip K. Hitti, History of the Arabs, p. 471, note 1.

Chapter 38: Zizam Al-Mulk Tusi

Nizam al-Mulk Tusi was born in 408/1018[1] and died in 485/1092. He was not only a minister of the Saljuqs for the last 30 years of his life, a scholar,[2] and a patron of arts and sciences, but also the founder[3] of the famous university styled after his name the *Nizamiyyah*.

He lived in an age which witnessed the lowest degradation of the caliphate, following its transformation during a period of three centuries,[4] from a democracy into an autocracy and from autocracy into a mere puppetry in the hands of powerful masters. That period also saw the fall of the Ghaznawid Empire and the Buwaihid Kingdom, and the rise of the Saljuqs after their victory over the Ghaznawids in 431/1040, when their nomadic life changed into the life of a gigantic empire, extending from the Oxus and Jaxartos to the Bosphorus. It was an age of change and fusion of social and political ideas and institutions, especially in that part of the Muslim world in which Nizam al-Mulk lived and worked.

The rise of the Persian element in political power in the early period of the ‘Abbasids was followed by a gradual revival of the Persian political institutions under the patronage of the Samanids, the Ghaznawids, and then of the Saljuqs. These institutions in their turn, together with their theoretical foundations, came to be assimilated by Muslim thought. For this assimilation, no battle of ideas was ever fought, it came as a process of cultural development in which Nizam al-Mulk stood as one of the representatives of Persian culture, with a bias towards Islamic thought.

Nizam al-Mulk was not really his name. It was a title of honour conferred upon him by his Saljuq master, Alp Arslan, after his appointment as a minister. His name was Abu ‘Ali Hassan, and his father’s name was Abu al-Hassan ‘Ali, who belonged to a family of landowners (*dihqans*)[5] of Radhkan,[6] a small town in the suburb of Tus where Nizam al-Mulk was born. In the days of the Ghaznawids his father was appointed a tax-collector of Tus by Abu al-Fadl Suri, who was the Governor of Khurasan.[7]

His early education started with the study of Tradition (*Hadith*) and jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), and as his father wanted him to take up the legal profession for his future career; he was put under the care of ‘Abd al-Samad Funduraji,[8] who was a profound scholar of Law.[9]

In the famous “Tale of the Three School Fellows,” it is related of him that in his school days in Nishapur, where he was sent to attend the lectures of Imam Muwaffaq, he made friends with two boys, who later became eminent personalities. One was ‘Umar Khayyam, the great poet and astronomer, and the other Hassan b. Sabbab, the founder of the Batiniyyah sect of the Assassins. Research by the late Sayyid Sulaiman Nadawi makes it unnecessary to discuss this controversial point[10] of Nizam al-Mulk’s life. This tale, he proves, is a fabrication.

From what the author of *Tarikh-i Baihaqi* relates about Nizam’s family on the reliable authority of his grandfather Shaikh al-Islam Amirak, who had seen Nizam al-Mulk in his boyhood, it may be concluded

that it was after he had reached the age of maturity and not in his early years, and after his father had been relieved of financial worries[11] that he was able to attend Imam Muwaffaq's lectures in order to complete his higher studies.

His studies over, he travelled to Bukhara and Merv, and to a number of towns[12] in Transoxiana, most probably in search of a post, and after 441/1049[13] he went to Ghaznah, where he sought service with the Gaznawids, thus getting an opportunity to acquaint himself with their administration. When Sultan 'Abd al-Rashid was murdered in 444/1052 and the political affairs were upset, he escaped to Balkh and entered the service of 'Ali b. Shadhan,[14] who was then the governor of that province on behalf of the Saljuq ruler Chaghari Beg Dawud. Annoyed with the habits of this man, who extorted heavy sums from him every year,[15] he fled to Merv.

Once there, Chaghari Beg appointed him the *mushir* (counsellor) and the *katib* (secretary)[16] of his son, Alp Arslan. It was on the advice of 'Ali b. Shadhan[17] that Alp Aralan, after his accession to the throne in 455/1062, raised him to the position of a Joint Minister with 'Amid al-Mulk Kunduri. But Kunduri was soon deposed and then put to death, it is said,[18] on the advice of Nizam al-Mulk, who had then become the full-fledged Prime Minister of the Saljuq Empire.

He became the real master of the whole realm with the succession of Malik-shah to his father's throne in 465/1072, which he owed entirely to Nizam al-Mulk's efforts.[19] From the capital of the Saljuqs, his influence spread to the capital of the 'Abbasid Caliph, who is said to have dignified him with the title of *Radi-u Amir al-Mu'minin*, never before conferred on a vizier.[20] He had done much to stabilize the power of the Saljuqs, and to improve their administration, and, therefore, when Malik shah once threatened him with dismissal he dare to reply that the kingship was linked with his vizierate.[21]

In his last days, he came into collision with the Isma'iliyyah movement of Hassan b. Sabbah, in whose activities he saw danger to the Saljuq Empire. He had actually once deputed Abu Muslim Radi to arrest Hassan,[22] but Abu Muslim was himself assassinated by one of the *fida'is* (the Assassins) in 485/1092.

It will be in place here to refer to the two Persian works of Nizam al-Mulk, which are the chief sources for the study of his political ideas: the *Sayasat Nameh* (The Book on State-craft) and the *Dastur al-Wuzara'* (The Conduct of Ministers) or, as it is more generally known, the *Wasaya-i Khuwaja Nizam al-Mulk* (The Precepts of Khuwaja Nizam al-Mulk). He is said to have written yet another work entitled as *Safar Nameh* (The Book of Travels) which is now extinct.[23]

Certain changes and additions may have been made to the original text in a later period, but the *Siyasat Nameh* has generally been recognized as the genuine composition of Nizam al-Mulk himself. There has been some controversy among scholars about the authenticity of the *Wasaya* on account of the doubtful "Tale of the Three School Fellows," which has been set out in detail in the preface of the treatise. There is no need to revive this half a century old controversy[24] as it has nothing to do with the study of his political thought.

The *Wasaya* is not claimed to be the composition of Nizam al–Mulk himself in the sense in which the *Siyasat Nameh* is considered to be his work. It was compiled in the ninth/15th[25] century by an anonymous person whose family, as he claims in the preface, descended from Nizam al–Mulk. He compiled it partly from the books and partly from the oral traditions handed down in his own family.[26] Therefore, the anecdotes cited in it begin invariably with the phrase, "So says Khuwaja Nizam al–Mulk."

The preface, which is one of the reliable sources of Nizam al–Mulk's life, is evidently from the pen of the compiler. But the other two chapters, which form the main part of the work and contain much valuable material on the political ideas of this famous vizier, are composed from his own authentic writings and utterances. It has been justly remarked[27] that there is no internal evidence in the main part of the work to show that it does not owe its contents to his pen. A large part of the *Wasaya* may be regarded as the actual utterances of Nizam al–Mulk.[28]

We are fortunate in having these two important works of Nizam al–Mulk representing his thoughts about kingship and vizierate, which were the two political institutions of primary importance in his days. The *Siyasat Nameh*, which is the exposition of his theory of kingship, was originally written to serve as a "monarch's primer."[29] It is said that in 484/1091[30] Sultan Malik–shah (r. 465 – 1072/485/1092) instructed some of his dignitaries to think over the state of affairs in his realm and write down the principles of conduct that were followed by monarchs in the past, and were required to be observed by himself.[31]

The treatise of Nizam al–Mulk among the works presented to the Sultan was the only one which he approved of and adopted as a guide (*imam*).[32] But it must not be treated as a mere handbook of day–to–day administration, nor must it be regarded as containing simply practical suggestions for the improvement of an administrative system. It is more than that. It is, in fact, the expression of a realistic political theory which emerges out of an actual political situation, and, therefore, helps us to understand the stage in the development of Muslim polity reached in the fifth/11th century.

The *Wasaya* is the exposition of his theory of vizierate. It consists of the counsels which he is said to have addressed in the "last days of his life,"[33] to his eldest son, Fakhr al–Mulk, who also held the office of vizier under the Saljuq Sultans Barkiyaruq and Sanjuar, and was assassinated, like his father, by a Batini[34] in 500/1106.

It is fairly easy to present Nizam al–Mulk as one who largely differs from the past writers of political treatises and from his contemporaries, both in his selection of the political institutions which form the subject matter of his writings, and in his approach to those institutions. The method adopted by him in explaining the principles of State administration throws light on his outlook and about the political situation in his days. His approach and outlook regarding the political problems are, indeed, inter–related.

A modern scholar, author of a pioneer work on Muslim political thought, regards his method as "historical." "If it is possible," he writes, "to label the Khuwaja's method with any particular epithet, it is

that his method is, to a large extent, historical."[35] He considers it historical because "in nearly every case he proves the truth of a principle which he chooses to propound, on the touchstone of tradition or historical facts, though some of the facts he relates are not chronologically correct."[36]

But it is in a limited sense that his approach can be regarded as historical. It is true that he makes reiterated references to history. But this is not all that makes the historical method what it really is. This method does not consist exclusively in citing historical instances. That is only a preliminary. The historical method consists basically in drawing conclusions objectively from the study of historical facts. The political maxims which Nizam al-Mulk lays down as the guiding principles for the successful administration of the State, are, in fact, the inductive generalizations from the study of history.

They are, indeed, empirical conclusions drawn from his personal experience of practical politics and from his observation of existing conditions. "No event," he believes, "ever happens to take place in the world which might not have occurred already several times. As one might have read, or known, or heard about the circumstances a particular event had brought in, one can surmise the consequences that would follow it in case it happens to occur again."[37]

In effect he is arguing that history repeats itself, but instead of proceeding from the past to the present he follows a reverse course when he first draws conclusions from the observation of the conditions around him and then turns them back upon the past. History, for him, is not the solution of problems, but the endorser of pre-conceived solutions. The essence of his approach to the political issue lies in the blood of the historical method and the method of observation. Though not very successful in following the historical method, he may be regarded as the most historically-minded writer on political topics both among his predecessors and his contemporaries.

This treatment of history squares well with the object with which he proceeds to formulate a particular political theory. He is concerned with theorizing those institutions and their principles and problems which had developed into an actual political constitution, resting mainly on the Sultanate (kingship) and the vizierate, and to bring them to their possible perfection by suggesting practical reforms. He makes ample use of the past and contemporary history to give his personal ideas the appearance of historical facts.

The political institutions of which he speaks had real roots in the political life of the peoples who inhabited a large part of the eastern lands of the 'Abbasid Caliphate, mostly non-Arab races. Most of those institutions had existed there long before the Great Saljuqs came to adopt them, and still much earlier than they could find their theoretical exposition in the writings of Nizam al-Mulk. The absolute monarchy, for instance, the office of vizierate, the monarchical form of administration of justice, the feudal system, the order of courtiers, the system of espionage, etc., were the institutions handed down by ancient Persia to the successive generations.

