

REVIEW ARTICLES

GHAZĀLIAN CAUSES AND INTERMEDIARIES*

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This monograph offers a reconstruction of al-Ghazālī's cosmic view. It is an interpretive reconstruction that reveals the influence of Avicenna's cosmological system. It argues for a close affinity of the cosmic systems of these two thinkers. The monograph raises the whole issue of al-Ghazālī's causal language in a manner that has not been raised before and interprets al-Ghazālī as maintaining that existents other than God are endowed with real causal efficacy. This interpretation, to be sure, is open to serious criticisms, but it also demands serious attention. The monograph draws attention (in a manner not drawn before) to al-Ghazālī's cosmological concerns and in doing so puts his thought in a deservedly wider philosophical perspective.

I

IN THIS PROBING, ANALYTIC MONOGRAPH, Richard Frank offers a reconstruction of al-Ghazālī's cosmic view. The reconstruction is based on statements al-Ghazālī makes in various works. It is an interpretive reconstruction that certainly reveals the influence of Avicenna's cosmological system on that of al-Ghazālī and argues for a close affinity of the two systems. Not that the author denies that al-Ghazālī rejected some major theses of Avicenna. But his interpretive analysis of Ghazālīan texts leads him to conclude that "from a theological standpoint most of the theses which [al-Ghazālī] rejected are relatively tame and inconsequential compared to some of those in which he follows the philosophers" (p. 86).

Professor Frank takes as his starting point Ghazālī's relatively late work, *al-Maqṣad al-Asnā*, which he regards as "essentially a work of theoretical or systematic theology," where al-Ghazālī is not "formally bound to the conventions of traditional manuals, as for example, in *Iqtīṣād*," and as such tends "to express himself more forthrightly and with greater clarity than he generally does elsewhere in treating the same basic matters." What emerges from a study of key passages from this

book and other works of al-Ghazālī, Frank continues, is that "while rejecting significant elements of Avicenna's cosmology, al-Ghazālī adopted several basic principles and theses that set his theology in opposition to that of the classical Ash'arite tradition" (pp. 10–11). But if this is the case, how is one to explain those affirmations of al-Ghazālī that belong to "the classical Ash'arite tradition?" The question is particularly pertinent since Frank (p. 11) inclines to the view that there is continuity in al-Ghazālī's thought from the writing of the *Tahāfut* onwards. He, however, suggests that there is no inconsistency here, pointing out that al-Ghazālī intended his writings to be understood on different levels, relative to the level of the reader's understanding, citing such Ghazālīan statements to the effect that it is not licit "to disclose the secret of God's ordainment publicly" (pp. 40–41).

The central issue discussed is that of causality, an issue that comes foremost to mind for anyone investigating al-Ghazālī's theological stance. Now, as it can be clearly shown, in the *Tahāfut*, but more unambiguously and decisively in its sequel, the *Iqtīṣād*, al-Ghazālī denies any causal efficacy in created things.¹ Nonetheless, he continues to use causal language, sometimes in the way it is used in ordinary Arabic, sometimes in a more specifically Avicennan/Aristotelian way. It is this causal

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¹ See this reviewer's article, "Al-Ghazālī on Bodily Resurrection and Causality in the *Tahāfut* and the *Iqtīṣād*," *Aligarh Journal of Islamic Thought* 1.2 (1989): 46–75, 59ff.

language that underlies Frank's interpretive analysis. Thus, as he points out (p. 18), al-Ghazālī speaks about the chain of causes leading to the supreme cause, God. He discusses such passages where al-Ghazālī, for example, speaks about "the universal, fundamental, permanent and stable causes (*al-asbābu l-kulliyatu l-aṣṭliyyatu l-thābitatu l-mustaqirratu*) which are constant and unchanging, such as the earth and the seven heavens, the stars and the spheres and their interrelated movements and which are constant and shall neither change nor fail 'until the Document shall reach its term' (Q 2.235)" (p. 42). He discusses passages where al-Ghazālī speaks of certain divine acts as the necessary conditions for the performance of other divine acts (p. 26ff.) and passages where a volition is said to compel the occurrence of the object willed and where the language of the enforcement and use of an existent as an instrument (*taskhīr*) is used (p. 24). He also discusses the role of angelic mediation of divine acts in al-Ghazālī and the parallels between the Ghazālīan and Avicennan concepts of the angelic celestial souls and intelligences (p. 38ff.). Frank maintains that al-Ghazālī's attitude toward causality is ambivalent, suggesting that in reality he does not deny causal efficacy in existents other than God. In fact, Frank goes as far as to argue that although al-Ghazālī, in his exposition of the doctrine of *kasb*, couches his statements in Ash'arite language, he actually holds the non-Ash'arite view that created power exists before the act and that it is endowed with causal efficacy (pp. 34–37).

In the final chapter (ch. IV), the author argues that al-Ghazālī does not merely hold that the existence of the universe is necessary because God has willed such an existence, but that God "wills necessarily to create what He creates" (p. 75). In other words, God could not but create this universe. Frank's arguments are richly informed with a review of Ash'arite discussions of the question of creation. Probing and thought-provoking, his arguments are certainly of intrinsic philosophical interest. But whether the interpretation they support represents what al-Ghazālī intended to maintain is another matter.

II

Professor Frank gives good reasons for having *al-Maḥṣad* as his starting point, and then working at the problem forward and backward, so to speak. This is hardly illegitimate. Sometimes, however, a more chronological approach would have helped clarify issues. This is very much the case in any endeavor to determine what al-Ghazālī means by God's *ijrā' al-āda*,

that is, God's ordaining things to flow according to a habitual course—a concept basic to al-Ghazālī's causal doctrine. It seems that here one should really begin with al-Ghazālī's works written during the Nizāmiyya period at Baghdad, where he is quite explicit as to what he means by *ijrā' al-āda*. These are the *Tahāfut*, the *Mi'yār* and the *Iqtisād*, the works in which he offers his major discussions of causality. In the *Tahāfut*, after stating that what we habitually regard as causes and effects are not necessarily connected, he asserts that the connection of these things "is due to the prior decree of God who creates them side by side (*alā al-tasāwuq*), not to any inherent necessity of these things that would render their separation from each other impossible."² Then, in response to the philosophers' objection that the denial of necessary causal connection would mean that God can make a dead man move and write volumes, open his eyes but see nothing, al-Ghazālī answers that "this in itself is not impossible as long as we turn over [the enactment] of temporal events to the will of a choosing being." "It is only disavowed," he goes on, "because of the continuous habit (*li iṭtirād al-āda*) of its opposite occurring."³ Again, in the *Mi'yār*, in discussing the empirical premises used in demonstration, these he argues are orderly and yield certain knowledge, so that if the theologian informs someone that his son has been decapitated, the theologian does not doubt this. The inquiry here would be about "the manner of connection between decapitation and death." "As for the inquiry" he continues, "as to whether this is the necessary consequence of the thing itself, impossible to change or whether this is in accordance with the passage of the custom (*sunna*) of God, . . . this is an inquiry into the mode of the connection, not the connection itself."⁴ In the *Iqtisād*, he uses the same example of decapitation to affirm that when decapitation takes place the decapitated person dies, not by the action of the sword, but by his *ajal*, "*ajal* meaning the time in which God creates in him his death, regardless of whether this occurs with the cutting of the neck, the occurrence of a lunar eclipse, or the falling of rain." "All these," he continues, "are for us associated things, not generated acts (*laysat mutawallidāt*), except that with some their connection is repeated according to habit (*wa lākin iqtirān ba'ḍihā yatakarrar bi al-āda*),

² Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*, ed. M. Bouyges (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1927), 279 (hereafter, *Tahāfut*).

³ *Ibid.*, 278.

⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Mi'yār al-ʿIlm*, ed. S. Dunya (Cairo, 1961), 191.

but with some they are not repeated.”⁵ There is nothing in al-Ghazālī’s discussion of *ijrā’ al-‘āda* in these works that remotely suggests that he means by it the rendering of events to occur in a habitual sequence where one event actually causes another.

Continuing with the use of this concept in the works cited above, it is perhaps best to refer to these events that occur due to a habitual order pre-ordained by God and which we ordinarily regard as causes and effects (but which, for al-Ghazālī, are in fact mere concomitants that are not necessarily connected with each other) as the “habitual causes” and their “habitual effects.” These habitual causes and effects follow a strict regularity pre-ordained by God, but subject to interruptions, interruptions also divinely pre-ordained. These interruptions are the miracles and they are possible precisely because the connection between the habitual cause and its habitual effect is not necessary.⁶ When the miracle occurs, God creates for us knowledge of this interruption.⁷ But while the connection between the habitual cause and its effect is not necessary, the pre-ordained course of events, which includes the interruptions, is unchangeable.

Now, when Professor Frank argues for a similarity between Avicenna and al-Ghazālī on this question of the occurrence of the unusual events, the miracles, he has a point in suggesting that for both these thinkers these events are “programmed,” so to speak (p. 59). But there is a vital difference here. The miracles of Avicenna are confined to the prophet’s ability to influence nature and to receive direct knowledge, either purely

intellectual knowledge from the Active Intellect or particular knowledge about future events from the celestial souls (as distinct from the celestial intelligences). But all these miracles, whether based on a theory of influence or of the receptivity of knowledge do not violate the Avicennan theory of causal necessity. As al-Ghazālī points out, scriptural accounts of miracles that, taken literally, violate the Islamic philosophers’ theory of causal necessity are interpreted by them metaphorically. Thus, he tells us, the philosophers do not accept literally such scriptural affirmations as the miraculous survival of a prophet cast into a fiery furnace or the prophet’s changing a staff into a serpent.⁸ And it is here that al-Ghazālī’s doctrine of the habitual causes comes in. It is meant, among other things, to allow the occurrence of such miracles and hence the literal acceptance of their scriptural accounts. This is at the basis of his doctrine of metaphorical interpretation of scriptural language. Unless one can demonstrate that a statement taken literally is impossible, one has to accept it as it is. The philosophers can demonstrate the impossibility of the class of miracles mentioned above on the basis of their theory of necessary causal connection if and only if they are able to demonstrate such a theory. But they are unable to do this—either logically or empirically. This is a main thrust of the seventeenth discussion of al-Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut*.

As already indicated, the habitual causes and their effects follow a predetermined regular course. They behave as though they are real causes and effects. Thus the habitual cause is prior to the habitual effect. In the case of the habitual essential cause, its priority to the habitual effect is not temporal, but ontological—in the case of the accidental habitual cause, its priority is temporal. The criterion of irreversibility also applies, so that with the exception of the interruptions of the uniformity, when the pre-ordained miracles occur, one can follow the strictest requirements of the Aristotelian demonstrative method and attain scientific knowledge that is certain. This, in effect, is what al-Ghazālī tells us in the *Mi‘yār*.

The question is whether in al-Ghazālī’s writing subsequent to the *Iqtisād* there is a transformation of the concept of *ijrā’ al-‘āda*, whereby it begins to refer to an order of created existents and sequences of events that constitute real, not habitual causes. As we see it, the causal language in these subsequent writings is certainly amenable to being interpreted in terms of the concept of the habitual cause and the habitual effect as

⁵ Al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtisād fī al-‘Itiqād*, ed. Çubukçu and H. Atay (Ankara, 1962), 224–25 (hereafter, *Iqtisād*).

⁶ Al-Ghazālī suggests an alternative theory that would allow the literal acceptance of those miracles the philosophers deem impossible (*Tahāfut*, 288ff.). This allows causal efficacy in things, provided the divine act is voluntary and is capable of intervening to create new causal conditions that allow the occurrence of the miracles the philosophers deem impossible. That this theory is introduced only for the sake of argument can be seen from the dialectical way in which it is introduced, but also because it is negated in the *Iqtisād*, where all causal action is lodged exclusively with the attribute of divine power. See this reviewer’s “Al-Ghazālī’s Second Causal Argument in the 17th Discussion of the *Tahāfut*,” in *Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism*, ed. P. Morewedge (Delmar, N. Y., 1981), 85–112, and the article cited in n. 1, above.

⁷ *Tahāfut*, 286. See also this reviewer’s “Al-Ghazālī and Demonstrative Science,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 3 (1965): 183–204.

⁸ *Tahāfut*, 271–72; 282–83.

encountered in his earlier works discussed above. For this concept does not preclude chains of such habitual causes and effects that are hierarchically ordered, having as their source the one real cause, "the cause of causes," God. It is true that when one ordinarily speaks of chains of causes, one is speaking of intermediaries and mediation. But does mediation in al-Ghazālī's language have to mean that the intermediary is endowed with causal efficacy? We think not, but this is a question to which we will shortly return. Again, it is true that the creation of habitual causes and their effects has to satisfy certain logical conditions. God is all-powerful, but this does not mean that he can enact what is self-contradictory. If knowledge by definition is an attribute of a living being, then God cannot create knowledge without creating life. Life is a necessary condition for the existence of knowledge. Thus when God creates knowledge He also creates life, the necessary condition for its existence. (This conditional aspect of the sequence of created events is explained very well by the author.) The model here is the Ash'arite doctrine of the eternal divine attributes that are additional to the divine essence. The divine attribute of life is the necessary condition of the divine attribute of knowledge—only a living God has knowledge. But the attribute of life is not the cause of the attribute of knowledge. Both are co-eternal uncaused attributes. Again, the conditions may be arbitrarily set by God. For example, the mind's "management" of the body is habitually, but not necessarily, "mediated" through the brain.⁹ To turn to references to more constant causes, Professor Frank rightly points to such Ghazālian passages as the one already quoted above about "the universal, fundamental, permanent and stable causes that are constant and unchanging." This passage normally conveys the idea that al-Ghazālī is speaking about real causes. But there is no good reason why these should not be interpreted as habitual causes, whose permanence is part of the habitual order of things.

