Chapter 1

Causality in Mutakallimun: Theological scheme of Muʿtazillates and Ashʿarites
Causality in Mutakallimun: An Introduction

Mutakallimun, as a sect subverting from the orthodox theologians of Islam, hinted at the enlightenment principle of the human subject in the cognition of absolute truth. Precisely for the same reason of positioning the human subject as the central agency in understanding the truth, their positions have been controversial in the theological discourses in Islam. It is rather surprising that the enlightenment that came about in Western philosophy in 17th and 18th centuries through Descartes and Leibniz had a pre-history of humanistic reason in Islamic thought way back in 9th century. This has to be seen in conjunction with the derivations from Al-Kindi and Al-Ghazali that Descartes devised in his philosophy. The human reason which has been the corner stone of modern Western philosophy, in itself is the controversial visions that Kalam sparked off. The chapter investigates the consequences of the reason in the discussions on causality.

Mutakallimun laid down the principle for a rational discourse of causality. They promoted the role of reason in addressing ontological and epistemological questions. However Mutakallimun remains committed to the divine law as far as ethics is concerned even though they put forward some philosophical questions concerning the relation between the God and the World.8

Most Mutakallimun agree with the general division of everything into substances and accidents. Accidents are attributes the bodies acquire. The instability of the accidents is the cause of the world’s transformation.9 But, there are different lines of arguments regarding the same problem. My study is to focus mainly on ash’arite theology and mu’tazilites rationalistic theology as a first step to address the notion of necessity in Islamic thought. The two schools have very much in common. However, they do have serious differences as well.

9 Ibid, p.494
In contrast to the emphasis of the mu’tazila on the reality of choice in human activity, al-Ash’ari insists that good and evil is willed by God. He creates the acts of men by creating in men the power to do each act. Mu’tazillates hold the view that the God had no attributes distinct from his essence. They do indeed uphold the doctrine of created Qur’an. For the majority of them Qur’an is an accident. Stressing much on absolute transcendence, mu’tazillates declares that God is not a body. And therefore is not to be attributed with any of the properties.

Mu’tazilites excludes any notion of pre-determinism on the grounds of necessary existence of God. God would be unjust if he decides in advance the fate of every man. According to the scheme of their argumentation the divine justice implies the free choice. The absolute school of late Kalam formulated the theory of origination as they found it impossible to find a sufficient reason to account for the change of accidence. Most of the Islamic thinkers address the mu’tazilite debate on causality. They reflect up on the relation between theology and philosophy.

It is interesting to note that Ash’arite school, on the other hand, holds the view that the God has eternal attributes such as knowledge, sight, speech and so on. The Ash’arite school formulated a general rule. Any change of attribute in being is due to some meaning (ma’na) that take place in it.

Emergence of Different Schools of Thought

The three early sects of Islam were the Kharajites, the Murjites and the Shiits. But the differences were rather political than philosophical. But Islam being a religion of peace tries to embrace all learning in its fold. It holds that all knowledge, whether of man or of the universe, is essentially one. This burning aspiration for reason and salvation led to the emergence of (1) exoteric (2) esoteric knowledge of God, namely rah-i-Dhahir and Rah-i-bathin. The former aims more at knowing the divine being than attaining. However, the latter aims more at attaining to God than knowing him.
"The Esoteric method (Rah-Bathin) was further enlarged under the name of "Mysticism" (Tasawwuf). The Exoteric method split up into branches: (1) *Hikmat* (Philosophy proper), and (2) *Kalam* (Science of Reason). The latter was subdivided into (a) Mu‘tazilitism (Rationalism) and (b) Asha‘rism (scholasticism)."\(^{10}\)

Hikmath aims at attaining the truths about the universe, Soul and God by rational arguments without confining themselves to religious dogmas period. Kalam, on the other hand, aims at attaining truth within the confines of religion. The difference between the two is that the former does not try to conform its truth to revelatory knowledge. The latter tries to conform its truth to the revelation at the time of attaining the truth. As far as the difference between the Mu‘tazillates and the Ash‘arites are concerned,

"the Mu‘tazillates hold that reason is the real creation of truth, and Revelation only confirm the dictates of reason; and they further hold that the object of revelation is to remove doubts and misgivings from the wavering minds by inviting them to adhere to Reason. The Ash‘arites maintain that Revelation is the real criterion of truth and the business of Reason is to substantiate the religious tenets and injunctions by its arguments."\(^{11}\)

In fact, these differences over the relationship between reason and revelation arise when Islam spread beyond the confines of Arabia. This happened mainly with the acceptance of the Faith by peoples of various nationalities and traditions. These new converts tried to interpret the Quran on their own with the aid of their ancestral beliefs. This schism between the orthodox believers and the new converts centered around four issues namely

"(1) the question of freedom human will, i.e., whether man has liberty of volition or not, and whether he has discretion in the choice of his actions or not. (2) The problem of attributes of God, i.e., whether God has attributes or not; and if he has, whether they are parts of His Essence or excluded there from

\(^{10}\)Nadvi, Muzaffar-ud-Din, Syed, *(1953), Muslim thought and its Source*, Lahore, Ashraf Press, p. 5.