Though modified in some respects under the influence of the new Muslim political theory, those political

institutions had, nevertheless, succeeded in preserving much of their original Persian character, and exerting, in their turn, a good deal of influence both on the political thought of the indigenous people even after their conversion to Islam as well as on the political system, largely of Persian origin, that Nizam al-Mulk seeks to set out. This makes us look upon his writings as the earliest exposition of what may be called the Persian political theory.

Side by side with this political theory, but with different notions and with a different approach to political problems, there existed the constitutional theory of the Arab jurists of whom Mawardi[38] (c. 364/974 – 450/1058), the author of the *Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah*, was the most eminent. Among this small group of jurists mention must be made of Abu Ya'la (380/990 – 450/1066), a contemporary of Mawardi, and author of another *Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah*,[39] and of Imam al-Haramain al-Juwaini (419/1028 – 478/1085), an intimate friend[40] of Nizam al-Mulk, whose treatise *Ghiyath al-Umam*[41] has not yet seen the light of day. (As political thinkers, the two have not yet been properly studied by students of the history of Muslim constitutional theory.[42])

While the Persian political theory attempts to throw light on the sovereign powers of the king, by analysing the institutions characteristic of this royal office, the constitutional theory puts forward the doctrine of Caliphate. It will be in place here to look into the general nature of the juristic approach to the political problems, and more especially to the institution of kingship, which Nizam al-Mulk also treats, with even greater interest. This will help us to appreciate the realistic element in his thought and approach.

In the first instance, these two sets of contemporary theories, one of the jurists and the other of an administrator, differ in their subject matter. A comparison of the contents of the two treatises of Nizam al-Mulk with those, for example, of the *Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah* of Mawardi, would hardly make one regard the two writers as dealing with the problem and institutions of the same political community living in the same age.

Of the office of the *Khalifah*, his powers and qualifications, the method of his election, the division of vizierate between the unlimited vizierate (*wizarat tanfidh*), the legal difference between their powers, the economic institutions of *jizyah* (poll tax), *zakat* (tax on the accumulated property), *fai'* (goods taken from non-believers), *kharaj* (land tax), and of so many other institutions of religio-political character, which from the chapter heads of the *Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah*, the author of the *Siyasat Nameh* and the *Wasaya* makes no mention at all, and, likewise, most of the topics discussed by Nizam al Mulk have been avoided by Mawardi and other jurists, except the offices of the Sultan and vizier, which they treat on a different plane of thought. In their constitutional theory, the Sultan occupies a position which is quite different from what he actually enjoyed in the political set-up of those days.

To treat the Sultan as a governor by usurpation (*amir bi al-istila*) is to bring him down to the position of the other provincial governors appointed by the Caliph. This amounts to arguing, as they seem to do, that the Sultan did actually derive his powers from the "Imperial" authority of the Caliph. They leave

actual facts out of account by putting the main emphasis on the formal legitimization of the Sultan's authority by the *Khalifah*, which was but an insignificant aspect of their mutual relations. In doing so, they are apt to lose sight of his sovereign powers, which he enjoyed independently of the Caliph's assent.

This limitation of the juristic approach to contemporary politics was bound to arise from the fact that its exponents were building their argument on the foundations of the political order of the Caliphate, which had ceased to exist as a real force for about 200 years. Deprived of any real power to shape the political life of Muslims, the Caliphate, as a political system, continued to exist in theory, which found its elaborate exposition in the writings of the juristic school of the fifth/11th century.

But by interpreting the political fiction of the Caliphate in terms of political realities of their times, these jurists, regardless of the actual facts, were indoctrinating the people with the belief that the caliph was still the real source of all authority.

They were, thus, unable to appreciate the fact that it was the autocratic rule of the independent prince, and not that of the 'Abbasid Caliph, under which the people had actually been living, and they failed to see that by legitimizing the authority of the Sultan, the Caliph only recognized his *de facto* sovereignty, and that this in practice did not render him sub-ordinate to the Caliph. Their juristic theory could not take into full account the growth of absolute monarchy in the Muslim polity upon which a formidable political structure had come to rest.

It is this monarchical system of government developing under the aristocratic rule of the prince, as against the constitutional structure of the Caliphate, which Nizam al-Mulk attempts to study. His political theory represents a particular phase of the development of the Muslim polity which was characterized by kingship. As such, it is an essential part of his contribution to Muslim political thought.

The first thing remarkable about his exposition of the institution of kingship is that he is careful to make no reference to the *Khalifah* as the head of the Muslim community, and to say nothing about the constitutional relations of the Saljuq ruler with the 'Abbasid Caliph. He rarely uses the title of Sultan for the Saljuq King,[43] and as for the term *amir muslauli* (governor by usurpation), it does not occur at all through his writings, both being the terms of the constitutional law employed by the jurists to denote the legal superiority of the caliph over the prince. Instead, he generally calls his ruler *padshah* – a Persian term for the king. All this may reasonably be taken as a conscious effort on the part of Nizam al-Mulk to avoid any discussion or even a phrase which might involve any reference to the legal relations of the Caliph and the prince, for his object in studying the monarchical constitution of the Saljuq Empire is to represent his royal master in his full independent position.

To this political objective his *Siyasat Nameh* was expressly dedicated, for it was composed at the instance of the great Saljuq ruler, Malik-shah, as the *Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah*, the earliest treatise on the constitutional theory of the Caliphate had been written by Mawardi only 40 years before at the instance of an 'Abbasid Caliph[44] to vindicate his claim to sovereign authority. This indicates the existence of a

theoretical conflict between the powers of the Caliph and the king, which of course has been prompted by the historical events which preceded it.

Conscious of the growing weakness of the Buwaihid dynasty in the beginning of the fifth/11th century, the 'Abbasid Caliph Qadir (381/991 – 422/1031) and his successor Qa'im (422/1031 – 407/1075), during whose rules the juristic theory of the Caliphate was formulated, attempted to achieve independence from the tutelage of the Buwaihids.[45] On the other hand, the Saljuqs, too, who had succeeded both the Buwaihids and the Ghaznawids after over-throwing their power, were no less keen to assert the authority they had established at the point of the sword.

In spite of acknowledging the nominal authority of the *Khalifah*,[46] who, in turn, had legitimized their rule and conferred upon them titles of honour,[47] the Saljuqs did not hesitate to inflict humiliation upon him whenever it was demanded by the political situation. Kunduri, the vizier of Tughril Beg (d. 455/1062), is said to have with-held the pension of the Caliph on his refusal to marry his daughter to the Suljuq prince.[48] On another occasion, Malik shah is said to have intended to banish the Caliph al-Muqtadi from Baghdad.[49]

Under this situation it was not possible for Nizam al-Mulk to make any mention of the *Khalifah* without recognizing him as the supreme authority over his Saljuq prince. This would have been inconsistent with the objective he had in mind in writing his treatise.

His effort to avoid any discussion of the legal or political relations of the Caliph and the king is significant. He is seeking to defend his prince against the theoretical encroachment on his independent position by the advocates of the Caliph's authority.

From the outset Nizam al- Mulk seems to have taken if for granted that the real source from which the king derives his authority, in theory or in practice, is not the institution of the Caliphate. That point has been removed from the plan of discussion. The reason is not far to seek. As it was inconsistent with his political ends to recognize the Caliph as the supreme authority, so an explicit refutation of his claims in this respect would have made Nizam al-Mulk unnecessarily provoke a controversy about the powers of the two offices. To this dilemma he finds a solution in what may be called in modern language the theory of divine right – the theory that the king enjoys the right to rule over his subjects by virtue of divine appointment.

This becomes obvious from the study of the first chapters in the *Siyasat Nameh*, which mainly explain the divine nature of this institution, and its functions ordained by God. He puts it in very clear words when he says, "In every age God selects one from amongst mankind and adorns him with princely skills, and entrusts him with the affairs of the world and the comfort of the subjects."[50] This is the remarkably simplified hypothesis of his theory of kingship; he does not argue to prove it, but simply states it as a self-evident truth.

This proposition, as advanced by Nizam al-Mulk, suffers theological weakness common to all the

expositions of the divine right theory which set out this hypothesis as a *fait accompli*, to be simply accepted rather than to be argued. It is indeed a dogmatic belief rather than a rational proposition. It is, however, important for our purpose, because it serves to explain how Nizam al-Mulk comes to expound a political theory which is out and out a vindication of autocracy, and how he is led from the outset to reject the democratic principles and enunciated by the advocates of the Caliphate.

After explaining the nature of the king's appointment, Nizam al-Mulk discusses the purposes of kingship in a political community. He argues the *raison d'ètes* of this institution, and throws more light on its divine nature. The essential function which the king has to fulfil in human society is to bring order of chaos, and to maintain peace and justice. This is what he means when he says, "If the people show any sign of disobedience or contempt towards the *Shari'ah* (the Canon-Law), or if they fail to obey God and to comply with His commands, then he intends to inflict punishment on them for their conduct...Due to their sin they bring this wrath upon themselves.

Benevolent kinds disappear from amongst them. Swords are drawn and blood-shed follows, and whosoever is powerful does as he pleases, until the sinners to one of the people whom God by His grace blesses with success according to his worth, and endows with wisdom and knowledge.[51]

Then Nizam al-Mulk goes on to say that the ultimate object to which the king should direct his efforts is to create and maintain wholesome conditions so "that the people may live with comfort under the shadow of his justice."[52]

It amounts to a sort of "mystical" interpretation of historical changes, bringing about the rise and fall of rulers. The king has been represented here as an instrument of God's will, fulfilling a divine function in political upheavals. It is the punishment for their disobedience that people are first deprived by the Almighty of the benevolent king. Then His wrath takes the shape of calamities and upheavals. And it is again by His mercy that a man rises to the position of a sovereign and brings about peace and order. Thus, in this divine order of political society all things proceed from God's will, and it is from His supreme authority that the king derives his powers.

While speaking of the monarch who succeeds in establishing his rule by subduing the warring elements and in executing God's will by bringing peace and tranquility to the people, Nizam al-Mulk is not unmindful of the victorious career of the Saljuq dynasty, which had risen to sovereign position by its own strength and successfully established an orderly government. This becomes clear when he says that it is by divine providence that his Saljuq master has been destined to rule his subjects.[53]

This implies that the king's authority rests, in the first place, on direct authorization from God and, in the second place, on his own ability to gain political power in which he is helped by God the Almighty. He is equally emphatic on the principle of hereditary kingship, which is always an essential part of the divine right doctrine. According to him, the kingly office is essentially of divine origin as well as hereditary, and should pass, like the kingship in ancient Persia, from father to son.[54] And it is according to this principle

that his Saljuq prince, he claims, has inherited this dignified office from his great ancestors.[55]

Nizam al-Mulk's vindication of the claims of the king to sovereign powers is based on a three-fold justification, namely, the divine sanction, the conquest of power, and the hereditary succession. He later states this more clearly in an anecdote in which Nushirwan, the Persian King, has been shown as asserting his eligibility to the throne in a royal speech addressed to his feudatories, "First, this kingship has been bestowed upon me by God the Almighty, secondly, I have inherited it from my father, thirdly,...I have recaptured the kingdom by the sword."[56]

It is obvious now that in explaining the nature of the supreme authority in the political community, he takes the position of a legitimist" who believes not in human choice, but in divine appointment and hereditary succession.

