

GHAZALI'S CHAPTER ON DIVINE POWER IN THE *IQTİŞĀD*

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A. INTRODUCTION

It is in his chapter on the divine attribute of power in his *Iqtīṣād fī al-I'tiqād* (*Moderation in Belief*)¹ that Ghazali (al-Ghazālī) gives us the theological foundation of the causal theory to which he subscribes. The basic doctrine which he announces and argues for is that divine power, an attribute additional to the divine essence, is one and pervasive. By this Ghazali means that it is not a multiplicity of powers that produce a multiplicity of effects, but that it is a unitary direct cause of each and every created existent. This one power brings about all temporal existents by "invention *ex nihilo*," *ikhṭirān*. It creates them directly, without the mediation of secondary causes.

This occasionalism pervades the chapter and is particularly manifest in Ghazali's lengthy defense of the Ash'arite doctrine

¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtīṣād fī al-I'tiqād*, edited by I.A. Çubuçu and H. Atay (Ankara, 1962), pp. 80-99. This work will be abbreviated *Iqtīṣād*. This is the earliest of two complementary works Ghazali devoted to an exposition and defense of Ash'arite dogma, the second being *Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id* (*The Principles of Belief*) which is included as one of the books of his *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (*The Revivification of the Sciences of Religion*). In the *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*) Ghazali states that he is writing the *Tahāfut* to refute the philosophers, not to affirm "true doctrine," and that he will write another work for affirming true doctrine, giving *Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id* as its title. Thus at the conclusion of the debate over the first proof of the philosophers' theory of the world's pre-eternity, he writes: "As regards the true doctrine, we will write a book concerning it after completing this one - if success, God willing, comes to our aid - and will name it *The Principles of Belief*. We will engage in it in affirmation just as we have devoted ourselves in this book to destruction." Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*, ed. M. Bouyges (Beirut, 1928), pp. 77-8. [This work will be abbreviated *Tahāfut*]. However, it is the *Iqtīṣād*, written shortly after the *Tahāfut* that best fulfills Ghazali's purpose and is the sequel to the *Tahāfut*. See G.F. Hourani, "A Revised chronology of al-Ghazālī's writings," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 104, 2 (1984): 239-94; also the author's "Al-Ghazālī on bodily resurrection and causality in the *Tahāfut* and the *Iqtīṣād*," *Aligarh Journal of Islamic Thought*, 2 (1989): 46-75, see pp. 49-51.

of acquisition, *al-kasb*. For he argues unequivocally (a) that power in all animate creatures is created directly by God and (b) that there is created with it the object of power ordinarily (but erroneously) regarded as its effect. Created power has no causal efficacy at all. Hence, whatever relation there is between human power and the object of power that God creates with it, the relation is not causal. Then, as a continuation of his defense of the doctrine of *kasb*, Ghazali offers a critique of the Mu'tazilite doctrine of the generated act (*al-tawallud*), which in his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*) he had identified with the philosophers' causal theory.² In this critique he again denies that animate created beings causally generate effects and, moreover, denies that any inanimate existent generates an effect. For inanimate beings have no power, power being an attribute only of the animate. "If, then, we deem it impossible to say that an object of power occurs through created power," he writes, "how would we not deem impossible an occurrence through that which is not a power?"³ He then concludes:

All temporal events, their substances and accidents, those occurring in the entities of the animate and the inanimate, come about through the power of God, exalted be He. He alone holds the sole prerogative of inventing them. No created thing comes about through another [created thing]. Rather, all come about through [divine] power.⁴

But while the main thrust of Ghazali's discussion is clear, its arguments are not without intricacy. The chapter is also many faceted. It includes a discussion of the question of reconciling divine power with divine omniscience. Again, it includes the critique of the Mu'tazilite doctrine of the generated act, to which we have already alluded. But the core of the chapter (and its lengthiest part) consists of the discussion of the doctrine of *kasb*, which Ghazali ardently defends. His defense, however, raises points that call for critical comment.

The discussion of *kasb*, central as it is, cannot, however, be taken in isolation, but must be seen within the context of the chapter as a whole. For the chapter's arguments are integrated and unified. They all stem from the doctrine of the pervasive-

² *Tahāfut*, p. 377.

³ *Iqtisād*, p. 98.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

ness of the divine will, the basic premise of Ghazali's causal doctrine. Hence in what follows we will begin with a brief exposition of the chapter's arguments, followed by a critical comment on Ghazali's defense of the doctrine of *kasb*. We will then offer a translation of the entire chapter with further commentary in the notes.

B. EXPOSITION

The chapter begins with arguments for the existence of divine power, for its being an attribute additional to the divine essence, and for its being pervasive and one. This is followed by discussions of three derivative questions: (1) the question of the relation of divine foreknowledge to divine power; (2) the question of the relation of divine power to created power in living creatures; (3) a question arising from the Mu'tazilite doctrine of generation where Ghazali rejects this doctrine, denying thereby the existence of all secondary causes.

*Arguments for Divine Power.*⁵ Ghazali offers a proof for the existence of divine power: "Every well-designed act proceeds from a powerful agent; the world is a well designed, ordered act; therefore it proceeds from a powerful agent."⁶ The world's design is apprehended by the senses and by observation and is hence impossible to deny. That a well-designed act is produced by an agent endowed with power is a rational truth that is immediately known. If, however, the opponent perversely denies this, Ghazali, to dispel all doubt, offers an argument: An act proceeds from the Agent either by virtue of its essence or due to a meaning additional to the essence. The first alternative is false. For then the act would be coeternal with the essence (that is, if the world were to proceed as the consequence of the eternal, changeless divine essence, it would have to be coeternal with God). Hence the act proceeds from something that is additional to the essence. This is the attribute of power. For, as Ghazali explains, power in conventional discourse is that through which "the act is rendered ready for the agent and through which the act comes about."⁷

⁵ *Iqtisād*, pp. 80-3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

Ghazali's point here is that if God acts through His essence or nature, His very nature necessitates His act. He is thus compelled to act. He has no choice and hence neither will nor "power," as Ghazali understands the latter term. The connection of the divine attribute of will, is introduced in passing as Ghazali reports a possible objection to his argument, namely, that if the divine attribute of power is eternal, then what it enacts must be eternal. Ghazali simply refers the reader to his discussion of the divine attribute of will. His position in essence is that the eternal will chooses a moment of time from among an infinite number of similar moments for the creation of an event. It is divine power, however, that brings about the existence of such a temporal event, the time of its occurrence chosen and decreed by the divine attribute of will. What the attribute of power brings about is something created in time, not something coeternal with it.

Divine power, Ghazali then maintains is pervasive, that is, connected with all things whose coming into existence is in principle possible. But such possibles are infinite. It is possible and conceivable for every future event to have another event succeeding it and so on indefinitely. Thus while an actual infinity of future events is never attained, there is always the potentiality of adding one event after another. Hence there are infinitely possible future events. But power is connected with every possible event. If, then, there is along side every possible future event an individual eternal divine power connected with it, then there would have to be an infinite number of such powers. (Since these would be divine powers and hence eternal, they would constitute a coexisting infinite, an actual infinite, which is impossible.) Ghazali refers us back to his discussion of the impossibility of the infinite past rotations of the heavens. (These past events, unlike future happenings, are for Ghazali actual events. If supposed infinite in the past, they would constitute an actual infinite, which is impossible.)⁸ Hence, divine power which is pervasive, that is, connected with everything that has the possibility of existence, cannot be fragmented, hence numerically infinite, but must be one.

*Divine Power and Divine Knowledge of Future Events.*⁹ If God has knowledge of a future contingent event, for example

⁸ See note 49 below.

⁹ *Iqtisād*, pp. 83-6.

the death of Zayd at a definite future date, would He have the power to create life in Zayd at that time? To resolve this difficulty, Ghazali undertakes an analysis of the terms, "possible," "impossible," and "necessary." Here he draws the distinction between what is possible in itself and its being either necessary or impossible through another. (The influence of Avicenna here is evident, though Ghazali uses Avicennan ideas for purposes all his own). In effect, anything which is internally consistent, devoid of contradiction, is in itself possible. If internally inconsistent it would be impossible. Thus for something to be both black and white at the same time, for example, is contradictory and hence is in itself impossible. If the divine will decrees the occurrence of a possible event, the event, though in itself only possible, becomes necessary through another, namely the decree of the eternal will. Similarly, an event which in itself is possible, whose existence, however, is not decreed by the eternal will, becomes impossible due to something external – the absence of its cause.¹⁰

Ghazali thus establishes the idea that something may be possible in itself, that is, when considered apart from anything else, and impossible due to something external. In the case of Zayd in the above example, creating life in him is not in itself impossible. But it is impossible due to an external thing. For then God would both have the knowledge and not have the knowledge of Zayd's death at a certain moment of time, which is a contradiction. Hence the revival of his death would be impossible, not in itself, but due to an external circumstance. From the point of view of linguistic usage, however, this does not mean that in such an instance the use of the term "power" as it refers to God is inapplicable. For people say that a person at any time has the power over two opposite things, knowing all the time "that what takes place in God's knowledge is the occurrence of [only] one of [these opposites]."¹¹

*Divine Power and Created Power.*¹² This lengthy section is in effect an exposition and defense of the doctrine of acquisition,

¹⁰ It should be reiterated that Ghazali does not deny that every temporal event must have a cause. What he denies is (a) that a causal act proceeds from the essence or nature of the agent, (b) that such an agent can be an inanimate existent and (c) that there is any agent other than God.

