

THE CONCEPT OF CHOICE IN
GHAZZALI AND MUHAMMAD ABDUH

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to give a critical account of the Islamic orthodox outlook on the problem of choice. It consists of two parts. The first deals with the thought of Abu Hamid al Ghazzali who represents the best developed form of the orthodox creed; and the second treats the account of Muhammad Abduh, the grand Mufti of Egypt of the 19th century on the same problem. In doing this I have attempted to draw a parallel between these two great leaders of thought and at the same time present the form which the Moslem creed of choice has taken in the 19th century at the hands of Muhammad Abduh.

In setting out to achieve this end, it was found necessary to introduce the problem by tracing its early development disclosing its roots and the various courses it has taken. The Holy Book has not laid down a definite answer to the problem of choice and bears in itself the seeds of dissention by containing verses suggestive of both aspects of the problem viz. free choice and determinism. Therefore, both tendencies have survived and vigorously combatted each other. The mu'tazilite school of thought professed free choice and based their belief on God's justice. The orthodox Moslems adhered to the creed of predestination and argued from the unqualified absolutism of the Godhead.

Al Ghazzali took over the Ash'arite outlook and developed it further. His main concern was to guard against any infringement on God's

absolutism. He ruled out the limitations put by the mu'tazilites on God viz., that He has to abide by His knowledge of truth and the good. He emphasized, instead, arbitrary divine will, giving it precedence over all the other divine attributes. The second step he undertook was to establish a direct relation between all the divine attributes and what happens in the world. Everything in the world, he believes, is an object of one or the other of divine attributes. Everything, therefore, that man seems to do is God's creation and action through man. Man is a locus, whereby divine decisions take place. He acquires what God chooses for him and does not do anything by himself. Al Ghazzali reduced man's role to a mere negative one and posited the proposition that God is the only positively free agent.

Muhammad Abduh resented this attitude of al Ghazzali's and felt that in the world of his day, Islam was not going to occupy its place in modern civilisation unless it raised man from the status of an automat to that of a free creative agent. The recognition of man, he believed, meant the belief in his freedom and the positive role of his intellect. He removed the despotic picture of God from the scene and faced the arguments of the orthodox Moslems vehemently both on scriptural as well as rationalistic basis.

In conclusion it might be said that Abduh brought about a radical change in the Islamic outlook on man, a change that would enable Islam to stand in the face of the modern spirit of the age; and, even, possibly, to participate in its promotion.

PREFACE

In the present thesis I wish to present and analyse the Islamic orthodox outlook on man as it is represented in its most developed form by al Ghazzali. Then I shall try to show how modern Arab Islam, as represented by its most vigorous reformer Muhammad Abduh has dealt with this problem and how it tried to overcome the discrepancy between the past and present and bridge the gap between Islam and the spirit of modern civilisation. Abduh tactfully avoids an open breach with the leading proponents of orthodoxy. One has to keep in mind the implicit opposition of his arguments to those of the orthodox. Abduh's starting point was mainly the Islam of his day, that is to say the whole mental and psychological make-up of the Moslems of his day. In this sense he would be the only Moslem who parted from the fixed theory that the past is embodied in worn-out books, to a more factual and dynamic outlook of the past which considers the past as the sum total of what we are now. The meaningful past is what has been able to survive through us. The Moslems of today are in a way the product of their past. Therefore, taking the present which represents the past as his basis, Abduh aimed at promoting and advancing Islam to the level of modern western civilization. Here lies the root of Abduh's firm belief in man's freedom and the positive role of his intellect. Thus we see that Abduh based his reformative movement on two assumptions, faith in man and veneration of the

present.

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INTRODUCTION

THE REEMERGENCE OF THE HUMAN

There are three dramatic historical and philosophical turning points in the history of the Arabs. The first was when Muhammad stood up in the market place of Mecca to declare as he was instructed: "I am the one who warns plainly."¹ The declaration brought the days of the Jahilliya to an end. The second was the murder of 'Othman b. 'Affan (d. 656). The turning of the tide was marked by these words of Thumama al Ansari: "This day the Caliphate of the prophet (khilafat al Nubuwat) has been usurped from Moslem hands (Ummat Muhammad). The sword, henceforth, is the final arbiter and he who wins a thing must usurp it".² The dynastic struggle breaks out shortly after this event at the hands of Banu Umaliya. The third turning point is marked by the reign of al Mutawakkil (d. 861) which announced the days of decline³ and reaction as manifested in the persecution of the Mu'tazilite movement. On the one hand, the Turkish element, which was culturally subordinate was assuming the upper hand in controlling the Caliphate. On the other, the Mu'tazilite movement which, as we shall see later, represents a humanist tendency in the sense that it recognises a place for man in the universal scheme of things, fell

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1. Koran, sura XV., VIII., XIV., and Ibn Hisham, Life of Muhammad, p. 117.
 2. Jabbur, J. Omar b. abi Rabi'a, Vol. I, p. 7; from Ibn Abd Rabi'h, al 'Iqd, II, 272, I, p. 226 (Egypt, 1293 A.H.)
 3. Hitti, History of the Arabs, p. 467.

prey to oppression at the hands of the orthodox after about a century of struggle.*

The first event marks the end of an era in Arab history characterized by the absence of religious fervour and announces the rule of God. The next is its counter-part and reflects the gradual waning of the religious spirit in directing and making history. The third represents the end of the more or less centralised rule and announces the beginning of the age of decentralisation and decline.

The Arab making of history stands almost unique in world upheavals. The speed with which it took place is symptomatic of a passing phase; but the lasting effects it has left, are those of a civilisation which took years of constant preparation and building up. It is the force of spiritual passion in making history. There is always something new and dynamic when history is being made. But such 'new and dynamic' force results from the revolutionising of the ways of life. It takes some time to show its effects, and takes longer to vanish. In Islam it was the obverse of the coin. The new dynamic factor was a spiritual force and its sudden appearance was striking. It is called the spirit in action. But the movement of the spirit is usually manifested in violent outbursts and short durations of power. So also was it in Islam. The waning of the religious zeal started to appear when the Umayyad¹ genius of seeing through state affairs showed itself.

* By the term "the orthodox" (ahl al sunna) I mean the traditionalists, or those who stick to the literal sense of the Koran and refuse to apply reason to Divine Law.

1. Wensink, A.J., The Muslim Creed, p. 37, also Macdonald, D.B. Development of Muslim Theology, p. 131.

The hardships which attended the life of the bedouin Arab in the desert left him little time to become involved in spiritual life.¹ His life was confined to a narrow strait of worldly affairs; and this is true especially in the case of the common man, who had no interest in ideas and in God. The appearance of Muhammad effected a great change in the God-man balance of relations in favor of the God pole. He oriented the Arab Bedouin towards a highly elaborate spiritual attitude and gave them a complete religion: "To-day I have completed your religion and have fulfilled my favor upon you".²

From the curse of Imru' al Kais (d. 540) at the idol in the temple of dhu'l-Khalasa³ till the call of Muhammad, God rose up in the desert from under the feet of the Bedouin and put him under His own. It is true that Muhammad gave the Arabs something they had never had before. He gave meaning and hope to their lives, but at the cost of submission. Apart from all the virtues of Islam and its values, one thing is certain, that it has exaggerated the status of God⁴ and established man's dependence on Him.

The Islamic religion is now considered one of the few surviving religions which have raised man, in history, from lower levels. This, however, should not lead us to overlook the fact that the God of the Koran and of the Hadith does not represent a departure from the God of the desert. Islam is only a transitional stage. The God of Islam is

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1. Hitti, op.cit., p. 96.
 2. Koran, sura V., Verse 3.
 3. al Aghani, Vol. VIII, p. 70.
 4. Wensink, op.cit., p. 37.

still awe-inspiring, revengeful, tremendous, ready to destroy and His instrument for torture is hell. "There is a strong likeness", says Wensink "between the genesis of Israelitic and Arabian monotheism. As the Israelites at Mount Sinai entered upon the service of a deity who was a powerful personality... so the people of Arabia were led by Muhammad into the presence of a terrible personality, super-human, yet with human qualities."¹ The Book is full of verses threatening with the fire of hell. It is only the fact that this God is also described as compassionate and merciful, side by side with these vestiges of the desert religion that makes us give to Islam the epithet of transitional. It was, thus, not accidental that Muhammad overemphasised compulsion in the Hadith and, to a lesser extent, in the Koran. He even went as far as to denounce believers in free will openly. There is a tradition which, however, may not be a sound one, that he once said: "Al Kadaris (those who believe in choice) are the enemies of God in His action," and also "al Kadaris are the magians of this nation".²

The hard grip of God on man was soon to meet some opposition from within Islam itself. The opposition had a two edged character. On the one hand, we have the active force in directing the worldly historic affairs of Islam which passed from the hands of men whose elan vital was religious, into the hands of people who had the weight religion lying lightly in their hearts, the Umayyads. "The Umayyad dynasty" says Macdonald,

1. Ibid., p. 49.

2. Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, Vol. II, pp. 86-125; also Milal I, p. 49.

"was in many ways a return to pre-Muslim times and to an easy enjoyment of worldly things; it was the rejection of the yoke of Muhammad in all but form and name."¹ The horn which announced this event was blown following 'Uthman's death, as has already been mentioned, and came to effect by the coming of Mu'awiya (d. 680). Mu'awiya turned his back to the over-religious concern of the Orthodox Caliphs, and embarked on a practical policy aiming at establishing an empire.² The religious bond became lax and he started to depend on able and experienced non-Moslems. When he became a Caliph the offices of the state were filled with those who had been the bitterest of Muhammad's opponents and by governors whose personal behaviour displayed little of the qualities suited to true Muslims.³ He was rightly accused by Moslem historians of having changed the caliphate in to a monarchy, and the status of Caliph of the Prophet to a king.⁴ The practical sense of the Umayyads did not bar them from conquering the holy cities of Islam, burning the Ka'ba and murdering the prophet's close kin.⁵ The rule of God was slowly giving way to the rule of man. Man was rising from the dust to occupy his place as master once more.

On the other hand, a parallel intellectual movement appeared which, conscious of its strong human character, started to ask questions concerning the status of God and man. Man is free declared the Mu'tazila. This is the first sign of gradual reemergence of man in Islam. It would not be

1. Maconald, op.cit., p. 131.

2. Hitti, op.cit., p. 197.

3. Wensink, op.cit., p. 37.

4. Hitti, op.cit., p. 197; also Ibn-Khaldun, Muqadima (Cairo edition), pp. 206, 208

5. Ibid., pp. 190, 191, 192, 193.

fair to attribute this movement to outside non-Islamic influences or even largely, because this is not the case. The movement was bound to come as a reaction of the suppressed human ego. It is an integral part of Islamic history and Islamic thinking. The Mu'tazila believed that their view of Islam was the true one, and they were able to enlist the Koran and common sense in their support. Whether they were right or wrong is a debatable point, but it is certain that it took orthodox Moslems decades to finish with them. It is also certain that their solution of the ethical dilemma "split the Muslim world into the advocates of divine power and the advocates of human freedom."¹

The advocates of compulsion as well as those of free choice could claim a scriptural basis for their views. The Koran contained verses which affirm both meanings. Here are some verses which imply compulsion: "When God hath created you and that ye make",² and "Their hearts and their ears has God sealed up, and over their eyes is a veil. For them a severe chastisement,"³ and "He leadeth astray whomsoever He pleaseth and guideth unto Himself whomsoever He pleaseth".⁴ Verses to the contrary effect can be cited: "That is for what your hands have sent on before, and for that God wrongs not His servants",⁵ and "The truth is from your Lord: let him then who will, believe; and let him who will, be an unbeliever".⁶ These quotations shows that both believers in free choice and believers in

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1. Dr. M. Fakhry, Some Paradoxical Implications of the Mu'tazilite View of Free Will, The Muslim World, Vol. XLIII, p. 104.
 2. Koran Sura XXXVII, 95 (Rodwell's trans.).
 3. Sura, II., 7.
 4. Sura XIII, 27.
 5. Sura III., 182.
 6. Sura XVIII, 28.

compulsion had a Koranic basis for their claim and for that reason had to interpret the contrary verses to suit their own purposes. The Hadith is a different story. The Hadith is heavily weighted against free choice and is imbued with tendencies of predestination. According to Wensink "Tradition has not preserved a single hadith in which liberum arbtrium is advocated".¹

The course of thought which the Mu'tazilite movement followed indicates the Mutazilite central concern with the role that man can play in the extensive order of being. From the beginning they were faced with the irreconcilable views of the despotism of God and the submissiveness of man already in vogue in the intellectual world of Islam. The difference between the mu'tazila and their opponents can be summed up by saying that one asserts the unlimited power and authority of God, and the other views Him from the angle of His justice. Therefore, the Mu'tazila had to make God's authority intelligible by stripping His nature from such qualifications as would place Him beyond reason and above moral standards. Henceforth, they proceeded, not to limit His sovereignty, but rather to make clear His relation to the world in general, and man, in particular. Thus the mu'tazilite doctors, in order to achieve their purpose, sought to introduce a way of thinking wherein man has scope to act and God's relation to the world is made indirect. For this reason, they developed a theory of God's nature, they invoked a rational theory of ethics, and a principle of natural causation and generation. The treatment of these principles

1. Wensink, op.cit., p. 51.

was subordinated to their chief aim, which is to guard man from subjection to divine power and to maintain his freedom.

1. God and His Unity.

The Koran applies to God many names from human analogy, and ascribes to Him certain attributes. A number of these attributes gradually came into prominence especially knowledge, power, life, will, speech, sight and hearing. The mu'tazilites argued that to take these attributes literally would not be compatible with the real meaning of unity, and therefore explained them in an allegorical way or identified them with God's essence. The orthodox Moslems, on the other hand, adhered to the literal meaning of the word of God. It was not until the Ash'ari (d. 935) appeared that they were really able to meet the mu'tazilite arguments. These neo-orthodox who followed al Ash'ari argued that these attributes exist alongside with the self and that they directly control everything in this world,¹ and therefore denied to man and nature any independent existence and activity. The mu'tazilite metaphysics aimed at showing that man was a free and independent agent. Therefore, the mu'tazilite doctors denied the existence of attributes distinct from the Godhead. Thus Wasil b. 'Ata, (d. 131 A.H., 748) who was the founder of the school argued that any assertion of a divine quality or attribute would involve the association of other deities with Him.² Later Abu'l Hudhail (d. 841 or 849) while agreeing with Wasil on the question of association, modified the theory

1. Al Ash'ari, Luma', p. 33.

2. Al Ash'ari, Maqalat al Islamiyin I, p. 225, also Shahrastani, Milal wa'l Nihal, p. 53.

in such a way as to bring it into harmony with the unsophisticated orthodox Moslems. He tried to explain that God's attributes do not subsist separately in His essence, and yet are one with His essence. He said "God is all knowing and His knowledge is His essence, all powerful and His power is His essence, all living and His life is His essence".¹ Al Ash'ari reports that Abu'l-Hudhail derived this view from Aristotle's books.² Al Nazzam (d. 231 A.H. 845) who came under the influence of Greek philosophy more directly introduced a slight modification to Abu'l-Hudhail's thesis and affirmed that God is said to be powerful, knowing, hearing, and speaking in Himself, not by means of power knowledge, sight and speech. Al Ash'ari reports that al Nazzam denied the attributes of the Self (al dhat) like power, sight, hearing, and life.³ By affirming that God is knowing, hearing, seeing, speaking, living and powerful, al Nazzam sought to assert the divine essence and to dismiss the possibility of attributing ignorance, deafness, blindness, dumbness, death and impotence to God.⁴ Al Nazzam holds with Abu'l Hudhail the theory of the negative attributes, i.e. that the affirmation of one quality of God does not mean more than the negation of its opposite, a view, which characterises the whole Mu'tazilite school.

Mu'ammār, a contemporary of Abu'l Hudhail, introduces a distinction of his own which is reminiscent of Plato, and differs from his mu'tazilite

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1. Mag. II. p. 485.
 2. Ibid., p. 486.
 3. Ibid., p. 486.
 4. Ibid., pp. 484, 486.

predecessors and contemporaries. He taught that God knows through knowledge and this knowledge is of an idea (ma'na), ~~is~~ not the idea of a thing but of another idea, and so on ad infinitum.¹

The most significant implication of this theory of attributes from ~~one~~ standpoint is the exaltation of God almost out of the reach of the creature. God is transcendent and inaccessible. The mu'tazilites stressed His transcendence as opposed to His despotism, maintaining, on the one hand, His sublime character, and on the other hand, His remoteness from the worldly scene. De Boer writes that the "mu'tazilites hardly got beyond negative determinations - that God is not like the things of this world - that he is exalted above Space, Time, Movement, and so on, but they held fast to the doctrine that he is the creator of the world."² There is an obvious resemblance between this God and Aristotle's God, who is pure thought thinking itself. Aristotle's God takes no interest in worldly affairs. The God of Islam although tremendous, overpowering and super-human, is nevertheless personal and in certain respects only too human. He does not pervade the world, but nevertheless is present to it. Hence the Mu'tazila's pure conception of God is of variance with the orthodox Islamic view. But in departing from the orthodox position the mu'tazila bestowed on man the free charge of his activity. We have as a result a divine realm and a human realm which are distinct to some extent. In the second place the negative conception of God's nature is no more than a

1. Ibid., p. 488.

2. De Boer, History of Philosophy in Islam, pp. 47-48.

profession, on the part of the Mu'tazila that God is not like the things of this world, and that the knowledge of His reality is beyond our scope. This avowal has a significant moral implications as regards man's free will. These moral implications are usually overlooked and their theological import, stressed only. However, it can be shown that the intention of the mu'tazila doctors, among other things, is to keep divine power out of the world, and to deny such ideas as would impose the dominance of God in worldly affairs.

2. Divine Will and the Mu'tazila.

It will appear from the foregoing discussion of the attributes of God that the will was not considered as essential by the Mu'tazila doctors, as the other divine attributes. God can be described as not willing, but no essential attribute can be denied of Him.¹ Al Shahrastani (d. 1153) reports that the mu'tazila agreed that the "will, hearing and sight are not attributes in Him", and that they disagreed on the mode of their existence, and the denotation of their meaning.² Al Nazzam speaks to the same effect, namely that the will is not to be considered a genuine description of God. He said "the will is not in reality attributed to God".³ On the separation of divine will from human will no one is more explicit than al Murdar (841, 210 A.H.) who states that God is said to have willed the wrong deeds of men in the sense that He did not stand

1. Maq. II, p. 508.

2. Milal I, p. 49.

3. Ibid., p. 57.

between them and their actions,¹ that is he left them free to act and sin when He could have stopped them. The Baghdad school gives two significant meanings to the expression 'God wills'. First that He gives being to a thing by willing it. Mu'ammār shares this view with them and says that God creates substances only, whereas accidents follow either naturally or by men's choice.² Second, that by willing a thing God prescribes it.³ This is in sharp contrast to the Neo-orthodox view that by willing God creates power to action or creates another will in man.