\(^{11}\)ibid, p. 6.
(3) the question demarcation between beliefs and actions, i.e., whether a man's actions from part of his beliefs or they are separate from them. (4) The dispute between Reason and Revelation, i.e., whether the real criterion of truth is reason or revelation. In other words, whether reason is subject to revelation or revelation is subject to reason.\textsuperscript{12} 

Obviously, freedom of the human will became a central question in all those discussions. It is also based on the question of necessity and contingency. According to Qura'nic verses, 'all things are known to him and ruled by him, and so human acts and the rewards and punishments due to men must be included: 'no misfortune happens either on earth or in yourself but we made it, - it was in the book' (Quran 57.22); 'everything have We set down in the clear book of our decrees' (Quran 36-12); 'had we pleased we had certainly given to every soul it guidance, but true is the word which has gone forth from me, - I shall surely fill hell with jinn and men together.'(Quran, 32-13).

At the same time, there are verses, assigning to men some freedom of volition and discretion in the choice of actions and imposing on them share of responsibility for their actions, such as: "whosoever acts virtuously does so for himself"; 'and whosoever gets to himself a sin, gets solely on his responsibilities"; 'verily, God changes not what concerns any people, until they change what depends on themselves.'

According to Dr. SM. Nadvi,

"By harmonizing these two sets of passages the only right conclusion we arrive at is that God is undoubtedly the supreme sovereign with very wide powers, but that human beings also have some hand in moulding the destiny in as much as they can make choice between good and evil, right and wrong. Whenever God speaks of predestination or prearrangement of human affairs, he generally means that they must and do conform to the usual course of action, that is, law of nature. Man within the limited spear of his existence is a builder of his

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, p.12.
character and an architect of his fortune, subject to the control and supervision of the supreme intelligence."

The early Arab Muslims, following the beliefs of their pagan ancestors, were in favor of fatalism. The Umavids maintained the view that man is entirely helpless and cannot therefore be responsible for his action. Thus they also gave an impetus to fatalism. A school of thought was founded by Jaham, son of Safwan who declared that man has no freedom of will, no liberty of volition and no choice of action; Man is entirely helpless just like a working mission, and that man is not responsible for his deeds period. The Jabris (pre-destinarians) based their theory on those verses of the Quran which assert the absolutism of the divine will and overlooked human freedom.

Kadir school of thought emerged opposing the tenets of Jabr School. It was founded by Ma’bad al-Juhaini. The proponents of this school emphasized liberty of human will and action. Ma’bad ul-Juhaini criticized the Umavid rulers for their irresponsible governance and held them responsible for their actions. He had to pay with his life for criticizing the oppressive rules.

However, Al-Juhaini’s theory of human free will and criticism of oppressive rulers received the support of Ghilan of Damascus. Ghilan enlarged the scope of Al-Juhaini’s mission by the addition that “it is essential for every believer to try to enforce what is advisable and to eradicate what is undesirable”. Subsequently, Ghilan was also assassinated by the Umayyad regime.

In this way the feud between the proponents of fatalism and free will continued with intermittent violence over the next several years. A truce was established by fatalism merging in Attributism. The attributist (sifathist), while adhering to the principle of compulsion of human action, ascribed certain attributes to God as distinct from his essence, such as knowledge, power, greatness, glory etc.

13 Ibid, pp. 16-17
The followers of free will (Qadris) continued to flourish, despite persecution. The qadris later on ended up as the Mu'tazilites. It is accepted that the Mu'tazilites emerged as a new school of thought out of a single incident that took place during a lecture by the well known imam Hassan al Basari. Hassan al Bsari was a liberal minded scholar and imparted to his students the notion of partial and limited freedom of human action in his lectures. One day while he was lecturing he was asked to give his opinion on the question as to whether those who committed great sins (Kaba'ir) should be regarded as Muslim or non-Muslim.

For Wasil-bin-Ata, such persons were not being classed either as believers or unbelievers but were to be assigned a different label, which was intermediate between that of believers and unbelievers. After such an event, Wasil bin Ata seceded from his teacher and he started lecturing on his own views in a different corner of the same mosque. The teacher, who saw this was taken aback by surprise and exclaimed “I'tzaila anna” (“he has seceded from us”). Thus was the name mu'tazilite got assigned to him and his school was thenceforth called Mutazalism.

The rationalist school of mu'tazilites was founded on the twin principles of divine unity and divine justice. According to them divine unity meant that God is One, Pure, and Simple. He has only essence and no attributes. The essence itself serves the purpose of all attributes. The mu'tazilites consequently maintained that the Quran is the work of God. Hence, Quran is his creation and not his word. By subscribing to the former position, they could hold that the Quran does not exist as coeternal with God. The idea is that it is subject to finiteness.

By divine justice, the mu'tazilites meant God is ever Just and Never cruel. And because he is never cruel man chooses his own misfortunes through his actions. Thus, the Mu'tazilites upheld freedom of volition and liberty of action for man.

Religious rationalism of mu'tazilites faced much protest from another section of Muslims whose protest resulted in a movement called Asha'risn which is largely

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[15] Ibid, p.23
reactionary in nature. In response to the mu'tazilite stand that the mysteries of the universe and the profundities of religious dogma could be expressed and met in terms of human reason, the ash'arites contented that abstract rationalist doctrines cannot comprehend the mysteries. They also apprehended that mu'tazilites doctrines may lead to the conclusion that the religion is no longer binding and that they might rid themselves of its control. The beginnings of Ash'arites School are shrouded in obscurity. At first, it was only a general and scarcely conscious shifting of the attitude.