¹¹ *Iqtisād*, p. 86.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 86-95.

al-kasb. Ghazali begins by stating a possible objection to his doctrine of the pervasiveness of divine power. What about the enactables by the powers of animate creatures? Are these enactable by divine power? If not enactable, this would contradict the doctrine of the pervasiveness of divine power. If enactable, then we would end up with the contradictory consequence that an object of power is enacted by two powers, the divine and the creaturely. It is this latter point that Ghazali answers, but before doing this he reviews two diametrically opposed positions regarding animate creaturely power. The first is that of the *mujbira*, the determinists, who deny creaturely power. This leads to their inability to explain the obvious distinction between a tremor and a deliberate bodily movement.¹³ He then mentions the Mu'tazilite position that affirms that animate creatures "create" their own acts, and that these acts are inaccessible to divine power.

Ghazali raises two objections to this position. The first is an objection based on a traditionally accepted belief – the Mu'tazilite doctrine is a denial of what "the early pious predecessors" (*al-salaf*) have agreed on, "namely that there is no creator except God and no inventor save Him."¹⁴ The second is an epistemological objection:

The Mu'tazilite doctrine means "attributing invention and creation to one who does not know what he has created."¹⁵ We have little and no information about the number and details of most of the acts we undertake. The infant moves to his mother's breast to suck without knowledge of his movement. Spiders weave highly developed geometrical shapes without knowledge of mathematics. The bees also build their hexagonal cells without knowing the intricate mathematical reasons that render such cells the most appropriate for their survival. Thus – and Ghazali discusses this in some detail – the hexagonal shape has a combination of characteristics not found in any other polygon. When placed adjacent to each other, their cells leave no gaps. The only other figure that has this property is the square. But the area of the circle it encloses is much less

¹³ The source of this argument goes back to al-Ash'ari himself. See *al-Ash'ari Kitāb al-Luma'*, ed. Richard J. McCarthy (Beirut, 1953), pp. 39 ff. (pp. 59 ff. in English translation).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

than the area enclosed by the hexagon. Of the polygons with a small number of sides the hexagon encloses what in area is closest to the circle. The combination of these two characteristics allows most space for the bees, whose shape, Ghazali further adds, is close to being circular. The bees have no knowledge of these mathematical factors in forming their cells - which in fact are created for them by divine power.

After rejecting the Mu'tazilite doctrine as repugnant, he advocates what he deems to be the middle position between their position and that of the determinists, namely that an object of power relates to two possessors of power. This relation would be impossible, he states, if the two powers relate to the object of power in the same way. But, as he will be showing, he states, they do not. Before showing this, he offers two demonstrations to show why two powers do relate to the same object of power.

The first consists in the argument that while both the tremor and the "voluntary" movement differ, they are both possible events. It is thus impossible for divine power which is pervasive and connected with every possible event to attach to one and not the other. Hence it creates the power in the animate being and since the object of this created power is also a possible event, divine power creates the object with it. The second argument begins by granting for the sake of argument that "the servant's" power causally produces the object of power. But such an assumption leads to contradiction. For if God wanted to bring the servant's motion to rest, the consequence is the existence of motion and rest at one and the same time - a contradiction. One cannot argue, Ghazali goes on, that divine power being greater than the created human power, overcomes the latter. For what we have here is the assumption that there are two powers, each creating or inventing *ex nihilo*. In such a case there is no variance, no preponderance of one creation over another. Invention *ex nihilo* is invention *ex nihilo* and does not allow for any variance in strength or weakness. Hence there would be in effect, an invention of motion and an invention of rest at one and the same time, and this is impossible. Hence invention *ex nihilo* belongs solely to one power, not the created power, but the divine.

An opponent, however, may maintain that this position is incomprehensible, "since a power that has no object of power is impossible just as knowledge that has no object of knowledge

is impossible."¹⁶ These must be connected and the only meaningful connection between the created power and its object is a causal connection. If the object of power does not come about through power, then power and object of power would not be connected.

Ghazali rejects this argument. His main point is that created power is related to the object of power, but not causally. The relation between power and object of power is not restricted to that of cause and effect. That not all connections are causal is evidenced, he argues, by the relation of the divine attributes of will and knowledge. These attributes are connected but not causally. It is false to say that the connection between power and object of power is restricted to the causal. The Mu'tazilite opponent, he then points out, holds that human power exists before it brings about its object and continues to exist after the object ceases to exist. To take the case of its existence prior to that of the object, in the period preceding the act, he argues, this power would be connected with the object of power, but not causally. Hence, the opponent must admit that there is a connection between power and what the Mu'tazilites regard as its object which is not causal. Again, the Mu'tazilites hold that God's endowment with power is pre-eternally connected with divine knowledge, existing before the world's creation. That divine power and knowledge are connected is true, he states, but that the world in the time preceding its creation occurs by this power, is false, since it does not exist. Hence power can exist without its object.

If the Mu'tazilites then argue "that the meaning of the connection of the power before the occurrence of the object of power is that if the object of power occurs, it occurs by it," Ghazali responds that this is not a connection in time but an expectation of a connection.¹⁷ Again, if the opponent argues that the meaning of the connection between power and object in the period preceding the coming to be of the object is that the power is prepared for the occurrence by it of the object, Ghazali responds that there is no meaning of "preparedness" other than "the expectation" of the occurrence by it. Hence there can be a connection between created power and the object of power that is not causal. This, Ghazali holds, is always the

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

case, since both the created power and the object of power are both created by divine power. The relation between created power and the object of power created by divine power is a relation of concomitance, not that of causal connection.

Ghazali then reports a final possible objection to his doctrine: a power through which an object of power does not come to be is tantamount to impotence. To this he replies that if this means that the experience of a tremor and of the created power are identical, then this is false – a denial of what is necessarily not the case. For this difference is immediately experienced. But if the opponent means that the object of power does not come about by the created power, this is true. While this is admittedly something akin to impotence, calling it “impotence,” is incorrect as it violates idiomatic usage. This is particularly the case if, for the sake of argument, one presumes to say that divine power falls short of bringing about its object. If what is akin to “impotence” is to be used at all, it would be more appropriately used with respect to created power.

*The Doctrine of Generation.*¹⁸ Ghazali begins his critique by first presenting the Mu'tazilite position in its strongest form: How can Ghazali uphold the doctrine of the pervasiveness of the divine will, “when most of what there is in the world by way of motions and other things are generated [things], one generated from another by necessity?”¹⁹ For, the opponent argues, we experience that the movement of the hand generates the movement of the ring on the finger and that the movement of the hand in the water generates the movement of the water. This is proven rationally. For if it were the case that God creates both the movement of the hand and the movement of the ring and both the movement of the hand in the water and the movement of the water, then it would have to be possible for Him to create the movement of the hand without the movement of the ring and the movement of the hand in the water without the movement of the water. But this is impossible.

Ghazali begins by criticizing the notion of generation. What is ordinarily meant by “generation,” he argues, is the emergence of one body from the interior of another – the newly born from the mother's body, the emergence of plants from the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

earth. But this is impossible in the case of accidents. The motion²⁰ of the hand has no interior such that the movement of the ring would emerge from it. "If the movement of the ring was not latent in the motion of the hand, what would being generated by it mean?"²¹ If this is not understood, then the contention that the movement of the hand generates the movement of the ring or the movement of the water is something that is observed is ignorance and folly. What is observed is the movement of the ring "with" the movement of the hand. "As for its being generated by it, [this] is not observable."

Turning to the argument that if God creates both the motion of the hand and the motion of the ring and the motion of the hand in water and the motion of the water then He should be able to move the hand without moving the ring or the water, this, Ghazali argues, is not the case. For it would be like saying that if knowledge were not generated from the will, God would be able to create will without knowledge (of what is willed). But this is impossible. The impossible is not enactable. (If life is a condition for the existence of knowledge, it would be impossible for an existent that is inanimate to have knowledge). In the case of the movement of the hand in the water, God must make it occupy a space close to the space it initially occupied. If the proximate space was not emptied, it would be impossible for the hand to occupy the space. Two bodies cannot occupy the same space. Hence the emptiness of one space is a necessary condition for the other. (A necessary condition by itself is not a causal condition – the divine attribute of life is a necessary condition for the attribute of will, but is not its cause). In essence, if God moves the hand in the water, He must also move the water. It is God who moves both the hand and the water. It is not the hand that moves the water.

In the case of concomitants where the existence of one is not a necessary condition for the existence of the other, these can be disconnected from each other without contradiction. Their concomitance is due to a habitual course ordained by God, but which is not necessary in itself. Interestingly, Ghazali mentions as one of his examples the example used and elaborated on in the *Tahāfut* – that of the contact of cotton with fire.²²

²⁰ Motion for the Ash'arite Ghazali is an accident.

²¹ *Iqtisād*, p. 96.

²² *Tahāfut*, pp. 278-9.