Thus we may sum up: there are three main points to be noticed in this mu'tazilite view of the will. First, that the will is not one of the essential attributes of God. Second, that God is not said to be willing in the human sense of the word, because His willing is one of creation, while man's is one of choice. Third, that it is given a negative or neutral status by al Murdār and others. It must also be noted that all three meanings serve one purpose, namely ~~the~~^{re} moved of divine willing from the scope of human affairs, and the possibility of leaving room for man's free choice. ✓

It should not be imagined, however, that the Mu'tazila, despite their wish to uphold the freedom of the will, belittled God's authority or sovereignty. What, in fact they were guarding against was the irrational despotism attributed to Him by the orthodox Moslems. However, it would be misleading to suppose that the mu'tazilite doctors were in full

1. Maq. II, p. 404.
 2. Milal I, p. 65.
 3. Maq. II, p. 509.

agreement on these problems. But, still we find them disagree more on the details of their creed than on its main tenets.

3. God and Moral Standards.

Divine despotism entails His supremacy over and above the moral law. The Mu'tazilites were mainly concerned with the problem of justice, and could not tolerate the claim that God violates the standards of morality. Hence, when the orthodox say that God's justice consists of exercising His absolute power in His kingdom and property; we find the Mu'tazila retort that God's justice consists in acting according to the right way and according to His best knowledge.¹ It seems that the concept of God's justice was the main reason for the mu'tazilite profession of free will. "God is wise and just" Wasil believes, "no evil or cruelty must be attributed to Him. God would not ask His subjects to do what He has forbidden them to do, nor would He impose on them a thing and chastise them for it. The subject is the evil doer, as well as, the good doer... and while God has bestowed on him the power to do so, He rewards or punishes him for his acts."² Reason is sufficient to distinguish independently the good from evil even before revelation.³ By considering reason as the means for knowing the good from the evil, the Mu'tazila deemed these values absolute, that is a deed is good or bad in itself⁴ not because God prescribes it. By prescribing a deed revelation does not make it good, by virtue of

1. Shah. Milal I. pp. 47-48.

2. Mil. I. p. 51.

3. Mil. I. pp. 77, 84; also Shah., Nihayat al Iqdam, p. 371.

4. Maq. II. p. 356.

prescribing it, but only confirms us in it.¹ Therefore, God as well as man have to regard the good in their actions, and the good is binding on them both. Man does not have to fear any longer an absolute arbitrary divine action.

4. Man and His Capacity for Action.

Having defined the metaphysical background of the freedom of the will the mu'tazila proceeded to explain the role that man plays as a free agent. Before this can be done there is one more difficulty to be settled. Both Ash'arite as well as mu'tazilite mu'takallims accepted the atomistic theory which involves a doctrine of continuous recreation. One of the major aspects of the theory of atoms is that the world is made up of indivisible particles called atoms, and almost all the mutakallims maintained that every atom has some accidents attached to it. But the nature of these atoms is such that they do not last for two consecutive moments of time.² God keeps on creating accidents moment by moment, and therefore sustains the world by His will. But the mu'tazila doctors could not maintain this aspect of the doctrine while they professed belief in human free will without inconsistency. For unless man can initiate by his own capacity and will certain actions the concept of free will becomes empty and meaningless. As opposed to God's moment by moment creations they had to substitute the principle of natural causation in order to introduce a measure of continuity in the order of things. Instead of God and man, the

1. Shah. *Nihayat*, p. 373.

2. Macdonald, *The Moslem World*, Vol. 18; pp. 10-12; also al Baqilani, *Insaf*, p. 15.

dichotomy in this case is between God and nature. The productive and generative powers of nature were recognised.¹ This principle of natural causation which went by the name of al tawallud, amounted to belief in the possibility of the transmission of a single action through several objects, despite the fact that the subjects' direct relation is to the first only.² These generated acts can be started by man or animal or accidentally by a physical object. Bishr b. al Mu'tamir (d. 825, 210 A.H.) the founder of the Baghdad school, considers whatever, is generated from our deeds to be caused by us,³ and therefore not the creation of God. Al Nazzam argued that God created all objects of such a nature as to behave according to the pattern created in them.⁴ The conflict between God and man is replaced here by one between nature and man. Natural determination by necessary law must extend to man and deprive him from his freedom. Mindful of this difficulty, al Nazzam argued that man cannot effect any motion by his powers except within himself.⁵ Al Nazzam, was trying in fact to shut up the self within a closed world of its own having its own moving principle, a principle which is not effective externally. This is because he has developed the principle of al tawallud to something very close to the causal doctrine of Imposition. He argued that God created things of such a nature as to behave according to the pattern created in them once and for all.⁶ The question arises here that if things follow a necessary order

1. De Boer, *op.cit.*, p. 46.

2. *Maq.* II, pp. 408, 409.

3. *Maq.* II., pp. 400-401, also *Milal* I, pp. 63-64.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 404.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 403.

6. *Maq.* II, p. 404.

of behavior from which there can be no departure what becomes of the mu'tazilite belief in free will? As an answer to this they almost all agreed that the soul is not subject to the laws of nature and that it has its own free choice. As Nazzam argues that man in reality is substance in the Aristotelian sense, and that the theory of accidents, under which man's activity is classified, is a drawback. Had it not been for this presence of the self, he goes on, everything would have followed as a necessary determination and generation.¹

So far the mu'tazilite doctors have maintained their belief in the freedom of the will in opposition to natural determination, but the question is what chance of communication with the outside world has this freedom. Mu'ammār b. Abbad (835, 220 A.H.) taught something to this effect, that the self is a closed circle. Thus he maintained that in his soul man can only make decisions, but no movements, and that he can effect no conditions outside himself.² Abu'l Hudhail and Bishr b. al Mu'tammer sought to break up the closed circle of the self and regain the sense of freedom. Both of them argued that while nature follows its own necessary laws, man is endowed with the power to effect certain conditions³ in nature itself. For nature has no principle within itself to initiate it to move. So they believe that he who shoots an arrow is responsible for what the arrow has caused; although the arrow, after it has been shot, followed the natural course determined by the necessary law. Bishr goes

1. Ibid., pp. 333-4.

2. Maq. II, p. 405.

3. Ibid., pp. 402-403.

as far as to affirm that man can effect generative as well as non-generative direct acts.¹ He considers all the following events as man's actions: sensations, perceptions, movement, objects propelled by man, knowledge in others, etc. all of man's own doing.² In other words, Bishr believes that whatever action we feel we have done is of our own doing. Abu'l-Hudhail introduces some refinement to this doctrine and says that whatever action we do is of our own doing if we only know its modality or else it is God's. He agrees with Bishr that the things one can make in himself can make in others too.³ Dirar b. 'Amr (contemporary of Wail b. 'Ala) agrees with Bishr and Abu-al-Hudhail in their opinion that man can initiate external action. These people seem to be building on the assumption that there exists a harmony between the natural pattern of behavior and that of the soul in such a way that the laws of nature will not contradict the initiation of the will.

The case of al Nazzam was a little more complicated. For he is one of those who distinguish between the realm of natural necessity and the soul. He believes that "Whatever happens outside the sphere of (man's) power is caused by God through an act of creative necessity (bi ijab al khalq) like the movement of a stone when it is propelled... and this means that God created the nature of the stone in such a way as to move if propelled and so on for all the rest of generated objects."⁴ The view of al Nazzam can mean many things:

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1. Ibid., p. 402.
 2. Ibid., pp. 401-402.
 3. Ibid., pp. 402-403.
 4. Ibid., p. 404.

1. That man can make psychological decisions.
2. That the only accident in the soul is movement and hence that man can move.
3. That whatever is generated is indirectly caused by God. There

is one point in al Nazzam's system which enables us to solve the problem of separation between the soul and the external things and that is the concept that man is soul and body intermingled. But this in itself is obscure and odd. However, al Nazzam also proceeds on the same assumption of Bishr and Abu 'l-Hudhail that there exists harmony between the two spheres.

After this short summary of al mu'tazila's teachings we find that orthodox moslems had many grounds of their opposition to this philosophy. As a result they adopted the mu'tazilite method of reasoning out their beliefs, and set on to disprove and denounce the main mu'tazilite ideas. They appeared as a reaction to the mu'tazilite school of thought. Henceforth, we shall see, in the following chapters, that the neo-orthodox* set themselves the task of disputing the following mu'tazilite principles.

First, the confidence placed by the mu'tazilites in the human intellect, and its independence. The ~~is~~^{defect} of this way of thinking, thought the neo-orthodox, is that it makes man independent from God and detracts from God's direct authority on him.

Second, the mu'tazilite conception of God and his attributes, which

*Neo-orthodox: I shall use this term to refer to the later orthodox schools, the Ash'arites' and al Ghazzali's, who distinguished themselves from the earlier orthodox sects by accepting the use of reason in defending the Divine Law.

stresses His justice more than His power.

Third, the belief that God's reason conditions His will and controls it.

Fourth, that values are absolute, i.e. are good or bad in themselves not for any other reason.

Fifth, the principle that nature has laws of its own, created by God, but is no more under His direct control and authority.

The purpose of the following chapters is to show the way the orthodox Moslems reacted to these principles and their attempt to denounce free will and the independence of man as alien to Islam together with their bringing forth of a rationalistic defence of Islam and the establishment of predestination on theological grounds. Once the scene is set for these two opposing trends, a study of the modern Moslem thinker's position before these trends will be presented.

CHAPTER I

THE NEO-ORTHODOX METAPHYSICAL BASIS OF CHOICE.

There is a wide-spread agreement among Moslem scholars and orientalists that al-Ghazzali is the greatest religious figure in Islam after Muhammad. He was a profound and prolific writer, but his original gifts of mind did not bloom into a pioneer of thought, but rather into a clear-minded and vigorous expositor and polemist. In other words, he toiled on and sifted and synthesized what others had said before him. However, the reader of al-Ghazzali cannot help being impressed by his character and the driving force behind his thought. The clarity of his thought and the lucidity and strength of his expression have few parallels in Arabic literature. The source of his power lies in the unshakable faith in and passion he has for salvation. He is first and foremost a religious zealot whose interest in thought is subsidiary to his devotion to salvation. His copious works are not an impartial search after truth, but a means of upholding the creed of al-Sunna, the orthodox faith.

Al-Ghazzali's was a tormented soul, nourished by anxiety and yearning for salvation. He was overwhelmed by the tragedy of the human condition. That is why it was impossible for him to acquiesce in one narrow view. Averroes later on taunted him for unsettled state of mind saying: "He did not cling to a single and definite doctrine in his books;

but was rather an Ash'arite with the Ash'arites, a Sufi with the Sufis, and a philosopher with the philosophers."¹

A soul, yearning for salvation, must face up to the question of free choice. In this facing-up the two poles of significance will be those of the God-man relationship, axis ever important in thought, and in human affairs. The portrait of God which is given in the Koran and al-Hadith is that of the God of the desert. He is omnipotent, overbearing, revengeful and yet not compassionate.

The tremendous and overwhelming power of the furious, revengeful and yet compassionate creating God, was bound to meet the challenge of time and thought. The reaction to this challenge was championed by the neo-orthodox Moslems and reached its climax with al-Ghazzali.

The question is whether there is a place for man in a religion with such an overwhelming conception of God. The God of the desert was attacked. The neo-orthodox movement appeared as a response to this attack. This intellectual response was directed against some perilous new doctrines advocated by the Mu'tazilite rationalistic movement which came to life under the Hellenistic impact. Thus the attempt to meet the new conditions forced the neo-orthodox Moslems to define those terms and relations, which did not square very well with Koranic doctrine. They assumed the responsibility of defending the faith of Muhammad from what had crept in to it from these pernicious, heathen sources. Thus, the aim of neo-scholastic theology was to preserve the purity of the faith of the Sunna from alien

1. Ibn Rushd, Fasl al Maqal, p. 21.

innovations. "God raised up a school of theologians" says al-Ghazzali, "and inspired them with the desire to defend orthodoxy by means of a system of proofs adapted to unveil the devices of the heretics and to foil the attacks which they made on the doctrines established by tradition."¹

The study of choice is in fact a study of man, his thought and activity; but in a religious system which fails to see anything other than God, the study of choice becomes a study of God, His nature and attributes, and the way they are related to other beings. In this way, the study of choice in orthodox Islamic thought is essentially metaphysical, as the tradition goes to affirm: 'He who knows himself knows God.' Not only in Islam but in any system or attitude of thought, which claims to be comprehensive, no consideration of the problem of choice can be made without invoking God and the field of discipline which is called metaphysics. The failure to see the relation between the two is the reason why, as we shall see later, contemporary Arab Islamic thinking is not matching the magnitude of the task.

Therefore, I am starting this chapter by a concise study of neo-orthodox metaphysics which as represented, in its most developed form, in the thought of al-Ghazzali.

I. Choice and God's Nature.

It has been shown previously what picture of God the Koran and the

1. Al-Ghazzali, Munqidh, p. 59.

Hadith give us of God, and here a corresponding theological statement of His nature will be given to complete the picture as developed later in Islamic thinking. The classical form of this picture is drawn by al-Ashari in his compendium of faith, *al-Ibana*. He expresses the belief in the omnipotence of God and His uniqueness in this memorable passage: "We believe that God created everything by bidding it 'Be' (Kun)"¹...; that nothing on earth whether a fortune or a misfortune, comes to be save through God's will; that things exist through God's fiat, that no one can perform an act prior to its performance, or be independent of God or elude His knowledge... that there is no creator save God; that the deeds of the creatures are created by Him and predestined by Him, as it is written: 'He created you and your deeds'², that the creatures can create nothing but are rather created themselves...; that God has pleased to give it to the pious to obey Him, through His grace, His care, His reform and His guidance, as He has pleased to delude (*adhalla*) the impious by refraining from guiding them graciously...; that God could reform the impious and covert them unto Godliness, but for his fore-ordination that they shall be impious as He foreknew, leading them thus to perdition and blindness. (We believe) that good and evil are the outcome of God's decree and fore-ordination (*qada' wa qadar*): Good or evil, auspicious or ominous, and know that what has failed to attain us could not have attained us and what has befallen us could not have failed to attain us, and that creatures are unable to benefit or injure themselves, save through God's pleasure."³

1. Koran, XVI, 42.

2. Koran, XXXVII, 94.

3. *Al-Ash'ari, Ibana*, (Fakhri's Translation, Islamic Occasionalism), p. 9.

Al-Ghazzali is no less eager to assert the unqualified and absolute freedom and power of God. He declares that there does not rest on Him any obligation to give laws, to create, to give reward, to take into account what is salutary for His servants, that it is not absurd that He should command them to do what is above their power, that He is not obliged to punish sin, that it is not absurd that He should send prophets.¹ Real unity, in al-Ghazzali's opinion, is the consideration of God as absolutely the sole agent in the universe.² The denial of the Mu'tazila doctors of God's authorship of all acts, and the emphasis they laid on man's will, moved al Ghazzali to redefine the Moslem creed and meet the theological difficulties raised by these innovators. The most serious innovation of the mu'tazilites was the doctrine of divine unity which denies that eternal qualities inhere in His essence and only affirm the quality of eternity to Him, as the most peculiar description of His essence. Al-Ghazzali immediately realised the serious consequences, of this position, namely the gulf it creates between God and His creatures, the confinement of God to a secluded transcendent existence.

Therefore, he affirmed that God is one, eternal, and His attributes are coeternal with Him. He knows by means of knowledge, lives by means of Life and is powerful through the possession of Power.³ In affirming this distinction between the self and the attributes, the neo-orthodox combine unity with multiplicity without saying how. They said we accept this

1. Iqtisad, p. 66.
2. Ihia' IV, p. 240.
3. Iqtisad, p. 54.

relationship without asking how (bila kaifa), and they affirmed that God is omnipotent, omniscient, living, willing, learning, seeing, and talking.¹ These are His seven main attributes. In al Ghazzali's opinion, the dispute over the relation of the divine attributes to God's essence as raised by the philosophers and the mu'tazilites is due to a misunderstanding of words.² Knowing a thing, he argues, means knowing something about that thing, i.e. what it is like and what its qualities are. Therefore, the cognition of an object involves a subject to be known and attributes that are known about it.³

With reference to the problem of God and His attributes, the misunderstanding arises, says Abu Hamid, when we start confusing the two linguistic forms of expressing our idea of God's knowledge. We can say: God has knowledge; and too that He is knowing. To infer from the 'word' 'knowledge' that there exists in Him an independent state we refer to as 'knowability', ('alamiya), by itself, is only an illusion arising from the ambiguity of words.⁴ The purpose of Al-Ghazzali is to affirm that God is to be described in terms of qualities and at the same time guard against hypostatizing these qualities. In fact none of the orthodox thinkers was able to reach a clear conclusion on this mysterious relation of eternal attributes and their mode of existence in relation to God's essence. Al-Ghazzali, like the other neo-orthodox thinkers, attacks the philosophers and mu'tazilites' principle of the identification of the attributes with

1. Ibid., p. 35.

2. Ibid., p. 55.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 55.

God's essence. God and His attributes are not one and the same thing, they argue, but what or how are they held together, they never make clear. "The Creator in our opinion", he affirms, "knows by means of knowledge, lives by means of life and is powerful by means of power, and so on for the rest of the seven attributes."¹

There are four principles which hold generally on all the divine attributes. First, that none of God's attributes is created in Him or elsewhere, nor have they a beginning in time. God is from all eternity and so are His attributes. Secondly, that the attributes are not the self but superadded to it. Thirdly that all the attributes inhere in the Self, and none could be outside it. This is laid down in contrast to what the Mu'tazilites have affirmed, namely that the will has a special locus created outside God. Fourthly, and most important of all to our subject, is that the attributes are all-comprehensive, embracing all and everything alike.² Al Ash'ari tells us "the divine willing, being one of God's essential attributes... must embrace everything which can truly be willed, just as divine knowledge, being one of God's essential attributes, must embrace everything which can be truly known."³

Power.

A. Divine ^{Power.} With reference to our subject we may study primarily three of these attributes, namely power, will and knowledge. It has already been mentioned that Islamic Traditions, and the Revealed Book ascribe to God absolute and unlimited power. "It must be remembered", Wensink writes,

1. Ibid., p. 54.

2. Ibid., pp. 54-65.

3. Al Asha'ri, Luma', p. 33.

"that Muhammad, the founder of the theocracy had accentuated the power of Allah, the Creator and governor of the universe, as well as the impotence of man as compared with this overwhelming personality... so the people of Arabia were led by Muhammad into the presence of a personality superhuman yet with human qualities."¹ Some Moslems went as far as to ascribe to Him the power of self-contradition. Anyhow, in al-Ghazzali's opinion contradictions² are the only thing God can not do, not because He has not the power, but because His knowledge is the highest and best. The highest and best are alien to falsehood. God's power must still be venerated as absolute. The consequences and difficulties which arise from such a position as His inability to commit suicide, contradict Himself, and such riddles were explained as false objections which do not apply to God as they apply to us, human beings. It must be carefully noted that never in the history of al Sunna was there any intention of belittling or defining God's power at all.

The point is that the overwhelming character of God leaves no room³ in the world for man or any other creature, not even for natural phenomena and principles. Thanks to the Mu'tazilites, who dared to shift the emphasis from God's power and will to His knowledge, we have now the right to speak of a philosophy of choice in Islam. This shift of emphasis was the target of al-Ghazzali for many years. In the course of this discussion we shall see that his attempt will consist of reversing the order of emphasis from knowledge to that of will and power.

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1. Wensink, op.cit., p. 49.
 2. Iqtisad, p. 41.
 3. Wensink, op.cit., p. 66.