This exposition of kingship is significant from yet another point of view. There is more in it than the mere explanation of the divine origin of the king's powers. It may be regarded as an effort of Nizam al-Mulk to seek moral justification for the passive obedience which the monarch has the right to demand from his subjects, and also for his unlimited authority to control the administration and political life of the people. The two are correlative to each other and follow as corollaries from this legitimist doctrine. This helps us to understand the relation between ruler and subjects as envisaged in his political theory.

He lays great emphasis on obedience as the most essential duty of the people towards the ruler, since he brings to them peace and prosperity after they have been deprived of it as a punishment for their disobedience to God. This has been stated more explicitly in another work, the *Wasaya*, in which he discusses the question of obedience to royal authority. "No doubt," he says, "it is but obligatory to worship the Almighty, and to obey the king. The common people generally, and the royal favourites and courtiers particularly are under the obligation of such obedience, and more especially one who has been entrusted with authority in the matters of administration and finance."[57]

The king is entitled to receive obedience from his subjects as a divinely appointed authority. Nizam al-Mulk asserts that the very fact that the king succeeds in establishing his rule in sufficient to make us regard his authority as resting on the divine sanction. Without the aid of God Almighty," he argues, "an individual can never become a ruler, nor can he bring the world into the bondage of subjugation. Though there might be several causes of his rise to political power, they all refer undoubtedly to the same divine help."[58]

The gist of this remarkably simplified contention is that it is the duty of the people to obey the prince without questioning the validity of his authority: it is valid as *de facto*. A *de facto* ruler may be unjust and may put the country into disorder, but Nizam al-Mulk, like a true legitimist, is careful to avoid this question as it ultimately involves the right of the people to resist a ruler who is doing wrong to them. If confusion and disorder ever take place in a political society, he attempts to interpret it as resulting not from the misrule of the monarch but from the sinful acts of the people themselves.

It is, therefore, by remaining obedient to the king that they can enjoy peace and prosperity which is restored to them under his rule. The king can rightly inflict punishment upon those who, "not realizing the value of security and comfort," might revolt against his authority.[59] There is no doubt that Nizam al-Mulk believes in the principle of passive and unconditional obedience on the part of the people, and leaves them without any moral right to resist the royal authority.

A political theory like this, with the belief in the divine appointment of the king, coupled with the principle of passive obedience by the people, can result only in the advocacy of absolute monarchy. The prince of whom Nizam al-Mulk is speaking here is surely an absolute monarch in that his powers are unrestricted by any human power. The only authority which could claim, at least in theory, a certain amount of legal right to impose any obligations on a Muslim prince as the 'Abbasid Caliph, to whom, we have seen Nizam al-Mulk avoids making any reference in this respect.

It is obvious from his attempt to explain the administrative system with constant reference to the royal office that the monarch is the sovereign authority in his realm, and, as such, is the source of all political power, all are sub-ordinate to him, and are endowed by him with powers and privileges according to their capability. In spite of representing the king as directly responsible for the welfare of the whole country, Nizam al-Mulk does not regard him as accountable to the people for his political conduct. On the question of the kings' responsibility in public affairs he seems to take again the position of the people, but before God. That, however, has not been laid down expressly, and has to be concluded only indirectly from the statements in which, for example, he says that on the Day of Judgment the king will be summoned before God to answer for his conduct towards his subjects,[60] and that the government officials are accountable to the king, and the king in his turn is responsible to the Almighty.[61]

What Nizam al-Mulk is attempting to set out here is indeed the concept of absolute monarchy. At this point he comes much nearer to the Persian idea of kingship and the Shi'ite doctrine of *imamah* (the leadership of political community), both founded on the divine right of the Head of the State, than to the constitutional theory of the Sunni Arab jurists, which was based on democratic principles. An absolute monarch claiming direct authorization from God to manage the affairs of a political society was an idea quite foreign to Arab thinkers. The *Khalifah* had always been regarded by them, at least in theory, as an elected functionary[62] to whom powers were delegated, not directly by God, but by the electors. They, therefore, held that the *Khalifah* was subject to certain legal restrictions. This democratic idea of Caliphate is in striking contrast with the Persian notion of absolute monarchy revived in Nizam al-Mulk's political theory.

It would not be wrong to suppose that this concept of a divinely appointed ruler came to him mainly from the political system of ancient Persia, and not from the contemporary Shi'ite doctrine,[63] which, as systematically evolved under the Fatimid rule in Egypt, was definitely a much later development in comparison with the Persian concept. This is obvious from his repeated references to the political principle on which the monarchical constitution in ancient Persia was based, but he makes no such

references to the political ideas of the Shi'ites, of whose political activities in the form of Batini movement he is, on the contrary, vehemently critical.64 But it must be admitted at the same time that his exposition of divine right is lacking both in philosophical depth and systematic treatment with which this doctrine was set out in the Fatimid dogmatics.

The reason for imitating the Persian model of kingship is to be sought in his contemporary historical conditions. On the one hand, he is expressing, as pointed out before, the popular idea of kingship prevailing in the territories conquered by the Saljuqs, and, on the other hand, he is seeking to replace the Turkish concept of tribal leadership by the Persian ideal of absolute monarchy.

The peculiar conditions under which he had to work out his political theory, made the adoption of autocratic rule inevitable. The institution of *Khanat*, that is, the tribal leadership among the Saljuqs, had largely become inconsistent with the stage of political power under tribal customs, their Khan was far from having any territorial basis for his authority, with the result that their tribal system of government was found inadequate to cope with the problems of the large territorial empire which they had come to rule. The Empire they had inherited from the Ghaznawids and the Buwaihids was far vaster than the territory hitherto known to them, and more advanced in political principles as compared with their own tribal customs. Despite the large powers that were conferred upon the Khan by the tribal system, he was regarded much more the leader of a large tribe, than as a sovereign in the proper sense.

There were other "minor leaders" of small groups of families who, at least in the early stage of their political career, could lay claim to political power derived not from the "major" tribal leader but from the tribal customary law. It was not until the reign of Malik shah, the third ruler of the great Saljuq dynasty, that the Saljuq prince could become a real autocratic mind65 in all State affairs throughout the reign of Alp Arslan and Malik shah, who was mainly responsible for altering their nomadic tribal political organization to harmonize with the requirements of a territorial empire. He converted their power into a centralized autocratic authority essential for successful government in his time.

What he is attempting now in his writings by theorizing about kingship and its institutional organization is to provide the Saljuq monarchy with a theoretical basis. He is seeking, moreover, to shape it on the model of Persian kingship about which he had read in the "works of the ancients" (*kutub–i pishinagan*),66 and had seen revived in the monarchical constitution of the Ghaznawids. To him this Persian monarchy, with its autocratic principles, was more adaptable to the new circumstances than any other type of institution which was founded on democratic principles.

Only an absolute monarchy, he thinks, can vigorously deal with the nomad Turkumans and the *petit* leaders of the Ghuzz tribes in subduing their power to a centralized authority. Therefore, he advises his prince that "God Almighty has created the king most powerful of all people, and all are sub–ordinate to him. It is from that they take their subsistence money and their position. He should treat them in such a way that they always realize their position, and may not throw off the bondage of allegiance, and, moreover, they should not be allowed to do whatever they like; they should do only what they have been

ordered to do."[67] His aim in stressing the absolute superiority of the king is to introduce a central authority with autocratic powers in the political system of the Saljuqs, the majority of whom were not yet fully accustomed to this principle of government and administration.

To imitate the Persian absolute monarchy was also useful in tackling the problems of the growing "feudal system" in the Saljuq Empire. The Persian institution of kingship had a record of feudal traditions, and could furnish the Saljuqs with the laws applicable in many respects to their relation with the feudatories and the subjects.

The system of land assignment – what Nizam al-Mulk calls the *iqta' dari*[68] – may be regarded undoubtedly as the Eastern form of feudalism as against the feudalism of medieval Europe. To a great extent, Nizam al-Mulk may be considered responsible for developing, if not for introducing, it on systematic lines within the political structure of the Saljuq Empire. It was due to the military organization of the Saljuqs, on which their political structure ultimately came to rest, together with the problems of revenue administration, that the practice of assigning fiefs (*iqta's*) to the military chiefs, soldiers, and to other private persons was adopted. There were also the *dihqans*, the old Persian land-owners, who continued to exercise proprietary rights as before. This system, in brief, was designed as a means of paying the soldiers and of collecting revenues.

The principles on which Nizam al-Mulk suggests that the *iqta' dari* should be based develop it into a feudal system very different from the Western feudalism, both in character and in social and political consequences. It is basically different in the tenure of the feudatories, in their legal rights over the land and the *ra'iyyah* (vassals) as well as in the relation of the king as the over-lord with the *muqta's* (feudatories), on the one hand, and with the subjects, on the other, and with the subjects, strictly hereditary as a general rule. There is nothing in his writing to suggest that he is in favour of assigning lands to an individual with a specified legal right to transmit it by inheritance.

On the other hand, in his system the feudatories come to occupy a position more akin to that of the tax-collectors with large administrative powers than that of the "feudal lords," in the medieval sense. In their relations with the vassals they are like the *shihnahs* (guards, and in case a feudatory fails to treat them well, "the fief, it is suggested, must be withdrawn from him."[69] Besides, "the officials and the feudatories must be changed every two to three years so that they may not get strong enough in their fortifications."[70]

It appears that side by side with developing the *iqta'* system, Nizam al-Mulk attempts to enlarge the powers of the king as a means of checking the centrifugal tendencies which tend to appear in feudalism. This leads him to put forward a theory of land ownership which goes well with his idea of absolute monarchy. He holds that "the feudatories who hold the fiefs must know that civility and courtesy the lawful amount which has been assigned to them, i.e., to the feudatories, and when that has been taken, the subjects shall be secure in their persons, property, wives, and children, and in their goods and estates....They must know that the land and the subjects all belong to the king, and the feudatories and

the governors (*walis*), set over their head, are like the guards to the subjects, as the king is to others."[71]

In entertaining such a view regarding land ownership, Nizam al-Mulk departs from what may be regarded as the Islamic theory, which attributes the absolute ownership of land, not be the Head of the State, but to the State itself, as entrusted to by God. It is also a clear departure from the traditional concept of the Ghuzz tribes, who looked upon the land that they would come to occupy as the common property of their families. It was this tribal concept of land ownership of Nizam al-Mulk was seeking to modify basically, as it was out of tune with the administrative principle of a centralized empire which had now passed into their hands. To him it was essential to bring both the land and the subjects under the central authority of the king.