Interpreted in terms of habitual causality, from both the works terminating with the *Iqtiṣād* and onwards, the cosmos for al-Ghazālī is a system of predetermined complex concomitant ordered events, the direct creation of divine power. It is a perfectly designed cosmos, and behaves like a perfectly designed unified organism. This concept of a perfectly designed cosmos is the very basis for al-Ghazālī's argument in the *Iqtiṣād* for the existence of the divine attribute of power. This, he argues, is an attribute additional to the divine essence that is one and

pervasive, the unitary direct cause of each and every created existent and every event.¹⁰

To say that the causal language in Ghazālī's works subsequent to the *Iqtiṣād* is amenable to being interpreted in terms of the concept of habitual causality as found in the *Tahāfut*, *Mi^cyār*, and *Iqtiṣād* does not necessarily settle the question. Al-Ghazālī may well have changed the meaning of habitual causality to include chains of real causes and effects. The question, in fact, is not easy to settle. This is partly because of al-Ghazālī's use of causal language (a topic to which we will return), but perhaps more so because, with the exception of statements about *kasb*, we do not encounter in these later works discussions devoted to causality as such, to the anatomy of causality, to speak, as we do in the *Tahāfut*, the *Mi^cyār*, and the *Iqtiṣād*. For in his later writings he has other concerns. This is not to say that there is no continuity in al-Ghazālī's thought. On the contrary, as we see it, the *Tahāfut* and the *Iqtiṣād* remain a basis for much of what is discussed in his later writings. But with the changes of purpose and emphasis, there is also change in style. This is particularly true of his *magnum opus*, his voluminous *Iḥyā²*, a complex work that embodies, among many other things, a series of homilies and instructions for the pursuit of piety. The language is often pictorial and abounds with example, metaphor and the illustrative anecdote. Nonetheless, one must certainly turn to this major work for clues as to whether or not the concept of *ijrā² al-^cāda* in it has undergone change.

III

The concept appears early in the *Iḥyā²*, in "The Book of Knowledge," in the discussion of knowledge that is blameworthy.¹¹ For, although knowledge in itself is good, al-Ghazālī maintains, some forms of knowledge are harmful to others. The types of knowledge that are harmful include magic and astrology. The magician has knowledge of the properties of substances, of such matters as astral omens, astrological calculations and timing, and makes evil incantations by means of which he attains the aid of demons. From all this, by virtue of God's making things flow in a customary course, *bi ḥukmi ijrā² al-Lāhi ta^cālā al-^cāda*, "there occur strange states in the bewitched person." "The knowledge of these 'causes' (*al-^casbāb*) inasmuch as it is knowledge is

⁹ See Frank's translation (p. 75) of the relevant passage of al-Ghazālī's *Iljām*.

¹⁰ *Iqtiṣād*, 82–83, 99.

¹¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā² ^cUlūm al-Dīn*, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1377/1957), 1:29–30 (hereafter, *Iḥyā²*).

not blameworthy,” al-Ghazālī states, adding, however, that it cannot but be harmful to people. Then, after differentiating between two kinds of astral science, mathematical astronomy and astrology, the latter, in effect, he tells us, consists of inferring temporal events from astral causes which is similar to the physician’s inferring from the pulse what malady will occur. “This is knowledge of the currents [of events according] to the custom and habit of God, exalted be He, in His creation (*wa huwa ma^ḥrifaṭun li majārī sunnati al-Lāhi ta^ḥālā wa ^ḥādāṭihi fi khalqīhi*), but the religious law has blamed it [i.e., astrology].”

Al-Ghazālī gives three reasons why the religious law blames astrology, the first being the most pertinent to our purpose, namely that it is harmful to most people.¹² “For when they are told that these effects occur subsequent to the movement of the stars, they come to believe that the stars are the efficacious [things] (*anna al-kawākiba hiya al-mu^ḥaththira*) and that they are the governing gods because they are noble celestial substances.” For, as al-Ghazālī explains, the perception of the weak is confined to the intermediaries (*al-waṣā^ḥit*), whereas the one well grounded in knowledge (*al-^ḥālim al-rāsikh*) is the individual who knows that “the sun, the moon and the stars are compelled entities (*musakh-kharāt*) by the command of Him, praised be He.” This is immediately followed by a statement that bears quotation in full. It translates somewhat as follows:

The example of the weak person’s seeing the occurrence of light subsequent to the sun’s appearance is the example of an ant, if an intellect were to be created for it, it being on the surface of a paper looking at the blackness of [a line of] writing as it continues to be renewed; it would thus believe that this is the act of the pen, but does not ascend in its perception to witness the fingers, then from them [respectively] the hand, then the will that moves the hand, then the writer endowed with power and will, then the creator of the hand, power and will. For most of people’s perception is confined to the proximate,¹³ low causes (*al-asbāb al-qarība al-sāfila*),

¹² The second is that astrological predictions for non-prophets is sheer supposition, since the complex causes cannot be known to them. This seems to be an expansion on Avicenna’s critique of astrology in the *Metaphysics* of the *Shifā^ḥ*; Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), *Al-Shifā^ḥ: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, ed. G. C. Anawati, S. Dunya, M. Y. Musa, and S. Zayed, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1960), 440. The third is that “plunging into this ‘science.’” has no benefit.

¹³ As will be shortly indicated, for al-Ghazālī in the *Tahāfut*, one can speak of a proximate cause in a metaphorical, not real, sense.

severed from ascending to the cause of causes (*musabib al-asbāb*).¹⁴

In this example, the rising of the sun is thought by the weak person to be the cause of light in the way that an ant would think that the writing being inscribed on a paper is the act of the pen. In this the ant is ignorant of the fingers, the hand, the will, the writer endowed with will and power, and of the creator of the hand, the power and the will. Are then the causes, intermediaries, the entities compelled to serve God’s command, in the discussion of magic and astrology (which includes the very pertinent example above) real causes or only habitual concomitants? And if real causes, why would al-Ghazālī bother at all to refer to *ijrā^ḥ al-^ḥāda*? One could argue as an answer to this latter question that it is at this juncture that al-Ghazālī has transformed this concept to include sequences of real causes, or else that he uses the phrase, *ijrā^ḥ al-^ḥāda* or its variants, merely to mollify his Ash^ḥarite readers. But is this really the case?