In trying to prove God's power al-Ghazzali adopts the Aristotelian method, viz. logic. First he declares: "We believe that God is Powerful."¹ Then he advances his argument in support of this pronouncement which takes the form of the following syllogism.

Every designed act has a powerful agent.

The world is a designed act.

Therefore, the world has a powerful agent.²

To establish the truth of his assumption that the world is designed and ordered, al Ghazzali appeals to observation,³ he says look and see. As regards his major premise, he simply takes it as a self-evident truth,⁴ but it is only because of those obstinate and uncouth people that he advances in addition a separate argument to prove it.

After logically proving God's power, he proceeds to discuss the rules which apply to it. Most significant of all is the rule that Power attaches to all the infinite magdurat, which he explains as all possibles.⁵ There is no movement whatsoever that could be excluded from the application of this principle of comprehensive attachment.⁶ This principle affirms that everything that occurs and manifests a power is the object of God's power, that is it is the direct outcome of the exercise of God's power. One can just imagine how everything is held within the reach and control of God's power.

1. Iqtisad, p. 35.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., p. 36.

The objection to this position was raised early in the days of heated disputation, much earlier than al-Ghazzali's time. A divine power which is directly operative in the world would not be compatible with the powers, living beings experience in themselves. One has, in this case, either to deny this feeling of power, or recognize its coexistence with a superior divine power. This recognition leads to the affirmation of two powers or agents over one and the same act. Al-Ghazzali consents to the second alternative, and says we affirm both powers over one and the same act.¹ This affirmation, he argues, ceases to be unlikely or impossible when it is made clear that the two powers and their relations to the one act are different and not the same.² "Power", he says, "is that which stands, linguistically for the quality which makes the action present to the actor and by means of which the action takes place."³ But this power which is ascribed to man is created in him by God at will. God creates the act and creates with it the power to do it, and thus in reality He is the sole agent.⁴ Therefore, the power which we call man's is one of the objects of divine power, or as has been said before, one of those infinite (maqdurat). "Power is applied to man as an attribute or quality, (wasfan)", he says, "and to God as His creation."⁵ It does not take much to see that al-Ghazzali has not affirmed the two powers, as he claimed he would do, but that he has sacrificed the one for the other, while reserving

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1. Ibid., p. 38.
 2. Ibid., p. 39.
 3. Ibid., p. 35.
 4. Ibid., p. 39.
 5. Ihia' I, p. 116.

for it the name. What in fact man's power amounts to, in this context, is a figurative quality not a real existence.

There is another serious objection raised against the principle of the general attachment of divine power to all the 'maqdurat', and al-Ghazzali tries to meet this charge squarely. The question raised is: How would one account for the principle of comprehensive attachment of power when in the world we see things generated in a natural way from each other?¹ The answer which al-Ghazzali advances is that it is not true that things are generated, naturally from each other.² He provides an ingenious critique of causality here trying to disprove it, and replaces natural causation by divine creation. The details of this rejection of natural causation will be expounded in another section.

B. Divine knowledge. He infers the conclusion of God's knowledge of Himself from the principle of God's knowledge of other things in a round about way. He argues that God knows other things because He created them, and He who knows others ought to know Himself.³ Therefore, nothing whatsoever escapes God's knowledge, neither existing things nor non-existing.⁴ Philosophers denied God's knowledge of things other than Himself, on the grounds that it would involve multiplicity and change in Him. For all things that are not good are ephemeral, changing, and numerous. Al-Ghazzali retorts that God knows by a knowledge which is one from all

1. Iqtisad, p. 41.

2. Ibid., p. 41.

3. Iqtisad, p. 42.

4. Ibid.

eternity, and accordingly His state is unchanged by the knowledge of other things.¹

In its relation to the infinite stories of possibles, God's knowledge is limited to their cognisance, rather than to effecting them. "The contention of the Philosophers* and the Mu'tazilah, that God's absolute might is conditioned by His wisdom and justice is repudiated by al-Ghazzali as blasphemous. The arbitrariness of God's will and the absoluteness of His power are such, al Ghazzali argues, that no limiting condition can be assigned to the operation of His power."² The truth is that divine knowledge is subsequent and subordinate to divine will. Divine knowledge is a knowledge of divine decisions.³ It stands to all possibles in the same relation. Al-Ghazzali writes that "If a thing is possible in itself and is equal to other things, in being possible, then divine knowledge attaches equally to these possibilities as such. In such a relationship there is no single possibility which will prevail on the other... God Himself knows that the creation of the world at the moment when it was created was possible; and He knows, too, that its creation before that time or after it was equally possible. For these alternatives are all

1. Tahafut, p. 198.

2. Faldry, M., Islamic Occasionalism, p. 76.

3. Iqtisad, p. 43.

* From the Preface of al Tahafut and the two introductory notes, it seems that al-Ghazzali means by the Philosophers, Aristotle, whose system al-Ghazzali believes includes all Greek philosophy, then the Moslem commentators, as he calls them (mutarjimun), like al Farabi and Ibn Sina.

equally possible. It is the function of knowledge equally to attach to them as such without giving priority for the one over the other. If the Divine will made it necessary that one possible be created at a certain time, it becomes attached to this possible then and subsequently divine knowledge attaches to this decision of creation at the moment in which it was created. Therefore, the will is the cause of specification and preponderance whereas knowledge is dependent and subsequent to the event that took place without affecting it."¹ Over this distinction, De Boer comments that: "In place of the assertion of the Philosophers that God wills the world, because he thinks of it as the best, Ghazzali substitutes, the statement: 'God has cognisance of the world because he wills it and in his willing it.'"² By raising the will and power of God above His knowledge al Ghazzali annulled the Mu'tazilite belief that His knowledge limits His actions. Besides, "the attribute of divine wisdom as conceived by al Ghazzali is wholly reducible to the attribute of power. The two are indeed indistinguishable."³

C. Divine will. In opposition to the mu'tazilite doctors who denied that the will to is one of the essential divine attributes, al Ghazzali does not only affirm that the will is one of the essential attributes of God, but raises its status to the rank of sole arbiter in deciding what should be created and what should not. The fact that God is willing is known to us from the need for a determining principles in

1. Ibid., p. 43.

2. De Boer, op.cit., pp. 162-63.

3. Fakhry, op.cit., p. 77.

conferring existence on the possible.¹ For the relation of the Self and Knowledge to these possibles is one. Therefore, the will must specify and decide which of the possibles must exist. After the decision is made by divine will, divine knowledge becomes cognisant of it subsequently. He rejects the contention of the Philosophers that willing implies a need, and that God, being perfect, and not needy, cannot be described as willing.

This account of the will recalls a scholastic subject which occupied Medieval thinkers in Europe and the later 17th century rationalists. They were puzzled whether this world of ours is the only possible world. Al Ghazzali is of the opinion that this world is not the only possible one, but that it is the only one, in existence and hence is the best. He says there are things whose existence is necessary, and these are things which the will attaches to. Then, there are things whose existence is impossible. These are the things which the will does not attach to. Finally, there are the things whose existence is logically possible.² Whatever is not self-contradictory is logically possible. Thus there must be an infinitely large number of logically possible worlds. These, possible worlds have their existence in God's mind and not outside. The only possibilities which are actualized achieve this actuality by virtue of their attachment to divine will.

The immediate objection made to the exaltation of the divine will to the rank of sole arbiter and prime cause, was directly launched against

1. *Iqtisad*, p. 43.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

the principle of general attachment of the divine attributes to their objects. The neo-orthodox's opponents said; according to you the attributes stand in equal relation to all their objects, how then can the will differentiate between one and the other of these objects and cause them to exist. Therefore, it must be necessary to introduce an outside cause to give specification. This cause cannot be the Self, because in that case the act must have been since all eternity like the Self. If on the other hand, you introduce some cause or other, that cause in turn needs another cause and so on ad infinitum. But this is absurd. If both alternatives are rejected, then, the principle of general attachment becomes false.¹

Al Ghazzali advances a twofold argument. First, he says that all created things come into being through divine will from all eternity (irada qadima) which attached to these and differentiated them from other possibles.² As regards the second, namely the cause of specification of one possible rather than the other, al Ghazzali asserts once more that it must be well understood that the task and nature of the will is to specify and distinguish one thing from the other.³ To ask why did it distinguish the one from the other which is equally possible, is just like asking why does knowledge make things known.⁴ Therefore, it is necessary to affirm this task of divine will, together with the affirmation that it is not created, but is from all eternity and that it is attached to created objects in a specific time.⁵ And this, in al Ghazzali's opinion, occurs in

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1. Iqtisad, p. 45.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Ibid.

a definite way. He argues here that every created thing is so created by divine power, and that this creation requires a will to start and move the power to its objects. It follows that, every object of power is willed and every created thing is an object of power. Therefore, every created thing is willed. Evil, heresy and blasphemy are created things, therefore, they are willed. Thus, what God wills is, and what He wills not, is not. This is the creed of the 'good forebears' of Islam, says al Ghazzali, and of all the people of al Sunna.¹

Having defined and explained his position, he launches an attack on the mu'tazilite view of the will. He says, al mu'tazila have committed two serious mistakes. First, that God wills through a created will which exists in no 'locus'. What this amounts to, he says, is that He wills through a will which is not His. Second, to say that the will occurred at a specific time implies that this occurrence must have a reason. If it is another will, then this will must have another will as its cause and so on ad infinitum. But if it was not through another will, then the world would not exist because it would lack a principle of specification.² The significant implication of this position, in raising the conception of the will with its comprehensive and decisive character to the place of an orthodox dogma is to establish the absolute might and freedom of God from all limitations. It replaces the rational by the voluntary and gratuitous, and thus places God completely beyond man's knowledge and understanding.

This introductory account of the nature of God, His attributes

1. Ibid., p. 46.

2. Ibid., p. 45.

and His relation to the world, leads us to the summit of the divine nature, viz. the profession of God's uniqueness (al tawhid). In al Ihia', al Ghazzali's famous treatise on faith and sufism, he devotes a whole section for the discussion of Divine Unity. He describes this as comprising four gradational levels:

First, the stage of verbal avowal of unity without full awareness of its reality.

Second, the stage of the belief in the heart in addition to the verbal avowal. This stage of unity is the general belief of the commoners.

Third, is the stage of the Elect (al Muqarrabun) who see intuitively that there is no agent save God.

Fourth, the stage of the Truthful (al Siddiqun) who see only the One and through it everything else.¹ This is the true consequence of the exaggerated exaltation of God's power, and al Ghazzali has, in fact, done nothing except draw the natural conclusion from his premises.

II. Choice and God's Justice

We turn now to the problem of the justice of God which stems out from the discussion of His nature and attributes. "The discussion of predestination", says Wensink, "could not fail to call forth the question of the justice of God."² In the Koran utterances to the effect that God is just, and that God will give reward or punishment according to each

1. Ihia' IV, p. 240.

2. Wensink, op.cit., p. 58.

man's actions, are numerous. In the opening verse God is described as the Compassionate, the Merciful, (al rahman al rahim).¹ Also, "God will not burden any soul beyond its power. It shall enjoy the good which it hath acquired, and it shall bear the evil for the acquirement of which it laboured",² and "God is not unjust to His servants",³ and many other verses. The Mu'tazilites felt that the consideration of God's nature as absolutely free would not only deprive them from their belief in free choice, but also would place the concept in itself beyond the limit of intelligibility. The neo-orthodox, on the contrary, felt that there was nothing unintelligible in the concept which safeguards God's authority. Al Ghazzali states the belief in God's absolute freedom from all imaginable bounds, in the following way. He says, there does not rest on Him any obligation to give laws, to create, to give reward, to take into account what is good and salutary for His servants; that it is not absurd that He should command them to do what is above their power; that He is not obliged to punish sin,⁴ nor be limited in any way. By opposing this avowal of the unqualified absolutism of Allah, Wensink says, al Mu'tazila saved the prestige and morality of God. He writes "the mu'tazilites took over the view of the Kadarites that man is the author of his acts, a view which originated in the tendency to safeguard the ethical nature not of man, but of God."⁵ For in a way there is a deep-seated religious feeling in man

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1. Sura I, I.
 2. Sura II, 286.
 3. Sura IV, 44.
 4. Iqtisad, p. 66.
 5. Wensink, op.cit., p. 60.

which rebels against injustice even if perpetrated by God. But the orthodox were caught between two fires: to affirm God's justice at the cost of His absolute power, or to affirm His absolute power at the cost of His justice. The orthodox view of the nature of God leads logically to the denial of justice in the accepted sense that He has to regard the good. This is how Al Ghazzali states the argument: It has been explained that every created object is so created by God's power, and what is created by God's power is necessarily willed by His will. Therefore, every maqdur, i.e. possible, or what is within the scope of power is willed, and every created thing is maqdur, therefore, it follows that every created object is also willed. Evil, heresy, and blasphemy are all created things (hawadith) therefore, they are also willed and what God wills comes to be and what He does not will, does not come to be.¹

The question immediately arises, does it follow from these arguments that God is an evil doer, unjust and cruel? The neo-orthodox thinkers do not acquiesce in a simple yes, for in their opinion, the terms just and good, unjust and evil have not the same denotation when applied to God and when applied to man. Justice is the dispensation of one's own property according to one's own wish, and injustice is the dispensation of a property which is not one's own.² God is the sole owner of everything, and hence originally the question of His being not just does not arise.³ If there were people who believe that the question holds it is because they

1. Iqtisad, p. 46.

2. Milal, pp. 47-48, also, Iqtisad, p. 75.

3. Iqtisad, p. 75.

do not understand the meaning of justice. "Whatever God has created in heavens and on earth", says al Ghazzali, "be it sustenance or death, happiness or unhappiness, power or impotence, obedience or disobedience, all are utterly just and right with no taint of injustice or malvolence."¹ The mu'tazilites, he argues, have put a limit on God's actions, in their avowal that He has to regard the good in His actions.² Al Shahrastani reports that "the Mu'tazilites unanimously declare that the wise can only do what is salutary (al-aslah) and good, and that His wisdom keeps in view what is salutary to His servants".³ In replying to this mu'tazilite appeal to theodicy, it was easy for the neo-orthodox Mutakkalims to bring forward several instances where the good was not regarded by God and al Ghazzali makes express pronouncement of this. But first he says that the mu'tazilite's claim is not true because: "we have already established the fact that nothing can be said to be binding on God".⁴ Secondly, he says observation is another evidence against this claim of theodicy.⁵

Next, he relates the classical example of the three children. The first died in childhood as a Moslem, the second died also as a Moslem, but after he became of age. The third had become of age, but died as a heretic. The mu'tazilite logic says al Ghazzali, makes it necessary that the first two should go to paradise with the second ranking higher than the first. The third should be condemned to eternal misery. The first child place in a lower rank because he is not given the chance to grow up

1. Ihia' IV, p. 252.

2. Iqtisad, p. 75.

3. Shah. Milal I, pp. 49-50 also Ibn Hazm, Kitab al Fisal, III, p. 164.

4. Iqtisad, p. 75.

5. Ibid., pp. 75-76.

and prove his hand worth. When he complains to God and says: why have you not given me the chance to grow up and prove myself, God is left no answer according to Mu'tazilite logic, except to say, I knew that if you had grown up you would have grown into a sinner, and that is why I put you to death in childhood. But here, the heretic in fire would complain and say: why, then, have you not put me to death too in childhood, since you knew I was going to be a sinner; for that would have been better for me? God is left no answer. The absurdity of this position, says al Ghazzali, shows that it is not true that God has to regard the good in His actions.¹

Now, if God's justice does not mean abiding by the good, does the term good have any meaning left? does it or does it not apply to God's acts? First, it should be noticed that the categories of good and evil do not apply to Him, for the good and the bad are good or bad by virtue of serving a purpose or not serving it.² The mu'tazilite definition of good and evil as absolute is blown up. Al Ghazzali proceeds to define these terms in his own way, then he engaged in a special discussion as to why people ascribe a universal significance to these terms.

III. The Relativistic and Pragmatic View of Value.

A deed, says al Ghazzali, can be one of three things. First, it serves the purpose of the agent; second, it does not serve the purpose of

1. Iqtisad, p. 76.

2. Ihia' I., p. 118.

the agent but runs counter to it; third, it neither serves nor does not serve and this goes by the name vain, i.e. has no use.¹ We call the first deed good, says al Ghazzali, the second bad, and the third vain, and its agent insolent.² It is obvious that these definitions or terms do not apply to God's deeds, for no purpose can be ascribed to Him. Furthermore, one and the same deed might serve its doer in one respect and goes counter to it in another. The same deed then would be called good and bad at the same time.³ Al Ghazzali gives an example of a man who has no religion, and therefore considers his committing an act of adultery good, but on the other hand deems it bad if someone made known his act.⁴ Good and bad have no meaning in themselves, argues al Ghazzali. They are relative. He declares "good and evil are two terms men use in referring to two relative things (idafiyan). They differ from primary or essential qualities (sifat dhat) in being relative... No wonder then that we see that a thing is good to Zaid and bad to 'Amr, at the same time."⁵

However, al Ghazzali does not believe that there is no way at all of applying the term good to God's deeds. It only has to be distinguished when it is used in relation to God. For it is due to misunderstanding that we find people ascribing to God purposes and obligations. In linguistic convention the term applies to God, in a separate sense. He says there are three states to which the term applies according to convention. First,

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1. Iqtisad, p. 67.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid., p. 68.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Ibid.

it is applied to whoever serves the desired purpose at the moment, or in the long run indifferently. Second, it is applied only to what serves a purpose in the long run, and this is the sense which al shar', the Divine Law, has recommended. Third, it is said that God's deeds are good without saying how;¹ and this must not be taken to ascribe to Him a purpose.

However, God's deeds are considered good, because God is not questioned for what He does nor is He held responsible in any way.² He is the absolute law-giver. This third conventional use is that of ahl al Sunna, who believe that whatever comes from God is good because it comes from Him, in opposition to those who believe that a deed comes from Him because it is good. The difference lies in the fact that the one group takes His will as the criterion of the good and the other takes His reason.