There was a counter movement which was started by Abu-al-Hassan Ali-ibn-Ismail-al-Ash'ari, which started as a response to the zealous upholding of Mu'talizism by Mamun Al-Rashid, where Al-Rashid thought Mu'talizism was something universally applicable. The change was already in progress. Such a shift can be seen in the Zahirities School in Spain, the al Tawari School in Egypt and Matrudi’s school in Samarkand.\textsuperscript{16}

It is true that al-Ash’ari started as a Mu’tazilite student under the last great mu'tazilite teacher Al-Jabba’i. But the authenticity of the following story is yet to be well established. Ash’ari proposed to Al-Jabba’i the case of three brothers, one of who was a true believer, virtuous and pious; the second an infidel, and the third an infant: they all died. Ash’ari wished to know what had become of them. To this, Jabai answered that the virtuous brother holds a high station in Paradise; the infidel is in the depths of Hell, and the child is among those who have obtained salvation. Ash’ari again raised a question: if the child wish to ascend to the place occupied by his virtuous brother, would he be allowed to do so. Jabba’i replied that the virtuous brother arrived at this place through his numerous works of obedience towards God. On the other hand, Ash’ari said that the child can say that it is not my fault; God did not let me live long enough. Jabba’i said that God’s version would be to assert that if had allowed him to live, he would have been disobedient and incurred the severe punishment (of Hell). Then Ash’ari diverted the discussion to the case of the infidel. In such a situation the infidel brother could say that God of the universe knew what awaited me and why then did He

act for the advantage of his brother and not for his own. Jabba’i had not a word to offer in reply.\textsuperscript{17}

**Causality in Mu’tazilites and Ash’arites**

I have already mentioned that the mu’tazilites relied on reason when they dealt with the diverse theological issues. During the period of mu’tazilites, *Kalam/ Scholastic theology* developed into a fully-fledged science based on Greek dialectic. While most of the Islamic Mutakallimun relied on the all four Aristotelian causes (material, formal, efficient and final), mu’tazilites, followers of Hasanul Basari, dropped formal and final causes. They believed that if God was material cause of the world then there is no need for teleology. They refused to believe that the formal and final causes are separate from material and efficient causes.\textsuperscript{18}

There are five important tenets which are considered as fundamental to mu’tazilites’ belief. Analyzing these tenets will help us to understand their concept on causality in detail.

1. Monotheism, i.e. in Essence and Attributes.

Mu’tazilites believed in the absolute unity and oneness of God. They upheld Divine unity in a way that is consistent with the dictates of both scripture and sound reasoning. They strived to prove the ontological difference of God from nature, humans, and material causality. Mu’tazilites denied the existence of attributes distinct from Divine essence. In other words, God is, for instance, omniscient, but He knows through His essence rather than by having separate knowledge apart from Him. This assertion was to avoid the multiplicity of co-eternals. They felt that the notion of multiplicity of co-eternals may impugn the absolute unity and oneness of God. God, being unique, has attributes that no creature shares with Him. He existed eternally in the past and He cannot perish (*fana*).

\textsuperscript{17} Nadvi, Muzaffar-ud-Din, Syed. (1953), *Op cit*, pp. 55-56

For mu’tazilites, God is omniscient of the past and present. He cannot be ignorant (jahl) about something. He sees visible things (mar’iyat), and perceives perceptibles. He is not like physical bodies, and that it is not possible for Him to get up or down, move about, change or have a form. He is not different from the accidents of motion, rest, color, food or smells. He is One throughout eternity and that everything other than He is contingent, made, dependent (muhtaj), structured (mudabbar), and governed by someone/thing else.

2. Justice, i.e. God is Just and is incapable of doing injustice.

Mu’tazilites pointed at the free will of human beings. They defined evil as something that stems from the errors in human acts. God does no evil, and He demands not from any human to perform any evil act. If man’s evil acts had been from the will of God, then punishment would have been meaningless, as man performed God’s will no matter what he did. Mu’tazilites did not deny the existence of suffering that goes beyond human abuse and misuse of their free will granted to them by God. In order to explain this type of clear evil, mu’tazilites relied on the Islamic doctrine of taklit, that life is a test for beings possessing free will.

God does not transgress His rule (hukm) and that He only causes sickness and illness in order to turn them to advantage. Whoever says otherwise has allowed that God is iniquitous and has imputed insolence to Him. He does the best for all of His creatures, upon whom He imposes moral and religious obligations (yukallifuhum). He has indicated to them what He has imposed upon them and clarified the path of truth so that we could pursue it, and He has clarified the path of falsehood (tariq l-bati) so that we could avoid it. So, whoever perishes does so only after all this has been made clear. And you know that every benefit we have is from God; as He has said: “And you have no good thing that is not from Allah” (Qu’ran 16:53); it either comes to us from Him or from elsewhere. Thus, when you know all of this you become knowledgeable about God’s justice.