Finally, Ghazali reports the opponent as maintaining that one does not mean by generation the "surfacing of motion from the interior of another," but "the existence of an existent after another existent and its being originated by it."²³ The falsity of this, Ghazali answers, is proved by the same thing which proved the falsity of the idea that created power brings about the existence of the object of power, namely it contradicts the concept of the pervasiveness of divine power. Any occurrence that is hypothesized as falling outside divine power falsifies its pervasiveness – which is impossible. If inanimate existents have causal power this means the attribution to God of impotence.²⁴ Then after mentioning some of the contradictions involved in Mu'tazilite statements about generation, he concludes with his categorical declaration that "all temporal events, their substances and accidents, those occurring in the entities of the animate and the inanimate, come about through the power of God... No created thing comes about through another [created thing]. Rather, all come about through divine power."²⁵

C. GHAZALI'S DEFENSE OF *KASB*: A CRITICAL COMMENT

As can be seen from the above exposition, the discussion that dominates the chapter is Ghazali's defense of the doctrine of *kasb*. Given his basic premise that divine power is pervasive in the sense that it is the direct creator of each and every temporal event, it follows that what is normally referred to as created power, which includes human power, has no causal efficacy. But if, on independent grounds, one finds reason to question this consequence, then one would have to question Ghazali's basic premise, his conception of what constitutes divine omnipotence. And what is open to serious questioning is Ghazali's answer to a criticism of his position that he himself reports, namely that it is meaningless to speak of a created power that has no object of power.

Before turning to Ghazali's answer to this criticism, however, a remark on the traditional objection to *kasb* is in order.

²³ *Iqtîşâd*, p. 98.

²⁴ See note 81 below.

²⁵ *Iqtîşâd*, p. 99.

This is an objection that revolves around the conflict over the concept of divine justice. The objection voiced, by Averroes,²⁶ among others, is that *kasb* reduces to *jabr*, to utter determinism. Ghazali argues, however, that *kasb* strikes the path of moderation between the Mu'tazilite doctrine that man creates his own acts (those ordinarily regarded as deliberate acts) and *jabr*. *Kasb* is not identical with *jabr*, he argues, because the former is unable to differentiate between the compulsory spasm and the act we speak of as deliberate, a difference which we ourselves experience. Ghazali's argument here, however, is not very helpful in resolving the ethical issue that is at the heart of the controversy, namely the issue of moral responsibility. If human power and its effect are both the direct creations of divine power, in what sense can the individual be held to be morally responsible for his acts?

To turn to the criticism which Ghazali puts in the mouth of the opponent, namely, that it is meaningless to speak of a created power that has no object of power, the criticism bears quoting in full:

For if the created power in the servant has no connection with the object of power, [this] is incomprehensible, since a power that has no object of power is impossible just as knowledge that has no object of knowledge [is impossible]. If it is connected with it, then the connection between power and the object of power is only intelligible in terms of influence, bringing into existence and the coming to be of the object of power by [power]. For the relation between the object of power and power is the relation of effect to cause, namely its coming to be by it. Thus if it did not come by it, then there would be no connection between them.²⁷

In answering this objection, Ghazali gives two arguments. The first is that between connected things there are relations that are not causal and hence, in effect, that one can affirm the connection between created power and what is regarded as its object and deny (without committing a contradiction) that this connection is causal. And Ghazali strenuously denies that this connection is causal. The second is that the Mu'tazilite oppo-

²⁶ Averroes, *Kitāb al-Kashf 'an Manāhij al-Adilla*, ed. M.J. Müller, in *Philosophie und Theologie von Averroes* (Munich, 1859), p. 105; also Averroes' criticism of the Ash'arite definition of act in his *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, ed. M. Bouyges (Beirut, 1930), p. 158. This work will be abbreviated *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

nent in terms of his own definition of power as existing before the act must concede the point that there is a period between power and the object it is supposed to cause, where it is related to such an object but not causally. Hence the Mu'tazilite opponent must admit that it is possible to have a connection between power and its object that is not causal.

To comment on the first argument, in all fairness to Ghazali, it has to be seen in its wider context. If the divine will is pervasive, then the created power has no causal efficacy, in which case the existence of a created power without its effect would have to be possible. Ghazali in effect argues for this possibility, pointing out as an example the relation between the divine attributes of knowledge and will. These are connected but not causally. (Knowledge is a necessary condition for will but is not its cause). But it is here that his argument is open to serious questioning. From the premise that some connections are not causal, it does not follow that all connections can be non-causal. Hence it does not follow that this particular connection, the connection between created power and what is regarded as its object need not be causal. To be sure, the attributes of will and knowledge are connected necessarily, but not causally. But is this analogy applicable to the relation between the created power in us and the object of power? The analogy, which the critic points out, is between knowledge and its object. The critic's point here is well taken. On the level of ordinary discourse it is quite odd to speak, for example, of one's power (capacity, ability) to write (when one is actually writing) as having no object, the movement of the hand and the writing being directly caused by a power external to us. And such language is inappropriate because of what we experience, a point to which we will return.

Turning to the second argument, the Mu'tazilite opponent had argued that it is impossible to have a connection between created power and its object which is not causal. Ghazali now argues at great length to show that on the basis of their own doctrine of created power, the Mu'tazilites must admit the possibility of a non-causal connection between such a power and what they consider to be its object. Ghazali's argument is a classic example of a dialectical argument. You concede or admit to the opponent a premise and then show that it leads to a conclusion contrary to what he holds. Sometimes the admission is made out of "conviction" (*i'tiqādan*), sometimes only dialecti-

cally (*jadalan*),²⁸ that is, only for the sake of argument. The Mu'tazilite premise in question is that power precedes its effect in time. This applies to two powers, created power and God's eternal power. To take the premise as it applies to created power first, this is a premise which Ghazali concedes only for the sake of argument. This is clear from the pattern of arguing he follows. There is no evidence to suggest that he does not subscribe to al-Ash'ari's doctrine that the created power and its supposed effect are always simultaneous, the created power never preceding such an effect.²⁹ Hence conceding the Mu'tazilite premise is simply for the sake of argument. And if this premise is false, as Ghazali holds, then the argument based on it, namely that a created power can be related to its supposed object but not causally, falls. Ghazali's dialectic may score a point against the Mu'tazilite opponent, but it does not establish that there is a period of time in which created power exists without its object. It only established this if the Mu'tazilite doctrine that created power precedes its object in time is true. But this is a doctrine which Ghazali holds to be false.

Ghazali's argument as it applies to divine power is more problematic. For here his Ash'arite position agrees with the Mu'tazilites in holding that divine power "precedes" the creation of the world.³⁰ Thus the admission of their premise becomes in effect an admission "out of conviction." Nonetheless, it serves the same purpose of showing that power, in this case divine power, precedes the object of power, in this case the world, and hence that during this period before the world's existence power existed without its object. But this point, which Ghazali does not elaborate, raises the question of the priority of God (and His eternal attributes) to the created world. Is this a temporal priority so that one can argue that there is an infinite period of time when divine power existed without the world? This brings up the perennial problem of the

²⁸ See *Tahāfut*, p. 15: "Let us concede all this to [the philosophers], either dialectically or out of conviction."

²⁹ For a comprehensive discussion of the Ash'arite doctrine, see D. Gimaret, *La doctrine d'al-Ash'ari* (Paris, 1990), pp. 131 ff. *Iqtisād* (p. 181, l. 11) affirms this doctrine.

³⁰ Ghazali affirms the priority of divine power to the world's creation in *Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id* of his *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, in *al-Rukn al-Thālith, al-Asl al-Thānī*. Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 4 vols. (Cairo, no date), vol. I, pp. 193-4.

relation of what is eternal in the sense of being outside time (not in the sense of being everlasting in time, that is, temporally infinite) to the temporal, the created world. Ghazali in the *Tahāfut* had argued that the world and time are created together and that God is prior to the creation of the world in a non-temporal sense of "before."³¹ But if the priority of divine power to its object, the created world, is not temporal, then the opponent can argue that it is meaningless to speak of a time in which divine power existed without the world.

The heart of the matter, however, is the question of whether created power and its object, always simultaneous occurrences, according to Ash'arite precepts, are, as Ghazali maintains, mere concomitants. It is here that one must review very briefly what he says about "habitual" causes and effects as being mere concomitants in his defense of the Ash'arite causal doctrine at the beginning of the 17th Discussion of the *Tahāfut*. There he argued that what we habitually believe to be causes and effects in nature are mere concomitants: we only observe the simultaneous occurrence of two events, but not any necessary causal connection between them. He then lists examples of these concomitants, namely "the quenching of thirst and drinking, satiety and eating, burning and contact with fire, light and the appearance of the sun, death and decapitation, recovery and the taking of medicine, the bowel's movement and taking of a laxative and so on to the inclusion of all observed connections in medicine, arts and crafts."³² This list, to which we will return momentarily, is then followed by a discussion of his famous example of the piece of cotton and its contact with fire. We only observe the occurrence of the burning of the cotton when the contact takes place, but we do not observe the burning by the fire.³³

Ghazali's argument is sound. Strictly speaking, in the examples he gives, we observe only concomitance, not a causal necessary connection.³⁴ Avicenna, for example, recognizes this and

³¹ *Tahāfut*, pp. 52 ff. This doctrine is reaffirmed in *al-Maqqad al-Asnā*. Al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqqad al-Asnā*, ed. F. Shehadi (Beirut, 1971), pp. 159-60. See also the author's "The Logical role of the argument from time in the *Tahāfut*'s second proof for the world's pre-eternity," *The Muslim World*, XLIX, 4 (1959): 306-14.