Having defined the terms good and evil, al Ghazzali proceeds next to show the reason why people ascribe an absolute or universal sense to these terms. He says there are three mistakes which make people confuse the meaning of these terms.³

First, the mistake from egoism. Certain people, says al Ghazzali, consider a deed bad, because it did not serve their own purposes in complete disregard of the fact that it may serve purposes of others, and be good.⁴ But these people cannot see beyond their own self interest and thus consider their interests as the criterion of what is good and evil. By proceeding from the particular to the general they give to these terms a sense of

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

absolute significance.¹

Second, the mistake from disregarding the exception. An action may seem to be bad all the time, like lying. This apparent universality, makes men believe that lying is bad in itself, not for any reason other than itself. The mistake made here, argues al Ghazzali, is that of disregarding the rare instance (hala nadira), when we deem lying to be good not bad.² Besides, he adds a pedagogical reason behind this claim to absolutism. He says for educational purposes, the child is taught that lying, for instance, is bad all the time in itself. So when he grows up the meaning of the word becomes fixed in his mind and it remains.³

Third, the mistake arising from association and identification. If a thing is described as good or bad on one occasion, people tend to take this quality and associate it with the thing itself and consider it as part of the thing. Or if the thing was found to be associated on one occasion or to have occurred with it, the mind imagines it to be so all the time.⁴

These are the three main reasons listed by al Ghazzali to show why people make the mistake of considering good and evil absolute. Then, he adds a sort of a corollary to show that when people make a good deed, even if they think that nothing comes to them from it the deed is still egoistic not altruistic. He says if a man helped another when he had no personal interest in helping him and when he could have refrained from

1. Ibid., pp. 68-69.
2. Ibid., p. 69.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

doing so, he would not be doing it because the action of helping is good in itself. It may have been done because the man in question has seen the sad and helpless condition of his neighbour, and hence imagined himself in the same helpless position, and accordingly rushed to his help, out of fear.¹

This, in general, is the Ghazzalian view of moral standards, but before closing the discussion, we may note a peculiar view on the same problem expressed by al Ghazzali in another work which does not seem to be compatible with the view expounded above. It seems, on the contrary, more compatible with the rationalist standpoint. In his book *al Maqsad al Asna*, he tries to explain the presence of evil in a world whose sole creator and mover is a compassionate and merciful God. Apparently, he says, it seems that the presence of all this evil in the world contradicts His goodness. This is not true, he goes on; for none of us can judge the acts of God since we have no means of comprehending them. There is a good hidden purpose behind every act of evil in the world,² says Abu Hamid, which we do not know. Therefore, if God sees that there is a greater good attainable with little evil He would not refrain from creating the little evil for the sake of the greater good.³ Thus, one can be sure, al Ghazzali, affirms, that "there is no evil in the world which does not contain some good in it; and that it is not possible to remove the evil without at the same time removing all the good it entails. Besides, a greater evil may

1. *Iqtisad*, p. 70.

2. *Maqsad*, p. 40.

3. Ibid.

occur in case this is done".¹ He gives the example of amputating a diseased hand for the sake of the whole body.

God's compassion means the willing on His part of the good,² al Ghazzali says: "He willed the good for the sake of the good itself, the evil not for its own sake but for the sake of the good also. Therefore, the good is done for its own sake essentially and the evil accidentally."³ Al Ghazzali then proceeds to affirm: "There could not have been anything better." This account is in apparent opposition to his previous position that God is free to regard or not regard the good. Here God seems to be seeking it. To imagine, he continues, that there is here in the world some evil which has no good intent behind it, or to think that the good could have been possible to attain apart from the evil in it, shows only the depravity of your mind.⁴

This view, it is true, is not representative of al Ghazzali's thought on the subject, for it does not occur in his major treatises but only in the Maqsad, but still it is worthy of note. Besides certain scholars tend to disregard this book because they think it is not authentic.

IV. God and Nature

The Islamic dictum 'there is no God but God' came to mean later there is nothing but God. The orthodox could tolerate no attempt at

1. Ibid., p. 40.
2. Ibid., p. 41.
3. Ibid., p. 41.
4. Ibid., p. 41.

recognising a power in the universe that was not God's. Allah occupied every corner of being, but orthodoxy never tried to obliterate the line of demarcation between Allah and the world; not even when later mysticism became an orthodox trend at the hands of al Ghazzali. What they did was to reduce the world almost to sheer nothing by considering it an implement of God. The world, al Baghdadi says, is "every thing other than God".¹ God was conceived as an absolute agent who creates, and directly controls every aspect of being. Pantheism was never the rule in orthodox Islamic doctrine, for in place of the saying that all is God, orthodoxy believes, God is all. We shall see later how orthodox mysticism avoided the tenet of pantheism, at the hands of al Ghazzali in particular.

As we have seen, any attempt which recognised or at least seemed to recognize other operative forces in the world, besides Allah was waived aside as pernicious. But nature seems to behave according to a pattern peculiar to itself, and in this way it appeared antithetic to God. That is why the conception of such a nature constituted a ground of dissension among the different schools of thought in Islam. Al Ghazzali was well aware of this antithetic and voices it forcefully in his works, and tries to explain it away leaving only one factor, God and dismissing the other, nature as a locus or receptacle. He said the main obstacle to the real understanding of unity is the devils insinuation which shows you nature and men's choice as partakers of God's action.² The only way open

1. Fakhry, op.cit., p. 36.

2. Ihia, IV, p. 242.

for the explanation of these apparent operations of nature and man, which forms a part of nature, was to show their utter dependence on God and draw out the metaphysical implications of this position. In their attempt to explain this, the neo-orthodox have launched an attack on the rationalists and especially the mu'tazilites; and therefore we expect them to be putting their ideas as a polemic to these principles of their opponents.

A. The atomic theory. The atomic theory served as the intellectual background for the neo-orthodox Mutakallims, and provided them with a metaphysics antithetic to that of Aristotle, who recognised nature and its operations. Aristotle says: "that nature is a source or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily."¹ This theory may be considered as an amalgam of different Indian and Greek sources, which passed through different channels into Islam. However, it is a comprehensive theory of creation, and comprises at the same time a comprehensive philosophy of being as a whole.

In this discussion, it will only be treated as part of the neo-orthodox device to explaining nature away. It will also serve to clear the ground for al Ghazzali, the theologian who dealt the final blow to the doctrine of natural causation.

Having rejected the Aristotelian conception of matter, the Ash'arites fell back on the philosophy of atoms and accidents later in the midst of the ninth century. There is no comprehensive original source left to the

1. Aristotle, Physics, McKeon, Basic Works of Aristotle, p. 236.

modern student to make a real study and evaluation of the theory; however a summary of its principles came to us through later commentators, like al Shahrastani (d. 1153), al Baghdadi (d. 1037), and Maimonides (d. 1204) in his *Dalil al Ha'irin*. The earliest account which has reached us is that given by Al Ash'ari (d. 935) in his *Maqalat*; then comes the fragmentary notes of al Baqilani (d. 1013) a late Ash'arite, scattered here and there in his two books, *al Tamhid* and *al Insaf*. Though they are fragmentary and scanty, they represent an original source, for al Baqilani himself was an Ash'arite atomist.

Al Baqilani tells us that the world is created and that all created things belong to three categories: body, substance or atom (the terms atom and substance both stand for *al jawhar al fard* or *al juz' alladhi la yatajazza'*), and accidents.¹ There is no concensus on the exact definition or meaning of body (*jism*) but the definition of al Baqilani serves in general to give an approximate picture. He said: body is that which is composed,² and 'Abbad B. Salman, is reported by al Ash'ari to have added to this that it is composed of atoms and accidents, and that the latter have no existence and are never separated from them.³ Dirar also consents with them. Atoms are defined as those particles which "cannot be further divided, which have no quantity but out of which compounds can be made which possess quantity."⁴ The most peculiar definition of atom is

1. *Tamhid*, p. 41, also Maimonides, translated from Munk's French version by Macdonald in 'The Moslem World,' p. 10.

2. *Tamhid*, p. 41.

3. *Maq.* pp. 304-305.

4. Maimonides, op.cit., p. 10.

that it is the bearer of accidents.¹ The most we know about it is that it cannot be further divided and that it is a sort of a substance in which accidents are created. It is not what appears to us in nature, for what appears is a compound of accidents. "The generality of the Mutakallims, it is true, identified substance and atom... which they conceived as the 'bearer' of accidents, so that it corresponded in reality to the Aristotelian notion of matter... as the substratum of change or becoming, rather than the 'primary substance' of the Categories."² Thus the quality of bearing characterises the atom most. For most of the atomists agreed that the atoms are all alike, in being bearers, and some went as far as to affirm one atom only.³ The thing which makes things differ are the accidents they bear.⁴ The accident is that notion (ma'na) which the atom bears.⁵ It must be carefully noted that between atom and accident no relation holds other than that of bearing and of being born. The significance of this belief will be made clearer when it is recalled that the purpose of the theory of atoms is to repudiate the possibility of all generation or dependence in things. Neither the atom nor the accident affect each other in any way. "There is no matter," says al Ghazzali, "common to the accident and the substance".⁶ The atoms, themselves exist in a vacuum (khala') i.e. they are separated one from the other by a gap in which nothing exists,⁷ and hence cannot affect each other in any way.

1. Maq. p. 307.

2. Fakhry, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

3. Maq. p. 308.

4. Maq. p. 308.

5. Tamhid, p. 41.

6. Tahafut, p. 236.

7. Mamonides p. 10, also al Ghazzali, Iqtisad, p. 41.

Moreover, accidents do not exist nor influence each other.¹ The accident as defined by al Baqilani as "that which does not endure... but perishes in the second instant of its coming to be."² Macdonald points out the implication of this doctrine and says "the object of this doctrine of the unenduring accident is to guard against the idea that there is in any sense a 'nature' (tabi'a) in things and that the 'nature' of a body requires that there should be joined to it such and such accidents. It means that Allah creates the accidents at the moment without the intermediary of any nature or of anything else."³ The accident never endures for two moments or two atoms of time,⁴ but is always recreated by God. It passes away as soon as it is created and God recreates it again.⁵ God in fact creates both atoms and accidents, but while accidents pass away continually atoms endure.⁶

The other aspect of accidents is their existence in constant conjunction with each other though as we have seen without affecting each other. Al Ash'ari reports that Dirar believed that no body exists without having accidents in conjunction with it. That these accidents occur in opposed pairs like life and death, motion and rest, knowledge and ignorance, combination and separation, dryness and moisture.⁷ Every atom must possess one or more either of the positive or of the negative of these accidents.⁸ But the accident cannot exist in another accident for this

1. Maq. p. 371, also Maimonides, pp. 10, 16.

2. Tahhid, p. 42, also Insaf p. 15.

3. The Moslem World, p. 13.

4. Maimonides, p. 12, also Insaf p. 15, and Maq. p. 358.

5. Maimonides, p. 12.

6. Maq. pp. 363, 371.

7. Maq. 305.

8. Maimonides, p. 11.

tends to build up a stable nature of things. Neither the atom nor the accident can give birth to another accident¹ for this would ascribe to things a power of their own, the very thesis which the doctrine is set against. God is the sole creator of both atoms and accidents.² The atoms endure but the accidents, being of such a perishable nature need the intervention of God to create them moment by moment, for they perish and are recreated at every moment of time. Therefore, "if Allah were to take His producing hand off the universe it would vanish. Thus the complete dependence of the world on God in existence and activity is firmly established."³ The accidents constitute all what we understand by nature and hence nature must be totally dependent for its movement and existence on God. They comprise colours, tastes, smells, life, power, impotence, movement, rest, life, death, speech, voices, knowledge, ignorance, heat and cold, dryness and moisture, combination and separation, etc.⁴ As soon as God ceases to create these they would vanish; He can also make them vanish, according to some by creating in them the accident of annihilation.⁵ Nothing stands on its own in nature, according to the neo-orthodox, and that is why the philosophy of atoms appealed to them. "The atomists are absolutely opposed to the idea of 'Nature'."⁶ No law of natural causation nor any persistence of the nature or behavior of things can be maintained in any way. Things are in a continuing flux. What nature amounts to in such a philosophy is

1. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

2. *Tamhid* pp. 44-6, also *Maq.* p. 371.

3. Macdonald, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

4. Maimonides, p. 16, also *Maq.* p. 358.

5. *Maq.* pp. 360-361.

6. Macdonald, *Development*, p. 81, also *Moslem World*, p. 11.

simply a series of divine decisions renewed every moment. Therefore, the Asharite world, comments Macdonald, becomes a "cinematographic-automation".¹

The Mu'tazilites who adhered as much as the Ash'arites to the theory of atoms were caught in a serious difficulty, which threatened their belief in free choice and in generation of things. For the doctrine of the perishability of accidents led to sustaining everything in the grip of Allah. Therefore, a modification of this doctrine was necessary if they were to stick to their principles of choice. It was natural that they could not go all the way with the other atomists as regards the latter's insistence on the perishability of accidents. Abu'l Hudhail, as a result, said that not all accidents are perishable, that some of them are, and others are not. Among those which perish are movements, and among those which continue to exist are colours, tastes, smells, life, power. These continue to be through God's bidding: "stay".² Al Jubbai' acceded to the same view. It is hard to believe or see that this slight modification succeeded in overcoming the difficulty. The fact that Abu'l Hudhail and al Jubbai' still consider movement perishable and not enduring for more than a moment of time, leads to the same results ~~that~~ namely ^{that} man's acts are constantly created by God, not by man. Freedom of choice includes both things, taking one course of action or rejecting it. But this capacity to take either alternative does not follow from these modified principles of the Atomic theory made by Abu'l Hudhail and al Jubbai'. For

1. Ibid.

2. Maq. pp. 358-59.

the recognition of movement as a perishable accident makes all acts done by men in reality God's moment to moment creation. Since we cannot take God's initiation of an act in us, or leave it at will there remains no point in the mu'tazilites claim that men are free. Nevertheless, we find that Abu'l Hudhail and al Jubbai considered power among the enduring accidents. They hoped to argue from this point that if man has a power in him which endures for some time, then the acts which he does are his own and do not fall under the moment to moment creation of Allah. But the question immediately arises, does this power, which must mean a power to act and hence to give rise to a movement behave harmoniously with the perishable accident 'movement'. If it does, then it must follow God's creation of movements every moment constantly or else it would not be running in harmony with it. If this is the case, then we are back at the same old point, namely, the attribution of man's acts to God. On the other hand if it does not run in harmony with God's creation of motion, then how would we reconcile, the power in man to move and the ascription of all movement to God. This seemingly incompatible view of the mu'tazilites thought leads to the conclusion that Abu'l Hudhail's and al Jubbai's attempt is not successful.

The real man to overcome this difficulty was Mu'ammār who introduced at the outset a radical modification to the theory. He said that God does not create except bodies,¹ while accidents are created or produced by these bodies.²

1. Milal, p. 65.

2. Ibid.

Bodies produce accidents by natural necessity (bi ijab al tab').¹ In this way Mu' ammar rescued the mu'tazilite doctrine of generation and free choice. He restored to nature its stable character and the effect of its objects on each other. However, the mu'tazilite adherence to the theory of atoms and accidents rather than the Aristotelian view of matter, held by most rationalists (philosophers) at the time, does not only seem peculiar, but also involves them in a difficulty which threatens their doctrine of free choice and from which they never escaped.

B. Al Ghazzali's repudiation of causality. Al Ghazzali was fully aware like the rest of the neo-orthodox Mutakallims of the incompatibility of God's omnipotence with the recognition of other agents, natural or human. In his famous treatise, al Ihia', he declares that the most serious obstacles to the recognition of God's Unity are the alleged operations of nature and man's choice.² In order to defend the true faith of al Sunna, al Ghazzali felt it necessary to repudiate this claim to natural efficiency, and strip nature of all independent activity. To do this he did not resort to any imported theory, like the rest of the Mutakallims, but relied on common sense and personal insight, and therefore, remained closer to the pure faith of Islam.

He was not seeking to explain the primary nature of matter, and therefore did not have to lean on atomism, for his sole purpose was to withhold all activity from the domain of nature and ascribe it to God.

1. Maq. p. 303, also, Milal p. 65.

2. Ihia' IV., p. 242.

His concluding remark to the discussion of generated acts in al Iqtisad reads: "This is what we have undertaken to demonstrate concerning God's power and its general rules, which govern everything."¹

The principle he had to fight against was that held by the philosophers and rationalists, namely that events occur through the agency of natural principles or causes.² When he turns to the discussion of the physical sciences in his famous attack on the Philosophers, (al Tahafut), he singles out the principle of natural causation as the first target. He says "the first point is their assertion that this connexion observed between causes and effects is of logical necessity, and that the existence of the cause without the effect, or the effect without the cause is not within the realm of the contingent and possible."³ Therefore, the core of the problem is the necessary nexus between cause and effect and this is the target of al Ghazzali.

In his attempt to vindicate the absolute power of God in al Iqtisad, al Ghazzali dwells on the term generation, and tries through a rhetorical argument to combat the principle. Thus we find him asking the question: What does it mean to say that an object generates from another? The answer, he says, is that one body issues forth (yakhruj) from another, as the child issues from its mother's womb. An affirmation of such a principle he argues, is impossible because nothing is generated from accidents, and a hand for instance, does not have an inside (jawf) from

1. Iqtisad, p. 42.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 41, also Tahafut, p. 228.
3. Tahafut, p. 222 (Van Den Bergh's translation).

which motion can issue forth. Therefore, we can not speak of motion as generated by the hand. If this is impossible, says al Ghazzali, then you either make your claim intelligible, or admit that the concept is inadmissible.¹ Then he adds that there is one more meaning to the term generation, viz. one thing takes place after another subsequently and is caused by it.² Al Ghazzali's answer to this second sense of the term generation is not of general interest because it does not combat the idea on its own account, but simply rejects it as incompatible with the principle of general attachment of the attributes - which his opponents do not admit. Your claim is false, he argues, because nothing comes to be from a created power, all action is God's preorgative and monopoly.³

Having dealt with the term generation in al Iqtisad, al Ghazzali advanced the really persuasive and comprehensive attack of the doctrine of causation in al Tahafut. He is mainly concerned here with the problem of the alleged necessary nexus of causal relation. He combats the idea that there inheres a necessary relation between cause and effect.

"According to us the connexion between what is usually believed to be a cause and what is believed to be an effect", he argues, "is not a necessary connexion; each of two things has its own individuality and is not the other, and neither the affirmation nor the negation; neither the existence nor the non-existence of the one is implied in the affirmation, negation, existence and non-existence of the other."⁴ Our only

1. Iqtisad, p. 41.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 42.
4. Tahafut, p. 225.

ground for maintaining this view of necessary causation is observation, but observation, he argues, shows that the effect "occurs with the cause and not through it."¹ Al Ghazzali's point is that observation does not reveal any connection between things, but simply reports what appears; and what appears is just a series of disconnected independent data. Observation shows us no relation of any kind. It must be noticed here that al Ghazzali is not denying all necessary relations. For he believes there are certain ways of speaking of necessary relations. The only idea he is rejecting is that a necessary relation exists between what is seen in the world and is called cause and effect. Logically we can speak of three necessary relations: the relationship of reciprocity according to which the negation of the one implies the negation of the other. Secondly, the relation of the conditioned to its condition where the negation of the condition leads to the negation of the conditioned. Thirdly, the causal relationship and this does not hold except if the principle of a causality which is in question, is assumed a priori.² The teaching that nothing in the world effects anything else and that everything is separate from everything else leads to the question, who, how, and what, is the agent of all the activity seen in the world. Here al Ghazzali reaffirms the prerogative of God's omnipotence. He says "the connexion in these things is based on a prior power of God to create them in a successive order."³ Al Ghazzali thus replaces natural causation by divine causation. But he

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1. *Ibid.*, p. 226.
 2. *Iqtisad*, p. 91.
 3. *Tahafut*, p. 225.

warns us against considering this divine causation as limited by any condition. Everything is tied up to God's will and nothing else.¹ Therefore, what al Ghazzali is proving is the utter dependence of everything on the arbitrary and gratuitous will of Allah. To give an illustration, he dwells on the case of the burning of cotton. He first attacks the contention of the philosophers that the agent of burning is fire exclusively through a natural process.² "The agent of burning", he says, "is God through His creating the black in the cotton and the disintegration of its parts and it is God who made the cotton burn and restored it into ashes either through the intermediary of angels or without intermediary. For fire is a deed body which can have no action by itself... It has been shown that coexistence does not indicate causation".³

In the second place he attacks the doctrine that events occur and proceed from their principles. There are two answers to this. First says al Ghazzali "we do not accept the assertion that the principles do not act in a voluntary way and that God does not act through His will... If it is established that the agent creates the burning through His will when the piece of cotton is brought in contact with the fire, He can equally well omit to create it when the contact takes place."⁴

Al Ghazzali is well aware of the objection to this position and meets it squarely. The denial of a persisting or an enduring pattern as a consequence of the denial of causation, leads to all sorts of impos-

1. Ibid., p. 229.
2. Ibid., p. 226.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 229.

sibilities and absurdities. A book left on a table may turn to a youth, a man walking on the street may fly, etc. Al Ghazzali answers with ease and confidence. He says for one thing, these extraordinary events are not impossible but rather possible, for only events that are self-contradictory can be called impossible. He writes "we only profess that these things are not necessary, but that they are possible and may or may not happen, and protracted habit, time and again, fixes their occurrence in our minds according to the past in a fixed impression."¹

However, al Ghazzali goes further and admits a natural principle in things which always holds unless it is violated by God. God is the only being who can break through this persisting natural order. Thus he writes "in fire there is created a nature which burns two similar pieces of cotton which are brought into contact with it and does not differentiate between them, when they are alike in every respect."² Then to affirm that God can break through this persisting relation, he adds "But still we regard it ~~as~~ possible that a prophet should be thrown into the fire and not burn, either through a change in the quality of the fire or through a change in the quality of the prophet and that either through God or through the angels."³ This is why we should not be surprised at the sight of miracles nor hold it impossible for miracles to occur. The point which al Ghazzali does not seem to be aware of is that his admission ~~that~~ God endowes things with certain natures or powers entitles one to ask the question:

1. Tahafut, p. 231.
2. Ibid., p. 232.
3. Ibid.

Where does he draw the line between the action of this nature and that of God. For previously he admitted no activity except that which is ascribed to God, while now this recognition of a created nature ~~in~~ things implies that things may have an effect on each other. It may be interesting to refer, in passing and before ending this discussion, to the striking similarity of al Ghazzali's ideas and approach to this problem and that of the British empiricist of the eighteenth century David Hume.