To turn to the example of the ant above, one notes that al-Ghazālī speaks of “the creator of the hand, power and will.” Is this power created in the individual who writes efficacious? The question brings us right to al-Ghazālī’s doctrine of *kasb*, which he discusses in the second book of the *Ihyā^ḥ*, “*Qawā^ḥid al-^ḥAqā^ḥid*” but more extensively in the *Iqtisād*. Interpreting al-Ghazālī’s doctrine of *kasb* hinges on the question of whether or not he holds that created power has any causal efficacy. If it turns out that al-Ghazālī maintains that created power has no efficacy whatsoever, then the causal sequences mentioned in the example above would have to be interpreted as habitual concomitants, nothing more.

IV

This brings us to Professor Frank’s interpretation of al-Ghazālī on *kasb* (mainly, pp. 34–37) as this doctrine is expounded in both the *Iqtisād* and the *Qawā^ḥid*. It is here, perhaps more than any other place in the monograph, that we find the author’s interpretation and arguments used to support it the least convincing. The arguments strike us as forced and attempt to find in the texts things that are not there. One also senses an impetus to read “between the lines,” to throw doubt as to whether what al-Ghazālī is declaring is really what he holds. What the author has to say about *kasb* in the *Iqtisād* is conspicuous for its omissions. And the first serious omission is the logical context in which *kasb* is

¹⁴ *Ihyā^ḥ*, 1:30, ll. 11–14.

defined and defended. Nothing is said about a basic premise, to which we have already alluded, and without which what al-Ghazālī says about *kasb* in the *Iqtīṣād* would be totally out of context, namely the doctrine of the pervasiveness of divine power (*ʿumūm al-quḍra*). Now, al-Ghazālī gives an argument from design to establish the existence of the attribute of divine power, an attribute additional to the divine essence. This attribute, he argues, is unitary: It does not consist of a multiplicity of powers. It is one and it is pervasive, that is, it is the direct cause of each and every created existent and event.¹⁵ This means, among other things, as al-Ghazālī argues at length, that divine power creates the power in humans and creates also what is ordinarily, but wrongly, regarded as the effect of human power, but which, in fact, is the creation of divine power. This in essence is the doctrine of *kasb* in the *Iqtīṣād*—the object of power (*al-maḳdūr*) is what human power acquires; it is that which is created for it as its concomitant by divine power. Human power has no causal efficacy.

If one is to argue that this is not the theory that al-Ghazālī actually upholds, that for him created power is endowed with causal efficacy, one must begin with his doctrine of the pervasiveness of divine power and give concrete, solid evidence to demonstrate that this is a doctrine he only “ostensibly” upholds and is not the doctrine he actually believes. For this doctrine is the underlying premise for al-Ghazālī’s statements on *kasb* that deny any causal efficacy in created power.

This denial is also clear in his spirited answer to the main Muʿtazilite criticism of *kasb* which he reports. Before turning to the criticism, one should take note of his objection to the Muʿtazilite doctrine that created beings create their own acts. They deny, he proclaims, the connection of divine power “with the acts of [His] servants, of animals, of angels,¹⁶ of the jinn, and of devils, claiming that all that proceeds from them is the creation and ‘invention’ (*ikhtirāʿ*) of [His] servants, God having no power over [these acts] either by way of denial or the bringing into existence.”¹⁷ In other words, the Muʿtazilite doctrine leaves a domain of existence inaccessible to direct divine power. For, and this is what seems to be entailed here, the acts of humans, angels, jinn, and so on, would by definition be creaturely acts. God can perform acts similar to them, but not acts that are identical with them, since the divine act is by definition not a creaturely act. This leads to attributing im-

potence (*al-ʿajz*) to God, a point al-Ghazālī stresses in the *Iqtīṣād* and repeats in a related, but different context, in his post-*Iḥyāʾ*² work, *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn*.¹⁸ But the Muʿtazilite criticism of the doctrine of *kasb* is a serious one and al-Ghazālī gives it his answer. The criticism, as reported by al-Ghazālī is as follows:

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 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 (*al-taʿthīr*), bringing into existence (*al-ijād*), the coming to be of the object of power (*ḥuṣūlihi*) by [power]. For the relation between the object of power and power is the relation of effect to cause, namely the coming to be by it. Thus if it did not come to be by it, then there would be no connection between them.¹⁹

In his answer, al-Ghazālī maintains that not all connections between entities are causal. The divine attributes of will and knowledge are always connected, but never causally. Moreover, the Muʿtazilites themselves would have to admit the possibility of the existence of a non-causal relation between created power and the object of power. For they maintain that power exists before and after the object of power. To take the existence of power prior to its object, there would be an interval of time in which created power is related to the object of power to be, but not causally. Hence in terms of the doctrine they themselves hold, they must admit that the relation of created power and the object of power can be non-causal. Again, they hold that God’s endowment with power, *al-qādirīyya*, which is pre-eternally connected with divine knowledge, exists before its object, the world, is created. Hence, divine power can exist without its object. In the *Iḥyāʾ*², he uses this same second example, substituting for the Muʿtazilite *qādirīyya*, the state of being endowed with power, the Ashʿarite positive attribute of power. But the logic is the same. Divine power, whether a state or a positive attribute, exists before the creation of the world, and thus has a non-causal

¹⁵ See note 10 above.

¹⁶ The mention of angels is significant as it relates to the question of angelic efficacy, a topic to which we will shortly turn.

¹⁷ *Iqtīṣād*, 87.

¹⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-Dīn* (Cairo: 1383 A.H.), 9. The reference is to the *qādirīyya* (usually identified with the Muʿtazila), who “perceived good and evil to be of their own [doing], intending by this to put God above injustice and the enactment of evil. But they went astray since in the course of this they unknowingly attributed impotence (*al-ʿajz*) to God, exalted be He.”

¹⁹ *Iqtīṣād*, 92.

relation to the world in the period before the world is created.