A good deal of his theory, it appears, has come to him from the old feudal Persia. This is evident from his attempt to explain this principle by an anecdote from Persian history in which the famous vizier Buzurjmihr has been represented as advising Nushirwan that "the kingdom (wilayah) belongs to the king (malik), and the king has entrusted the dominion, and not the subjects, to the military When the military is not well wishing unto the kingdom, and kind to the people...and takes the power to arrest and imprison...and to appoint and dismiss, what difference then remains between the king and the military, for that power really belongs to the king, and not to the military."[72] On another occasion Nushirwan exhorts his feudatories to treat the people well, and only to take from them what is due and just, and he stresses the fact that the dominion belongs to him, and it is by him that the estates have been assigned to them.[73]

Nizam al-Mulk's feudal theory takes away much of the powers from the hands of feudal lords which they enjoyed, for instance, in Western feudalism. It leaves them with limited power to collect the revenues, and to have only "a fixed amount in their hands."[74] Moreover, it removes them from the position of being the sole intermediaries between the king and the subjects, preventing the latter from getting into direct contact with him.[75] In his system, the direct responsibility for the well-being of the subjects rests not with the feudatories, but with the king, and, therefore, he suggests that the king should send spies (*jasusan*) and special confidants (*khwas*)[76] to inquire secretly about administration in the fiefs in order to get reliable information about the condition of the subjects, and urges him to dismiss a feudatory who forbids subjects to represent their cases to the king in order to seek redress for grievances.[77]

All this results in the concentration of all the political administrative powers, as sought my Nizam al-Mulk, in the central authority of the king which was once enjoyed by the Persian autocrat.

Though his idea of kingship is in essence of Persian origin, it differs in certain respects from the Old Persian prototype, and has been refashioned in other respects under the influence of Muslim political theory and practice. It is, on the whole, an attempt to readjust the Persian model with the contemporary social and political structure.

The most important point of difference is that Nizam al-Mulk is not an incarnationist. Unlike the ancients

who could look upon their Persian monarch as the incarnation of Divinity,[78] he treats his ruler as a simple human being. In spite of once calling the prince the "shadow of God on earth" (*zill Allah fi al-ard*) in the *Wasaya*[79] – a phrase which does not occur at all in the *Siyasat Nameh* – he does not go the extent of clothing him with divine attributes so as to make him appear an embodiment of Divinity. The phrase is devoid here of any mystical meanings, and has been used in the ordinary sense of a metaphor, to mean that the exalted office of the king is like a shadow provided by God on earth under which mankind may find peace and security. No doubt, he speaks of this monarch as "adorned with the virtues and excellences which were lacking by kings all over the world,"[80] yet there is in him no tendency to regard the king as a super-human being in any metaphysical sense. Among those excellent virtues with which his prince is adorned, he counts, for example, good appearance, justice, courage, generosity, etc.[81] but they are all divinely gifted qualities, not divine attributes. Therefore, his prince is by no means an incarnation of God.

Far from attaching any "mystical" or metaphysical sense to the concept of kingship, he believes that "the king is endowed by God with wisdom and knowledge so that he can treat each of his subjects according to his worth and can give each a position according to his value,"[82] and, again, "His (i.e. the king's) wisdom is just like a lamp that gives off abundant light. People can find their way in its light and can come out of darkness,[83] and he does not need himself to be guided by others." We can see his prince bearing a small resemblance both to the philosopher-king[84] and to the Shi'ite teacher-Imam,[85]but suffering from an innate inability to become the true image of either. This seems mainly due to the fact that Nizam al-Mulk is by temperament much more a matter-of-fact exponent of popular ideas than a real philosopher, unable to develop his thoughts into philosophical concepts. He may be taken as possibly expressing a general belief about kingship prevailing in his days, in which the old Persian idea of the divinely-appointed monarch in its moderate form – and not the concept of divine monarch – was superficially inter-mingled with the Neo-Platonic interpretation of the philosopher-king as an embodiment of perfect wisdom. His concept of the king is that of a statesman who is primarily concerned with general beliefs rather than with philosophical generalizations.

His Persian ideal is modified also in another respect, obviously under the direct influence of Muslim thought. Though he treats his prince as a divinely-appointed ruler, invested with unlimited powers, he does not regard him by any means as a law-giver. A human authority with absolute legislative powers has never existed in Muslim polity, because *legislation* in the proper sense of the term has never been recognized as a human function in the Muslim legal theory. According to this theory, there does already exist a divine Law (*Shari'ah*) supreme, eternal, and perfect, which is theoretically as binding on the ruler himself, however autocratic he may be in practice, as on his subjects. This is what seems to have prevented Nizam al-Mulk from attributing any legislative power to his prince. His king, on the other hand, is subject to the supreme Law of God, and, is, moreover, an instrument for enforcing that law, and for making people abide by it. He emphasizes that it is obligatory for the king to seek knowledge of religion matters and to comply with, and make arrangements to carry out the commands of God and the traditions of the Prophet, and to pay respect to religious scholars."[86] Therefore, it is the duty of the ruler

to appoint judges (*qadis*) to execute the *Shari'ah* as his deputies (*na'ibin*).

This discussion of the ruler's responsibility in enforcing the *Shari'ah*, apart from explaining a principle of Muslim policy, is also interesting for its historical significance in respect of the Saljuqs. This shows Nizam al-Mulk's attempt to teach the Saljuqs the principles of the Muslim legal system and to familiarize them with the law of the more civilized people of whom they had become the rulers. But his royal masters were altogether strangers to all culture,87 and there is no reliable information to prove that they could even read and write. Therefore, books, as the direct source of knowledge of religious Law, were out of their reach. This seems to be the reason why Nizam al-Mulk advises his prince to get himself acquainted with the teachings of religion through the debates of the scholars (*'ulama'*) which he should caused to be held occasionally in his presence, once or twice a week. "Thus, one day he will become conversant with most of the laws of the *Shari'ah*, the commentary of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet and, thus, the methods of dealing with temporal and religious affairs would become easy for him."88

This discussion leads us at this point to another important question, namely, the place that religion must have, according to Nizam al-Mulk, both in the conduct of a ruler and in the political life of a people, where we can see again that his concept of kingship is modified by the influence of Muslim thought. In spite of his love for the political principles for pre-Islamic Persia, he is essentially a religious-minded man who can believe only in the religious values of social life and enunciated by Islam, and can look upon a political community as dedicated out and out to religious ends. His political theory is made up of reconciliation between the Old Persian ideals and the Muslim political ideology.

To him, in the first place, religion and politics are inseparably joined together and, as such are complementary to each other. "The State (and kingship) and religion," he believes, "are like two brothers."89 And throughout his writings, the two have been treated in the same spirit. In dealing with them, he closely follows the spirit of Muslim polity which is largely based on the concept of the indivisible unity of religion and politics.

The principles of conduct which he lays down for his king under the influence of this religious trend are in striking contrast with those prescribed by Machiavelli for his prince. Unlike the Machiavellian prince who is advised to handle religion merely as a useful instrument for achieving political ends, and who is taught to appear rather than become religious,90 Nizam al-Mulk's prince is taught to believe sincerely in religious truths, and to exercise political power as an essential means of attaining them. According to him, both the State and religion are dependent upon each other for their existence; therefore, the king must treat them both alike. "Whenever there is any disorder in the state," says Nizam al-Mulk, "there is confusion in the religion of its people also, and the heretics and mischief-makers make their appearance. And whenever religious affairs are disturbed, the State is thrown into disorder, the mischief makers grow strong, and heresy makes itself manifest."91 He believes that "the most virtuous thing for the king is to uphold the right faith."92 To him a wise and just ruler is one who follows the tenets of

religion faithfully, and eradicates heresy from his realm.[93]

It is obvious that the concern of his prince with religion is not mere politics; it is rather a matter of genuine faith in the religious values of social life. It is an instrument to preserve the State as well as a means of salvation in the life to come.[94] "The ruler who strives to uphold the faith successfully is entrusted by God with temporal and religious affairs, and his wishes are granted in both worlds."[95]

This shows how Nizam al-Mulk is at pains to make his prince a religious as well as mundane authority. It is, however, no artificiality with him to blend the religious and temporal powers in one and the same office. With a religious man like him, looking to faith for guidance in the spiritual as well as in the worldly affairs, it is more natural to combine them than to treat them as separate. Besides his own outlook about the relation of religion and politics, which led him to attribute religious function to kingship, there arose a historical situation in which the king came to be regarded not only as a temporal authority but also as a religious functionary. The age of the Caliph, when he was the undisputed leader of the Muslim community, had practically come to a close by this time, giving rise to the power of the independent autocratic monarch to whom the people now looked for leadership, there arose a historical situation in which the king came to be regarded not only as a temporal authority but also as a religious functionary.

The age of the Caliph, when he was the undisputed leader of the Muslim community, had practically come to a close by this time, giving rise to the power of the independent autocratic monarch to whom the people now looked for leadership in all temporal and religious affairs. It will not help much towards appreciating the role this autocrat came to play in the social life of the Muslim people, to suppose about this historical change that, "politically, the *Khalifah* gave place to the Sultan, that is, a religious executive was replaced by and explicitly independent mundane power."[96] It must be admitted that the Muslim world, far from thinking in terms of the separation of State and religion, was definitely at a stage of political development in which, as we have seen, it could still easily believe in their ultimate oneness. The Caliph, therefore, was not held to be simply a religious executive; he was a temporal authority as well, and both functions were intricately inter-woven in his office.

The autocratic prince, who came to fill the void left by the Caliph in the Muslim life with the latter's downfall, was his heir in both capacities. He was a replica of the Caliph, in almost every respect, save that, like the Caliph, he was not an elected functionary, and therefore, unlike him, he was in practice an absolute sovereign with no constitutional limitations on his authority, and under no constitutional obligation even in fulfilling his religious functions. Had he been regarded as simply a mundane power, the Muslims living under his rule would have been left without a leader to organize their religious life, especially after the Caliph had practically been removed as a real force from the scene of their spiritual and political life.

It is this practical necessity that has led Nizam al-Mulk to insist on the essentially religious character of the king's authority. This special emphasis on the religious character is also important on account of the fact that it tones down the autocratic temper of his monarch. The moral obligations he sets on the

absolute authority of the king prevent it from growing into an oppressive despotism. His is basically the idea of a *paternalistic* State in which the king is held responsible for the security and well-being of all subjects. The first and foremost moral obligation of the king towards his subjects is to do justice. He believes it to be a religious duty, for it has been ordained by God.