This short resumé of the causal theory does not do the doctrine justice; but, not being interested in the doctrine by itself, we pass it over, in order to draw the significant conclusion which bears on our subject. The point is that after the account given of causality, one feels that everything is left in utter and direct dependence on God. Man's role in the world grows smaller and smaller. Choice is ruled out, and becomes almost meaningless. The theory removed from the way of the neo-orthodox both the explanation of choice by means of natural causes and dependence on nature, as well as man's psychological awareness of his identity on which he depends in making decisions. The confirmation of the neo-orthodox principle, namely that Unity of God means that there is no agent except Him, is accomplished. Allah is the sole absolute Agent.

CHAPTER II

MAN AND CHOICE

1. Choice and the Intellect.

The major question left over from the previous chapter is whether there is a place for man in the neo-orthodox system of thought. Recognition of man, means the acceptance of his reason and his ability to make decisions. Where does Islam stand in relation to this recognition. In comparison with the other Semetic revealed religions Islam has been described as a rational religion. This need not mean that the religion of Islam is built on the basis of human thinking. To the Moslems Islam is not a human creation. What is usually meant when it is described as rational is that it lacks the element of mystery which can be observed in Judaism and Christianity. In the Koran there are references to reason and the exhortation to the Moslems to make use of their reason. But the exact meaning of this is not certain nor definite. It comes close to common sense and the necessity to know by analogy and from the example of others. Later, in the days of Islamic enlightenment, when new pressing issues came up and had to be met, the meaning and role of philosophy was recognized. The conflict between reason and revelation did not refer to the exclusive use of one of these, but to where the final authority lies. Most Moslems accepted both revelation and reason together, but while the orthodox moslems considered reason merely as a means to understand revelation,

the rationalists considered it a faculty which independently of revelation can reach truth, and one which can understand revelation also and interpret it. However, Wensink labels Islam in general (or possibly the orthodox) as anti-rational. He says, "Islam condemns the rationalistic attitude. There are many traditions according to which Muhammad emphasized his refusal to be questioned by pointing to earlier examples of communities destroyed in consequence of their disputations."¹

On the role of the human intellect, the position of al Ghazzali is quite inconsistent and indefinite. Two main opposing attitudes could be discerned in his writings. The first is the suspicion of man's intellect and its ability to extend to metaphysical realms; and the other the belief in an intellect unchecked and unlimited in scope. The sceptical attitude is maintained in his two books, *Tahafut al Falasifah* and *al Munqidh min al-Dalal*. The other dogmatic attitude dominates *al Qustas al Mustaqim* and *Mi'yar al-'Ilm*.

On the one hand, al Ghazzali is doubtful of the claim that human reason is capable of discovering the divine truths. "Our purpose", he says addressing the philosophers, "is only to show your inability to justify your claim to the knowledge of the realities of things by demonstrative arguments (*barahin qat'iyah*). We intend to shake your faith in your own claims... there are some people (with whom he seems to identify himself) who believe that the realities of the divine things cannot be discovered

1. Wensink, op.cit., p. 53.

through intellectual investigation."¹ In al Munqidh he develops this sceptical attitude at length. He tells us there that he cleansed his mind of all inherited ideas² as well as of unfounded truths. He doubted necessary truths as well as the authority of the senses.³ However, one ought to be cautious while reading this account and refrain from taking it at its face value, and ought rather to look at the underlying purpose of the book. For the book as a distinctly dialectical purpose which is the logical defence of the faith. Al Ghazzali lived at an age in which all sorts of creeds and attitudes were clashing. Scepticism was not only widespread among atheist and disaffected believers, but among faithful Moslems as well. One of the greatest thinkers of the Mu'tazilite school, al Nazzam, had already established scepticism as a decisive methodical approach to truth and true Islam. As to al Ghazzali, who passed through scepticism in his early days, as he tell us, he ends by denouncing scepticism and the sceptics. Macdonald writes that "al Ghazzali was a rationalistic skeptic using reason to destroy its own ultimate validity and a pragmatist, using the facts of consciousness to re-establish a basis for thought and belief."⁴ It seems that al Ghazzali described himself as a sceptic in order to be in a better position to attack scepticism. This claim puts him in a better position to show that scepticism failed to give him intellectual satisfaction. There are several reasons why one ought to assume that the story was invented

1. Tahafut, p. 167.

2. Munqidh, p. 51.

3. Ibid., p. 53.

4. Macdonald, Moslem World, Vol. 18, p. 8.

for controversial purposes.

From the standpoint of internal criticism, I can point out some readily observed points. First, he says that he had thrown away accepted beliefs and started from naught; then he quickly discloses to the reader his firm faith in Allah. He says: "At length God cured me of the malady."¹

Second, from the phase of admitting only self-evident truths, which he claims to have gone through, he leaps to the irrelevant conclusion that truth cannot be distinct from one of four beliefs. "The truth" he says, "cannot lie outside these four classes... If truth is not in them, there is no point in trying to apprehend the truth."² From admitting only self-evident truths one does not reach this conclusion and if al Ghazzali has reached this conclusion it is because he had a formed opinion already. Besides, all these four classes of beliefs are Islamic, which shows that he never quit the Islamic faith or sought the truth in another.

Third, we are told in the Munqidh that he would proceed to seek truth with an unbiased mind in these four schools. But he has shown, in at least two places, that he was not concerned to find truth but rather falsehood. This is especially clear in his treatment of the philosophers and the Batiniyah. Here he states: "When I started on the study of philosophy, I was convinced that a man cannot grasp what is defective in any of the sciences unless he has so complete a grasp of the science in question... I realized that to refute* a system before understanding it... is to act

1. Munqidh (Watt's transl.) p. 25.

2. Ibid., p. 27.

* My underlining.

blindly. I, therefore, set out in all earnestness to acquire a knowledge of philosophy."¹

In the case of the Batiniyah, he says that it only occurred to him to read their books, and was prompted to do so at the Caliph's request.² This motive is quite different from a systematic search after truth.

Fourth, he says that he remained in a state of utter scepticism for two months until finally God healed him.³ Philosophic doubt is usually more lasting and of a more moderate nature.

From the stand-point of external criticism, I may mention the fact that no historian of that era nor any of the extant works of al Ghazzali himself, besides al Munqidh, show that he had passed through such a crisis, or was counted among the heretics or innovators by any one. He is always described as a devout and faithful Moslem. Here we are faced with the dilemma that he was either a hypocrite for a time, pretending belief in Islam without really believing it, or that the account in al Munqidh is not a genuine factual account.

There is, however, a record of the immediate change which made him quit teaching as well as flee the people; but this does not contribute any relevant support to the thesis in question. It only marks a change in his way of life from being a mystic in theory to a mystic in practice, and does not reflect any sceptical struggle within himself.

However, al Ghazzali's sceptical attitude was not overcome by the

1. Ibid., pp. 29-30.

2. Ibid., p. 40.

3. Ibid., p. 25.

use of reason, on the contrary it was overcome, as he claims, by the direct intervention of God. He says: "This did not come about by systematic demonstration or marshalled argument but by a light God... cast into my breast."¹ Such an account places reason in an entirely subordinate position, and establishes man's utter dependence on God. Parallels are sometimes drawn in this connexion between Descartes and al Ghazzali, which as far as philosophica analysis is concerned, could be drawn regardless of the question of authenticity. Nevertheless, there is a radical difference between the two, and this constitutes the distinction between western and eastern thought. Descartes recovered faith in reason on rational grounds, by ruling out scepticism. Thus he established the creed of reason. Al Ghazzali, on the other hand, ruled out reason as incapable of restoring faith and attributed his rescue from scepticism to God. That is how he established the mystic creed. Here, between faith in man, on the one hand; and exclusive faith in God, on the other, lies the disparity between east and west.

In his other attitude, which marks a polar difference and is totally rationalistic, al Ghazzali appears as a wholehearted believer in reason. However, some difference is shown here and there in one book or the other. In al Iqtisad he limits the scope of reason to the knowledge of God, His attributes, and the creation of the world.² In Mi'yar al 'Ilm he maintains that reason is endowed with a native capacity to

1. Ibid.
 2. Iqtisad, p. 86.

know things that are not within the reach of the senses.¹ But in the *Qistas* he loses his sense of proportion and says that he tested and weighed by reason all the divine knowledge including the nature of the next life, and reward and punishment.²

The second aspect of reason is that of the relation of the intellect to value. The question is whether it is of the nature of the intellect to determine the nature of good and evil. He asks what is the meaning of these terms; and in answer, he says the good is "that act which conforms and suits the purpose of the agent," while evil is that which does not.³ Thus the use of these terms is relative. Accordingly, man can never know what is really good by himself or what is really evil, being in no position to fathom the purposes and intentions of God. Furthermore, God himself does not act according to a set pattern of good and evil, there being no such thing. Divine will makes absolute moral decisions limited by no extraneous factor. He insists that "the intellect does not show us what is good and what is evil in acts and utterances, nor in creeds and morals; nor can it differentiate between what leads to happiness or unhappiness... But if we were informed, believed what we were told, and translated that into action as revelation has decreed, we shall be secure."⁴

We are actually told here two things. First that reason does not have anything to do with the nature of the good; and second, that for our purposes we can know the will of God through revelation. *Al Shar'*, the

1. *Mi'yar al 'Ilm*, pp. 48-9.

2. *al Qistas*, p. 83.

3. *Iqtisad*, p. 67.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

Divine Law, becomes the only factor determining what is good and evil for man.

However, God Himself is beyond al Shar' and is by no means limited by its decrees which are His decrees and orders. Hence the coming of the prophets becomes of the utmost importance, since they let us in on the secret of good and evil. "The prophets," he comments, "convey to us what is not within the scope of the human intellect. However, reason alone is able to understand this revelation. Reason is not in a position to prescribe the good deeds or prohibit the bad ones, nor does it discern the nature of morals. It stops short of finding the true path to happiness and unhappiness."¹

The main and significant objection raised by the Mu'tazilites against such reasoning is whether we can be sure that God is not deceiving us. This is not impossible, they say, because He is beyond good and evil and hence may very well deceive us. Deception would not be a vice in His case. Al Ghazzali retorts that deception can only be effected through speech with others. God does not speak with others, He only soliloquises.² Hence it is not reasonable to expect deception or such like from Him. There is, however, another objection to the Ghazzalian definition of good and evil. He conceives of them merely as means, whereas good and evil seem to belong primarily to the order of ends.

Now it would seem that if man cannot determine what is good and

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., p. 49.

evil by himself it becomes hardly possible to say that he exercises choice. The neo-orthodox were quite consistent with themselves when they denied choice to man. They did not, however, verbally admit compulsion. They denied the name compulsion, and thought that by so doing, they could avoid the issue. M. Abduh, who was aware of this subterfuge, refers, in his writings, to those who were fatalists in fact but rejected the name of fatalism.¹ If the intellect of man is not in a position to lead him to make decisions, who and how are these decisions made?

2. The Theory of Acquisition

It will be recalled that the mu'tazilites were much concerned about the problem of justice and responsibility. Their answer was their adherence to free choice as a necessary means for establishing a faith in a just world and a just God. The orthodox Moslems rejected this conclusion and said: we adhere unquestioningly to the literal meaning of God's word. But their heirs, the neo-orthodox, were ready to go all way along with these rationalists and maintain the creed of al Sunna and guard it from attack. They gave themselves the epithet of the people of enquiry and understanding (ahl al Nazar Wal Bahth). They set out to solve their problems on the same Mu'tazilite rationalistic basis. Al Ash'ari gave the first impetus to this trend, and apart from his success and contributions to al Sunna, he got himself involved in futile linguistic niceties

1. Abduh, Risallah, p. 37.

on the problem of free will. The neo-orthodox view of God's nature, their denial of the standards of morality and the principle of the general attachment of the attributes were all channelled in such a way as to make God the absolute and sole Agent. The principle of general attachment of divine attributes formed the strongest metaphysical basis for the belief in predestination and God's absolute direct control of every single thing and activity in the world. Realizing the harshness of this view and its reduction of man to nothingness, al Ash'ari resorted to what came later to be known as the theory of al Kasb for which he finds scriptural basis in the verse: "Good will not burden any soul beyond its power. It shall enjoy the good which it hath acquired".¹

The neo-orthodox claimed that this view reconciled fatalism and choice,² and explained man's moral responsibility too. This theory earned al Ash'ari a great reputation. He became famous among Moslem thinkers as the reconciler and thus would have one raised man by this theory from low level of an automat to the level of a human being.

Let us start by showing what the upholders of this theory meant by acquisition, and then try to point out its general weaknesses. Neo-orthodox metaphysics required that any explanation of activity must be attributed to God as its creator and sole agent at the moment it is done. The fact that man exercises a certain activity which he feels is of his own doing stimulated this discussion on acquisition. The neo-orthodox seem

1. Koran II, 286.
2. Ihia' IV, p. 249.

to have disliked the name of compulsion and said the avowal of compulsion is false and rash,¹ and that of free choice is no less false. For those who believe in compulsion do not differentiate between voluntary and non-voluntary acts.² Those who believe in free will have also committed awful mistakes. First, that they have broken with the beliefs of the good forebears of Islam (al-salaf al-salih).³ Second, they attributed actions to him who knows not what he has done. For the movements which come from men and animals are beyond their understanding as to their number and details.⁴ Third, the claim to free choice constitutes an infringement on the domain of God. For anything which may be done not by Him involves that one of two things would have to follow, either the affirmation of unmindfulness and neglect on His part, or the affirmation of weakness and impotence.⁵ As can be well seen from this, the neo-orthodox did not have to worry about the rejection of free choice, what they wanted was to escape the charges ascribed to the term compulsion. Their only hope lay in the distinction they tried to draw between a voluntary and non-voluntary act.

However, al Ash'ari understands by the term simply that "the acquisitions of men are created by God... because God said: 'When it is God who has created ye and what ye make'."⁶ Acts, he argues, must have a creator and an agent, the real creator and agent of our acts is God.⁷

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1. Iqtisad, p. 38.
 2. Ibid., p. 39, also Luma' pp. 39-40.
 3. Ibid., p. 37.
 4. Ibid., pp. 37-38.
 5. Luma', p. 24.
 6. Sura XXXVII, 94.
 7. Luma', p. 39.

So also a created act must be created somewhere and be acquired by someone. "Similarly, if the acquisition is itself proof of an agent who makes it as it really is, it does not necessarily follow that the agent who makes it as it really is, is also the one who acquires it; nor does it follow that the one who acquires it as it really is, is also the agent who makes it as it really is. For the acquirer acquires a thing because it takes place in virtue of his created power over it."¹

Therefore, man is said to be acquirer when God creates in him a power to act. It must be remembered here that this power is not lasting nor can achieve more than one act. For as we have seen from their metaphysics power is an accident and so is the will; and God, therefore, has to keep recreating these accidents in man from moment to moment. Therefore, the will in him and the power are both created by God and are not of his own choice. Al Ghazzali labours the point and says, "the name of the Creator and inventor was to be applied to him who has created the object by his power. The created power and the object it has created are both God's creation. This is why He is called Creator and Inventor. Because the object created is not created by man's power, therefore, man is denied the name creator, although he is involved in the act of creation. Another name then must be sought for this kind of relationship, and the term acquisition was used."² Man, says al Ghazzali is a locus (mahal) where these things namely, will, power, action, etc. take place.³

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1. Ibid., p. 40.
 2. Iqtisad, p. 59.
 3. Ihia' IV, p. 249.

He is not their author, but someone else is and this is the meaning of his being compelled (*majbur*) i.e. all what takes place in him comes not from him but from someone else.¹ On the other hand he is said to be a maker of choice (*mukhtar*) in the sense that he is the locus where another will has occurred by compulsion.² It might have been noticed here that al Ghazzali's definition of a compelled man and of a maker of choice are just the same, with the qualification that the first is general while the second is more particular. He is a locus in both cases, but when he is called a maker of choice (*mukhtar*) it is because he is a locus of a particular thing, a will created in him. If this point is grasped, there would not be left much difficulty in understanding al Ghazzali's words: "therefore he (i.e. man) is compelled to choose".³ Forced choice is the real definition of acquisition. In al Ghazzali's opinion, and also in the opinion of other neo-orthodox thinkers, this is not the same as compulsion (*jabr*) it is a relation of a peculiar kind. It is neither compulsion nor choice but is an intermediate position. For the act of fire in burning is pure compulsion, the action of God is absolute choice, and man's action is in an intermediate position (*manzila bayn al manzilatayn*).⁴

This intermediate position, says al Ghazzali, is not incompatible with choice nor with compulsion but includes both.⁵ There is a long chain of causes in an act, starting from God and ending up with man. The statement

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ihla' IV, p. 249.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

that man is an agent can be used but in the same sense as God is agent; for God is said to be an agent in the sense of creator and author, while the term is applied to man as a locus where power was created. Power was created after the creation of the will, and the will after knowledge. Thus power was tied up with the will and the will with knowledge, the way a conditioned is related to its condition; then all were tied up to God's power as the caused is tied up with the cause and the created with the creator.¹

Al Ghazzali dwells on the word agent and explains it in order to dismiss all misunderstanding of the term when especially applied to man. He says this ambiguity disappears when one realises the many senses that the term agent has.² It is said, for instance, the prince killed some one, and at the same time it is said that the executioner killed him. Both the prince and the executioner, in a sense, are killers, but while it is applied to the first in one sense, it is applied to the second in another. So is it in the case of God and man when they are called agents. God is agent in the sense of creator and inventor, whereas man is agent in the sense that he is the subject, the locus in which Allah created will and power.³

The Allegory of the pen in al Ihia' illustrates this, very clearly.