³² *Tahāfut*, pp. 277-8.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 278-9; *Iqtisād*, p. 97.

³⁴ "To deny efficient causes that are observed in sensible things, is sophistical talk," writes Averroes in his criticism of Ghazali. *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, p. 519. But the point at issue is whether we observe necessary connection between the efficient

uses an additional argument to infer (to his own satisfaction) that there is such necessary causal connection.³⁵ Ghazali who uses the same argument but draws from it a different conclusion³⁶ insists that what we encounter in the examples he cited

cause and its effect. Averroes here does not answer this point, although he goes on, as we see it, to give more effective criticisms.

³⁵ Ibn Sinā (Avicenna), *al-Shifā' (Healing): al-Ilāhiyyāt (Metaphysics)*, ed. G.C. Anawati, S. Dunya, M.Y. Musa and S. Zayid, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1960), p. 8, lines 8-9; *al-Burhān (Demonstration)*, ed. A.E. Affifi (Cairo, 1956), pp. 96, 223, 249-50.

For Avicenna the observation of regularities is not sufficient for establishing necessary causal connection. In addition there is the "hidden syllogism" to the effect that if these regularities were coincidental or accidental they would not have happened always or for the most part. From this he concludes that the regularities derive from the inherent nature of things that connect them causally and necessarily. Avicenna's "hidden syllogism," however, is open to the criticism that it is circular since the accidental and the coincidental are by definition those things that do not happen always or for the most part.

³⁶ Ghazali concludes that the regularity derives from God's decree, not from any causal properties in created things. Al-Ghazālī, *Mi'yār al-'Ilm*, ed. S. Dunya (Cairo, 1960), pp. 189-91. Nature's uniformity is decreed by the divine will, but is not necessary in itself. Hence its disruption when God creates a miracle does not involve contradiction. The events that are normally regarded as causes and effects but are not necessarily connected can best be referred to as "habitual" (to follow Ghazali's language) in two senses of the term. (a) They follow the habitual course of nature ordained by God - the decreed uniformity that is only disrupted when God creates the miracle. (b) They are "habitual" in the sense of our habitually believing them to be causes and effects. These habitual causes and effects, are not real causes and effects. But they do follow an order which includes the relation of the priority of the cause to the effect, a priority which in itself is not necessary, but is part of the contingent uniformity decreed by God. It is on the basis of this uniformity that we are able to infer the habitual effect from the habitual cause and the habitual cause from the habitual effect - that is when the proper conditions obtain, conditions that are part of the order which is not necessary in itself, but which is decreed by the divine will. Thus, to give but one example, we can infer the habitual cause from the habitual effect when (barring impediments) it is ascertained that there is only one habitual cause. (This is not to deny that the uniformity ordained by God does not contain necessary connections - life is a necessary condition for knowledge, for example - but these are not causal connections). The only suspension of our ability to make scientific causal inferences is when there is a disruption of the uniformity, when the miracle takes place. (God then does not create in us knowledge of the uniformity, creating instead knowledge of the miracle). In his writings, Ghazali ordinarily (when he is not discussing the metaphysics of causality) speaks of causes and effects within the created world without having to constantly remind us that these are habitual, not real, causes and effects, in the same way that he speaks of human will and human power without having to constantly tell us that this is created will and created power that has not real efficacy. For a fuller discussion of Ghazali's interpretation of Aristotelian causal theory in occasionalist terms, see the authors' "Ghazali and demonstrative science," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, III, 2 (1965): 183-204, and, "Ghazali's attitude to the secular sciences and logic," in *Essays in Islamic Philosophy and Science*, ed. G.F. Hourani (Albany, N.Y., 1975), pp. 100-11. For a discussion of the causal theories discussed in the 17th Discussion of the *Tahāfut* in the

is sheer concomitance. The question then is whether the connection between created power and its object belongs to the same class of events given by Ghazali as having the relation of mere concomitance. Is my experience of my ability or power to move my hand and the deliberate movement of my hand the same as my observing a piece of cotton that burns when in contact with fire? This hardly seems to be the case. Normally, when I am fully awake and aware of what I am doing, the experience of my power to move my hand consists in experiencing the exercise of this power. I do not experience my power to move my hand (when moving the hand) and the movement of the hand being caused by an external power. It is this experience that renders the Ash'arite statement that the created power in reality has no object that it actually enacts (and never can enact) an aberration of our normal use of language. But whether this appeal to experience and language refutes, in any final sense, Ghazali's position on *kasb* is not entirely certain. Not that a restoring of efficacy to created power – assuming that such a restoration has been affected – renders the experiencing of our power, volition, action and voluntary motion any more comprehensible. These in an ultimate sense remain a mystery. And Ghazali conveys a deep sense of this mystery and the wonders of creation in his argument against the Mu'tazilite doctrine that man creates his own acts. For, according to Ghazali, this doctrine means the attribution of "invention and creation to one who does not know what he has created." He then follows this with examples of animate creaturely actions, the longest of which is his description of the bees in building their honeycombs, an example he reechoes in his later writings.³⁷

Whatever one may think of Ghazali's defense of *kasb*, his arguments do evoke the sense of the mystery of things and the wonders of creation. And this sense of the mysterious and of awe at the wonders of creation underlies his relentless and spirited defense of the doctrine of *kasb*. One must keep this in

light of the discussion of causality in its sequel, the *Iqtisād*, see the author's "Al-Ghazālī's second causal argument in the 17th Discussion of his *Tahāfut*," in *Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism*, ed. P. Morowedge (Delmar, N.Y., 1981), pp. 85-112, and "Al-Ghazālī on bodily resurrection and causality in the *Tahāfut* and the *Iqtisād*," the full reference already cited in n.1.

³⁷ See, for example, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*, ed. R.A. Qabbāni (Beirut, 1986), p. 67.

mind as one pursues the intricacies of his chapter on divine power, a chapter so basic for a proper understanding of his views on causality.

D. TRANSLATION³⁸

{80} *The First Attribute: Power*

We claim that the originator of the world is powerful. [This is] because the world is an act that is well designed, organized, perfected, ordered, comprising [different kinds] of wonders and signs. This gives evidential proof of power.

We [thus] construct the syllogism, saying: "Every well-designed act proceeds from a powerful agent; the world is a well-designed, ordered act. Therefore it proceeds from a powerful agent."

In which of these two premises³⁹ is there a dispute?

If then, it is said, "Why do you say that the world is a well-designed act?", we say:

"We mean by its being well-designed its organization, its orderliness and its symmetry. Whoever looks into his organs, external and internal, there will become manifest for him of the wonders of perfection that whose enumeration would be lengthy. This, then, is a premise which is apprehended, known through the senses and observation. It is hence impossible to deny."⁴⁰

If, then, it is said, "how do you know the other premise, namely, that [in the case of] every well-designed ordered act, its agent is powerful?", we say:

³⁸ The translation is based primarily on the Ankara edition to which we have been referring. Three other uncritical Cairo printings have also been consulted. Two of these are undated and published by two different commercial presses, Maktabat al-Ḥusayn al-Tijāriyya and Maṭba'at Muṣṭafā Bābā al-Ḥalabī; the third, published by al-Jundi press, is dated, 1972, and is edited by al-Shaykh M.M. Abu al-'Alā. These versions seem to be copies of each other. Where these vary from the Ankara edition, the latter usually, but not always, includes such variants found in the manuscripts it uses in its *apparatus criticus*. As will be indicated, there are places in the translation where the readings in the Cairo versions have been preferred.

³⁹ Ghazali, however, uses the term *uṣūl*, "principles," which is more concordant with *kalām* terminology, rather than *muqaddimāt*, "premises" the term usually used in logic. But the intention is the same. "Premises," however, seems preferable here as it conveys more directly the syllogistic nature of the argument.

⁴⁰ Knowledge received directly by the senses is "necessary knowledge," in *kalām* epistemology. See note below.

{81} That which apprehends this is rational necessity.⁴¹ For the intellect ascertains its truth without proof, [its truth] the rational person being unable to deny. Despite this we will unsheathe a proof that will sever the root of [all] denial and obstinacy. We say:

[What] we mean by His being powerful is that the act proceeding from him is not devoid [of one of only two exclusive alternatives]:⁴² either [(a)] that it proceeds from Him by virtue of His essence or [(b)] by virtue of a meaning in addition to [His essence]. It is false to say that it proceeds from Him by virtue of His essence, since if this were the case, then [the act] would be eternal with the essence. This proves that it proceeds from [something] additional to His essence. Thus the attribute additional [to the essence] through which the [agent] becomes prepared for [bringing about] the existing act we call "power;" since "power," according to the convention of language is an expression of the attribute by which the act is rendered ready for the agent and through which the act comes about. And this description is what the decisive disjunction which we have mentioned proves. We do not mean by "power" anything but this attribute and we have proved it.

If, it is said, "This [argument] turns against you with respect of power; for it is pre-eternal whereas the act is not pre-eternal,"⁴³ we say, "the answer to this will come [when we discuss] the characteristics governing⁴⁴ the [divine] will."⁴⁵

⁴¹ *Darûratu al-'aql*, literally, the "necessity of the intellect." The *darûrat al-'aql* in *kalâm* language refers to *al-'ilm al-darûri*, "necessary knowledge," which includes self-evident truths, knowledge of one's existence, of one's states and knowledge received directly by the senses, as distinct from *'ilm nazari*, "reflective knowledge," arrived at through inference.