Justice, as a principle of good government, occupies a pre-dominant place in his concept of kingship, and time and again he lays emphasis on its importance for State and society. But, in spite of all its significance, he does not attempt to formulate any systematic theory of justice, nor does he make any effort to define it exactly. This much, however, can be concluded from his statement that, like almost all his ideas, justice, too, is a practical maxim or a social rule rather than a social philosophy. Everyone should be given what is due to him, or what has been legally recognized as his right in a given social order. To him justice is a moral principle which is also usable as an effective means to preserve a political society and to promote peace and prosperity among the people. "The kings should strive," he says, "to seek the favour of God, which can be attained through the kindness with which they treat the people and through justice which they administer to them. When the people pray to the welfare of the king, his State grows stable and prospers ever day."[97]

To stress its significance for the prosperity of the State he quotes the saying that "a State can continue to exist notwithstanding impiety, but it cannot exist with tyranny."[98] Therefore, he believes that an auspicious age is one in which a prince comes to rule.[99] He quotes several anecdotes from history to demonstrate the material advantages of justice, and to show that justice is the outstanding moral virtue of a king. He lays equal emphasis on its moral and material aspects as inseparably joined together, and stresses the point that as justice brings prosperity and good reputation in this world, it helps a ruler "to attain salvation in the next world.[100]

In his notion of justice he is influenced again both by Islam and by Persia. It is under the Islamic influence that he comes to realize the religious and moral significance of justice, and goes to the extent of linking its worldly aspect with the deliverance of the soul and eternity. To illustrate this point he quotes from the Holy Qur'an,[101] the Tradition[102] of the Prophet, and statements about the practice of the pious Muslim rulers, and says that the worthiest prince is one "whose heart is the seat of justice."[103]

From ancient Persia he learns the methods of the administration of justice and principle of direct responsibility of the king in matters relating to it. He is so impressed by the Persian standard of justice that he believes that "the Sassanian kings, especially Nushirwan the Just, have surpassed all other monarchs in justice, generosity, and courage."[104] He says that the Persian kings used to strive so honestly to live up to the principle of impartiality in justice that they could even allow themselves to appear as respondents before the Chief Justice who heard complaints against their royal person.[105] They held it as their personal duty to see that the others also treated the people with the same impartiality and justice, and, in order to hear the complaints personally, they used to hold public audience twice a year, to which everyone was allowed free access, and whoever prevented anyone from

going to the king to obtain redress for grievances was sentenced to death."[106]

Besides justice, which is essential for good government, there are some other moral duties, which, as Nizam al-Mulk says a ruler has to perform for the well-being of his subjects. His idea of benevolent despotism involves the notion that a good monarch must rule, not for his own good, but for the good of the whole country. He is responsible for the welfare of his subjects and is personally accountable to God, not only for his own conduct, but also for the conduct of his officials towards the people.[107] It is therefore, an essential part of his duty that he should appoint as government officers only those who are God-fearing, learned, pious, and righteous,[108] and should instruct them to treat the people well,[109] because as justice brings prosperity, oppression leads to the devastation of a country.

This autocratic but benevolent sovereign, depicted for the first time in the writings of Nizam al-Mulk, is a typical Muslim prince who came into existence with the downfall of the Caliphate and continued to live for centuries in the Muslim polity. Equally typical is his vizier, who stands next to him in rank and power in the political hierarch of the kingdom.[110] Like the king, he is also of Persian origin; he is, in fact, the Muslim heir of the pre-Islamic Persian grand vizier, called the *wazurg-farmdhar*, who made his way into the constitutional system of the Caliphate[111] "when the 'Abbasids came to copy the administration of Sassanian Empire."[112] This grand vizier was next to the king, and what he was in his relation to the Persian king, the Muslim vizier was to the Caliph.[113]

For Nizam al-Mulk, himself a Persian and Grand Vizier, it is quite natural to aspire to model this institution as closely as possible on the traditional line of the Persian vizierate, which had once worked so successfully under the Sassanian rule. But he is not the first writer to speak of this institution, for Mawardi and others had already discussed it in some detail. There is, however, a sharp distinction between the theory, for example, of Mawardi and that of Nizam al-Mulk. What Mawardi speaks of is, in fact, the constitutional position of the vizier in his relation to the caliph, and, therefore, it is what may be called the constitutional theory of vizierate.

With this aspect of the vizierate, Nizam al-Mulk is less concerned, and he seldom refers to it. What really interests him more, or rather exclusively, is the political and moral aspect of this institution. There is yet another difference: unlike Mawardi, who is primarily concerned with discussing the question what the vizier's functions are in a constitutional set-up, Nizam al-Mulk attempts to show what he ought to be in order to attain perfection in ministerial ethics. He deals with the vizierate on a plane of thought which is nearer to that of the *Qabas Nameh* of Amir Kaika'us (412/1021 – 475/1082).[114] Indeed, his field of study is the art of minister ship, but, compared with Amir Kaiks'us, he treats it on a wider scale and with a touch of personal experience which obviously could not be claimed by the Amir.

To Nizam al-Mulk the vizierate is the most important and the most exalted office, next only to the Sultanate.[115] Though this glorification of the ministerial office is not without a tinge of exaggeration, it serves to give an idea of the importance the vizier once had in the Eastern monarchical States, including the Saljuq Empire, in which he played a significant part in politics, and actually shared a good deal of

power with the king. In most of the achievements which were attributed to the royal person he had a real hand. Therefore, there is a certain basis of truth in regarding the vizierate as "an institution on which depends the State and the people, the religion and the kingdom."[116] This indicates Nizam al-Mulk's belief about the vizierate as an indispensable part in the machinery of a monarchical government. He is also conscious of the historical role it played in bringing so much credit to the kingship in the long course of its career. "All the kings," he says, "who have left their good names on the pages of time, owe it to the felicity of the righteous vizier,"[117] and again, "...a good minister brings to the king a good name and leads him to adopt a good conduct. All the princes who had been great, and whose name shall be held in honour until the Day of Judgment, where those who had good ministers."[118] Throughout his arguments about the importance of minister ship, he is insistent on the point that the welfare of both the king and the kingdom depends upon the sagacity of the vizier, and that a bad vizier always leads them to destruction.[119]

What Nizam al-Mulk is attempting here by stressing the importance of the vizierate is not to represent the vizier as a mere intermediary between the king and his subjects, but to show them as the representative of the king and actually responsible to him for the whole administration. That is to say, the vizier, as conceived by him, is in a sense a share in the king's real powers. This was actually the position which Nizam al-Mulk had himself enjoyed in his own life-time as the vizier of the Saljuqs. That in elevating this office to such an exalted position he is mainly encouraged by the Persian tradition, is evident from statement in which he asserts that since the origin of the State up to the days of Yazdigird all administrative affairs had been exclusively in the hands of the viziers. The vizier was the counter-part and deputy of the king.[120] He is influenced again by the Persian forerunners, the Barmakids, were the first exponents in Islam. To him it seems most desirable that both the kingship and the vizierate should be hereditary, as was the regular practice in ancient Persia from the days of Ardashir, the son of Babekan, to the reign of Yazdigird.[121] He regrets that "when the kingship came to an end in Persia the vizierate also departed from the house of the viziers."[122]

Nizam al-Mulk presents a picture of the typical minister serving at the Court of an Oriental monarch, when he comes to enumerate the dangers with which this important office was fraught, and the noble qualities which were supposed to be the pre-requisites of the vizierate. He gives a detailed account of them, supported by his personal experiences, or by illustrations taken from contemporary history. It gives an idea of the state of politics and administration in the medieval Orient in which a vizier had to discharge his duties with so many powers to conduct the government, and, at the same time, with so many risks of being suddenly overthrown from office for any mistake.

The dangers in accepting his office, as he enumerates are:

a) The minister may do injustice to the people as he has to issue numerous orders every day,[123]

b) may please one man and displease thousands of others, high and low, rich and poor,[124]

c) he may displease the princes of the royal household by his acts and may consequently incur the displeasure of the king,[125]

d) he has to always deal with the nobles and grandees of the empire whose hostility and hate might turn the king against him,[126] and

e) there is a large number of officials of high and low ranks upon whom he has to depend in discharging his duties, and their displeasure and conspiracy may undermine his reputation and career.[127]

All this renders the office of the vizier a difficult one, requiring a man of sharp intellect and outstanding abilities. Nizam al-Mulk attempts to lay down at length the essential conditions of this office which were regarded in his days as the qualities of an ideal vizier. The duties of the vizier, he says,[128] are determined by his four-fold relations: First, he is under the obligation of obedience to God, secondly, he owes allegiance to the royal master, thirdly, he has to care for the favourites of the king, and fourthly, he is concerned with the common people.

One cannot fail to note that his whole discussion of the institution of vizierate, like that of the office of kingship, is pervaded again by a religious and moral outlook, arising out of his sincere regard for religion. In the office of vizierate, as he treats it, diplomacy and morality have been blended together, but emphasis is altogether on its moral ends. To acquire merely worldly pomp and power, he says, should not be the ultimate end of the vizier, what really befits this exalted office is to seek real prestige and a good name in religious and worldly matters.[129] This can be achieved through upholding the right faith and following the dictates of God faithfully.[130] It is the duty of the minister that he should strive hard to revive and propagate the faith of Islam and try to attain the excellent moral virtues without which divine favour is impossible. He comes to preach to the vizier a sort of Sufi-like attitude towards political life when he says that he should believe in the divine providence, and should regard his success not as the fruit of his own efforts but as the result of the divine will.[131]

Then comes the king who is, according to Nizam al-Mulk, a divinely-appointed authority. He is at pains to make him a point of focus for the loyal sentiments of the whole political society and especially of the official community among whom the vizier has a greater obligation to pay homage to the king than anyone else.[132] In order to prove himself a truly obedient servant of his master, he says, the vizier must refrain from seeking any sort of worldly pleasure, because the greatest pleasure for a minister really consists, not in satisfying his own desires, but in pleasing his royal master.[133] Therefore, he should direct all his efforts towards reforming the affairs of the kingdom[134] and increasing the wealth of the State,[135] which is the only way to please the king.

Finally, he advises the minister to have special regard for the companions, courtiers, and other favourites of the king and the nobles and high officials of the kingdom.[136] They are always influential figures in a feudal society headed by an absolute monarchy, and have an important role in its politics. As their friendliness has great advantages for the vizier, their antagonism may turn all against him;[137] therefore,

he advises the vizier to be careful in handling them. It is, however, remarkable about Nizam al–Mulk that, in spite of dealing with the problems of an office of a diplomatic nature within the framework of feudalism, which is always tainted with conspiracies, he does not induce the vizier to follow cunning methods. Instead, he believes in the moral standards of political conduct and insists that the vizier "should steadily follow the path of truth and righteousness in State affairs," and this would serve to protect him from the enmity of his foes and would ultimately convince them of his integrity.[138]

Nizam al–Mulk's importance as a political thinker must rest, not on the practical suggestions he offered to improve the conditions of a particular State, but on his theories of monarchy and minister ship. He was the first to discover the moral and political principles of kingship and vizierate and wherever the two institutions came into existence in the Muslim world, his ideas served as their theoretical foundations. It is evident from the references to his works in the writings of the succeeding generations, that he was generally studied. Even the contents of *Wasaya'* "were known far and wide,"[139] long before they came to be compiled in the form of a treatise in the ninth/15th century. The vast literature on political ethics produced in later days, especially the treatises written for the guidance of Muslim princes, contain a good deal of the political principles which are enunciated for the first time by Nizam al–Mulk. This may be considered to be his direct influence on the later development of Muslim political thought.