This is the theological and logical context of the discussion of *kasb* in the *Iqtiṣād*. Any terminological questions would have to be seen in this context. Frank is correct when he points out (p. 35) the peculiarity of the sentence where al-Ghazālī speaks of the object of power as not being “by the servant’s power even though it is with it/him (*lam yakun al-maḡdūru bi qudrati al-ʿabdi wa in kāna maʿahu*).”²⁰ In the context of the discussion, particularly as this comes after the statement that both the power and its object come about through the power of God, one would expect the *maʿahu* to be *maʿahā*, referring to power. Two of the manuscripts, as Frank points out, give *maʿahā*. But the sense, even with the reading adopted by the editors of the Ankara edition, is clear, the reference being either to the *qudra*, or to the servant in the sense that the *maḡdūr* would be with the servant, now that divine power has created it for him. Any suggestion that by using *maʿahu*, “with him,” al-Ghazālī here is hinting that power exists with the servant before the act and is thus subscribing to Muʿtazilite doctrine is stretching matters far too much. Al-Ghazālī could have been clearer here. To be sure, he is a master of the Arabic language, but even masters of the language sometimes have their lapses and al-Ghazālī has his share of them. In this instance, however, if he is indicted as failing to be crystal clear, the indictment is based on the assumption that the reading adopted by the editors represents the original. The author, however, sees this (relating it to statements in other works) as an indication that al-Ghazālī is deliberately vague as he strives to give the impression that he is affirming traditional beliefs, when in reality he is not doing this.

Frank believes that he has found—for al-Ghazālī’s attempt “to give the impression of asserting traditional teaching without actually doing so” (p. 36)—a better example in the *Iḥyāʾ* (in the *al-Risāla al-Qudsiyya* that forms part of *Qawāʿid al-ʿAqāʾid*). But alas, the finding rests entirely on mishaps in the author’s translation. The terrain here is slippery where, as the old Arabic adage had it, “[even] the thoroughbred will stumble,” *wa qad yakbu al-jawād*. As we will shortly note, another scholar had had one stumble here, identical with one of the stumbles of our author.

Before commenting on his translation, one should note that al-Ghazālī’s statement on *kasb* constitutes a second thesis and has to be read in the light of a first thesis that comes immediately before it, namely that God alone is the creator of all things, that “all the acts of His

servants are His creation, connected with His power.” Again, as we will indicate, portions of the second thesis, which are not translated, also shed light on what al-Ghazālī is actually saying. Another point to note, which is quite basic, is that the author translates *kasb/iktisāb* as “performance,” instead of the traditional “acquisition.” Translating this term as “performance,” not withstanding note 58 that attempts to justify it, is simply too far-fetched, far removed from what the term in this context connotes; but much more to the point, it carries with it the assumption of the point at issue. If *kasb* is the “performance” of the created *qudra*, then we have already built in the nuance that this power has causal action. Similarly, the author’s translation of power, when speaking of the created power, as “power to act” is also an instance of begging the question. It is best to translate the created *qudra*, literally and simply as “power,” not “power to act,” since whether it itself has the power to act and hence can enact an object of power (*al-maḡdūr*) or whether it is divine power that acts on its behalf, bequeathing to it the object of power which it thereby acquires, is the very point at issue.

In considering Frank’s translation, it is convenient to break the paragraph into numbered sentences or sections and then comment on them individually. The translation (p. 36) with numbers added would be as follows:

- (1) The Second Thesis: That God alone creates (*ikhtaraʿa*) the movement of men does not mean that they are not subject to men’s power of action as being performances (*iktisāb*).
- (2) On the contrary, God creates (*khalāqa*) both the power and its object and He creates both the choice and the thing chosen.
- (3) The power to act is an attribute of the individual and a creation of the Lord’s, but is not a performance (*kasb*) of His.
- (4) The movement is a creation of the Lord’s and is an attribute of the servant and is a performance of his (*kasbun lahu*), since it was created as the realized object of a power to act which is his attribute (*maḡdūratun bi-qudratin hiya waṣṣūhu*) and so the motion has a relationship to another attribute which is called a “power to act” (*qudrah*) and with respect to this relationship is called “a performance” (*kasb*) . . . ;
- (5) it is the realized object of God’s power in its being a creation and the servant’s power in respect to another kind of relationship which is referred to by performance.²¹

²⁰ Ibid., I. 3.

²¹ *Iḥyāʾ* 1:110, I. 13ff.

In the case of (1), we have “subject to men’s power of action” as the translation of *maqḍūra li al-ʿibād*. A more neutral translation would be “objects of men’s power.” The meaning of this is then explained by what immediately follows, *ʿalā sabil al-iktisāb* “by way of acquisition,” translated by the author, “as being performances,” which, as suggested earlier, assumes the point at issue. Sentence (2) poses no problems.

It is with (3) that we begin the slippery road, particularly that the referents to the pronouns are easily mistaken. The Arabic of (3) is as follows: *fa ammā al-quḍra fa waṣfun li al-ʿabdi wa khalqun li al-rabbi subḥānahu wa laysat bikasbin lahu* (here again, the author translated *quḍra* as “the power to act” and *kasb* as “performance”). The question is to what does the *lahu* refer? In their translations, both professors Frank and Tibawi make the referent, *al-rabb*, “the Lord,” by using the capital “H” in “His.”²²

Now this interpretation is understandable since *wa laysat lahu* comes immediately after *al-rabbi subḥānahu*. To take the *lahu* as referring to God would be a natural thing to do. But, on reflection, this cannot be the case; the *lahu* has to refer back to the servant. Who would ever say that *quḍra*, and this is created power, is a *kasb* of God, so that al-Ghazālī finds it necessary to deny it? Does *kasb* ever apply to God? Now, the created *quḍra* itself is not a *kasb*. *Kasb* normally refers to creaturely movements, *al-ḥarakāt*, deeds or works, *al-aʿmāl*, to creaturely acts, *al-afʿāl*, to knowledge attained concomitantly with *naẓar*, *al-ʿilm al-naẓariyy*. These are the things bequeathed by God’s power that the created *quḍra* or the individual in whom this *quḍra* is created acquire. And this is precisely the point al-Ghazālī is making, namely, that the *quḍra* is a creation of the Lord, but that, unlike the movement, it is not an acquisition of the servant.