⁴² This is the disjunctive syllogism, *al-şabr wa al-taqsim*, to use the terminology of the *kalâm*, used by both the *mutakallimûn* and the philosophers where the disjunct is exclusive and restricted to the alternative mentioned.

⁴³ Adopting the reading in the Cairo versions and recorded in the *apparatus criticus* of the Ankara edition, *yanqalib 'alaykum hâdhâ fi al-qudra fa-innahâ qadîma wa al-fa'l laysa bi-qadîm*. The Ankara body of the text reads: *fa-hâdhâ yanqalib 'alaykum fi al-qudra fa-innahâ qadîma qultum lam yakun al-maqdûr qadîman*. "This [argument] turns against you with respect to power; for it is pre-eternal [but] you said that what is enacted by power is not pre-eternal."

⁴⁴ *Al-Ahkâm*.

⁴⁵ *Iqtîşâd*, pp. 101 ff. The divine will, also an attribute additional to the divine essence, has as its function specifying one similar thing from among other similar things for the divine power to bring into existence. The issue has to do with the creation of the world at a moment in time. Temporal moments are all similar. But the divine eternal will chooses one moment for creation. By definition the will is that

Now that we have established [the existence of the divine attribute of] power, let us mention the characteristics that govern it.

One of its governing characteristics {82} is that it is connected with all [things] enactable by [divine] power,⁴⁶ and by "[things] enactable by [divine] power," I mean all the possibles.⁴⁷ [Now] it is manifest that all the possibles are endless; hence the enactables by [divine] power are infinite. We mean by our saying that there is no end to the possibles that the creation of events after [other] events does not reach a limit where it is rationally impossible for an event to occur thereafter. Possibility is hence ever continuous and [divine] power is spacious [to accommodate] all this.

Demonstrative proof of this claim, namely the pervasiveness of the connectedness of [divine] power [with things possible], is that it has become evident that the Maker of the world⁴⁸ is one. [It follows then that] there will either [(a)] be alongside every enactable by [divine] power, a [corresponding divine] power, when the enactables by [divine] power are infinite, whereby one would have to affirm numerous powers that are infinite, which is impossible, as has been previously [shown] in refuting infinite rotations,⁴⁹ or else [(b)] there will be one power. Hence

which chooses between similars when there is no determinant to influence this choice. Or as Ghazali puts it, "the will is nothing but an expression of an attribute whose function is to differentiate one thing from what is similar to it." *Ibid.* p. 106. This definition is argued for at length in the first Discussion of the *Tahâfut*, where Ghazali rejects the doctrine of a pre-eternal world. See *Tahâfut*, pp. 31 ff. Hence the eternal power causes its object to exist at the time specified by the eternal will. It thus does not follow that because the divine attribute of power is eternal, the act it produces is coeternal with it, as the opponent suggests.

⁴⁶ *Al-maqdûrât*, the plural of *al-maqdûr*, a key term throughout Ghazali's discussion. In some contexts it means that which is enactable by power, in others, that which actually has been enacted by power. The context sometimes requires its translation as "the object of power." We have translated the term in all three ways - depending on context.

⁴⁷ The Cairo texts add, *allatî lâ nihâya lahâ*, "which are endless/infinite." The Ankara edition does not include this in its *apparatus*.

⁴⁸ *Šâni' al-'âlam*. The Cairo versions give *Šâni' kull al-'âlam* (a variant given in the Ankara edition), "maker of the whole world."

⁴⁹ *Iqtisâd*, p. 17, where the argument is given in its shortest form: to suppose infinite rotations in the past means that at the present an infinite has terminated, for Ghazali, a contradiction. The argument resting on the contradiction of affirming infinities that are unequal is discussed in greater detail in *Tahâfut*, pp. 31-3 and repeated in the discussion of the divine will in *Iqtisâd*, pp. 104-5. The issue between Ghazali and the philosophers who believed in an eternal world is whether past events, that no longer exist, form an actual, not merely potential infinite. For

its connection as it unites with the [things] with which it connects by way of substances and accidents, with [all] their differences, is due to something they share. And these share in nothing other than possibility. From this it follows then that every possible [existent] is necessarily enactable through [divine] power and comes about through [divine] power.⁵⁰

In general, if substances and accidents proceed from Him, then it is impossible for their similars to proceed from him [simultaneously and in the same place]. For the power over a thing is a power over its similar [only] if plurality in what is enacted by power is not impossible.⁵¹ Hence the relation [of divine power] to all motions and all colors is of one pattern. It thus becomes fit for creating one motion after another {83} perpetually, and likewise one color after another, one substance after another, and so on. And this is what we meant by saying that His power, exalted be He, is connected with every possible. For possibility is not confined to [any] number and the relation of the essence of power does not pertain to one specific number rather than another. It is thus not possible to refer to a movement and say that it is extraneous to the possibility of the connectedness of power with it, even though it has connected with its similar, since we know that what belongs necessarily to the one thing belongs necessarily to its similar.

From this [doctrine of power], three [questions] derive.

[I. Divine Power and God's Knowledge of Future Events].

The first is if one were to say, "Do you say that the contrary of what is known [will happen] is [enactable] by [divine] power?", we say:

This is [one of the things] over which there has been disagreement. But disagreement in it is inconceivable once its

Ghazali (but not Avicenna) these events, since they have existed do form an actual infinite. See *Tahāfut*, pp. 33-4. The story is different with future events. These, for Ghazali, do not form an actual infinite - they may indefinitely increase but they never form an actual infinite.

⁵⁰ What Ghazali seems to mean is that should the possible be realized in existence. it is realized only through the act of divine power, not that whatever is possible is always realized through the act of the divine power. The eternal will, for example, chooses only one moment of time, among other possible moments, for creation to take place, the divine power enacting the world only at that moment chosen by the will.

⁵¹ *Idhā lam yamtani' al-ta'addud fi al-maqdūr.*

truth is ascertained and the knotiness of verbal expressions removed.

Its proof is that it has been established that every possible is [enactable] by [divine] power and that the impossible is not [enactable] by [such a] power. Reflect then⁵² as to whether what is contrary to what is known [will happen] is impossible or possible. And you will only know this after you know the meaning of the impossible and the possible and attain their true natures.⁵³ Otherwise, if we are lax in our reflection, then it may become true that the contrary of what is known [will happen] is impossible, that it is possible and that it is not impossible, in which case it would therefore be true that it is [both] impossible and not impossible, when [in fact] the two contradictories {84} are [never] both true.

Know, then, that underlying [this] expression there is a coverage of [different meanings] which will become unveiled for you by what I say, namely, that it would be true [to say] of the world, for example, that it is necessary, that it is impossible and that it is possible. As for its being necessary, this is where if we suppose the will of the Eternal to exist an existence that is necessary, then the object of the will would by necessity be necessary, not possible, since the nonexistence of the object of the will with the realization of the eternal will is impossible.⁵⁴ As for its being impossible, this is when one supposes the absence of a connection of the [eternal] will with the act of bringing [the world] into existence. For then it is necessary that its origination is impossible, since this would lead to the occurrence of an event without a cause, which is known to be

⁵² Reading *fa-unzur* as in the Cairo versions. The Ankara edition gives *jal-nanzur*, "Let us reflect."

⁵³ Reading *wa lâ ta'rif dhâlika illâ idhâ 'arafa ma'nâ al-muḥâl wa al-mumkin wa ḥaṣṣalta ḥaқиqatahumâ*, as given by the three Cairo versions and as an alternative reading in the Ankara edition. The main text of the Ankara edition reads, *wa lâ na'rifu dhâlika illâ ba'da an 'urifa* [possibly *'urifa*] *ma'nâ al-muḥâl wa al-mumkin wa nuḥaṣṣilu ḥaқиqatahumâ*, "we will only know that after the meaning of the impossible and the possible are known [made known] and we attain their true natures."

⁵⁴ Any temporal event which the eternal will chooses to happen, must happen. The event, however, is the consequence of the will's eternal choice, not the necessary consequence of the divine essence or nature, which would render the divine act compulsory.

Hence Ghazali's insistence on the Ash'arite dogma that the eternal attributes are "additional" to the divine essence.

impossible. As for its being possible, this is when one examines only its essence, considering with it neither the existence nor nonexistence of the will. It will then have the description of possibility.

Hence the considerations are three. The first is to make as a condition the existence of the will and its connection [with the world]. In this consideration it is necessary. The second is to consider the absence of the will. Considered in this way it is impossible. The third is to pay no heed to the will and cause, where neither its existence nor its non-existence is considered, and devote reflection only on the essence of the world.⁵⁶ Thus, with this consideration, there would remain for it the third thing, namely, possibility. {85} By this we mean that it is possible in itself, that is, if we do not make any condition other than itself, it would be possible.

From this it becomes clear that the one thing can be possible [and] impossible, but possible through a consideration of itself [alone], impossible through a consideration of another. But it is not allowable for it to be in itself possible and in itself impossible. For these are contradictories.