"A certain devotee who was on the way to illumination saw a piece of paper with lines written on it. 'why' said the devotee, 'hast thou

1. Ibid., p. 250.
 2. Ihia' IV, p. 250.
 3. Ibid., pp. 250-52.

blakened thy bright face? "It is not fair to take me to task," replied the paper. "I have done nothing. Ask the ink..." Thence, the devotee turned to the ink, then to the pen and then to the hand. "The devotee looked at the hand and said: 'Is it true? Are you so cruel?', 'Do not be angry Sir,' replied the hand' I am a bundle of flesh, bones and blood. Have you ever seen a piece of flesh exerting power?... I am a vehicle used by one called vitality". Then vitality sent him to will. "Don't be in too great a hurry," exclaimed will. His majesty, the mind sent an ambassador called knowledge, who delivered his message to me through reason... the moment an order is delivered, I dare not disobey... so you would not blame me... Reason excused himself by saying he was a lamp only, but knew not who had lighted it. Mind pleaded his innocence by calling himself a mere tabula rasa (lauhun busita). Knowledge maintained that it was simply an inscription on the tabula rasa inscribed after the lamp of reason had been lighted... The devotee was puzzled by the reply... he spoke thus to knowledge: 'I am wondering in the pathy of my enquiry. To whomsoever I go and ask the reason, I am referred to another. Nevertheless, there is pleasure in my quest, for I find that every one gives me a plausible reason. But pardon me, Sir, if I say that your reply, knowledge, fails to satisfy me... Surely you are not trifling with me? "No. I spoke in right earnest... But I see your difficulty. Your means are scanty, your horse is jaded, and your journey is long and dangerous. Give up this enterprise, as I fear you cannot succeed. If, however, you are prepared to run the risk, then listen, your journey extends through three regions.

The first is the terrestrial world, its objects pen, ink, paper, hand, etc... are just what you have seen them to be.* The second is the celestial world, which will begin when you have left me behind. There you will come across dense forests, deep wide rivers and high impossible mountains, and I know not how you should be able to proceed. Between these two worlds there is a third intermediary region called the phenomenal world. You have crossed three stages of it: vitality, will and knowledge. To use a simile: a man who is walking is treading the terrestrial world: if he is sailing in a boat he enters the phenomenal, if he leaves the boat and swims and walks on the waters, he is admitted in to the celestial world. If you do not know how to swim, go back. For the watery region of the celestial world begins now when you can see that the pen inscribing on the table of the heart. If you are not of whom it was said 'O ye of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?' prepare thyself. Then knowledge drew his attention saying: 'there is the rub. Do you not know that the furniture of a palace indicates the status of its lord? Nothing in the world resembles God, therefore, His attributes are also transcendental... The devotee, who listening with rapture, suddenly saw as it were a flash of lightening, there appeared working the pen which writes on hearts, formless. "A thousand blessings on thee, O knowledge, who hast saved me from falling into the abyss of anthropomorphism (Tashbih)."¹ The purpose and details of the allegory are clear and need no further explanation.

1. Ihia' IV, (Extracts Sayed, Nawab, Ali's Trans.) pp. 45-56.

*My underlining

To sum up the whole argument, al Ghazzali gives three recognized senses of the word 'agent' when applied to man. First, in the sense in which man is said to write with his hand. Second in the sense in which he breathes through his lungs; and third, in the sense in which he sinks in water if he steps into it. These three acts are one as far as compulsion is concerned but they differ in other aspects. Thus we call his sinking in water natural, his breathing voluntary and his writing an act of choice. The first two senses are obviously imposed on him compulsorily, says al Ghazzali; but the third has given rise to a lot of misunderstanding.¹

The trouble with this theory is that it is equivalent to compulsion (al jabr), but in order to conceal this fact the neo-orthodox have given it an illusory character suggesting one thing and meaning in fact another. The word 'kasb' in Arabic means acquired by oneself through one's effort. The neo-orthodox have loaded it with another meaning. To them it meant that God has created directly what He willed through man. In the case of al Ash'ari God does not even create a will outside, He acts outright in man by His own will.² What made the neo-orthodox theologians use this term, when they know that what they mean by it is the same thing as compulsion?

Beside their intention to escape fatalist difficulties, it seems that the word conveyed a special meaning to them. It signified that man acquired something from God when God acted through him. It is enough

1. Ihia', IV., p. 248.

2. Luma', p. 23.

gain for man to boast if God acted through him. Their explanation of the theory does not permit one to say that there is anything more to it at all. Therefore, as far as free choice is concerned, the theory makes no difference at all. For the fact is still that man is compelled. There is not even the possibility to ascribe to him an effort which he can do and we can call his. Man does not require any special effort on his part to draw God or give Him reason to act through him. Even, if they granted such an effort as man's, they would not be consistent with themselves. The truth, according to them, is that any effort or movement is directly attached to God's attributes and is His. Things happen through man in all sorts of ways without his knowing how or what. This process of creation is continuous from moment to moment, nevertheless we still find al Ghazzali maintaining that "the exclusive invention of movements by God does not mean that it is not within man's power by way of acquisition. For God created power and its object as well; He invented choice and the one who chooses as well. Therefore, when power is applied to man it is descriptive, but when applied to God it is creative."¹

Here are some of the difficulties which the opponents of the neo-orthodox raised and the way the latter tried to face them. First, the rationalists said the meaning of what you say is not clear. The created power you speak of has no meaning unless it is connected with its objects (al maqdurat), for the notion of power which has no object is absurd, just like that no knowledge without anything to be known.² Power, they argued, related to its objects as one which effects them and brings them

1. Ihia' I, p. 116.
 2. Iqtisad, pp. 39-40.

to be, a relation of cause to effect.¹ To this al Ghazzali retorts: You have no right to raise this objection because you also suppose a power before its effect.²

Second, they say the power you speak of is equivalent to impotence.³ Al Ghazzali replies, if what you mean is that it is equivalent to a compulsory non-voluntary act, then you are wrong, but if you mean that its object was not effected by it, this is true.⁴ He objects though to the name given, impotence and says it is wrong unless it is used in comparison with God's power.⁵

Third, they argued that if God is the sole agent, then He has created injustice and is to be called unjust.⁶ The answer is that God created injustice not for Himself but for others and thus is not to be called unjust.⁷ Al Ghazzali replies, that the term unjust is not to be applied to Him, for terms like this are relative and good only for our purposes.

Fourth, they charged al Ghazzali and his school, of having affirmed two powers or agents over one and the same thing. Al Ghazzali does not deny this, he says:

"The truth is to confirm both powers in doing one and the same thing... there remains the difficulty arising from the feeling that the collaboration of two powers in one act is not very likely to happen.

1. Ibid., p. 40.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 40.
5. Ibid., pp. 40-41.
6. Iuma', p. 44.
7. Ibid.

This is true only if the application of both powers was in one and the same manner, but once it is explained that each of the two powers is related to the act in a different way the uncertainty disappears."¹

Why did he assign two agents to one and the same act? On the one hand, he wanted to recognise that man can be something by himself without exposing the doctrine of predestination to any hidden or apparent danger. Secondly, he felt that in a scheme of predestination, he has got to explain the difference between voluntary and involuntary acts. We have adopted this principle, he says, because we believe that there is a difference between the voluntary and involuntary acts of man.²

Here, I shall try to expose some of the weaknesses in al Ghazzali's attempt to distinguish between the two acts. It will be recalled that the point which the neo-orthodox claimed distinguishes them from fatalists (mujbira) was the distinction they make between voluntary and non-voluntary acts. He says there exists a difference between God's moving a hand of one of his subjects, and His making it tremble. He also says that when a man moves, God creates in him at that moment both the motion and the power to move.³ Man's act is potentially possible, but without God's interfering power, it is impossible. God is portrayed, here, as an efficient cause; man's action as a material cause; both in the strict Aristolian sense.

The role of man is entirely passive, he is a material cause, a

1. Iqtisad, pp. 38-39.

2. Ibid., p. 39.

3. Ibid., p. 39.

locus. This passivity of man's is his whole capital for the claim of freedom. Man's acts are different from involuntary acts, he argues, "by reason of man's capacity to act", and this "distinguishes his acts from those of trembling." Our claim to freedom, in Abu Hamid's opinion, is simply that God creates in us a power or a will at the moment he wants us to act whereas in an involuntary act God creates thought in us without creating a power in us.

This supposed distinction between voluntary and involuntary acts in order to prove some kind of choice to man, does not, in fact, stand analysis. By voluntary act, we usually mean a deliberate act thought of and willed by man to be done or to be left at will. First, I shall try to point out that al Ghazzali's definition does not correspond nor approaches in meaning this broad definition of a voluntary act, as most people understand it. Second, I want to show that al Ghazzali's definition of a voluntary act amounts exactly to an involuntary one.

As we have seen the point which distinguishes a voluntary act from an involuntary one is that God in the first case creates in us a power to act, while in an involuntary act He does not create in us this power but the act directly. In order to have any meaning, the power He creates in us must be ours, that is within our control. But al Ghazzali does not admit this at all. The power God creates in us is to be used by man as God meant it to be used¹. Man cannot use it differently nor

1. Ihia' IV, p. 248 also Iqtisad.

refrain from acting through it. He cannot act through it, nor do the opposite of what it was meant for. Besides, it does not last for two moments of time and God keeps recreating it in us. Then, if it is created by God at the moment He wanted man to act and if He created the power for the action He wanted, not any other, then man has no choice but be forced to act the way he was meant to act. In fact he is not acting but God is acting through him. This becomes equivalent to al Ghazzali's definition of non-voluntary act in three ways. First, that the power that is created for an act to be done by it, does not last but is recreated every moment, therefore, there can be no lapse of time between the power created and the act and therefore they are created together. This is just like saying he created the action outright the way He does when He creates involuntary acts.

Secondly, man cannot use this power which is created in him to do the act or to do its opposite, or even, refrain from doing it. This becomes equivalent to compulsory non-voluntary acts which one has no choice or capacity to control.

Thirdly, to say that this power, which amounts just to a potentiality or liability to be acted upon, is the differentia between the two acts is absurd. For the mere fact that the locus, where the non-voluntary act was created by God, did act, shows that it has a potentiality, or can be acted upon. For example, if the hand through which a non-voluntary act passed like trembling, was not liable to motion it would not have trembled.

These three points show that the difference drawn by the neo-orthodox Mutakallims between non-voluntary and voluntary acts is not genuine, and hence an acquired act and a compulsory one are in fact one the same thing.

There is another difficulty involved in the theory of acquisition. By laying down the principle of general attachment of divine attributes to their objects, everything in the world becomes the direct object of one or other of these attributes. But these attributes stand in equal relation to their objects.¹ Therefore, an acquired act, as well as an act of compulsion stand from divine attributes in equal relation, namely, being directly effected by them.

Discussing the theory of acquisition, Macdonald says it "is their device to explain away human consciousness of free choice. It is not, I think, in any sense an attempt to reconcile predestination and man's moral responsibility for his (supposed acts), the Asharite theologians felt no such ethical problem. He (i.e. Allah) creates in the supposed actor an accepting, as his own, of his supposed acts".² This explanation of Macdonald's quite plausible is especially that we do not know, in fact, that we are compelled to do things, and that it is God who possesses this knowledge. Besides, Al Ashari himself says that to differentiate between a voluntary and an involuntary act, is a matter of feeling that they are different.

1. Iqtisad, p. 39.

2. The Moslem World, Vol. 18, pp. 14-15.

Now, we are in a position to confirm that the theory of acquisition did not reconcile free choice and compulsion. The whole problem raised may be reduced to a linguistic fallacy.

Aside from the failure of the Ash'ari and al Ghazzali to develop a conciliatory position between compulsion and free will, there has been other attempts at this made by a leading neo-orthodox theologian who came after al Ash'ari but before al Ghazzali.

Al Baqilani drew a line of his own on the issue of choice. He hit the crux of the matter by distinguishing between creation and decision. He said that man does not create his acts but rather makes his own decisions. A decision must not be confused with an act of creation. This is, in fact all what the neo-orthodox want. Through this differentiation between the word 'to create' and 'to choose', al Baqilani distinguished himself from all Moslem thinkers. He writes "that the acquisitions of men take place in accordance with their intention and decision (hasab al qasd minhum) and this does not prove that the acquired act is their creation or invention".¹ Creation in the sense of giving being, as well as accepting or leaving the total responsibility for that being is the idea which al Baqilani fights. He writes "it is not impossible that one of us acts according to his end without that act being of his own creation, ex nihilo."² "That is what happens also with sails, for the movement and direction of sailing ships from left to right takes place according

1. *Insaf*, p. 136.

2. *Ibid.*

to what the sailor's end is. But we do not say that the sailor created the movement of sails in itself..."¹ What is meant is that God creates the general, motion, growth, etc. and we dispense with this in our own way and according to our own ends. He understands by decision the making use of created power which God creates. However, had al Baqilani given these ideas more force, or made them more definite and clear, he would have initiated an important trend in orthodox thought.

1. Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

THE DAWN OF MODERNISM

1. Al Ghazzali's Mysticism and al Tawakkul

Eversince the persecution of the mu'tazilites, mysticism in its major aspects, was taking the upper hand. New inspiring and forceful ideas were drawing to an end. The life and energy that were left, turned in a closed circuit the same old story recurred repeatedly until it became meaningless and ineffective. The stage of dynamism and religious emotions which characterised the early period of Islam was coming to an end; a new and different one was to take its place.

In the period of decline the concept of predestination took a new form, a transitional one. From being a rational concept held up in argumentation by the philosophers and theologians, it became a practical formula presented to the common people. As a concept it sought to become part of a system of thought, as a formula it aimed at becoming a way of life. Predestination henceforth took the form of Tawakkul, or total resignation to God. The concept of al Tawakkul was discussed at length in al Ghazzali's major work *al Ihia'*, in which he states that the concept of Tawakkul stems essentially from the belief in the unity of God. He writes, "our purpose is to point out the way of unitarianism; for God, in reality, is the Sole Agent. He is the awe-inspiring and desired one;

on Him we lean and on Him we depend."¹ As has been previously shown there are four kinds or ways of conceiving divine unity, in al Ghazzali's opinion. First, there is the stage of verbal avowal of unity without full awareness of it. Second there is the stage of belief which accompanies the verbal avowal. Third, there is the stage of the Elect (al Muqarrabun) who see by intuition that there is no agent save God alone. Fourth, is the stage of the Truthful (al Siddiqun) who see only the one and all as one.²

The concept of al Tawakkul is based on the third stage.³ There occurs a vision to the Mutawakkil which shows him God as the sole agent, that everything comes from and through Him, creation, property, gifts, prosperity, poverty, everything that has existence is His invention and making.⁴ We must not profit another agent in conjunction with Him in acting for this would lead to association. When one realises all this, al Ghazzali adds, one would cease to seek anyone but God. For He is the one to be feared, sought after and depended on. Only He can be said to be, all other things are dependent on Him.⁵ The account given here shows that al Tawakkul is based on the metaphysical definition of God. In the former chapters, I dealt with this definition, and pointed out that the despotic character of Allah, as the neo-orthodox Moslems conceived Him, left no room for anything else. If this is true ~~of~~ predestination then would not be just an idea picked up at random but an integral part of the

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1. Al Ihia' IV, p. 250.
 2. Ihia' IV, p. 240.
 3. Ibid., p. 241.
 4. Ibid., p. 242.
 5. Ihia IV, p. 242.

orthodox view of God. Choice becomes a grave sin and likewise dependence on nature.¹ It is only by rulling out thoice and dependence on nature, says al Ghazzali, that the mystery of the unity of God can be comprehended.²

Al Ghazzali defines al Tawakkul as the whole-hearted reliance on Allah.³ In another place he puts it in a more specific manner saying: "the meaning of Tawakkul is reliance on the hidden causes rather than the apparent ones, with the contentment of the heart in the Cause of causes, rather than the cause ^{if} self."⁴ According to al Ghazzali there are three stages or levels of Tawakkul. In the first stage one puts his confidence in God. He depends on the Lord and His providence.⁵ In this stage it is permissible for the Mutawakkil to do some work in order to gain his living, provided it is in accordance with the rules of true acquisition as explained in Sufi rules, and provided he is fully aware that in all ~~that~~ he does it is God who is acting through him.⁶

In the second stage one ~~that~~ becomes as dependent on God as a babe is dependent on his mother. It is higher than the first in the scale of dependence and differs from it in that instead of looking on al Tawakkul itself, al Mutawakkil seeks God directly.⁷ The Mutawakkil in this stage refrains from any attempt to acquire his living and depends totally on hidden causes.⁸

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1. Ibid.
 2. Ibid., pp. 242, 257.
 3. Ibid., p. 253.
 4. Ibid., p. 260.
 5. Ibid., p. 255.
 6. Ibid. IV., p. 261.
 7. Ibid., p. 255.
 8. Ibid., p. 261.

In the third and highest stage, the Mutawakkil becomes in the grip of God, like a dead thing devoid of consciousness except to the extent that he envisages divine power which is dominating him.¹ The certitude of his conviction, in this stage, becomes stronger and he fully realises that he is only a locus where movement, power, will, and knowledge are made to occur.² It differs from the previous stage in that in it, the Mutawakkil, does not need to seek God nor to beg Him for anything, due to the fact that in this stage he knows that God is guiding him.³ It is the stage of the Elect (al Khawas).⁴ In this stage, the Mutawakkil roams around in the wilderness, his only capital is God's Providence.⁵ He may find a plant here and there to eat, or God may strengthen him to stand hunger, or may be to be content in death.⁶ However, al Ghazzali believes that the Mutawakkil can achieve this highest stage only in rare occasions.⁷

To sum up, in the second and third stages all effort is ruled out. In the first, some effort and work is allowed, but is confined to the narrowest possible limits. Al Ghazzali himself finds these stages the course of spiritual conflict; for in the days of his mystic retirement he complains of the pressure of family duties which distracted him from his mystic ecstasies.⁸ His wife and children became constant reminders of worldly duties and paternal responsibilities.

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1. Ibid., p. 255.
 2. Ibid., p. 255.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid., p. 261.
 5. Ibid.
 6. Ibid.
 7. Ibid., p. 225.
 8. Munqith, p. 92.

The concept of al Tawakkul is well-knit in al Ghazzali's Sufi scheme, and it needs a thorough study of this scheme to bring about its full elucidation. Being outside the scope of this discussion, the study of al Ghazzali's mysticism will be left out, except for the following few general remarks. First, it can be said that he brought about the reconciliation of Sufism and orthodox Islam. This enfolding of Sufism in the orthodox creed made of al Tawakkul a general orthodox attitude. In the second place, one finds that what usually goes by the name of al Ghazzali's Sufism is simple asceticism of the Christian and early Islamic types. He denies the three main concepts of Sufism, namely attainment (wusul), union (ittihad), and inherence (hulul). All these three concepts says al Ghazzali are erroneous.¹ "The complete mystic way", says he, "includes both intellectual belief and practical activity, the latter consists in overcoming the obstacles in the self and extirpating its base characteristics and vices so that the soul may attain freedom from what is not God."² Mysticism with its stress on al Tawakkul turned out to be a dominant force in later Islamic thought, as a result of al Ghazzali's influence. He succeeded in both systematising the doctrine and giving it a popular form.