3. Promise and threat, i.e. God has promised those who obeyed him with reward.
By the same token, He has threatened those who disobeyed Him with punishment. And since the promised reward will not be revoked, so will the threat of punishment. However, forgiveness is feasible only with man’s repentance. Forgiveness will not be granted without it.

4. The middle way, i.e. the fasiq (Godless).

The person who has committed a cardinal sin, such as consuming alcohol, adultery, or lying, is neither a believer an unbeliever. That is, they are neither here nor there. To put in other words, they are in half way between belief and unbelief.

5. Enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, mu’tazilites argue that the way to know what is good and what is evil is not confined to sharia law.

Independent reasoning is capable of recognizing good and evil. Furthermore, they maintained that upholding this duty does not necessarily require the existence of an imam or a leader. It is the duty of all Muslims to uphold it. And yet, they also recognize that some aspects of this duty are the prerogatives of the leaders of Muslims, such as executing the Islamic penal code, preserving the integrity of Muslim territories, and other government affairs.19

Apart from these five tenets, mu’tazilites put forward and discussed many subject relating to divinity, natural sciences, sociology and the humanities. There is no difference between the mu’tazilites and the ash’arites in their methods of proving the creation of the world and the existence, unity and incorporeality of God. There is a difference between them only on such general religious questions as attributes and the freedom of the will. The belief in the reality of attributes and the belief in pre-destination did not originate with the

ash'arites. They had been well established in Islam even before the mu'tazilites came into being. Mu'tazilites rejected the orthodox Muslim position later espoused by the ash'arites.²⁰

Both ash'arites and mu'tazilites agree with the metaphysics of atoms and accidents. The atomic theory of Kalam began to take definite shape in the ninth century. Mu'tazilites opposed the dualism of substance and accidents. They held the view that body is an aggregate of accidents, which once constituted becomes the substratum of other accidents. Mu'tazilites and ash'arites differed in many secondary points despite their agreement on many fundamental points.²¹ For instance, Al-Jubba'i defined substance as the bearer of accidents. Substance is substance in itself and can be conceived as substance prior to existence. He also holds that homogeneous substances are substances in themselves and are like or unlike in themselves; but do not change in reality. Al-Ash'ari defines substance as that which subsists in itself and is susceptible of opposites.

Ash'arite stand point on nature is representing 'atomic conception.' The cosmos was perceived as the discontinuity of reality. It was a domain of separated entities and rather very concrete matter. They atomized matter, space and time broke the bond of interrelated causality into the will and the power of the most Omnipotent and the most Omniscience of God Almighty. The segmentation and division are paved the cohesion and connection in the Divine will which creates all things at every moment and it is the direct cause of things. Mainly secondary cause (such as animal and human action or law of nature) is depending on the prime cause (God Almighty).²²

Ash'arite atomic conception negated Aristotelian causality, but not causality itself. Ash'arite point of view differs from philosophers, who admitted the continuous chain of causality that caused the eternity of the world. Ash'arite causality is apparently not necessarily precedes the result, but it has possibly been operating permitted by the will (iraadat) and the

²¹ Fakhry, Majid, (1958), op cit., p. 33
²² Ahmad Daud Ishak El-Mebawiy, ‘Muslim Cosmology: A Reflection on the case study of theologian (Mutakalliman) and Peripatetic (Mashsh'iyyan) on nature (cosmos) as a fundamental of Islamic science.’ Malaysia,, MARA University of Technology.
power \((qudrat)\) of Allah almighty. The segmented portion of world's bodies require continually annihilated and created the new existences in every moment \((muhdath)\). This is reality of temporality of the world existence that shows coherence to Islam. Subsequent to atomic concept of devoid, space for Ash'arite is where the realms which occupied by atoms.

Abu Mansur al-Maturidite didn't present his definition of nature clearly. Though, he was an atomist and orthodox theologian who accepted that the world has elaborated as the totality of existence of substances or atoms and accidents except the existence of God. He had an additional concept of body \((jism)\) which is meant it couldn't express God by that name. He tried to deny the eternity of the world and confirm the creationism.

He used perceptual argument to negate the eternity of the world. Similarly, he used rational argument to show that the concept of creation of the world is the best argument to carry out the massage of creation '\(ex\ nihilo\)'. His special argument indirectly falsified through the impossibility of eternity world. Briefly, al-Maturidite argued that the world cannot be eternal because the only God is eternal. God has will and power to create and He is the prime cause and need no other causes to act. He argued that the whole world is finite and it originated and annihilated. So, it's impossible the world be eternal. Meanwhile he argued also on creation '\(ex\ nihilo\)' stand point. Using the argument of unperceivable things to negate existence, he sought to prove that there is no world without starting point.

Al-Razi is considered as one of the great theologians who advocated creation '\(ex\ nihilo\)' theory. According to him, the world is composed of the contingent being. All kind of things other than God are contingents, and the contingency is discerned as some basic principle in al-Razi. The main casual arguments of Al-Razi could be summarized as follows. Al-Razi argues that the world has caused by the Necessary Being which took part after the passage of chosen particular time. It is the nature of God's will to choose a particular time for creation. On contingency quality and contingent priory, al-Razi denied the positive quality of contingency over contingency. In fact, the contingent is originated for the existence of God.