Let one then return to the [question of] the contrary of what is known [will happen]. We say:

If it precedes in God's knowledge that Zayd will be rendered dead on Saturday morning, for example, then we would [ask]: would the creation of life for Zayd on the morning of Saturday be possible or not possible? The truth is that it is [both] possible and impossible, that is, it is possible in terms of itself if [all] attention to anything else is severed, and impossible in terms of another, not in itself – this if one considers with [the possibility of creating life] attention to the connection of [God's] knowledge of [Zayd's] being rendered dead. That which is impossible in itself is that which is in itself prohibited such as combining being [both] black and white [at one and the same time], not due to an impossibility in [what is] other than itself. [Now], the life of Zayd, if it is hypothesized to be [at the time God knows it to cease to exist], [its existence] would not be impossible by virtue of life itself; but an impossibility necessarily would follow in what is other than itself, namely, the essence of knowi-

⁵⁶ Reading *wa nujarrid al-naẓar ilā dhāt al-'ālam*, as given by the Cairo versions and reconstructed from variants in the Ankara edition. The Ankara text reads, *wa mujarrad al-naẓar ilā dhāt al-'ilm*, "reflection being on the essence of knowledge."

edge, since it would then turn into ignorance. And it is impossible for it to turn into ignorance. Hence it is clear that [Zayd's] life is possible in itself, impossible because it leads to an impossibility in another. If then we say that Zayd's life at that time is [enactable] by [divine] power, we only intend that life inasmuch as it is life, is not impossible in the way that combining being [both] black and white [at the same time] is impossible. And the power of God, exalted be He, inasmuch as it is power does not stray from the connection of creating life and does not fall short {86} of it due to slackness, weakness, or [any] cause in the essence of power. And these are two things impossible to deny, I mean the removal of [any] shortcoming from the essence of power and the affirming of possibility for the essence of life inasmuch as it is life, nothing more, without paying attention to anything else.

And if the adversary says that [the contrary of what God knows will happen] is not [enactable] by [divine] power, in the sense that its existence would lead to an impossibility, he would, [taking this] sense, be uttering what is true; for this we do not deny. What remains is to look into [the usage] expressed. Is it correct from the point of view of language to affirm or negate this term, ["power"]? It is clear that the correct thing is to use this term. For people say that so and so has the power to move and to remain still – if he wishes he moves and if he wishes he stays still. And they say that at any time he has the power over two opposites, knowing [all the time] that what takes place in God's knowledge is the occurrence of [only] one of [these opposites]. Hence [the normal] application of the term bears witness to what we have mentioned. The [prevalent] meaning allotted [to the term] is necessary,⁵⁶ there being no way for denying it.

[II. Divine Power and the Powers of Animate Creatures]

The second derivative [question arises] when someone says:

You have claimed the pervasiveness of [divine] power in its connection with all possibles. What then do you say about [the enactables] by the powers of animals and the rest of the living among created beings – are these [enactable] by divine power

⁵⁶ *Wa ḥazz al-ma'nā minhu darūri*. The sentence is highly idiomatic, its nuance difficult to capture in a translation.

or not? If you say they are not [enactable] by [divine] power, then you contradict your statement that the connection of [divine] power is pervasive. And if you say that they are within His power, it becomes necessary for you to affirm an object of power, [enacted by]⁵⁷ two possessors of power, which is impossible, or else to deny that man and the rest {87} of the animals have power, which is a denial of necessary [knowledge] and a denial of the demands of the religious law, since demanding that which is not within one's power is impossible; and it is impossible that God should say to His servant: "you must undertake [to enact] that which is within my power, when I alone have the power over it, and you have no power over it."⁵⁸

We say in disengaging ourselves [from this difficulty]:

On this [question] people have aligned themselves to different parties. Thus the determinists (*al-mujbira*) have adopted the view denying the power of [God's] servants. From this, as a necessary consequence for them, follows the denial of the necessary differentiation between the spasmodic movement and the voluntary movement. It also follows as a necessary consequence for them the impossibility of the obligations of the religious law. The Mu'tazilites, [on the other hand], have undertaken to deny the connection of the power of God, exalted be, with the acts of [His] servants, of animals, of angels, of the jinn, and of devils, claiming that all that proceeds from them is the creation and "invention" (*ikhtirā'*)⁵⁹ of [His] servants, God having no power over [these acts] either by way of denial or the bringing of them into existence.⁶⁰ [From this] there thus necessarily ensues for them two great repugnancies.

The first is the denial of what the early pious predecessors, may God's satisfaction be upon them, have all agreed on, namely that there is no creator except God and no inventor save Him.

⁵⁷ *Ithbāt maqdūr bayna qādirayn*, literally, "affirming of power between two possessors of power."

⁵⁸ This is an expression of the Mu'tazilite doctrine that a just God does not demand of His servants that which is beyond their capacity, *mā fawqa al-lāqa*.

⁵⁹ The term when applied to divine action would mean "invention / creation" *ex nihilo*.

⁶⁰ *Lā qudra li-Allāhi 'alayhā bi nafy wa lā ijād*. Presumably the *nafy* here is after the act has already proceeded from the creaturely agent, not that God cannot prevent the creature from acting. The position here seems to be - but this is not certain - that the act being discussed is by definition creaturely, not divine; hence it would be a contradiction for God to perform such an act.

The second is their attributing invention and creation to one who does not know what he has created. For, [in the case of] motions {88} that proceed from the human being and the rest of animals, if asked about their number, details and amount, [the individual] would have no information about them. Indeed, the infant boy as he separates from the crib, [beginning to move on his own], will crawl by his own choice to the [mother's] breast and suck. And the cat when born crawls to its mother's breast, her eyes [still] unopened. [Again,] the spider weaves by way of webs wondrous shapes that astound the geometer by their circularity, the parallelism of the sides of [their concentric shapes]⁶¹ and the symmetry of their organization. One knows by necessity their having no connection with knowing [things] the geometers are unable to know. And the bees design their cells in the form of hexagons, including [among] them neither the square, the spherical, the seven-sided nor any other shape. This is because the hexagon is distinguished by a special property, proved by geometrical demonstrations, that is found in no other [shape]. This is built on [a number] of principles.

The first is that one of the shapes, the one that is most spacious, is the circular shape, [which is] free from angles extraneous to the straight.⁶² The second is that when [the circumferences of] circular figures are placed pressed against each other there will necessarily remain between them unused gaps. The third is that of the figures with few sides, the closest to the circular in containment⁶³ is the hexagonal [shape]. {89} The fourth is that all the shapes close to the circular, such as the seven-sided shape, the octagon and the pentagon, if a group of them are placed pressing against each other, there would remain [between them] unused gaps, and [hence such shapes] would not be contiguous. As for the squares, they are contiguous, but are remote from containing circles [close in area to the area the squares encompass] because of the distances of their angles from their centers.

[Now] since the bees require a shape close to [that of] circles so as to contain their person (for [the bee] is close to being cir-

⁶¹ *Aqlā'ahā*, literally, "their sides."

⁶² I.e. free from angularity, not that these circular figures have straight angles.

⁶³ I.e. in containing maximum area. The text reads: *inna aqraba al-ashkāl al-qalīlati al-aqlā' ilā al-mustadira fī al-iḥtiwā'*.

cular), and since, due of the narrowness of their [dwelling] space and their greatness of number, they have a need of not losing space through gaps infiltrating between their cells and that are not spacious for [containing] their individuals, and [since] among shapes, despite their being infinite, there is no shape that is close to circularity, and [at the same time] has this special property, namely, of being closely pressed [to similar shapes] and being devoid of gaps between their number, other than the hexagonal, God, exalted be He, has forced [the bees] to choose the hexagonal shape in crafting their cells.

Upon my word, did then the bees know these subtle points which most rational humans fall short of apprehending? Or, is it [not the case] that the creator, the sole possessor of might, has pressed them into labor to attain what they necessarily need, while they in the midst [of their cells] are [but] a channel [of events] subject to the determinations of God, exalted be He, [events] that flow over them and in them, which they neither apprehend nor have [any] power of resisting? Indeed, there are in the crafts of animals wonders which if I were to relate a portion thereof, the breasts would be filled with the greatness of God, exalted be He, and of His glory. Woe then to those who stray from the path of God {90}, who are conceitedly deceived by their inadequate power and weak ability, who think that they participate with God in creation, invention and the innovating of such wonders and signs. How preposterous, how far off the mark! May the creatures be rendered low; the one who alone has might is the almighty of the earth and heavens.⁶⁴

These then are the kinds of repugnancies that necessarily follow from the doctrine of the Mu'tazilites. Look now at those who follow [the prophet's] customary practice (*ahl al-sunna*), how they have been successfully guided to what is correct and elevated to moderation in belief. They thus said: upholding [the doctrine] of determinism is impossible and false, and upholding [the doctrine] of [human] invention is a frightful plunging [into error]. The truth is to affirm two powers over one act, and to uphold [the doctrine] of an enactable by power related to two possessors of power. Nothing remains but the deeming of the occurrence of two powers over one act unlikely. [But] this is unlikely if the attachment of the two powers is in one respect.

⁶⁴ *Al-arḍ wa al-samāwāt*, as in the Cairo versions. The Ankara edition gives only *al-samāwāt*.