It is true that the masses were not all involved in the abstract intellectual strife of the Mutakallims, but due to the dominating influence of al Ghazzali and his simple and lucid style, he was able to

1. Ibid. (Watt's tr.) p. 61.

2. Ibid.

bring this strife nearer to the common man.

There are two remarks pertaining to method, rather than subject matter that should be made before starting to determine how far the ideas of such a great figure affected the course of Islamic history. First, one must be able to establish by historical evidence how far these ideas were within the reach of the common people. Second, one must be able to prove that abstract ideas and theological differences do really influence and determine the course of history.

The period of the controversy of the sects (al firaq) was not the period when religious ideas and faith had their greatest effect on the course of history and the lives of the people. The fruits of Islam were reaped in its early days when it had such an emotional impact upon the people. When this vital emotional force of early Islam waned it took the form of a highly abstract intellectual movement. No judgement can be passed now on al Ghazzali's influence and the neo-orthodox influence, as a whole, on the course of Islamic history until the two above mentioned suggested studies are made. These two questions form a subject of another separate study and, therefore, will not be attempted here.

However, two general remarks on this issue can be safely made. First, there is a general tendency among the orthodox groups to suppress every thing human and profane, in favor of the sacred and eternal. Freedom, the basis of human value is denied by these theologians and replaced by an entirely submissive picture of man. Even the authority of the intellect was subject to mistrust. The mystics did not favor the study of

physical science and al Ghazzali actually went as far as to discourage the study of mathematics on the ground that it opens the door wide to heresy.¹

Unfortunately there has not been in Islam attempts (corresponding to the Renaissance or the Reformation in Europe) to save Islam from ever turning round in a circle of detached theological concern. One nevertheless, does not fail to find such great and sensitive souls like Omar al Khayyam who was a contemporary of al Ghazzali.

Al Khayyam laid down the seeds of a humanistic revolution in Islam, corresponding in a sense to the Romantic movement in Europe. He rebelled against the futile disputes of the theologians and philosophers alike, denouncing their artificial account of the human condition. He thinks that through abstraction life becomes unreal and empty. He feels that the changing and running stream of life is stronger than speculation. He says: "The Grape that can with Logic absolute

The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects confute."²

In place of these futile disputes, he called for a fuller absorption and realisation of life itself, and stood for the immediate worldly experiences which are tabooed by the theologians and philosophers. He stood for life and emotion as opposed to reason. The 'wine' which he keeps mentioning is just a symbol for a rich emotional worldly life. Although there are some people who are under the impression that he was a fatalist, such a

1. Munqidh, p. 33.

2. Fitzgerald, E., The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, verse, XLIII.

judgment could not be taken at its face value. When he speaks of al qadar, he sounds more like a cynic, than like a credulous believer. On the contrary, his call appeals to man to seek release from his fetters and to try to live his life fully. Besides, several of his verses demonstrate that by exercising his full powers, man would be obeying the qadar. For by exercising all one's powers, one would be obeying God who created these powers for the purpose of free exercise.

We can find two other parallels between him and the European romanticists. First, he has laid special emphasis on the disorderliness of the world, and secondly his approach to sin and evil was one of natural understanding rather than of condemnation. Both these tendencies leave man free to his spontaneous nature.

However, this great and promising creative mind was never fully appreciated by Moslems; and his significance, as far as they were concerned, died with him. It is natural that in an age of decay Tawakkul and mysticism should take the upper hand. The Ghazzalian form of mysticism survived in a degenerate form throughout the ages of decay until the modern era, when it was taken up by Muhammed Abduh.

The second remark I wish to make concerning the general effect of al Ghazzali on the course of Islamic history is that an overemphasis and concern in theological matters tends to obstruct and divert the way of the sciences upon which progress depends. Besides, the attitude of al Tawakkul which al Ghazzali advocated goes contrary to the spirit of historic achievements. It could be said here that al Ghazzali is primarily

responsible for spreading these ideas of tawakkul in Islam and among the common Moslems. This is due to his highly esteemed position and his extremely influential character. He simplified these ideas through the clarity of his thought, the lucidity of his writings and the intense emotions of his belief. Macdonald says that he brought about the final triumph of the Ash'arite movement in the East.¹

X 2. Muhammad Abduh

Al Ghazzali's influence reached Abduh (1849-1905) who became acquainted with al Ghazzali's mysticism through the degenerate versions which survived to his day. ~~But Abduh was a keen and brilliant student who was ready to go his own way early in life.~~ The Sheikh of al Ashar was told once that Abduh was reviving the mu'tazilites teachings. To his threats Abduh answered, "If I give up blind acceptance of Asharite doctrine, why should I take up blind acceptance of the mu'tazilites? Therefore, I am giving up blind acceptance of both and judge according to the proof presented."² This event shows clearly that Abduh was determined early in life to have his own way of conceiving Islam.

~~In this essay we will attempt to give a summary of Abduh's theory of choice, together with the comprehensive system of thought which underlies it.~~ Abduh had to face new and serious difficulties which did not exist in the early days of Islam. The world in which Abduh lived was

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1. Macdonald, Development, p. 207.
 2. Adams, Islam and Modernism, pp. 42-43.

different in spirit and circumstances. It was an age where religion was forced to relinquish leadership in worldly affairs under the pressure of new dynamic factors. These factors were the new forces of scientific achievements, enlightened ideas and power politics. Henceforth, Abduh's task which was almost imposed on him by these new circumstances was to struggle for adjusting Islam to the present exigencies, and to give it a reason for survival. In other words, he had to break up the vicious circle within which Islam was turning. Islam found in Abduh a reformer and a guide in the dark labyrinth of religious decadence and confusion. The way was open to the new and forceful ideas, to the young generation, to accept either, dynamic and scientific civilisation leaving religion alone, or turn its back on this new civilisation and adhere unquestioningly to the letter of religion. Abduh's life and thought were devoted to bring about a fusion of the two tendencies.]

~~The student of Islam must be warned against taking Abduh in isolation from his Moslem milieu and evaluating him as a man of thought of the 19th century as he might take, for instance Spenser.~~ [Abduh's life and thought show that he was a reformer of Islam mainly concerned with improving the condition of Moslems. He was not an amateur theorist seeking ideas for their own sake or just to quench an intellectual curiosity. He had the deep rooted concern about the life and progress of the Moslems, and in his opinion, any philosophic attempt has to take into consideration the establishment of a Moslem ideology and way of life. Any endeavor of this nature needs to take in the new facts about life in the modern world,

together with maintaining the principles of orthodox Islam. The fact that Abduh was fully aware of this need and could answer it, constitutes his major significance to modern Islam. Any attempt which looks upon Islam from the standpoint of modern levels of thought, and measures it against these levels, commits a historical error. In the light of these facts we find that it is impossible to consider Abduh among the contemporary free thinkers of the world beyond his limited social milieu. ~~Abduh was a corner stone and his endeavor waits to be developed by some one else, for he had never had the time to expound and develop these principles which he laid down. He himself felt this need and wrote in al Risala: "I am giving a summary in this section, following the example of the Kuran in committing to men of discernment the matter of supplying the details."¹ This is the reason why, for instance, Horten feels rather disappointed at Abduh's contribution. He writes, "Fate has not afforded us... the spectacle of the rise in Islam at this period of the penetration of modern culture, of an outstanding thinker such as Ibn Sina who should wrestle with the new problems of cultures, overcome the old in its moribund constituents, develop it further in its good and solid fundamentals, and clearly recognise and try to solve at least the chief problems of modern knowledge of the world."² I hope to show in the present chapter that Abduh has penetrated into the sources of the crisis of Islam and grasped its implications.~~

1. Risala, p. 168 (Michel Trans.)
 2. Adams, 105.

[In his early days, Abduh fell under the spell of mysticism. His disciple, Mustapha Abd al Razeq, says that his master entered the Azhar in 1282 A.H. as a mystic,¹ and that he was the protege of his Sufi Uncle. In al Manar, Muhammad Rashid Rida tells us that Abduh used to lose his senses in mystic ecstasy and become totally absorbed in a world of spiritual contemplation.² However, his mysticism, which did not last for long, was of a moderate nature and like al Ghazzali's was radically at variance with the brand of mysticism which believed in fusion (hulul).³

Soon afterwards, he quitted Sufism as a result of meeting al Afghani. This event marks the turning point in Abduh's life. Al Afghani exposed him to the current ideas of the modern world. He soon became convinced that mysticism is responsible for the present backwardness of Islam.] ~~In the famous controversy with Hanoteaux, he says, I do not deny the fact that Time (al Zaman) has turned its back upon Islam and visited on it degenerate Sufis belonging to centuries past. They spread among Moslems, he adds, fake ideas which bear no relationship to their religion, thinking it to be the true Moslem creed, and therefore, it gave rise to much apathy and backwardness resulting from ignorance of the right faith of Islam.~~⁴

~~Hanoteaux was an ex-French minister of Foreign Affairs and wrote an article in the 'Journal Parisien'. In this article, which was trans-~~

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1. Abd al Razeq, Muhammad Abduh, (Dar al Ma'aref, 1945), p. 34.
 2. Ibid., p. 33.
 3. Rida, Tarikh, Vol. I, pp. 928-29.
 4. Reply to Hanoteaux, pp. 32-33.

lated in an Arabic paper, al Mul'ayed, in April 1900, Hanoteaux attacked Islam as a religion which stands in the way of the progress due to its tenets of predestination and anthropomorphism. These tenets, argues Hanoteaux, degrade man to the level of animals.¹ In his reply Abduh rejects the charge and attributes belief in predestination to western civilisation in general and Christianity in particular and denies the principle of predestination to be of Islamic origin.² There were, however, a small group of Moslems who believed in compulsion, (al jabr),³ says Abduh, but these were not taken seriously by anyone nor did their creed last for long as it was the case in Christianity.⁴ Besides, those who introduced predestination in Islam were Arians, not Semites⁵ and thus the tenet of predestination has come to Islam from the Arians. Even Greek philosophy has known fatalism,⁶ says Abduh.

Contrary to these tendencies the Koran denounces and denies compulsion (al jabr).⁷ It confirms the belief in acquisition and choice in about sixty-four verses.⁸ Other verses which appear to be at variance with these have been revealed in order to point out the effect of God's power in forming the ethical traits of peoples and nations.⁹ No man has a choice concerning the traits which he acquires from the group, or nation.

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1. Ibid., pp. 29.
 2. Ibid., pp. 29-30.
 3. Ibid., p. 32.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Ibid., p. 33.
 6. Ibid., p. 30.
 7. Ibid.
 8. Ibid.
 9. Ibid., p. 31.

he belongs to.¹

Besides, the life and ideas of the Prophet are a sufficient evidence of the belief in choice.² His ceaseless and tireless struggle shows that he never depended on others or on mysterious causes to achieve what he wanted. The companions of the Prophet and their successors says Abduh, also believed and confirmed the Prophet's belief in Choice and reason.³ The spread of Islam at their hands, gives a conclusive evidence that they did not believe in resignation and dependence as Hanoteaux declares.⁴

[Abduh represents the breakdown of the line of thought which was laid down by al Ghazzali, rather than the continuation of it.] While speaking about the philosophers of Islam, Abduh says with a conscious feeling of disappointment that "the defenders of the faith rose up against them. Al Ghazzali, and his disciples, came and seized everything in the books of the philosophers that had to do with doctrines about God and general matters connected with them... everything the dogmatic theologians conceived of as having any bearing on the bases of religion, and they subjected it all to bitter criticism... As a result, their position of influence was lost: the commonalty cast them aside, and the leading men paid no attention to them. Thus time brought to nought what the world of Islam had been expecting from their efforts."⁵ It may be gathered from the foregoing account that [Abduh believes that al Ghazzali and those who

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1. Ibid.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Risala (Michel Trans.) pp. 16-17.

followed his line of thinking were responsible for the static state of Islam. Abduh's attempt is the first important reaction against narrow orthodoxy of the past. He represents the resurrection of the human in Islam.

The major source for Abduh's theological ideas on free choice is his brief work called *Risalat al Tauhid*, which constitutes a series of lectures delivered in Beirut at the Sultaniyyah School in 1503 A.H. when Abduh was exiled from Egypt. These lectures, or better call them notes on theology are brief and concise rather than developed in detail. A considerable part of these ideas and arguments are the same as those of Jamal ul Duin's so that some of them appear in the *Risala*, almost exactly as they appear in Jamal Ul Dine's Reply to the Fatalists (*al Rad 'ala al Dahriyin*) which was translated from Persian by Abduh himself. But as Abduh's philosophy is more developed and comprises Jamal ul Dine's thought as well in it, Abduh will be taken in this discussion as the major protagonist of these ideas.]

A. Man and Reason. According to Abduh man is a knowing and intelligent being, endowed with the faculties necessary for enabling him to pursue what is best for himself. Islam, he maintains is a rational religion consequently, is unique among the religions of the world.¹ The Koran has raised reason to the first rank when it left to it "the final

1. *Risala*, pp. 5-6, 14.

decision regarding the question of man's happiness, the ultimate discovery of truth, and what is good and evil."¹ Besides, the Koran, he continues, has ordered us to use our reason to examine things and has forbidden us from submitting to authority.² Regardless of these exhortations, says Abduh, there are few Moslems in our day, who try to know in order to believe, although most of them believe in order to know.³ Then he adds "this is why I raised my voice to free the mind from the too heavy fetters of authority (al-taqlid)."⁴

Abduh believes that Islam has essentially two messages; one is an appeal to all men to believe in God and His unity; the other is to believe in the message of Muhammed. Concerning the first, the Kor'an summons us to depend on "the human intellect, and direct it to a consideration of the universe, to the employment of rational analogy, to the appeal to the order and arrangement of the universe, and to the succession of causes and effects, in order to arrive thereby, at the belief that the universe has one Maker, that He necessarily exists, is wise, omniscient, and omnipotent. The intellect shows also that He is one, one in the sense that He corresponds to the unity of the order observed in things. Thus the Koran has set free the human intellect to follow the course of nature without restriction; and roused it to the consideration of creation and the various signs of God's power and goodness in nature, in order that by

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1. Ibid., (Michel Trans.) p. 88.
 2. Ibid., (Ar.) p. 15.
 3. Ibid., p. 40.
 4. Abduh, Islam and Christianity, p. 48.

reflection upon them, it may attain the knowledge of God."¹ He then adds ~~in the Risala that "it is unanimously confirmed by Moslems, except those of them who have no faith in their religion or mind, that there are religious questions which could only be known through reason. These questions are the knowledge of God's existence, His ability to send prophets... and His will to select them from among others, also the belief in the Message. They also agreed that although Revelation may affirm things beyond our comprehension, it does not submit what is rationally impossible."~~²

The definition of God's unity given by Abduh here is extremely significant and original. It amounts to what may be called the unity of pattern. He says that this unity is similar to the unity found in things,³ but the only unity found in things is the unity of order, and that is how Abduh's words should be understood. He says that "reflection upon the created world directs us of necessity, to worldly benefits and lights up a path for the soul to the knowledge of the One of whom these benefits are the evidences and whose light is clearly manifest in them."⁴ Then he adds that the Koran "summons to a consideration of the signs of God in nature."⁵ God, being perfect must manifest highest existing order. Therefore, by studying the order and perfection in things, we would be striving after the knowledge of God.

It is Abduh's belief that God and His attributes could be known

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1. Risala, p. 6.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Passim.
 4. Risala, (Michel's Tr.), p. 55.
 5. Islam and Christianity, p. 50.

by the intellect without the help of revelation. But, certain attributes are made known to us, not by reason, but by the divine law, because they are inaccessible to reason.¹ Besides, reason while it can know the necessary order of things, cannot penetrate to the underlying realities of these things.² By placing the reality of things beyond the law which binds it, and beyond its appearance, Abduh comes close to the Kantian outlook. These are the limits he finds necessary to impose on reason: "If we properly appreciate the human intellect, we find its utmost reach is to know the accidents of existing things which fall within our consciousness, be it sensation, feeling or reasoning. Having known these accidents, we proceed to infer something about their origin and universal type, plus the comprehension of the laws of their development. But the knowledge of inner true reality underlying them is beyond the reach of the intellect."³ Abduh extends his rule of accidents and realities to the divine realm. He says that we can know God and His attributes, but not the essence of God (al-dhat).⁴

In general, this is the position of Abduh on the question of the intellect and its independent search after truth, which, if compared with modern progress on the subject is very elementary and inadequate. However, it has its value in relation to the development of Islamic thought.

In the question of morals, the intellect is as competent as it is

1. Risala, p. 27.
2. Ibid., pp. 30, 31.
3. Ibid., pp. 29-30.
4. Ibid., p. 30.

in epistemology. The disjunction in al Ghazzali's philosophy concerning the role of the intellect in epistemology, and its role in ethics does not exist in Abduh's philosophy. The ability of the mind to distinguish what is morally good and what is bad is the basis of the distinction between vice and virtue.¹ The happiness and unhappiness of man depend on this native ability to draw the line of demarcation between the two.² This is also the basis of cultural emergence and decay, and the rise and fall of nations.³

The statement given here serves to exhibit the humanistic tendency in Abduh's thinking, and what is more, the application of religious thought to the course of history and the nature of progress. In this way, he detached religious thinking from mere abstract thought and verbosity. Moral consciousness and freedom become the basis of all civilisation.

Values are ideas which exist independently of you and me.⁴ He says, "this is self-evident and is not open to question, either theologically or philosophically. For acts of choice are either good or bad, and in themselves. They also may be good or bad as regards their consequences for the individual person, or the social group. But our senses and intellect are capable of distinguishing a good choice from a bad one, a priori without the aid of revealed truth (al sam')".⁵ It may be gathered from this that Abduh does not seem to be aware of the difficulties involved

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1. Ibid., pp. 44-45.
 2. Ibid., p. 45.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Ibid., p. 45.

in maintaining both, an end and act theory in ethics. However, the significant point in the foregoing account is Abduh's intention to establish a philosophy which puts man in possession of his faculties to use them and depend on them in his search for truth. Values, according to him, have meaning in themselves attainable by reason independently, without the help of divine revelation. The belief in the meaning of values and man's capacity to attain them is the first fundamental prerequisite of the belief in choice. This way of looking on values is reminiscent of the mu'tazilites' outlook on this problem. Good and evil, in the view of both the mu'tazilites and Abduh's, are not to be conceived in terms of what al Shar' prescribes. On the contrary, they both think that al Shar' prescribes what reason recommends as good in itself. "Al Shar' has brought us" Abduh says, "an elucidation of the facts (al waqi'), and has not waited nor determined the nature of the good by virtue of prescribing it. The scriptures prove this to be true."¹ These were the preliminary ideas which Abduh felt should be defined before a clear statement on free choice could be made. First, he showed that man is endowed with a reason which enables him to make independent decision; and second that good has a definite meaning in itself. The affirmation of these two ideas is the result of Abduh's realisation that any attempt to make Islam occupy its place in modern civilisation and contribute to it must first recognise man and raise him from the old, servile and lowly condition in which he

1. Ibid., p. 51.

was placed by traditional orthodox theology. Abduh wished to reform Islam and purge it from harmful ideas and attitudes that have been allowed to creep into it. In his attempt to achieve this end Abduh was able to argue his points with a sense of understanding the thought of his time. Most of his arguments are new in Islamic thinking but still do not represent a radical diversion from al Sunna. X

[B. Free Choice. After defining the framework of his thinking Abduh proceeds to defend human freedom and show that it is one of God's greatest endowments to man.