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Chapter 39: Al-Ghazali

The structures of political authority in Islam are by no means as simple as it seems at first glance. In the legalistic theory of the caliphate expounded by the Sunni jurists the *Shari'ah* is quite obviously the source of all authority, including political authority as well. As a body of more or less concrete law, the *Shari'ah* itself must be authorized from some source, which is presumably qualified to judge right from wrong.

Theoretically, the *Shari'ah* is changeable from time to time, i.e. from prophet to prophet, but the *Shari'ah* of a prophet is the best law for the time for which it is laid down. It is claimed that the Islamic law is laid down for all times to come. It is elastic only in the sense that some parts of one of its sources (the Qur'an) are given in such general terms as are capable of different interpretations at different times, and the validity of some parts of another source (*Hadith*) depends upon historical authenticity. Human beings may not change the laws laid down by the *Shari'ah* but they my know them or not know them, interpret them or not interpret them, obey them or disobey them. The pre-requisite for the knowledge of the *Shari'ah* is acknowledgement of the established sources of the *Shari'ah*, i.e. *usul al-din*. The pre-

requisite for obedience is belief.

The ultimate source is authority is God. It is only the good that God commands and only the evil that He forbids. The principal difference between the Sunni and later Shi'ite persuasions is the Sunni doctrine that the last and definitive revelation is the Qur'an, and Mohammad is the last human being to be endorsed with revealed knowledge of right and wrong. The successors of Mohammad may only know the *Shari'ah* by reference to the Qur'an, to the behaviour of Mohammad, and, wherever these sources are not explicit, to the consensus of Muslims – or indeed by reference to analogical judgment. Thus, the proximate sources of authority are the Qur'an, the Sunnah, *Ijma'* and *qiyas*.

The immediate source of authority is somewhat more difficult to ascertain. Learning, or *'ilm*, is necessary for the discovery of what the *Shari'ah* is, and this qualification is the source of the title 'ulama'. The Sunni *'ulma'* are distinguished from others by their acknowledgement of the "canonical" sources of the *Shari'ah*. However, since there is no priesthood in Islam, the *'ulama'* form an undefined and unwieldy body. The business of discovering the law is at times very much like legislation, but the non-officialised body of the *'ulama'* tend to convert their function to that of a huge, unwieldy board of judicial review.

Obviously such action as might be undertaken by such a group must come after the political fact, and because of the nature of the institution the time-lapse between deed and decision might be generations. It would be wrong to deny the *'ulama'* any authority at all, for the 'Abbasid dynasty went to great lengths to secure the support of the *'ulama'* and to display respect for their judgments. The pattern of political behaviour thus was carried on by subsequent Islamic rulers. Nevertheless, it was characteristic of the Caliphs to claim the more remote authority for their government.

In a sense the Muslim community, because of its intimate connection with the principle of *ijma'*, may be reckoned a source of authority. However, since *ijma'* is a source of the *Shari'ah*, and since it is a process rather than an institution, it cannot satisfy the requirement of an immediate source of authority. As a source of the *Shari'ah* it is theoretically anterior to it, and, thus, a more remote source of authority. In any case, it is still subject to "discovery" and interpretation by the *'ulama'*. As a process, its legislative efficacy is similar to that of custom in Roman and Canon Law, so the time-lapse is necessarily great.

The Muslim community is not only the Islamic Church, but it is also the personal sphere of validity of Islamic government. Membership in the community is the result of belief, and belief is the basis of obedience to the *Shari'ah*. The purpose of Islamic government is to see to it that the *Shari'ah* is obeyed. In other words, the part the community plays in political affairs is primarily passive, although Islamic government is clearly established for the benefit of the Muslims.

Regardless of the degree and kind of authority attributed to the *'ulama'* and the community, neither group ever wielded real political power to transform their political function to that of an institution authorizing the day-to-day acts of government. Theoretically, the Muslim system all but disregards the question of power, practically, it is another question. Ibn Khaldun is the most outstanding Islamic theorist

of those few who dealt with the problem of power. He asserts that power and authority were joined in the Orthodox Caliphate.[1] Ideally, of course, power should reside with the immediate source of authority in the community.

The relation of the caliphate to the *Shari'ah* is more difficult to define than that of the *'ulama'* or the community. During the whole of the Umayyad and the early part of the 'Abbasid Caliphate, the Caliph is much more the exponent of power than of authority. In the last centuries of the 'Abbasid Caliphate the Caliph could hardly be considered the exponent of power either. Was he then the most immediate representative of authority?

With the exception of the Qur'anic Law, the caliphate and the *Shari'ah* developed *pari passu*. The Sunnah of the Prophet did not become constitutive until treated as such by the successors of the Prophet. *Ijma'* and *qiyas* are certainly later accretions. This historical fact has tended to complicate the relationship of the Caliph and the *Shari'ah*. In the main, the Caliph is the executive of the *Shari'ah*, the commander-in-chief of the Muslim army, and the leader in formal religious observances prescribed by the *Shari'ah*.

Above all, the Caliph is the head of the religious institution in Islam, only of the formalized part of it. Since religion was an all-inclusive concept, he was also the political institution. The sub-ordination of the Caliph to the *Shari'ah* was most clearly expressed as a by-product of early political controversy in the attacks on the piety and personal behaviour of the Umayyad Caliphs.[2] That the political behaviour of the caliph must be in accordance with the *Shari'ah*, was implicit in 'Abbasid religious policy. The theoretical implications of this policy were limited only to the function of the Caliph once appointed and as a consequence fail to define the authority for the appointment of a particular Caliph, or the authority for the institution itself.

The circumstantial authority arising out of the contention that the Caliphs were properly executing the function of the Caliphate did not exhaust the 'Abbasid theory. Their personal claim to the office itself was based both on agnate descent from the Prophet and the action of divine Providence. This theory of constitutive authority was never denied by Sunni theorists, but it was certainly omitted in the heavy casuistical overlay which attempted to camouflage the fact of dynastic succession.

In time the Sunni theory of the constitutional process came to be a composite of the actual circumstances of the historical appointment of various Caliphs. These various circumstances were codified in detail, and with some juridical expansion by al-Mawardi,[3] but the *Shari'ah* nature of the constitutional process had already been established.

Thus, the *Shari'ah* was recognized as authority for the acts of the caliph and for the manner of appointment of a particular Caliph, but there remains the problem of the authority for the institution itself. Al-Baghdadi's answer that the Caliphate is required because there are certain explicit *Shar'i* duties incumbent upon the Caliph merely begs the question.[4] We must be satisfied then with the conclusion

that the authority of the Caliph is primarily circumstantial, i.e. he has authority for what he does rather than for what he is.

What the Caliph is depends rather upon historical events, and this is not surprising since the institution developed along with the *Shari'ah*. History has a legislative character in Sunni Islam, and the Caliphate is the prime example of the legislative efficacy of history. On the other hand, the effect of historical legislation is primarily retrospective. As a result, we are told what the Caliph *was* and what he *should* not be. Clearly, Sunni theories of the Caliphate are not slavish descriptions of the obtaining conditions, but in so far as they deviate from the merely descriptive, they also concentrate on the function rather than the institution of the Caliphate.

So long as sufficient measure of power was attached to the Caliphate, this question did not agitate Muslim theorists. We might say the institution of the Caliphate was almost taken for granted. However, when the Caliphs lost control of affairs, circumstantial authority had no longer applied to the Caliphate. Al-Mawardi was very much aware of this problem, but his treatment of it was entirely inadequate. He insists on the legitimacy of the Caliph who is constrained by one of his military sides, even though he expressly states that the "obligatory" character of the Caliphate is derived from the Caliph's duties as executor of the *Shari'ah*.[5] Nevertheless, al-Mawardi has not necessarily contradicted himself – he has simply failed to state explicitly the source of Caliphal authority.

It was this omission which permitted theorists of the post-'Abbasid period to apply the criteria of circumstantial authority to the actual but "unconstitutional" holders of power. The inevitable corollary was the establishment of power as the constitutive authority of the Caliph. Regarding the theory of al-Mawardi, our inference is that he considered the constrained Caliph legitimate because of the validity of the constitutional process by which he was appointed. The resulting situation is pure anomaly, the authority of the Caliph is his "constitutionality," while the authority of his constrainer is circumstantial (derived from his ruling in accordance with the *Shari'ah*), and the sum total is legitimate government.

Al-Ghaz□l□'s attempt to solve this problem is much more serious than that of the preceding theorists. In many important respects his theory departs from the well-established pattern of Sunni theory. On the other hand, these divergences are carefully couched in terms calculated to maintain the essentials of traditional Sunni theory. While remembering that the classification of authority as functional, constitutional, and institutional is only an analytical construction, which finds no place in Islamic theory, we may find his classification helpful in analyzing al-Ghaz□l□'s theory.[6]

In referring to Islamic government al-Ghaz□l□ uses the same term as his predecessors. However, it is almost immediately clear that he has something else in mind, and not the traditional Caliphate of even al-Mawardi. He follows the prejudice in favour of a one-man government, but his implication is clearly that of a multi-lateral rather a unitary government. Most important of all is his association of the Caliph with the Sultan. We shall return to this problem, but it is necessary to realize that he assumes the co-operation of the Caliph and the actual holder of power in his discussion of the obligatory character of the

Caliphate.

In keeping with the then traditional treatment of the question of the obligatory character of the Caliphate, al-Ghaz□l□ first directs his argument against those who deny the Caliphate, and then against those who deny its obligations altogether.[7] The first argument is a positive one, and concerns the institutional authority for the Caliphate. The second is a negative argument, and sheds light on the nature of the Caliphate and the duties attached thereto. After dealing with these two arguments we shall discuss his treatment of the constitutive process with special reference to the qualifications of the Caliph and the constituent power.

The Mu'tazilah asserted that the obligatory character of the Caliphate was based on "reason" and not upon the *Shari'ah*. The Sunni jurists insisted upon the *Shari'ah* as the basis of the Caliphate. Al-Ghaz□l□ follows the accepted Sunni line, but he develops his argument in a more logical fashion, adding new elements. First, he states that the Caliphate does indeed have utility, but he traces the proof of the *Shar'i* obligation of appointing an Imam first to *ijma'* and, second and more importantly, to the deduced will of the Prophet. He contends that the will of the Prophet was the source of the consensus of the community. His argument is that the prophet's purpose was the formal establishment of the religion of Islam. To secure this end both life and livelihood must be protected. The appointment of an imam is, therefore, obligatory. He also indicates that only through the performance of formal religious observances may the bliss of the hereafter be achieved.