If, however, the two powers differ and the manner of their attachment differs, then the occurrence of the two attachments over one thing is not impossible, as we shall show.

If then it is said, "What made you affirm one enactable by power between two powers?", we say:

[What made us affirm this] is the conclusive demonstration that the voluntary movement differs from the tremor, even if the tremor is supposed willed for the one with the tremor and also sought for him,⁶⁵ there being no difference [between the two movements] except in terms of power; then [secondly] the decisive demonstration that [in the case] of every possible, the power of God, exalted be He, is connected with it, that every created thing is possible, the act of the servant being created, and hence is possible. For, if God's power is not connected with it, it would be impossible.

For we say:

The voluntary movement, inasmuch as it is a created, possible movement is similar to the spasmodic movement. It is hence impossible for the power of God, exalted be He, to be connected with one of them, and fall short of the other, when it is similar to it. On the contrary, another impossibility will necessarily ensue from this, namely that if God, exalted be He, willed to stop the movement of His servant's hand, when the servant willed to move it, then one of two alternatives will necessarily ensue – either that the movement will come to be {91} together with rest, or both will not come to be. This would then lead [either] to the [simultaneous] combination of motion and rest or⁶⁶ to being devoid of both. Being devoid of both with the contradiction [this entails] necessitates the negation of the two powers. For power is that through which the enactable by power comes to be when [both] the will and the receptivity of the receptacle are realized.

And if it is thought [in the example] that the object of the

⁶⁵ *Wa inn furiḍat al-ra'da murāda li al-murta'id wa maṭlūba lahu.* There is an ambiguity here: Is this tremor willed and sought by the person with the tremor or for him? The former makes the much better sense and as such what Ghazali seems to mean is that even if a person wills to have a tremor and seeks it, this will not produce it. Only power would affect this.

⁶⁶ Reading *aw* as given in the Cairo versions. The text reads, *fa yu'addi ilā ijtīmā' al-ḥaraka wa al-sukūn ilā al-khuluwwi 'ankumā.* If this reading is accepted, it would make better sense if the *ilā* is eliminated, whereby the sentence would translate: "The [simultaneous] combination of motion and rest would lead to being devoid of both."

power of God, exalted be He, is preponderant because His power is stronger, this [conclusion would lead to what] is impossible, because the connection of one power with one movement is no better than the connection of the other power with it, since the bestowed [end result] of both [powers] is invention *ex nihilo* (*al-ikhtirā'*). [Rather, God's] strength is only with respect of His overpowering another and His overpowering another is not [something] preponderant in the movement under discussion, since the lot of motion [given] by each of the two powers consists in its being [something] invented *ex nihilo* by [the power]. But invention *ex nihilo* is the same.⁶⁷ It thus has neither [what is] stronger nor [what is] weaker so as to include [the notion of] preponderance. Hence the conclusive proof for affirming two powers leads us to affirm one object of power between two possessors of power.

If it is said, "proof does not lead to an impossibility that is incomprehensible and what you have mentioned is incomprehensible," we say:

We will render it comprehensible, namely, in that we say that God's invention of the movement's hand is intelligible without the movement being enacted by the servant's power. Thus as long as God creates the movement and creates with it a power over it, He would be the one to whom alone belong the invention of both the power and the object of power. From this it comes out that He alone [possesses] invention, that the motion exists and that the one in motion has power over it, and that by reason of his having power over it, his state is different from the state of one suffering from a tremor – hence the removal {92} of all the difficulties. The sum [of all this] is that the possessor of power, whose power is wide, is capable of inventing power and the object of power together. And since the term, "creator" and "inventor" is applied to one who brings about the existence of a thing through his power, and power and [its] object are both through the power of God, exalted be He, He is thus named "creator" and "inventor." The object of power is not through the power of the servant, even though it exists with him.⁶⁸ For this reason he is named neither "creator"

⁶⁷ *Wa al-ikhtirā' yatasāwā*, literally, "invention *ex nihilo* is equal."

⁶⁸ *Wa inn kāna ma'ahu*. In other words, the relation of the created power to the object of power is that of concomitance. It is not a causal relation as the text will further show.

nor "inventor." It thus becomes incumbent to seek for this type of relation another different name. Hence the term "acquisition" was sought for it auspiciously from the book of God, exalted be He. For the application of this term for the works of servants has been found in the *Qur'an*. As regards the term, "act,"⁶⁹ there has been hesitation in applying it. There is no need to squabble about names, once the meaning is understood.

[To this] it may be said:

The matter at hand is to understand what is meant. What you have mentioned is incomprehensible. For if the created power in the servant has no connection with the object of power [this] is incomprehensible, since a power that has no object of power is impossible just as knowledge that has no object of knowledge [is impossible]. If it is connected with it, then the connection between power and the object of power is only intelligible in terms of influence, bringing into existence and the coming to be of the object of power by [power]. For the relation between the object of power and power is the relation of the effect to the cause, namely its coming to be by it. Thus if it did not come to be by it, then there would be no connection between them. Hence there would be no power, since anything that has no connection is not a power. For power is one {93} of the attributes that is connected.

We say:

It is connected. Your statement that connection is restricted to coming to be by [power] is refuted in the case of the connection of will and knowledge.⁷⁰ And if you say that the connection of power is restricted to the coming into existence of the [object of power] by [power], this also is false. For power, according to you, continues to exist [after the object of power comes to be]. And if it is supposed to exist before the act, then would it or would it not be connected [with the object of power]?⁷¹ If you

⁶⁹ In the Third Discussion of the *Tahāfut*, the use of the term "act," is confined to animate beings. The inanimate do not "act" and when the term is used to refer to the action of an inanimate thing like fire, this use, for Ghazali is metaphorical. *Tahāfut*, pp. 100-1.

⁷⁰ The divine attributes of will and knowledge are not causally connected, but connected nonetheless.

⁷¹ Ghazali here is arguing against the Mu'tazilites on their own terms. For they held that power in created things exists before the act, not only at the time of the act as the Ash'arites held. If then power exists before the object of power, is it at this preceding time, connected or not connected with the object? See Part C above for our comment on Ghazali's argument.

say, "no," this would be impossible,⁷² and if you say, "yes," then what is meant by [power] would not be the coming into existence of the object of power by it, since the object of power has not as yet come to be. Hence it is inevitable that one should affirm a different type of connection [between power and object of power] other than its coming into existence by [power], since the connection at the time of the occurrence [of the object of power] is expressed as "coming to exist by it," whereas the connection prior to this differs from it. It is hence another kind of connection. Hence your statement that the connection of power to [its object] is of one pattern is erroneous. The case is similar with [God's] endowment with power,⁷³ pre-eternal according to them. For it is eternally connected with knowledge and before the creation of the world. Our statement that it is connected [with its object, namely the created world] is true, but our statement that the world has come to exist by it [before its actual creation] is false, because it had not as yet come to be. If, hence, the two are expressions of the same thing, then one would be true when the other is true, [which is not the case].

If it is said, "the meaning of the connection of power before the occurrence of the object of power is that if the object of power occurs, it occurs by it," we say:

This is not a connection at the time, but an expectation of a connection. It then ought to be said that the power exists, being an attribute that has no connection, but for which a connection is expected, if the object of power comes to be, the same being the case with {94} possession of power. From this an impossibility ensues, namely that the attribute that had not been among those that had a connection becomes one with a connection. And this is impossible.

If it is said, "the meaning of [this] is that [power] is prepared for the occurrence of the object of power by it," we say:

There is no meaning of "preparedness" other than "the expectation" of its occurrence by it. And this does not necessitate a connection at the time. Just as [you find] it intelligible [to affirm] an existing power connected with the object of

⁷² The Mu'tazilites would then have to say that there is a power that is not connected with anything - causally or not causally.

⁷³ *Al-qādiriyya*. For the Mu'tazilites God is *qādir* (powerful) in Himself, not through *qudra*, an attribute additional to the divine essence. Ghazali is presenting the argument using Mu'tazilite language, but whether one uses *qudra* or *qādiriyya* the logic of the argument remains the same.

power when the object of power is not occurring by it, it is intelligible for us also in a similar way [to affirm] a power where the object of power does not occur by it, but that it occurs through the power of God, exalted be He. Hence our doctrine does not differ from your doctrine except in our saying that [the human power] came about through the power of God, exalted be He. If, then, [according to you], it does not follow necessarily from the existence of the power and its connection with the object of power for the object of the power to come into being by it,⁷⁴ from whence would one call for the non-existence of [the human power] by the power of God, exalted be He, when the existence of the object of power through the power of God, exalted be He, has no greater merit over its non-existence with respect to the severance of the relation from the created power? For if the relation is not rendered impossible because of the non-existence of the object of power, how would it be impossible because of the existence of the object of power? Hence whether the object of power is hypothesized as either existing or non-existing there must be a power, connected [with the object of power] that has no object of power [as its effect] at the time [of the existence of such a power].⁷⁵

If it is said, "a power through which an object of power does not come to be and impotence are tantamount to the same thing," we say:

If by this you mean that the state which the human apprehends when [the created power] exists is similar to what he apprehends when {95} there is impotence in the case of the tremor, this is a denial of [epistemic] necessity. But if you mean that it is tantamount to impotence in that the object of power did not come to be by it, this is true. Naming it "impotence," however, is incorrect - [this], even though, viewed in terms of falling short of [accomplishing the act], if related to the power of God, exalted be He, it is thought to be akin to impotence.