\(^{23}\) Ibid.
On temporal time, al-Razi has an argument that rejects Aristotelian definition of time. Time and movement are dependent to enable transference of substance that occurs from the location to another. And movement cannot be conceived except in conjunction with time. This dependence of time and movement will violate the rules of the impossibility of circular dependence. Further argues that all the accidents and changes in the world are due to the benevolence of God. They are not eternal.

Al-Razi asserts that the world is (composed of) contingent being and it must be temporal or being contingent in-itself (mumkin binafsihi). On mu'tazilite concept of the reality of the non-existence, al-Razi holds that existence is an extraneous quality which is common to all existing entities. However, unlike al-Mu’tazila, he doesn’t believe in the continuity of essence and independent existence. He rather holds that even essence and existence are different things. Yet it cannot survive without existence. Avicenna and asha’arite believe that existence is merely the existence itself, nothing additional quality. Meanwhile al-Mu’tazilite believes in additional quality. Furthermore, he argues that the essence can survive independent of existence.

Mutakallimun generally believed that God could cause the atom to exist separately in such a way that it could be seen with nacked eye. Some held the view that single atom was liable to motion and rest and their derivatives, such as union with other atoms and separation. The atom was not liable to colour, taste, dimension, life, form etc. Al-Jubba’i found no problem in ascribing to the single atom colour, taste and contact. However, he rejected the possibility of life, power or knowledge inering in it. Hish’am al-Fuwati denied the separate existence of atoms, as well as its aptitude for contact, motion, rest, etc. According to him, single atom was not susceptible of contact and distinction. It takes six atoms to form a plane, and six planes constitute a body. Abu’l-Hudhail argued that a body required a minimum of six atoms, corresponding to the six planes of the solid.
Accidents can be divided into primary and secondary accidents, depending up on whether they accompany substance necessarily or not. The first of the primary accidents are motion, rest, composition and location. Second comes the accident of colour; the third, the accident of heat; fourth, the accident of cool; fifth, that of dampness; sixth, that of dryness; seventh, that of smell; eighth, that of taste; ninth that of sound: tenth that of duration.²⁷

Al-Ash’ari held the view that eight of these accidents accompany substance of necessity: modus, colour, taste, smell, heat or its opposite, life or its opposite and finally duration. However, al-Ka’bi, a mu’tazilite, argued that substance can be divested of all these accidents save colour. Abu Hahim, another mu’tazilite, believed that an atom can be divested of all accidents, save the accident of modus. Another mu’tazilite, al- Salihi went to the extend in order argue that an atom could exists without any accidents altogether.²⁸

Apart from all these, Mutakallims were confused by the phenomenon of motion. Al-Nassam argued that everything in the universe is either body or motion. He includes accidents and human actions in the category of motion. There is motion of intention and motion in space. He undermines the importance of intermediary points in motion. A body can move from point A to point C without traversing point C. However, this view was rejected by majority of Mutakallims. Abu’l Hudhail opined that a part of the body may be static while the rest of it was in motion. Ash’arites viewed that motion and rest were two of the ‘modi’ of substance. A substance which moves from one point to another is at rest in relation to second point and in motion in relation to the first. Majid Fakhry comments on diverse views on motion:

“Only al-Qulanisi, a rather dissident Ash’arite, is reported by al-Baghdadi as holding that rest was two successive ‘modi’ in the same place, motion two successive ‘modi,’ one in the first place and the other in the second. This conception of motion naturally raised the question: at what does motion supervene on body? Some Mutakallims, like Al-Nassam, claimed that it supervenes up on it while in its initial position; others that it supervenes up on

²⁷ ibid, p.38
²⁸ Al-Ash’ari Abul-Hasan, (1321 A.H.), Usul al-Din: Hydderabad, pp. 56-57
it when it had settled in its second position or 'locus.' This was the view of Abu’l Hudhail, Al-Jubba’I, his son Abu Hashim, and Al-Ash'ari.”

Bishr al-Mu’tamir, head of the mu’tazilite school of Baghdad, denied all these alternatives and argues that a body moves through a distinct motion, which does not supervene up on it in either of its two successive states.

The most characteristic feature of accidents, as explained by Mutakallimun, was its perishable nature. The ash’arites held that accidents were perishable by definition. Their persistence in being is unthinkable. In the same way, al-Baqilani defines accident as that which cannot endure. For him, Qur’an speaks of the transient things in the world. A leading mu’tazilite al- Ka’bi also agreed to this kind of a conception. However, many mu’tazilites could not heed wholly to the notion of perishable accidents. They found that this militated against their notion of human activity and their allied doctrine of generation (tawullad). As a result, some of them disputed this theory while some others assigned certain durability to the accidents. For instance, Abu’l - Hudhail believed in a qualified theory of origination. He assigned to the category of perishable accidents the accidents of will and motion. He assigned to the category of durable accidents a number of accidents such as colour, life and knowledge, etc. The same view was upheld by al- Jubba’i and al-Nassam. Al-Nassam deemed it impossible for motion to endure.

One important thing to be noticed here is that Mutakallims, while assigning duration to the special category of accidents, reserved to its being a separate status. They held the view that a substance depend exclusively on the divine fiat. It entails that a thing is brought in to being out of nothing. God creates in being the accident of duration. If being is the first stage of life history, the accident of duration is the second stage of life history.