Indeed, by contrast,²³ and this brings us to (4), it is the movement that is (i) a creation of God, (ii) a description or attribute of the servant, and an acquisition of his, that is, of the servant. The Arabic of (4) is as follows: *wa amma al-ḥaraka fa khalqun li al-rabbi wa waṣfun li al-ʿabdi wa kasbun lahu*, immediately followed by *fa innahā khuliqat maqḍūra bi qudratin hiya waṣfuhu*. Here again the translation of *wa kasbun lahu* as “a perfor-

mance of his,” is misleading—it assumes the point at issue. And here again, we encounter the difficulty of determining the referent to the pronoun in *waṣfuhu*. That the referent here in the author’s translation is made to be the servant is understandable, since (3) speaks of the *quḍra* as being a *waṣf* of the servant. But again on reflection, this cannot be the case. The referent is God. Here we are speaking, first of all, of the movement which is a creation of God, which is an attribute of the servant and an acquisition for him. For this movement is created as the object of power (*maqḍūra*) by a power that creates it. The power that creates it is not the power of the servant. Creation (*al-kahlq*), for al-Ghazālī, belongs to God alone. In the sentence beginning with *fa innahā . . . waṣfuhu*, the *hu* in *waṣfuhu*, refers to the creator, to God. Tibawi in this instance saw this and in his translation capitalizes “His,” which is the correct thing to do. Moreover, in (5) we have “and the motion has a relationship to another attribute,” that is, an attribute other than God’s, as the author recognizes in his analysis (last line, p. 36). Hence in (4) the *quḍra* in the *maqḍuratun bi qudratin hiya waṣfuhu* is not an attribute of the servant, but of God. Any suggestion here that al-Ghazālī is saying that the *maqḍūr* is “the realized power to act that is his [i.e., the servant’s] attribute” is not what the text says.

(5) makes sense if *waṣfuhu* in (4) refers to God. (Here again we have *kasb* translated as “performance”.) It would have been helpful to include the section left out, since it (as well as the concluding section left out) shows the close relationship of what is said here to the much more detailed discussion in the *Iqtiṣād*. This is the argument that the movement could not be a compulsion (as the Mujbira hold) since we experience the difference between the movement that is the object of power and the compulsory tremor. Nor could it be a creation of the servant (as the Muʿtazila hold) “when he has no knowledge of the details and parts of the acquired movement and their nature.”²⁴ “If the two extremes are false,” the statement continues, “there only remains moderation in belief,” namely (to use a somewhat literal translation) “that it is the object of power through the power of God, exalted be He, as a creation, and by the servant’s power in a different mode of connection expressed [by the term] ‘acquisition.’”

The last sentence above as translated by the author in (6) has once again *kasb* as “performance.”

The concluding part of the second thesis, which is not translated, is a summary of the argument in the *Iqtiṣād* to the effect that the relation between power and

²² A. L. Tibawi, “Al-Ghazālī’s Sojourn in Damascus and Jerusalem,” *Islamic Quarterly* 9 (1965): 65–122. This includes the text of the *al-Risāla al-Qudsiyya* and a translation. Pages 79–94 constitute the Arabic text, the rest the translation. For the translation of the above passage, see p. 110.

²³ Here the *wa ammā*, introducing the sentence, left untranslated, has some significance.

²⁴ This is a basic argument in the *Iqtiṣād*, 87–90.

the object of power can be non-causal,²⁵ the proof of this being that God's eternal power prior to the creation of the world was connected with the world, but not through creation (*lkhtirā*^ᶜ).

As we have tried to indicate, there is something seriously amiss with the translation. It neither conveys the real meaning, nor the spirit of the passage, so that the analyses and interpretation that follow (pp. 36–37), based on the translation, are really quite off the mark. This does not mean, however, that al-Ghazālī's use of causal language elsewhere poses no problems in interpreting him. This is particularly true in the attempt to understand what he means by angelic mediation.

VI

Al-Ghazālī's use of causal language as ordinarily used in Arabic and in the way it is used by the Islamic philosophers is not a phenomenon that one meets only in the *Ihyā*^ᶜ and subsequent works. As Professor Frank recognizes and shows, it is used in the *Tahāfut*, the *Mi^ᶜyār* and the *Iqtisād*. Al-Ghazālī does, however, give us indications of how he is using this language. Thus in the *Tahāfut*'s third discussion, he gives the argument that agency cannot be attributed to the inanimate, but only to creatures endowed with will. The argument comes in the form of an answer to the objection that in ordinary Arabic usage one says that “fire kills,” “the sword cuts,” and so on. Al-Ghazālī declares that this is metaphorical usage. “For if the term ‘agent,’” he writes, “is [applicable to both willer] and non-willer in the same way, not by way of one of them being the basis, the other derived from it as a metaphor, why is it then that on the basis of language, custom and reason, killing is related to the willer, even though fire is the proximate cause (*al-^ᶜilla al-qariba*) of the killing?”²⁶ We note here that he uses the term “proximate cause,” but this is only a cause in a metaphorical sense. Again, as Frank points out (pp. 28–29), in the *Iqtisād*, in an adaptation of an Avicennan argument, by *al-murajjih*, namely, that which gives preponderance for something to exist rather than not to exist, al-Ghazālī states that he means nothing else but “cause,” *sabab*. But in what sense of cause? In a later chapter of the same work, he states that the preponderance of one course of action over another is explicable in terms of God's creation of a habitual course of events (*bi ḥukmi jaryi al-^ᶜāda*).²⁷

Terms like “cause” (*sabab*, ^ᶜ*illa*), “generation” (*tawallud*), are common Arabic terms and it would be quite cumbersome to have to keep on saying that this is metaphorical usage, or that the reference is to habitual causes, and so on. The problem is that when used ordinarily, they also convey our ordinary common-sense way of understanding them. Thus in the example, in *al-Maqṣad*, of the mechanical waterclock, part of which is translated by Frank (p. 42), al-Ghazālī, in another part, uses the expression *mā yatawalladu minhā* “what is generated from it,”²⁸ where the immediate sense is that it is motion that generates something else.

Al-Ghazālī's argument that the proximate cause is said to be a cause only in a metaphorical sense clearly betrays his full awareness of how the language of habitual, not real, causes and effects does not tally with our Aristotelian, common-sense way of looking at things. The concept of habitual causality is more complex and difficult to understand, and if there is an esoteric message in al-Ghazālī's causal language, it is here that one should expect it. Is *kasb*, which is at the heart of the causal question, the doctrine that the common folk, the ^ᶜ*awāmm*, are likely to understand or appreciate? Al-Ghazālī explicitly answers in the negative, as the text that will be next quoted shows.

We do find indications also in the *Ihyā*^ᶜ showing clearly that he does not intend these causal terms to be understood in their ordinary sense, although the proper sense of understanding them is restricted to the very few. After a discussion of the problem of the human will and human power, he raises a question against his position and then answers it. This short passage, partly translated by the author (p. 25), deserves a fuller translation since it is quite important:

You may say: “Do you state that knowledge generated will (*al-^ᶜilm wallada al-irāda*) and will generated power (*wa al-irāda walladat al-qudra*) and power generated motion (*wa al-qudra walladat al-ḥaraka*), and that every posterior [event] comes to be by the [immediately] prior? If you say this, then you have made the judgment that the creation of a thing is not from the power of God, exalted be He. And if you refuse [to affirm] this, then what is the meaning of the [conditioned] arrangement (*tarattub*) of some of these in terms of others?”