⁷⁴ That is, "by it" at the time when his power and its relation exist. The "if" clause of this conditional sentence reads literally: "If, then, it is not a necessity of either the existence of power or its connection with the object of power for the object of power to exist by it, ...".

⁷⁵ In other words, if one hypothesizes a power that exists before the object that is caused by it, as the Mu'tazilites hold, where the object of power has not as yet come to existence, or if one supposes a created power simultaneously with an object of power (though the object is created by divine, not human power), as the Ash'arites hold, in either case there is a power without an object of power caused by it.

This is the same as if one were to say that power [existing] according to their principles before the act is the same as impotence inasmuch as the object of power is not [at the time] occurring by it the expression, ["impotence"], would be rejected since [power] is an apprehended state whose apprehension in the soul differs from the apprehension of impotence. The same is with [our case], there being no difference. In brief, one must affirm two different powers, one that is higher, the other more akin to impotence, whenever⁷⁶ related to the higher. You have the choice of either affirming for the servant a power that in one respect makes one imagine it to be similar to impotence or affirming that of God, exalted be He. Do not be afraid, if you are just, [to hold] that that which is akin to falling short of [accomplishing an act] and of impotence is more properly [attributable] to creatures.

This, then, is the most that this brief discussion of this problem [can] bear.

[III. Refuting the Doctrine of Generation; Denial of all Secondary Causes]

The Third derivation.

Someone may say:

How do you claim the pervasiveness of the connection of [God's] power with all temporal occurrences when most of what there is in the world by way of motions and other things are generated [things], one generated from another by necessity? For the movement of the hand, for example, by necessity generates the movement of ring [on the finger] and the movement of the hand in the water generates the movement of the water; {96} and this is experienced. Reason also proves this. For if the movement of the water and of the ring were to have [occurred] through the creation of God, exalted be He, then it would be possible [for Him] to create the movement of the hand without [the movement] of the ring, and the movement of the hand, without [the movement] of the water, which is impossible. The same applies to [all] generated things, with all their divisions.

We say:

Whatever is not understood cannot be worked with in terms

⁷⁶ The text reads *minhumā*, a printing error corrected as *mahmā* in the list of corrections, appended to the text (p. 269).

of refutation and acceptance. For a doctrine's to be either rejected or accepted comes [only] after its being intelligible. What for us is known by the expression, "generation," is for a body to emerge from the interior of [another] body in the way the newly born emerges from the mother's belly and [the way] plants [emerge] from the earth. But this is impossible in the case of accidents, since the motion of the hand has no interior such that the movement of the ring would emerge from it, nor does it contain things so that some of what it contains would surface. Hence if the motion of the ring was not latent in the motion of the hand, what would its being generated by it mean? This needs explanation. And if this is not understood, your statement that this is observed is ignorance and folly, since it is [only] its occurrence *with* it that is observable, nothing else. As for its being generated by it, [this] is not observable.

You state⁷⁷ that if God were to create [such motions] He would have been able to create the motion of the hand without the motion of the ring and of the hand [in the water] without the movement of the water; but this is insanity. [It is] similar to one's statement that if knowledge were not generated from the will {97} [God] would have been able to create will without knowledge and knowledge without life. But we say that the impossible is not enactable by power and the existence of the conditioned without the condition is unintelligible.⁷⁸ [For] a [necessary] condition for will is knowledge and a [necessary] condition for knowledge is life. Similarly, a condition for a substance's occupation of a space is the emptiness of that space. If, then, God, exalted be He, moves the hand [in the water], He must make it occupy a space close to the space in which it was. If He did not empty [the proximate space], how could He make [the hand] occupy [this] space. Its being empty is a condition of its occupation by the hand; since if it moves and the space is not emptied of water by annihilating the water or moving it, then two bodies would congregate in the same space, which is impossible. Hence the emptiness of one space is a condition for

⁷⁷ Literally, "Your statement."

⁷⁸ The condition here is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition. If life is a condition for the existence of the attribute of knowledge, it would be unintelligible to speak of an existent that has no life as having knowledge. Thus it would be unintelligible to speak of an inanimate object, a stone, as having knowledge. See *Tahāfut*, p. 294.

the other. They are thus concomitants, and it is thought that one is generated by the other, which is an error.

As for the concomitants that do not constitute a condition, it is possible for them, according to us, to be disconnected from the connection with that with which [each] was a concomitant. Rather, its concomitance is due to continuous habit as with the burning of cotton when it is contiguous with fire⁷⁹ and the occurrence of coldness in the hand at the touch of snow. For all this is continuous by virtue of the course of the custom of God, exalted be He. Otherwise, power in itself does not fall short of creating coldness in the snow, the touching of hand [and snow], and the creating of heat in the hand at the touching of the snow {98}, instead of coldness.

Hence what the opponent perceives as a generated thing falls into two parts: one is a condition where nothing but connection is conceivable; the second without condition, where the non-existence of the connection is conceivable, if the habitual [course of nature] is disrupted.

[In response to our argument] it may then be said:

You have not proved the falsity of generation, but have denied [yourselves] understanding it, when it is [quite] comprehensible. For we do not mean by it the surfacing of one motion from another by emerging from its interior, nor the generation of coldness from the snow by the exiting of coldness from the snow, its transfer, or its existing from the essence of coldness.⁸⁰ Rather we mean by it the existence of an existent after another existent and its being existent and originated by it. That which is originated we call generated and that through which origination takes place we call that which generates. This naming is understood. What is it that proves its falsity?

We say:

If you confess this, then what proves its falsity is that which proves that the falsity of the created power being that which brings about [the] existence [of the object of power]. If, then, we deem it impossible to say that an object of power occurs through a created power, how would we not deem impossible an occurrence through that which is not a power? Its impossibility goes back to the pervasiveness of the connection of [divine] power and [to the fact] that [for the occurrence] to be

⁷⁹ For a detailed use of this example, see *Tahāfut*, pp. 278 ff.

⁸⁰ Alternatively, "its exiting from coldness itself."

outside the [divine] power falsifies its pervasiveness, which is impossible. Moreover, it leads necessarily to [the attribution to God of] impotence and preventiveness [of His exercise of power], as has been previously [seen].⁸¹

{99} Yes, there lies with the Mu'tazilites who uphold [the doctrine of] generation in [their] detailing of generation innumerable contradictions, as [for example,] their saying that reflection generates knowledge, but that its recalling does not generate remembering it and other things which we will not go into length mentioning. There is no need for elaborating that which one can do without.

You have known from the sum of this that all temporal events, their substances and accidents, those occurring in the entities of the animate and the inanimate, come about through

⁸¹ Reading *thumma huwa mujib li-al-'ajz wa al-tamānu' kamā sabaqa* as a variant given in the Ankara text and as given in the Cairo versions. The editors of the Ankara text have adopted the reading *lā al-tamānu'*, "not preventiveness," instead of *wa al-tamānu'* (and preventiveness). Accordingly, the sentence would then translate something as follows: "Moreover, it leads necessarily to [the attribution to God] of impotence, not [merely] preventiveness." But if God is prevented from performing an act, then this leads to His inability to perform it. Hence, the reading adopted in the translation seems preferable. The *kamā sabaqa*, "as has been previously [seen]" does not refer directly to any explicit mention or use of the concept of "preventiveness" in the chapter, although the argument is implicit therein: if there is such a thing as an efficacious secondary cause, animate or inanimate, that is preventive of divine action, then this would mean the attribution to God of the inability to execute such an action. The reference, however, is to a previous discussion, that God is the only creator of the world (pp. 73-80). Ghazali refutes the argument that it may be possible that there are several creators, each confined to bringing about some part of the creation. Thus he argues that if, for example, one creator is confined to the creation of substances, another to the creation of accidents, this would be impossible since the existence of substances and accidents are mutually dependent. Hence one of the hypothesized creator's refusal to create accidents, for example, would prevent the other from creating substances (p. 78). Ghazali argues further in the same vein against dualism, the belief of a creator of the good and a creator of evil.

The argument based on *al-Tamānu'* is encountered in earlier Ash'arite writings, in similar but not identical context. Al-Bāqillāni, for example, gives a version of the argument which he refers to as *dalil al-tamānu'* (proof from preventiveness) to demonstrate that the celestial spheres have no causal efficacy on events in the terrestrial world. His argument in its barest essentials can perhaps be paraphrased as follows:

It is either the case (a) that God cannot prevent the supposed causal action of the celestial spheres and create terrestrial events directly or (b) He can. If (a), then the supposed causal action of these celestial spheres are preventive of divine action. "This leads to His deficiency and to His being created." This is impossible. If (b), it becomes false that these astral beings have actions and influences (*baṭala an takūna li-hādhihi al-kawākib af'āl wa ta'thirāt*). Al-Bāqillāni, *Kitāb al-Tamhid*, ed. Richard J. McCarthy (Beirut, 1957), pp. 50-1.

the power of God, exalted be He. He alone holds the sole prerogative of inventing them. No created thing comes about through another [created thing]. Rather, all come about through [divine] power.

This is what we have intended to show by way of establishing the attribute of power for God, exalted be He, the pervasiveness of its governing rule, and what relates to it in terms of derivatives and concomitants.