His first argument is an appeal to common sense. He argues that just as sane people know by common sense that they exist, so also they know that they are the authors of their own deeds.¹ Man deliberates, weighs his action and then wills it.² He is responsible for both his choice and its realisation.³ Any attempt to deny this fact is tantamount to the denial of existence; it is incompatible with the first postulates of human reason.⁴ Man is conscious of both his freedom and the freedom of others.] ~~This consciousness, seems to Abduh sufficient to dismiss every statement to the contrary as irrational.~~⁵ ~~He does not bother, nor feels prompted to explain this consciousness of free choice like the neo-orthodox who resorted to highly sophisticated theological arguments in order to bar man from the possibility of exercising his freedom.~~

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1. Ibid., p. 36.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Ibid.

Abduh, it appears, was familiar with these arguments of the neo-orthodox, although one can hardly produce any decisive evidence in favor of this statement. However, he has given us certain theological arguments which serve as counter-arguments to the neo-orthodox. These arguments constitute a process of breaking down established ideas and building up a new set of ideas in their stead.

1. God's unity and free choice. Here he gives four points to support his position. It was the habit of the neo-orthodox to attack all those who dared to profess belief in free will, calling them associatonists (mushrikun). Faced with this situation, Abduh had to reconcile man's free will and Divine Unity. The crux of the matter, he felt, was the use of the word 'create' (khalafa). In order to avoid the difficulty, he refrains from applying it to man's performance of his actions and substitutes the term 'acquisition',¹ which he uses in quite a different sense from that of the neo-orthodox. For whereas the neo-orthodox meant by the term that man is the locus of action, Abduh means by the term that man obtains his own actions by his own will and his own effort.²

In the second place Abduh argues that one may speak of God's power, in a sense different from the neo-orthodox sense. He says that Islam ascribes to God's power what is beyond the cosmic causes (al asbab al kawniya) and man's power.³ It also affirms two principles of extreme importance. First, that man acquires, i.e. chooses what is best for

1. Ibid., pp. 38, 39, 40.

2. Ibid., p. 38.

3. Ibid.

himself; and second, it recognizes God's power as the ultimate principle of all being.¹ It is the principle or final resort (marja') of all existence.² This feeling that every thing depends on God fills man with awe, says Abduh, but wise men know that they are in complete possession and control of what God has given them to do with it what they choose.³ God can stand between the subject and what he can do, can stop him or promote what he chooses, but what is within the power of man, God leaves to him.⁴ God's intervention is the exception, rather than the rule. Abduh, however, is not much concerned with the details of this divine intervention, and says we need not bother about it nor try to explain it because it is beyond our knowledge, and we must proceed on the basis of faith in our freedom.⁵ Underlying all this explanation is the keen intention of Abduh to divert men's minds from these futile problems and direct them to more practical and useful ones.

Thirdly, he argues that belief in the oneness of God does not involve, more than the recognition that God has created us, and entrusted our created capacities with power to do what we deem good and right.⁶ That is to say while we are in this world, we are our own masters. Our acts could be attributed to God only in the sense that He has in the last analysis created our will, our capacity and all what we are; but once we take possession of them they come within our control. We have

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1. Ibid.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid., p. 37.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Ibid.
 6. Risala, p. 39.

seen previously how the Asharites, in order to counteract this thesis, adopted the atomistic theory which affirms the continuous creation by God of all our actions moment by moment.

Fourthly, he tries to clarify the term 'association' (ishrak), in order to stop people from applying it freely to each other. Acquisition, he states, does not lead to association.¹ If there are certain people who claim this to be the case, it is only because they miss the meaning of the term 'association' as it is used in the Book and al-Sunna.² He defines association, as "the belief that there are powers other than God's which have an effect on the faculties conferred on man by the Creator, as well as things which have powers over what is placed beyond man's reach".³ That is, association is the recognition of powers other than both God and man. It is a definition which essentially retains the concept of man's control over his created powers freely; and a defence against the popular version of al qadar, which in one way or the other, admits the motion of invisible powers influencing the actions of man.

The Holy Law of Islam, (Al Sharia' al Islamiyya) has been revealed, he says, in order to abolish such pagan concepts.⁴ Islam has made clear two main concepts, in Abduh's opinion; first that man acquires, by his own will, his own acts which lead to happiness. The second, is that the power of God is the principle of all being.⁵ These two points are the basis of

1. Risala, p. 38.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

human happiness and civilisation.¹

These are the main points which Abduh sets forth to counter the charge of Association. The second obstacle to free will which he recognizes, is one which is related to the neo-orthodox doctrine of attributes. The neo-orthodox upheld the theory of acquisition on the ground of the unity of God's attributes and the objects of these attributes. There falls under the objects of these divine attributes all acts of volition, knowing, acting, etc. Here Abduh observes that all what we know is the accidents of things, the underlying reality is not within our Ken.² The relation of divine attributes to things in this world remains a mystery for ever to Abduh.

On the question of the relation between divine attributes and their objects; Abduh states that any investigation transcending the common sense level and the simple awareness of free choice for the purpose of reconciling man's freedom, and the all-embracing knowledge and will of God must be considered as "an attempt to pry into the secrets of Destiny. But we have been forbidden to probe into them. To be occupied with unattainable issues is futile and forbidden by religion. The extremists of every religion, especially Christianity and Islam, have delved too deeply into them. But after prolonged disputation, they have found themselves at the point where they started, and the most that they have accomplished was to cause divisions and dissensions in their midst."³ Abduh's

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., p. 29.

3. Ibid., p. 37.

attempt to push aside the question of the divine attributes and their relation to the world, constitutes the main blow to predestination, and releases man from the grip of Allah. The sincere intention of Abduh, namely to curb futile disputations over fruitless subjects, must not be underestimated or overlooked, because it is an important aspect of a new trend of thinking.

2. The main difficulty which Abduh meets in affirming free will is rooted in the Kor'an. There are several verses in the Kor'an which appear to imply determinism. Only misunderstanding of these verses, says Abduh, makes people think that these verses deprive man of his free will.¹ Those who believe these things, he argues, have misunderstood the real sense of the text. It is perhaps necessary to point out here that Abduh reopened the right of interpretation (al-Ijtihad) in Islamic Jurisprudence. Accordingly, he makes use of this right to say that the verses which suggest determinism are not to be taken at their face value.² The claim that God determines our good as well as our bad deeds, that He could have made us follow the right path but did not, is utterly unfounded, according to Abduh. He argues that the Kor'an has stated and affirmed free will in more than sixty-four verses.³ The rest of the verses which one may imagine to affirm the contrary, "have come down only to determine the general divine laws known as cosmic laws."⁴ This last argument is quite

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1. Reply, p. 30.
 2. Ibid., pp. 30-31.
 3. Ibid., p. 30.
 4. Ibid., pp. 30-31.

original and unique in the history of Moslem textual interpretation. No one has previously interpreted the deterministic verses in the Kor'an in this way, except for a passing reference in Averroes' to determinism as the consequence of cosmic law's.

3. The argument from al-Salaf al-Salih. He argues that our 'good forebears', believed in reason and free will.¹ Abduh needs to have explained this controversial statement, but he did not. Anyhow, he says these good forebears must be considered as a shining example in these matters.² Their awareness of these gifts, says Abduh, is the main reason why they spread Islam and its civilisation far and wide in the world.³ He repeats this point over and over again in order to stress the effect of freedom and faith on the making of history. He seems to believe that the basis of reform in Islam must proceed from the true understanding of the faith. The true faith shows that man is rational and free, and the Moslems must believe this, in order to regain their past glory and catch up with modern civilization.

4. The argument from the will and knowledge of God. The argument hinges on the point of whether God's will is limited by His knowledge or whether the will is supreme. The neo-orthodox argued that God's will is the sole basis of all His decisions, and that it is not bound by His knowledge, at all. Abduh, on the other hand, recognises the supremacy of divine knowledge and the limitations it imposed upon His will. He says

1. Ibid., p. 31.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

that "what is logically possible must be according to His knowledge, because God acts as His knowledge deems good."¹ In this way Abduh undermines the thesis of the neo-orthodox Moslems who have envisaged God as a capricious despot. God cannot be said to act arbitrarily any longer. He, too, has to choose what is good, and fitting.

In this argument, Abduh seeks to clear up the question of predestination by redefining the meaning of divine will. God's will, according to him, is something other than what we commonly understand by the term. As applied to man the term will mean that faculty by means of which one chooses to do an act, or not to do it.² In this sense, the term will, does not apply to God. When we talk of divine will we must mean something else. This is because we hesitate between one alternative and the other; we also change our willful decisions from moment to moment. We live in time, in changing circumstances, and our knowledge is not perfect like God's. These fluctuating conditions are impossible in the case of the Necessary Being. Therefore, the conditions under which we toil are inapplicable to God, and the divine realm must be unchangeable, timeless, and perfect. The implication here is that if God's exercise of will is in an unchanging and timeless world, then it would be inconceivable that He should exercise His will in this changing world and hence He does not act through us nor compels us. Man then is free. Thus, in this world we are left to our own resources to exploit them as we deem proper. Our

1. Risala, p. 24.

2. Ibid., pp. 24-25.

wishes and decisions cannot be attributed to God, as the neo-orthodox argued, simply because God is not subject to such changing conditions as we are.

Now, if this is the case, what then is the divine will and what is its scope? Abduh defines divine will as "the quality which specifies (tukhassis) one of the many different possible aspects of the world and gives it being. It has been shown that he who gives being to possible things is the Necessary Being. He is omniscient and of the logically possible things, whatever exists exists according to his omniscience. It has also been shown that every existent thing, exists according to a certain mode and with particular characteristics. These things have a spatio-temporal existence. All these modes and characteristics of existing things have made the logically possible acquire actual existence. The choice of one logically possible form, rather than the other, is what is involved in the act of the divine choice. This choice exercised by the will has been necessitated by divine knowledge. • We can apply the term will to the divine Being only in the sense of the choice of these logical possibilities with respect to the world at large.¹ Therefore, the realm of divine will is not in this world but in the world of the logically possible forms.

It might be seen from the foregoing account of the divine will that by dissociating divine willing from the petty problem of ends and

1. Ibid., p. 24.

means which men are occupied with, Abduh has undermined all what al Ghazzali and his Ash'arite predecessors established with ~~the~~ respect to the compulsion and domination of God and His control of every single activity human or natural. By relating divine will to creation and the cosmic order, he has also saved man from divine despotism and established the creed of free choice.

The distinction is now drawn between the realm of the human will and the realm of the divine will. Predestination is ruled out. If the neo-orthodox believed that the realm and scope of the divine will covers all existence whatsoever, Abduh believed that its realm is in God's mind. It may be objected that Abduh never said this. I agree, Abduh has never said this explicitly, but it is implied in his premises. According to him God's will applies only to the choice of possible orders of being. His choice of one form or another gives it existence.

The question is where does the world of logically possible things exist. They are not within this world because they are outside spatio-temporal relations. They acquire this spatio-temporal form of existence only by being given actual existence by God. Are they in some other third world? Do they exist at all? They must have some sort of existence or else it would not be reasonable to talk of them.

The way Abduh speaks of them implies that they exist in God's mind. He says God thinks of these possibilities and contemplates them.¹

1. Risala, pp. 25, 26.

Now, if God's mind is the abode of these possibilities and if he chooses from them, then the realm of the divine will is God's mind. But this does not mean that God's will is shut up within Himself, because Abduh says that by willing one logically possible object rather than another God gives the possible object spatio-temporal existence.

The significant point to be stressed here is the kind of thing God wills. He wills the logically possible aspect of the world as a whole not the particular events and things that creatures do.¹ The mode according to which God created this world is called the cosmic or divine order. The only limit to man's will is the cosmic order, or in other words the laws of nature.

When he writes about the creation of the world, he does not say that God created and continues to create everything, but that God's will and power attaches to the Highest order of things and gives it existence.² This accounts, he says, for the statement: His acts could not be described as having ends, and He is far above arbitrariness,³ for when He creates order in general He has nothing particular in mind. Then He is above arbitrariness because he creates order and order is rational.⁴

In conclusion, one must admit that humans are limited by God, only to the extent they obey the natural laws of this world, or as he puts it, the cosmic order. Abduh is explicit on this point in one of his

1. Ibid., p. 25.
2. Ibid., pp. 24, 25.
3. Ibid., p. 26.
4. Ibid.

articles published in al 'Urwat al Wuthqa. He says that "man's will is one link in the chain of causation".¹ Then he proceeds to explain specifically how cosmic order affects the will of man. "Cosmic phenomena have a power over the mind as well as over the will. Neither sane nor insane people can deny this."²

Abduh, however, does not limit himself to religious reasoning but goes beyond it to scientific argument. He, thus, opens the way for agreement between Islam and science. In one of his articles he analyses the psychological motives and operations of the will and its dependence on it.³ The value of the article lies more in the fact that it opens Islam up to the modern spirit, than in its original contribution.

Abduh defends the thesis of free will eloquently and with a modern sense of understanding of the relationship between civilisation and the concept of freedom. However, he does not go to extremes in his belief in free choice. His position may be best described as a half compromise between freedom and determinism. Although, he believes that God created us and put us in charge of our own affairs, he maintains that God superintends things we do and governs the whole universe. He assures us that "God's power is also unquestionable. If He wishes He could rob us of the ability and will which He has conferred on us."⁴ "But this point", he adds, "is beyond our reach and comprehension. The relation of God to this

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1. Tarikh, II, p. 266.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid., pp. 185-86.
 4. al Manar, VI, pp. 589, 590.

world remains a mystery, the mystar of al Qadar, We must believe in it, without trying to fathom its depths",¹ which is impossible any way. The search for what lies beyond what we know, i.e. to the reconciliation between the all inclusive knowledge and will of God, and between man's acts of choice which is intuitively known, is a pursuit after the mystar of al-Qadar. We are prohibited from discussing this mystery."² Abduh is not opposed to the belief in al-Qadar at all; on the contrary he considers it a part of the orthodox faith. It's even good, if it were stripped of its obnoxious deterministic accretions. It gives rise to virtues such as resoluteness and boldness.³ Al Qadar is used in a special sense, and there is a difference between al Qadar and fatalism. Qadar, in his opinion, is the surrender of what lies beyond our reach and understanding to God.⁴

Abduh sides with the upholders of free will for two main reasons. First, because he was unable to conceive how it was possible for God to deter us from doing one thing, and then forcing it on us, and holding us responsible for it. The whole pillar of religious belief namely judgment, collapses if we accept such a view.

The second and more important point, can be described as a humanistic tendency of his thought. He believes that freedom constitutes the core and essence of man. In this first place man's freedom and reason

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1. Risala, p. 37.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Tarikh, II, p. 266.
 4. Risala, p. 38.

distinguish him from the animals.¹ Freedom is actually more than that to Abduh. It is something unique in man. Furthermore no human civilisation is possible without the recognition of man's freedom of choice. "The happiness of man", he says "in this world and in the next is bound up with what he acquires for himself and what he does."² Then he adds that on the basis of this concept civilisation has flourished and God has laid down religious obligation (*taklif*). Those who deny it, deny themselves.³ The decadence of Islam is due mainly to those alien doctrines, which Aryans have introduced into Islam, and of which fatalism is one.⁴

Having attempted to cast out the innovations introduced into Islam and restore faith in reason and free will, Abduh expresses his belief that Islam will revive and face up squarely to the conditions of the time.

"Islam", he exclaims "will not stand as a stumbling block in the way of civilisation, but will promote it by ruling out the harmful in it and by choosing the good. Civilisation and Islam will thus turn out to be the closest allies when their introduction is made."⁵

It took Abduh considerable effort to cast out what al Ghazzali had established in the creed of Islam, viz. al-Tawakkul, which was fatal to Islam. Jamal ul Dine, Abduh's master, was furious at those who adhered to such beliefs. He says Islamic society must be purged and cleansed from what corrupting concepts they have thrust on it.⁶

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1. Risala, p. 39.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid., p. 37.
 4. Reply, p. 32.
 5. Abduh, Islam and Christianity, p. 149.
 6. Tarikh I, p. 35.

The contribution of Abduh lies in the emphasis he put on man, his thought and freedom which he declares are the basis of civilisation, and on the understanding of the scientific spirit of the age and its reconciliation with Islam. He introduced into religious thinking, as may be noted in his only theological and philosophical treatise, al Risala, the sense of history and progress. He tried to lay down the principles of religious guidance for an Islamic way of life.

① In concluding Abduh's revolt against the traditional attitude and his reform, it is best to let Abduh himself speak: "Islam has condemned blind imitation in matters of belief and the mechanical performance of religious duties... Islam drew the intellect out of its slumber... and raised its voice against the prejudices of ignorance, declaring that man was not made to be led by the rein but that it was in his nature to guide himself by science and knowledge. The science of the universe and the knowledge of things past... Islam turns us away from exclusive attachment to the things that come to us from our fathers... It shows us that the fact of preceding in point of time constitutes neither a proof of knowledge nor a superiority of mind and intellect, that ancestors and descendants are equal in critical acumen and in natural abilities... thus it delivered reason from all its chains, liberated it from the blind imitation that had enslaved it, and restored to it its domain in which it makes its own decision in accordance with its own judgment and wisdom... Nevertheless, it must humble itself before God above and stop at the limits set

by the faith; but within these bounds there is no barrier to its activity and there is no limit to the speculations which may be carried on under its aegis."¹

1. Risala (Michel) pp. 107-9.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the problem of choice which I have undertaken in this thesis represents, in fact, the struggle and the shift of emphasis in the God-man poles of relationship. The Moslem unitarian was faced from the beginning by a predicament hard to solve. He had either to attribute to God absolute and despotic power at the expense of sacrificing man, or of recognising freedom of choice at the expense of the unity and absolutism of God.

The question, therefore, which this thesis dealt with was the orthodox view of choice in its past form and present one. In doing this it was found necessary to discuss thoroughly the subject of God's nature and the scope of His power. For in orthodox Islam God is everything, and the domain of His power covers every aspect of existence. What is God's relation to the world and how is it achieved? The neo-orthodox conceded that every aspect of existence or activity is directly attached to God's attributes and become thus one of its objects. Man's activity and what man's apparent choice are in reality nothing except God's activity through man. Man acquires his acts, and does not choose them. He is a locus whereby God creates decisions and carries them out.

After dealing with the different aspects of the problem and its ramifications in al Ghazzali's philosophy, a discussion of the development

of the problem in modern times follow. The sole genuine Arab Moslem doctrinal thinker in modern Islam is Muhammad Abduh. Therefore, an analysis and exposition of what Abduh had to say on this problem was given in this study. To Abduh the problem in its most fundamental aspect seemed to be: what way was Islam to follow in this highly complex, competitive and progressive world of today. In giving Abduh's answer I tried to show how he based his philosophy on the belief in man, his freedom and the positive role of his intellect. I also dealt with his arguments against those previous orthodox Moslems who denied man, and the way he conceives of the reality of the Islamic religion. By giving Abduh's reaction to the problems of his day and his own version of true Islam the discussion started in the beginning of this thesis ends.

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