[I answer]:

Know that the statement that some of these things came to be from others is pure ignorance, regardless of

²⁵ Ibid., 93.

²⁶ *Tahāfut*, 100–102.

²⁷ *Iqtisād*, 174.

²⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā fi Asmā^ᶜ al-Lāh al-Ḥusnā*, ed. F. A. Shehadi (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1982), 101, l. 5.

whether this is expressed by [the term] generation (*al-tawallud*) or some other [term]. But all this reverts²⁹ to the meaning expressed by “eternal power.” This is the principle which most people are unable to know, excepting those well grounded in knowledge. For they came to know the essence of its meaning, whereas the majority have come to know the mere utterance together with some kind of analogy with our [own] power.³⁰

In other words, the ordinary usage of causal language has to be understood by those “grounded in knowledge” (*al-rāsikhūn fī al-ʿilm*) as the expression of the action of the eternal power (*al-qudra al-azaliyya*), not of any created being. Here what is operative is the concept of the pervasiveness of the divine attribute of power, argued for, as noted earlier, in the *Iqtiṣād*. That al-Ghazālī is speaking of direct causal action of the divine power is shown by a brief statement in the very lengthy chapter entitled, “The Manner of Contemplating the Creation of God, Exalted Be He.” The context of the statement is a rebuttal of those who think there is any sharing by the creatures in God’s creative acts. It is the ignorant, for example, who maintain that water moves downwards because it is by its nature heavy.³¹ But, al-Ghazālī argues, if water moves downward because of its nature, how does it move upwards in the plant? If this is due to attraction by one who attracts it (*bi jadhbī jādhībīn*), al-Ghazālī then asks, “who then compelled (*sakhkhara*) that which attracts it?” If this, in the final analysis, he continues, ends up with the Creator, “why is this not reverted to Him from the beginning? (*fa limā lā yuḥālu ilayhi min awwalī-l-amr*).”³² In other words, why posit a chain of causes, that is, of real, not habitual, causes, when the attraction is directly attributable to God?

This brings us to the question of angelic mediation in al-Ghazālī, to whose significance Frank draws attention. The author also draws attention to al-Ghazālī’s adaptation of Avicenna’s angelic scheme to his cosmology. Now, in Avicenna’s scheme, the angels, whether celestial intelligences or celestial souls, have causal efficacy. These celestial beings causally necessitate the existence of their effects. Does this mean then that the angelic mediator in al-Ghazālī also has causal efficacy? This is a question that is not easy to answer, partly because al-Ghazālī often uses example and anecdote in his statements on angelic mediation, partly because his language

at points is very suggestive that he holds that the angelic mediators do have causal efficacy.

This is seen in his use of the example of the puppets and the puppeteer. In a lengthy chapter on the topic of what God loves and what God abhors,³³ he tells us that most people think that what they experience of activities in themselves have no causes in the world of the unseen. They are like children at a puppet show who think that these puppets move by themselves, being unaware that they are moved by unseen strings, manipulated by an unseen puppeteer. Those well grounded in knowledge, however, know there are unseen causes of our acts, that every individual is attached to fine unseen strings terminating in “the hands of the angels that move the spheres.” (These movers of the sphere correspond to Avicenna’s celestial souls as distinct from the celestial intelligence). These angels in turn are directed to the “bearers of the Throne” (presumably corresponding to the celestial intelligences in Avicenna’s system) who receive their commands from God.³⁴ The example is also used in a discussion of God’s bounties that include the food we eat. The causes that make plants live, grow, yield their harvest and hence provide food, are akin to the puppeteer’s strings, reaching to the “celestial angels that move them, this extending to remote causes.”³⁵ Implicit here is that the remote causes terminate in the cause of all causes, God.

The model is Avicennan and the language is certainly suggestive of causal action on the part of these angels. But there are differences between the Ghazālīan and Avicennan causal chains. For one thing, unlike Avicenna, God, for al-Ghazālī, is not bound to act “through” angelic mediation, but also acts directly. For another, al-Ghazālī holds that in addition to the celestial angelic causes, there are multitudes of terrestrial angels, each entrusted with a specific task. Al-Ghazālī discusses the class of terrestrial angels in a chapter on God’s grace in creating angels.³⁶ For each part of our bodies, in its replenishment and growth through food, food, flesh, and blood have no causal efficacy to effect organic change. This change comes about through the action of the terrestrial angels. Each bodily organ is acted on by a number of such terrestrial angels, each angel entrusted with one and only one specific task. Angelic activity covers each and every part of our bodies. But what does al-Ghazālī mean by the bodily part? Here his atomism sur-

²⁹ More literally, “the reversion (*hiwāla*) of all this is to . . .”

³⁰ *Iḥyāʾ*, 249, ll. 23–28.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 429.

³² *Ibid.*, 429, ll. 17–18.

³³ *Ibid.*, 87–96.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 117–20.

faces. Addressing his reader, he states that this angelic activity covers each “part of your parts that are indivisible (*wa dhālika fī kulli juz²in min ajzā²ika al-latī lā tatajazza²*).”³⁷

Al-Ghazālī’s language is strongly suggestive, perhaps here more than any other place, that angelic action is real causal action. Nonetheless, there are also strong indications, compelling in our view, for believing that when he speaks of angelic action he is still speaking of concomitant habitual causes, not real causes. This is evident in the first part of his lengthy chapter on divine unity, the basis of trust,³⁸ where he speaks of those rare individuals who have knowledge through immediate intellectual apprehension (*al-mukāshafa*). This is when it is revealed to the gnostic that “there is no agent except God, exalted be He . . . and that He has no partner sharing His act.”³⁹

Later on in this chapter, in what amounts to a restatement of the doctrine of *kasb*, al-Ghazālī also explains how the same act is attributable to God and the servant, but in two different senses.⁴⁰ The sense in which the servant is the agent is that he is the place (*maḥall*) in which God creates power (after creating will, after creating knowledge). By contrast, the act is related to divine power in terms of causal efficacy, that is, in terms of “the connection of the effect to the cause and the created thing to its creator (*irtibāṭ al-ma^clūl bi al-^cilla wa irtibāṭ al-mukhtara^c bi al-mukhtari^c*).” It is in terms of this distinction, where the act is causally related only to God—al-Ghazālī in effect continues—that “God, exalted be He, related acts in the Qur^ʿān one time to the angels, one time to the servants and another time to Himself.”⁴¹ It is clear from this that action relates to the angels only in the sense that they are the locus of divine action. They are intermediaries, to be sure, but only in this sense.