29 Fakhry, Majid. (1958), op cit, p. 40
30 Usul al-Din (1321 A.H.) op cit, p.53
31 Fakhry, Majid, (1958), op cit.,p.41
Substance also like its accidents perishes up on creation and is created by God so long as he wishes. But every such recreation implies a fresh start in life history of substance.

Ash’arites viewed that the extinction of a body is the outcome of God’s refraining from creating in it the accidents of duration. Al-Ba’qilani ascribed extinction to God’s withholding of accidents of modus and colour from the body. In as much as body cannot be divested of those two accidents, it necessarily entails the annihilation of the body. God would have ceased to create this added accident in the body when He wished it to perish.

Another ash’arite, al-Qalanisi, suggested that when God wishes to annihilate the body, He creates in it the accident of extinction which leads to the annihilation. This view keeps up the general spirit of Mutakallims argument that a body cannot be divested of a set of positive accidents or their opposites. In brief, ash’arites held that death itself is one of the accidents God creates in the dead man.

Mu’tazilites view of extinction differed considerably from that of ash’arites. Abu’l-Hudhail denied that duration was an accident super added to the body. Extinction, like the duration of the body, is simply the outcome of God’s decree. When God decides to destroy a body He creates the accident of extinction in no substratum and this leads to total annihilation of the body. Both Al- Jubba’i and his son added that God creates the accident of extinction in no substratum and this leads to the total annihilation of the whole world. It is impossible for God to certain bodies without destroying the whole. Hence, destruction is brought about by virtue of an accident, which contradicts bodies.

As I have pointed out, both mu’tazilites and ash’arites accepted contingent metaphysics of atoms and accidents. But their basic difference was in matters pertaining to freedom of will. Mu’tazilites professed freedom of will. For them, Human agents are endowed with certain efficacy. He can effect a series of conditions in nature. He would be the author of

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32 Usul al-Din (1321 A.H.) op cit., p. 67
33 ibid
34 Al-Baghdadi, Abdul-Qahir, (1910), Al Farq Baina al farq, Cairo, p.183.
those conditions/actions. This is against the general notion of mutakallimun which is premised on God’s active intervention. Mu’tazilites wanted to vindicate the efficacy of man in willful action. Consequently they came up with their doctrine of generation (Tawalud). The credit for conceiving this view goes to Bishr b. al-Mu’tamir, head of Mu’tazilite school of Baghdad. According to Al-Mut’amir whatever is generated from our deeds is our doing. He brought in a causal relation between the will as agent and the act as effect. Abu’l- Hudhail, head of another Mu’tazilite school in Basra, introduced a subtle difference distinction between acts of which the agent knows the modality (kaifiya) and the acts which he does not. Abu’l-Hudhail asserted that man could be the author of those acts of which he knows the modality. Similarly, the acts which he cannot know the modality should be ascribed to God. He made this distinction in order to ward off criticism against the mu’tazilites that they project man as the creator of his deeds.

Despite the minor disagreement, Bishr and Abu’l-Hudhail agreed up on two points which are central to mu’tazilite idea on moral freedom. The first point is that in the inward action of willing and choosing man exercises a definite freedom of initiative. The second point is that the man can effect through his will certain deeds in the outward sphere of nature by generating such effects. The second point was so problematic that mu’tazilites had to face a lot of confrontation from those who strictly advocate Islamic notion of God’s absolute power and uniqueness. Salih Qubba argued that whatever comes about through man’s action is of God’s doing initially. In order to safeguard the notion of divine omnipotence, he denied the existence of any necessary correlation between the phenomena of nature altogether. He added that there is direct working of God in each and every action. He explains this by saying that wood may not burn even if it is brought in to contact with fire many times, provided God doesn’t wish it.

Only one mu’tazilite, Al Salihi, put forward his arguments in line with Salih Qubba’s opinion. Salihi did not recognize any limitation on God’s power. But he argued that God could create death and knowledge in the sale subject. He can create life and ignorance in

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35 Ibid, p.377
36 Fakhry, Majid. (1958), op cit, p. 45
37 Ibid, p.46
it. However, he refused to admit the possibility of creating life and death simultaneously in the
subject. Al-Jubba'i denied the view that God could create perception alongside blindness. But
he agreed to the notion that a body could be brought in to contact with fire and God may not
create burning in it.

Abu'l- Hudhail, however, refused to deny the first possibility. He believed that
God can create direct action together with death. He can create muteness together with speech.
It is interesting to note that both Al-Jubba'i and Abu'l- Hudhail maintained that God could
create an accident in no substratum. However, they did not admit the possibility of the
creation in no substratum of any other accidents. The ash'arites condemned this teaching as
tantamount to infidelity.