We have found the usual Sunni insistence upon the *Shar'i* character of the Caliphate inadequate for the definition of the institutional authority of that office. In supporting this view, the Sunni theorists point to no specific provisions of the *Shari'ah*. Instead, they reason from the prescribed duties, deducing the executive institution.[8] The weakness of their argument is manifest, for as we have seen, the Caliphate existed in fact before any of its duties were defined. By the addition of new elements to this argument, al-Ghaz□l□ goes much further towards a definition of the institutional authority of the Caliphate. The most important innovation is his reference to the consensus of the community, which is no less than the historical practice of the community. Evidently, this is historically legislation.

Technically, the consensus by which the community has authorized the institution of the Caliphate has reference to the consent of the Companions of the Prophet to the establishment of the Orthodox Caliphate. The phrase "consensus of the community" is sufficiently vague to include the consensus of other generations as well. However, the consensus of the community is not actually a legislative process, but merely evidence of the fact that what has been approved by the community is actually provided for in the *Shari'ah*. Despite this legal detail, we must conclude that the authority for the institution of the Caliphate is derived from the community of the Muslims.

By the time al-Ghaz□l□ wrote, the consensus of the community had become a source of the *Shari'ah* in its own right. The community at large has been endowed by the grace of God with a special character, summed up in the words of the Prophet, "My community will never agree in error." The important thing to

note is the consensus implies unanimity, or very nearly that. The community as a source of authority is then considered collectively. *Ijma'* is, as has been said, primarily a conservative principle, tending to approve and perpetuate existing phenomena. But it is correlatively a dynamic principle, expressing in a way the historical continuity of the Islamic community. The institution of the Caliphate is intimately bound up with the collective unity of the community, as well as with its historical continuity.

Al-Ghaz□l□'s logical bent of mind will not allow to be satisfied with the mere evidential fact of *ijma'*. Clearly, *ijma'* itself contains no logic, while al-Ghaz□l□'s intention is to frame the requirements of the *Shari'ah* in a manner best calculated to convince the protagonists of reason. Therefore, he goes back to the source of the *ijma'* which is, he says, the intention of the Prophet to organize the establishment of Islam.9 Primarily, he is referring to the establishment of external observances of the religion such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage, the execution of the *hudud* punishments for such transgressions as drinking and adultery, the maintenance of the *Shari'ah* Law in such matters as marriage and inheritance, and the administration of Islamic justice by means of the Qadis.

Under these headings come the collection of taxes and the government administration, for these are included either directly or indirectly in the *Shar'i* requirements concerning them. The Prophet may have desired to accomplish other, less concrete things as well, but here the main point is his purpose of organizing the administration of the (Sunni) religion. Although it is here presented in slightly different terms, this is the same old argument leading to the functional or circumstantial authority of the Caliphate. Al-Ghaz□l□'s argument goes on to show that the requirements of the *Shari'ah* imply the requirement of an institution of some sort to execute them. That institution, the form of which has been authorized by the consensus of the community, is the Caliphate.

Though al-Ghaz□l□ rejected the argument of the Mu'tazilah that the obligatory character of the Caliphate is based upon reason, he agrees with them that it does have utility. Utility is a concept with a minimum of religious connotation. We have seen that the *Shari'ah* contains very many material provisions, but none of these could be classified by a Muslim as merely utilitarian. Obviously, al-Ghaz□l□ is referring to governmental functions common to all centralized coercive orders, such as the maintenance of order and the security of life and property. This utility can only exist where power is present.

The subject of utilitarian power comes into al-Ghaz□l□'s argument again when he attempts to prove that the Imamate is necessary for the realization of the Prophet's goal. It enters when he says that material security is a pre-requisite for the carrying out of the *Shari'ah*.10 The concrete character of so many of the *Shari'ah* provisions necessitates, in the establishment of the *Shari'ah* in the setting of a civic religious institution.

Obviously, this implies the existence of a favourable disposed political power. This is provided by the Sultanate. His conclusion is that the Caliphate (execution of the Shari'ah because of its relationship with the Sultanate (coercive power) is required as a result of the objective of the Prophet (the establishment and institutionalization of the *Shari'ah*). In the progress of this argument the Sultanate is brought in

without any explanation of the relationship of the bearer of power to the Caliph; we only know that the function of the Sultanate is an essential element of the authorized Caliphate.

In a later argument al-Ghaz□l□ opposes those who deny the obligatory character of the Caliphate altogether. Here we get into some confusion of terms. The contention of al-Ghaz□l□'s opponents is that the Caliphate has lapsed because there is no qualified person to serve in that capacity.[11] The implication of their statement is that the Caliphate is not, therefore, a rigid requirement of the *Shari'ah*. At least this is in some measure the way in which al-Ghaz□l□ chooses to understand their argument. In his own approach al-Ghaz□l□ definitely confuses the terms obligatory (moral) and necessary (natural).

The argument is simple: there ought to be a Caliph, therefore, there must be a Caliph, therefore, there is a Caliph. From this we are probably justified in deducing that the opposing argument runs, there is no Caliph, therefore, there need not be a Caliph, and therefore there is no obligation to appoint a Caliph.

Al-Ghaz□l□'s final argument on this question is his asking what would become of all those religious, social, economic, and political phenomena which are regulated by the *Shari'ah* if there were no Caliph.[12] He contends that without the existence of the Caliphate no judgment of a Qadi, no contract, no testament would be valid. In other words, the power of all Qadis and government officials is derived from the Caliph. In theory, Islamic government is perfectly centralized. The authority which any individual Qadi has is completely derived from the Caliph, and not from the task he performs, as is the case of the Caliph's own authority. It is inconsistent, but there is no circumstantial authority for sub-ordinate officials, their authority is only constitutive (derived from the manner in which they were appointed). Thus, the absence of the Caliphate would turn every normal human relationship into sin, and lead to disorder and strife. He does not say what effect such social disintegration might have on the chances of the individual Muslim for salvation, but from other indications we may conclude that they would be considerably reduced.

We are not much clearer on the nature of the Caliphate in al-Ghaz□l□'s theory: (a) The Caliphate comprehends the necessary power to accomplish the maintenance of order. (b) It represents or symbolizes the collective unity of the Muslim community and its historical continuity. (c) Deriving its functional and institutional authority from the *Shari'ah* in the community as well as the symbol of the divine guidance of the Sunni community by virtue of its obedience to the *Shari'ah*. It is not coincidental that these three aspects of the Caliphate correspond to al-Ghaz□l□'s three sources for the obligatory character of the Caliphate: (a) utility, (b) *ijma'*, and (c) the objective of the Prophet.

So much for the Caliphate, what about the Caliph himself? Al-Ghaz□l□ joins the earlier theorists in giving a long list of qualifications required of for the office. Ideally, al-Ghaz□l□'s qualifications are the same as those of al-Mawardi's. The Caliph must be without physical as well as mental defects. He must be honourable, courageous, wise, and so on. It must not be thought that these qualifications are mere words. They do not represent abstract qualities, but rather their concrete equivalents. Thus, he must be able to defend the Muslims against their enemies and maintain internal order. He must be able to make

judgments in accordance with the *Shari'ah*. He must be able to administer the affairs of the State. Finally, he must be of Quraishite descent. Al-Ghaz□l□ adds that he must be an 'Abbasid.[13]

These requirements are very great, and it is not surprising that they were, in reality, never completely fulfilled. The only stipulation which had been fulfilled was that the Quraishite lineage, and for 300 and more years before al-Ghaz□l□, the Quraishite Caliph, had been an 'Abbasid. This fact, more than anything else, represented the unity and historical continuity of the Sunni community.

The inconsistency in al-Mawardi's theory stems from the fact that he insisted upon these qualifications in the Caliph, while permitting the Caliph to be inactive. On the Caliph's inactivity he clearly contradicts his own words. At one point, al-Mawardi insists on the personal activity of the Caliph, while at another he validates his being constrained by one of his military sides. The reasons which might have justified al-Mawardi's equivocation were no longer effective in al-Ghaz□l□'s time. We find al-Ghaz□l□ facing the problem of the inactivity of the Caliph, and the related problem of his qualifications.[14]

To understand al-Ghaz□l□'s treatment of this problem we must bear in mind his insistence upon the obligatory, even necessary, character of the Imamate. We are not concerned with "an irresistible force" and an "immovable object." Al-Ghaz□l□ tells us frankly that the necessity of having an Imam is so great that it compels the alteration of the qualifications when there is no other way out.[15] The licence of duress had, indeed, been applied previously by al-Mawardi to validate the rule of "Amirs by Conquest,"[16] but he does not seem to have been able to bring himself to do the same for the constrainer of the Caliph.

At any rate, al-Mawardi did not permit, even in a case of duress, the lowering of the qualifications of the Imamate. Perhaps al-Mustazhir was obviously unqualified, or it might be that al-Ghaz□l□ was more honest than al-Mawardi; anyway al-Ghaz□l□ is willing to concede many of the qualifications in order to maintain the Caliphate. About the only concrete thing that he insists upon is that the Caliph be of Quraishite lineage. As a result, the personal qualifications of the Caliph are hardly applicable to the nature of the Caliphate. On the other hand, the symbolic character of the Caliph could not be more sharply drawn. In other words, the Caliph himself represents only one of the three major aspects of the Caliphate.

The qualifications of the Caliph are probably the well-developed part of the constitutive process in the hands of Islamic theorists. But they are very vague in their description of the constituent power. Al-Ghaz□l□ says there are three ways in which one of those who is qualified for the Caliphate may be chosen: by designation of the Prophet, by designation of the ruling Caliph or by designation of the holder of actual power. Al-Ghaz□l□ tells us that only the last alternative applies to his time.[17] Designation alone is not sufficient for appointment, for there must be the *bai'ah* as well. The *bai'ah* must be performed by the great man and the people of "loosening and binding" (*ahl al-hall w-al-'aqd*).[18]

It is not easy to ascertain who these people are, but we take the great men to be those with some measure of power; and the people of loosening and binding to be the *'ulama'*; in concrete terms, this

means that the most powerful Saljuq leader appoints the Caliph, then the appointee is recognized by the less Saljuqs, local princes, and the chiefs of the bureaucracy, and finally the appointment receives the consent of the *'ulama'*. There is probably a fourth stage in which the appointment is announced in the mosques, and the people accept the decision handed down from above. In view of al-Ghaz□l□'s statement to the effect we must look upon the holder of power, or the Sultan, as the constituent power. The whole of the constitutive process beyond the bare fact of appointment by the Sultan is a formality.

Al-Ghaz□l□'s treatment of the constitutive process by no means contravenes the accepted requirements of the *Shari'ah* in this matter. It is true that al-Mawardi sets up special qualifications for those who choose the Caliph, as Mawardi sets up special qualifications for those who choose the Caliph, as well as for the Caliph himself. But, generally speaking, the Sunni theorists are sufficiently vague about the question of selectors to allow al-Ghaz□l□'s theory to meet their standards, particularly since some of them at least insist that their need not be more than one selector.