VII

In the last chapter, Professor Frank discusses in detail the determinism of al-Ghazālī’s system. He points out very correctly that once the system is set going, so to speak, God cannot interfere with it. And al-Ghazālī, as Frank recognizes full well, agrees. For al-Ghazālī, any change within the preordained system is impossible because it violates the concept of God’s omniscience, that

is, His knowledge of all future events; and since power is confined to doing the possible, this does contradict the concept of divine power. In this final chapter, however, Frank focuses attention on the related question of whether al-Ghazālī holds that the world is necessary, not only in the sense that, God having willed it, it has to be as He willed it, but necessary in the sense that God could not but have willed it. The author argues that al-Ghazālī’s real view is that the world is necessary also in this second sense.

Before turning to Frank’s main argument, one should note that it is preceded by a valuable discussion of the question of other possible worlds. The author gives a succinct review of Ash^carite thought on the subject and then indicates that al-Ghazālī does not touch on the question (discussed by his predecessors) of whether those possible worlds would differ from ours in having classes of beings that are different. Al-Ghazālī does not say much about this subject, the author points out. At best, he convincingly maintains that for al-Ghazālī such possible worlds would differ in their structures, but not in the kind of beings they would include. One finds support for this in a notable example of possible worlds al-Ghazālī introduces in the *Tahāfut*,⁴² an example which becomes quite pertinent to the question of whether God had to will our world and could not have done otherwise. In defining the will as an attribute whose function is to differentiate between similars (for the author’s discussion of this definition with the appropriate reference, see p. 53), al-Ghazālī argues that the philosophers themselves have to admit that God must have differentiated between similars. For He could have created the movement of the heavens in the opposite direction. Moreover, of the numerous number of points on the outermost heavenly sphere—infinite in number according to the philosophers’ Aristotelian concept of potentially infinite division of a spatial continuum—God chose two specific points. The world could have been created to revolve around any one of an innumerable number of possible axes. Here we have the concept of other similar possible worlds, by implication all equally good, where the differences between them have nothing to do with differences in classes of being.

To turn then to Frank’s main argument that God must will the world’s creation. This is based on his exegesis of two passages, one in the *Iqtisād* and one in the *Ijām* (p. 73 and p. 75) where the divine will is referred to as having a necessary existence. What does this mean? Al-Ghazālī certainly does not make his meaning crystal-clear and the phrase is amenable to

³⁷ Ibid., 118, l. 17.

³⁸ Ibid., 240ff.

³⁹ Ibid., 242 ll. 4–5.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 250, l. 21ff.

⁴¹ Ibid., 250, ll. 31–32.

⁴² *Tahāfut*, 42–46.

different interpretations. Frank interprets it as asserting that “God necessarily wills what He wills and, by implication, could not have willed other than what He in fact wills” (p. 73). This is a possible interpretation, but, as we see it, not the most likely one—that is, if one follows the pattern of Ghazālian explanations of the relation of knowledge to will and power (admittedly, as the author points out, not always consistently clear, and certainly fraught with logical and philosophical difficulties). But the pattern is there.

A statement in the *Ihyāʾ*² may be helpful here. “The act of God, exalted be He, is termed choice (*ikhtiyāran*) on condition that one does not understand by choice a will after perplexity and hesitation.”⁴³ He then cautions that all such language when applied to God is metaphorical. Still, there is a pattern that is operative here: God has knowledge of possible alternatives, makes a choice and wills it. The will, the *irāda*, here, is the act of willing a choice, but not “after perplexity and hesitation.” It is an eternal act, to be sure, but nonetheless an act of choice. “Once” so to speak, the choice is made, the act of willing becomes realized. With the realization of such an act of willing (*tahaqquq al-irāda*),⁴⁴ the existence of the will as a realized act of willing becomes “a necessary existence” and the existence of its object becomes necessary. This interpretation does not entail the idea that God must will what he wills.

There are other grounds for maintaining that al-Ghazālī does not hold that God must will the creation of the world. (Why would he want to hold this?) His main objection to the belief in the world’s pre-eternity is that it is based on the premise that God acts by necessity. This brings us to his endorsement of the Ashʿarite doctrine of the divine will as additional to the divine essence. This doctrine is meant, among other things, to safeguard the concept of the divine voluntary act—for if identical with the divine essence, the will’s act becomes an essential act and hence compulsory.

This, in turn, brings us to an issue which is not discussed in this monograph, but which is central to the question of the relation between the cosmologies of al-Ghazālī and Avicenna, namely the question of *takfīr*—al-Ghazālī’s pronouncing those subscribing to three of

Avicenna’s doctrines as infidels. The first of these is the doctrine of the world’s pre-eternity, which is central to Avicenna’s cosmology. As already suggested, it is condemned largely because it maintains that God’s eternal act of causing the world’s existence is a necessitated, not a voluntary act. The second is the doctrine that God does not know the terrestrial particulars except in a universal way. This is also a doctrine that involves Avicenna’s cosmology. It involves his entire emanative scheme that, among other things, entails that God knows the effects of His self-knowledge through mediation. But Avicenna’s cosmology involves as well the third doctrine, namely that it is only the individual human soul that is immortal and that bodies cannot be resurrected. Avicenna’s cosmological system cannot accommodate a doctrine of bodily resurrection.⁴⁵

Al-Ghazālī’s pronouncement that the Islamic philosophers are infidels for upholding these three doctrines is not a rhetorical utterance, but a legal statement. It is announced in the *Tahāfut* and repeated in its sequel, the *Iqtisād*. Al-Ghazālī then repeats it in works written after the *Ihyāʾ*². He thus repeats it in *Fayṣal al-Tafriqa*—significantly, a work that shows a greater tolerance toward Islamic sectarians, particularly the Muʿtazila, but which does not spare the Islamic philosophers the charge of *kufur*. He then again repeats it in his autobiography, his *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*.

VIII

Although Professor Frank’s interpretations are not immune to criticism, his monograph marks an important development in the history of Ghazālian studies. It raises the whole question of al-Ghazālī’s causal language in a manner that has not been raised before. One may disagree with its interpretation of this language, but the interpretation demands serious attention. The monograph is rich in commentary, analyses, and adds considerably to our knowledge of Avicenna’s influence on al-Ghazālī. But perhaps, above all else, by focussing attention on al-Ghazālī’s cosmology, it puts his thought in a deservedly wider philosophical perspective.

⁴³ *Ihyāʾ*², 249, ll. 21–22.

⁴⁴ *Iqtisād*, 84, l. 5.

⁴⁵ See the reviewer’s “Avicenna and the Problem of the Infinite Number of Souls,” *Mediaeval Studies* 22 (1960): 232–39.