All these debates were reflected in most of the philosophical and theological
doctrines. The whole course of mu'tazilites speculation shows the influence of Greek
philosophy as applied to Islamic theology. The mu'tazilite school of Baghdad concerned itself
mainly with a metaphysical question: what is a thing? They generally held that a thing denotes
a concept which could be known and could serve as subject to a predicate. The philosophical
implications of these debates were far reaching. Later on, many scholars tried to assimilate
the views of both mu'tazilites and ash'arites. According to Nisaburi, God's control over
natural process such as aging, rain and the motions of the stars and planets is evidence for his
existence, omniscience, and omnipotence. The Qur'an makes this quite clear. It never implies
that the clouds could act on themselves without God's direct involvement. In order to
emphasize the absoluteness of God's omnipotence, thinkers such as Al-Ghazali had denied the
existence of intermediate causes. God might not only create the clouds, but in addition create
the rain within the clouds in a way that was beyond human comprehension. Nevertheless,
Nisabuiri included chains of secondary causes in his portrayal of the terrestrial realm, which
comprised of the Earth and the surrounding atmosphere. In his portrayal of the heavens,
which comprised the sun, moon, planets, and stars, Nisaburi views natural processes as the
results of chains of real secondary causes.^

The ash'arites propose an alternative conception of terrestrial matter. They argue that nature is composed of uniform atoms. They do not exist without the accidents that God conferred upon them at every instant. Nisaburi's portrayal of the terrestrial realm developed out of this debate between the Falasifa and the Mutakallimun over whether terrestrial matter was comprised of the four elements or of atoms. In the end, Nisaburi preserved Falsafa's belief in the existence of the elements. However, he undermines the significance of secondary causes as the Ash'arites had wanted. The Ash'arites denied the existence of the elements because the role of the elements as secondary causes in natural processes might restrict divine omnipotence. Nisaburi agreed with the Mutakallimun that the Falasifa's conception of the elements did threaten divine omnipotence, but he did not believe that this threat to divine omnipotence necessitated the denial of the elements' existence. 39

There is a critique on natural causality found in al-Ghazali. It is motivated by a desire to protect the concept of divine omnipotence as advocated by Ash'arites. Ash'arites believe that the connection between cause and effect is not a necessary relationship. It happens, because God established it in that way. God can alter or temporarily hinder the normal operation of that relationship. By stating in this way that the relationship of cause to effect is not a necessary relationship, al-Ghazali asserts that such a relationship generally, or normally, exists. He seems to presuppose the distinction between the absolute and ordained powers of God. God retains the ability to act in ways other than those ways in which he has retained it. 40 More over, ash'arites maintain that the principle that the effect results from something in the cause cannot be rationally demonstrated. Observation only proves simultaneity or coexistence of cause and effect. 41

Ash'arites attack the position that the principle of causality is a necessary rather than contingent. In order to show the non-necessary, or 'chosen,' quality of causal relations, al-Ghazali offers two alternate theories. The first theory, similar to the position of

39 ibid
41 Ibid.
the mu'tazilites, maintains that natural causality does not operate on the basis of any inherent quality, virtue, or power. The causal nexus is to be understood in the sense that there are certain conditions are present. God or his angels will directly intervene in the natural order to produce the effect. There is no such thing as natural causality in the sense of inherent virtue. What exists instead is only divine causality. Indeed, there is no such thing as a natural order but an orderly action of God. The causal relationship, however, is a result of God's ordination and not a necessary relationship. God could break the connection of cause and effect but by adding to the normal properties of the agent an additional property that will prevent the normal operation. This is strictly the Ash'arites position in this regard.

Causality and Human actions in Mu'tazilites

According to mu'tazilites, it is perception that distinguishes a living being from non-living being. Knowledge ('ilm) for the mu'tazila is the knowing of objects. It is a grasp of and conviction about the being, character, states, situations, and circumstances of things and events. Intelligence ('aql) consisting in an accumulated aggregate of universally common knowledge, whose perfection (kama!) is attained in mature experience. It is directed essentially and primarily towards action. 42

Besides intelligence, man is also endowed by God with an autonomous power of efficient causality (qudra) by which he is the originating author of his own acts. By virtue of his autonomous power of efficient causality, he has within himself a quality of his own being. It is the ground of the possibility of his acts. It can be said, therefore, that man by nature (constitutionally) is an autonomous agent. This agent seeks his own good through action. In order to maintain the integrity of man's autonomy as a moral agent, the mu'tazila assumes that he is endowed with a native capacity to discover and know what is good and what is evil in the realm of human activity. 43

43 ibid
In the maturity or full actuality of his intelligence (kamal 'aqlihi), man is given the general moral principles through which he may rationally determine the good or evil of specific actions. Man is conceived as having an innate desire to seek his own good. He has an innate power to act. He has an innate understanding of the fundamental criteria of good and evil. It is the natural desire to discover and achieve what is best for his own action. Mu'tazilites consider the foundation and essence of the obligation to enquire into the nature and ground of being in general.

For the Basrian mu'tazilites, human actions include both primitive acts and engendered acts. Primitive acts are produced immediately in some part of the agent by his ability to act and engendered acts (al-mutawallidt) those effects which are caused in a lawful manner as the consequents of a primitive or basic act. As an entity, a given action has attributes and characteristics which are either essential or not-essential. Essential actions are a given class of entities. Not-essential actions are being grounded directly or indirectly in the presence of some other entity to which it is related in a particular way. For them, volitions constitute a distinct class of actions, and an act other than essential act is said to be voluntary or intentional when the agent forms the volition to do it simultaneously with his initiating the being of the act. The agent is considered morally responsible for his acts.¹⁴