On the other hand, it is quite possible that he belittles the importance of the *bai'ah* of the *'ulama'* too much. His reason for this is probably that the important question for him was whether or not the Sultan would choose anyone at all. But, of course, the Sultan's primary concern was that his choice should be acceptable to the *'uluma'* and the people. Were he not concerned with the attitude of these groups, and perhaps his own salvation, the Sultan might dispense with choosing a Caliph altogether. Having chosen a Caliph, he has gone so far towards preserving law and order and the "establishment of Islam" that al-Ghaz□l□ cannot conceive the repudiation of his choice by the *'uluma'* or the people.

The constitutive process is, then, loosely speaking, a *Shar'i* process, but the constituent power is the Sultan. The limitations upon the Sultan's choice are real, as is the importance of the general *bai'ih* , but since these have much greater reference to the functional and institutional authority of the Caliphate, we shall do no more than make a mental note of them here. Our conclusion is that the constituent authority for the appointment of the Caliph is the Sultan.

There is no contradiction between this conclusion and our previous statement that the source of all authority in Islam is the *Shari'ah*, for the *Shari'ah* has a tendency to recognize existing power in the constitutive process. Besides, as long as the Caliph had no power to do anything, the most important aspect of *Shari'ah* authority, i.e., functional authority, does not become operative. As a result, the constituent authority of the Sultan is the critical political factor. One might argue that the Sultan derives this authority from the *Shari'ah*, but that would not be what al-Ghaz□l□ himself has argued.

From the foregoing, we can see that the Caliph is different from the Caliphate, and that the authority for one differs from the authority for the other. We must now examine the relationship of the Caliph to the Caliphate, and of the Sultan to them both.

If the Caliph does not satisfy all the requirements of the Caliphate in him, it is at least clear that he is its principal personal representative. We have already established that the Caliph has a special connection

with the authoritative source of *ijma'*. On the other hand, we know that he cannot possibly be the personal subject of functional authority, since he has no power. Contrarily, no governmental act, unless performed directly or indirectly by the Caliph, has any validity.

We have already seen the Sultan is, in some measure, the authority for the Caliphate. However, the actual government in the world of Islam is carried out by the Sultan. Circumstantial authority is not considered sufficient to legitimize the government of the Sultan even if it is not a conformity with the *Shari'ah*.[19] The only way in which the government of the Sultan is valid and authorized is through its recognition of the Caliph. As we have already stated, no government, other than that of the Caliph, is valid under the *Shari'ah*, and sub-ordinate officials have only delegated authority, not functional. Thus, the validity of the government of the Sultan is established only upon the Sultan's oath of allegiance to the Caliph, and the Caliph's appointment of the Sultan. By his exercise of the constitutive authority, the Sultan recognizes the Islamic Sunni community, and in theory, the functional authority which rests with the *Shari'ah* proper.

The fact that al-Ghaz□l□ accepts this compromise sheds some light on the political objectives of Sunni theorists. The total achievement of this arrangement is the recognition by the holder of power that the *Shari'ah* is the organizing principle of the Sunni community, and, in more concrete fashion, the establishment of Sunni Islam. The element of compromise enters when al-Ghaz□l□ argues for the legitimacy of this arrangement, even though the Sultan actually ignores many provisions of the *Shari'ah*. Recognition of the *Shari'ah* by the Sultan with obedience to its provisions is form without content. This leads us to the second objective of the Sunni theorists, that is, the establishment of order and maintenance of discipline.

The governmental scope of the Sultanate included very few of the interests which concern modern governments. By the establishment of order and the maintenance of discipline the Sultanate merely provided a favourable field for the activity of the established Islamic institution. Al-Ghaz□l□, therefore, felt justified in validating the government of such a Sultan. He was willing to make concessions regarding a limited number of *Shari'ah* regulations in order to preserve the religious life of the community.

Just as the Caliphate comprehends the function of the Sultan, so does it also comprehend the religious and legal duties imposed by the *Shari'ah*. As we have said, the Caliphate is a religious as well as a political institution of Islam. We have also seen that al-Ghaz□l□ does not insist upon the qualifications which the Caliph must have in order to carry out his religious duties. If necessary, the Caliph may enlist the aid of the most outstanding learned people of the day.[20] The principal political function of the *'ulma'* is the interpretation of the *Shair'ah* in terms of the problems facing the community. In short, by their approval of the Sultan's choices of the Caliph (*bai'ah*) and by their *fatwas*, the *'ulama'* express the functional authority of the *Shari'ah*.

The term caliphate stands for the whole of Islamic government. Although al-Ghaz□l□ seems to follow the traditional prejudices in favour of autocracy, it is obvious that his is a multi-lateral conception of the

caliphate. In it there are three main elements: the Caliph, the Sultan ad the *'ulama'*, each corresponding in some aspect of the authority behind Islamic government and each performing a function required by the authority. The greatest virtue of al-Ghaz□l□'s theory is its political realism, and yet he has maintained the essentials of the traditional theory. Each of the parts of the Caliphate represents not only an aspect of authority and a function of Islamic government, but also one of the major elements of political power in the Sunni community.

Was al-Ghaz□l□'s theory an accurate description of the government of his time? Such a development of the caliphate was the result of many diverse and fortuitous events. Nevertheless, the roots of this development may be traced back to the calculated policy of the early 'Abbasids. The early 'Abbasids based their government upon the power of troops imported from Khurasan, and not upon local Iraqi levies. They asserted their own legitimacy upon the circumstantial fact, that they were ruling in accordance with the *Shari'ah*. They went out of their way to honour the *'ulama'* and give them a place at Court.

Ultimately, the success of the system depended upon the maintenance of delicate balance of power, and upon the continued co-operation of those forces. The fact of the matter was that when the relative power of each element of the government changed it was not supported by the others. Al-Ghaz□l□ argued for the independence of the *'ulama'* and he urged them to resist the blandishments of the Sultan. When the Sultan was powerful he interfered with the succession to the Caliphate in a manner calculated to lower the influence and prestige of that office. When the Sultan grew somewhat weaker, the Caliph was eager to exercise local power himself. Al-Ghaz□l□'s theory notwithstanding, the existence of the Caliph alongside the Caliphate was an ever-present temptation to re-establish the old order.

The multi-lateral conception of the Caliphate was not opposed to al-Mawardi's ideal construction. Al-Ghaz□l□ did not reject the traditional Sunni theory. In fact, al-Ghaz□l□ sought only to explain the political conditions of his own time in terms acceptable to traditional Sunni thought. If he ground any axe at all, it was for the Sunni *'ulama'*, who were certainly a most conservative body. Nevertheless, once the Caliphate could be resolved into its component parts, it became possible for the rest of the parts to hobble along without the Caliph himself. In this sense al-Ghaz□l□ paved the way for the post-'Abbasid development of the Sunni political theory.

The original inspiration for al-Ghaz□l□'s theory of the Caliphate seems to have come from his interest in Hellenistic thought. We find an interesting statement of the same principle in no less an exponent of the opposing "philosopher-king" theory than Nasir al-Din al-Tusi. Al-Tusi says that the second possible variation of the supreme government of the Virtuous City arises when all the qualities required of a philosopher-king do not exist in one man, but are produced in several men collectively.[21]

More significant than the parallel passage in *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* is the reflection of al-Ghaz□l□'s theory in the writings of ibn Taimiyyah. If anything, ibn Taimiyyah was more enamoured of the past than al-Mawardi, but by the time he wrote the 'Abbasid Caliphate was no more. Ibn Taimiyyah argued that

legitimate Islamic government in his days was composed of the Amirs and the *'uluma'* acting in co-operation with one another. Ibn Taimiyyah's principle of "co-operation' leads him to repeat al-Ghaz□l□'s theory of divided authority in accordance with the qualifications of various persons in opposition to the theory which accorded complete authority to the ruling war-lord.22

The origin and development of this principle present many difficulties, but Laoust tells that ibn Taimiyyah was influenced rather by the Arab Neo-Platonists, such as the Ikhwan al-Safa, than by al-Ghaz□l□.23 It is unlikely that the idea itself originated with al-Ghaz□l□ who was himself deeply influenced in his youth by the Hellenistic movement in Islam. Nevertheless, his application of it is to the Sunni caliphate was certainly an innovation, and all the more noteworthy for its reappearance two centuries later in the works of ibn Taimiyyah. It need hardly be added that the *'ulama'* did in fact assume a special position of political authority as well as a part of the "original" Caliphal functions in the ottoman State, and to a lesser extent, perhaps, in the Mughul Empire in India.

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1. Ibn Khaldun, Muqaddimah, Beirut, 1900, pp. 2-3ff.
2. Goldziher has set forth the arguments of the early political factions in Volume 2 of his Mohammedanicsche Studies.
3. Al-Mawardi, al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah, Cairo, 1909, Chapter 1.
4. 'Abd al-Qahir ibn Tahir al-Baghdadi, Usul al-Din, Istanbul, 1928, p. 272.
5. Al-Mawardi, op. cit., p. 16
6. Functional authority is that which authorizes each separate act of the Caliph, without regard to the manner of his appointment. Institutional authority is that which provides that there shall be such an institution as the Caliphate. Logically, institutional authority must precede functional authority, though the office and its duties are conceptually joined. Constitutional authority provides for the manner in which a Caliph should be appointed. It will usually be found that the question of legitimacy in Islamic political theory relates to the constitutive process, while functional lapses are regarded as disqualifying and not illegitimating.
7. Al-Ghaz□l□ al-Iqtizad fi al-I'tigad, Cairo, n,d., pp. 104 – 09.
8. Al-Baghdadi, loc. cit,; al-Mawardi, op. cit., p. 3; see also al-Baqillani, al-Tamhid, Cairo, 1947, pp. 185 – 86 "Concerning the Purpose for which the Imamate is Established."
9. Al-Ghaz□l□, op., cit., p. 105.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 107.
12. Ibid.
13. Al-Ghaz□l□, Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, Vol. 2; al-Haram w-al-Halal, p. 124.
14. See Goldziher, Streitechrift des Gazali gegen die Batinijja-Sekte, Leiden, 1916, pp. 80ff., for analysis and pp. 58ff. text for al-Ghaz□l□'s early, detailed views, referred to in both Iqtisad and the much later Ihya'.
15. Iqtisad, p. 107; Ihya', loc. cit.

16. Al-Mawardi, op. cit., Chapter 3, pp. 27 – 28.

17. Ihya', loc.cit.

18. Iqtisad, p. 107. The bai'ah is important, even essential, but not constitutive. Thus, according to al-Ghaz□l□, it a qualified Quraishite is an actual holder of power, he may be appointed himself as Imam. (This denied by al-Baqillani, al-Tamhid, p.180, and so may not be taken as a generally accepted Sunni theory). Nevertheless, the bai''h remains necessary, having only a declarative effect.

19. Ihya', loc. cit.

20. Iqtipad, p. 107.

21. Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, Akhlaq-i Nasiri, treatise 3, Chapter 3, p. 309.

22. Henri Laoust, Esai sur les doctrines socials at politiques d'Ibn Taimiya, Cairo, 1939, pp., 282, 294, 307, 315, 317.

23. Ibid., p. 100, note 1.

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