According to the Basrian mu'tazilites, all men of sound mind know that certain acts are morally obligatory (wdjib). This is immediate and irreducible intuition. Any one who omits morally obligatory actions deserves blame. Similarly, to perform an utterly pointless act or to inflict on another living being undeserved hardship or harm is morally bad (qabih).¹⁵ Any one who intentionally performs them deserves blame. They hold, moreover, that it is readily possible by systematic reflection to derive from these absolute principles a full set of rules. In this way, one can know the ethical value of any act. All actions may thus be divided into four basic categories (1) obligatory, (2) laudable but not obligatory, (3) neutral, and (4)

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¹⁵ Ibid.
bad. First three could be termed as good. Human ethical judgment is often limited because of our incomplete knowledge of present circumstances and of future contingents.\textsuperscript{46}

They proceed to argue that God does not act by any necessity of His nature. His creation of the world and of mankind is a purely gratuitous act (\textit{tafaddul}) on His part. The point is He could as well have created a different world or nothing at all. However, creation of the world is not purposeless. The purposeless act is ethically bad and God does only what is good. He created mankind as autonomous moral agents. He rewards them in a future life in a way that proportionately exceeds whatever they might deserve. Obviously, it is for this end that God has deputed prophets\textsuperscript{47}. Revelation gives men further incentives to do what is fundamentally right.

\textit{Mu'tazilites} share the view that men normally act for what they perceive to be in their own best interest. The prudent individuals will consistently do what is right in order to achieve their ultimate well-being. That is nothing but God's reward in the next life. Reasonable men can know this even without the assistance of revelation. We can discover by reasoning that there is a creator who is altogether just. To do what is right can thus be rationalized on purely utilitarian grounds. To fulfill the moral obligation one has to seek one's own good. Similarly, one has to avoid grave or irremediable harm. As I have pointed out, the Basrian \textit{mu'tazilites} hold that it is not our acts alone which are subject to the basic ethical rules\textsuperscript{48}. Neither God's acts nor our voluntary acts are causally predetermined. Given creation in its present state, the same set of moral rules is binding on all agents. Because of this, God's acts as well as ours can be rationalized in terms that are fully comprehensible to us. We are obligated absolutely to do what is right and obligatory. In the same way, God is obligated absolutely to reward us for or fulfilling our moral obligations.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.  

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Ash'arite position on Human Actions

In contrast to this mu'tazilite teaching, the doctrine of the ash'arites represents a very pure kind of voluntaristic Occasionalism. According to the Ash'arites, to do right is to put something in its own place. To do wrong is to put something in other than its own place. The question that arises here is what is the basis of the formal determination of what is appropriate. Abu Ishaq al-Isfara'i (d. 418 A.H./1027 c.e.) states the common doctrine of the school: “The ethical valuations ('ahkdm) of actions are grounded neither in the acts themselves nor in their properties; they are grounded simply in what God says”

Speaking explicitly against the teaching of the mu'tazilites, ash'arites say that to be good and to be bad are not attributes of what is good or is bad. Good and bad have no meaning other than the very promulgation of [God's] command and prohibition. That is to say, since the referent of 'good' or 'bad' cannot be the act itself or any attribute of the act. In other words, the assertion must be ontologically grounded in an entity extrinsic to the act.

Ash'arites strive to show that every moral judgment the mu'tazilites do not base on scripture is based on subjective biases and human predilections. Following the spirit, al-Ghazali responds that the Mu'tazilites arguments contain three fallacies: (1) the claim of intelligible moral essences; (2) the claim of a priori knowledge; and (3) the claim regarding the nature and value of consensual knowledge.49 As for the claim of intelligible moral essences, al-Ghazali states that it is simply arbitrary. Killing, for example, has only one essence; yet the mu'tazilites concede that execution as recompense for certain crimes are not evil. Similarly, lying has only one essence. A man who lies to a group of unbelievers on their way to kill a prophet would not be deemed to have committed an evil act. In short, the mere fact that these actions enjoy one status under one set of circumstances and another under another undermines the claim that their moral status is based on some inherent, unchanging, intelligible essence.

The dispute between mu'tazilites and asha'rites is not over the basis upon which such moral convictions are founded, but over the actual convictions themselves. The difference with the mu'tazilites is not simply a matter of mistaking revelation for a priori knowledge. As for the claim that consensus provides the basis for moral convictions, Ash'arites objects that while large numbers of intelligent people might agree on a moral position, it cannot be assumed that their agreement was reached on the basis of some universal a priori insight. Rather, some of the parties to this agreement may base their conviction on revelation, while others may simply go along with the majority. Al-Ghazali too accepts consensus as a valid and infallible source of knowledge when the subject is the religious law.

A-Ghazali sums up the arguments of ash'arites in this regard strongly rejecting mu'tazilites' inclusion of morality in their ontological scheme. From here, al-Ghazali declares that there are only two bases for moral action: (1) religious devotion (al-tadayyun bi al-shard'i') and (2) self-interest (al-sghrad). He goes on to address an objection to the effect that intelligent people are commonly known to prefer telling the truth to lying, or saving a drowning person to abandoning him, even in cases where they are under no religious obligation to do so. Al-Ghazali insists that his interlocutor has simply been misled by the fact that personal interest is often an ulterior rather than an apparent motive. Personal interest is often hidden not only from outside observers but even from the doer himself.

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50 Ibid.
51 Ibid