

translation of ibn Rushd's *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* is under preparation, to be published by the Board for Advancement of Literature, Lahore.

(B) Sections of Books.—'Abd al-Salām Nadawi, *Hukamā'-i Islam*, Azamgarh, 1953, Vol. I, pp. 386-408 (Urdu); abu al-Hasan 'Ali, *Tārīkh-i Da'wat-u 'Azimat*, Azamgarh, 1375/1955, Part I, pp. 111-81 (Urdu); Majid Fakhry, *Islamic Occasionalism*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1958, chapter 2 and by index; M. M. Sharif, *Muslim Thought: Its Origin and Achievements*, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1951, pp. 75-80; F. Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1958, pp. 94-99; M. Saeed Sheikh, *Studies in Muslim Philosophy* (in press), Pakistan Philosophical Congress, Lahore, chapter on al-Ghazālī; D. M. Donaldson, *Studies in Muslim Ethics*, S. P. C. K., London 1953, chapter 6 and by index; A. J. Arberry, *Sufism*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1956 (second impression), pp. 74-75, 79-83 and by index; S. M. Afnān, *Avicenna: His Life and Works*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1958, pp. 235-41; E. I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1958, pp. 38-43 and by index; J. W. Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, Lutterworth Press, London, 1955, Part II, Vol. I, pp. 90-93, 262-309 and by index of authors; C. Hartshorne and W. L. Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*, Chicago, 1953, pp. 106-11.

(C) Articles.—G. F. Hourani, "Al-Ghazālī and the Philosophers on the Origin of the World," *The Muslim World*, 1958, Vol. XLVIII, Nos. 3 & 4, pp. 183-91, 308-14; Michael E. Marmura, "Al-Ghazālī and the Argument of Time," *The Muslim World*, 1959, Vol. XLIX, No. 4; M. M. Sharif, "Muslim Philosophy and Western Thought," *Iqbal*, July 1959, Vol. VIII, No. 1, pp. 7-14; M. Hanif Nadawi, "Ghazālī ka Nazriyyah-i Ta'lil," *Thaqāfat* (Urdu), Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, July 1959, Vol. VII, No. 7, pp. 11-19.

Chapter XXXII

FAKHR AL-DIN RĀZI

A

LIFE, SIGNIFICANCE OF THOUGHT, AND WORKS

The intellectual life of Islam after the attacks of Ash'ari and Ghazālī upon rationalistic philosophy can be largely described as the gradual transition from the rationalism of Aristotelian philosophy toward the intuitive and illuminative wisdom of the Ishrāqīs¹ and Sufis. Although Islam began to weaken politically and culturally during the later part of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, Muslim thought especially in the Shi'ah world continued the process of divorcing itself from the categories of Peripatetic philosophy. One of the most influential and colourful figures in this movement, who played a major role in the attack against the rationalists, was Fakhr al-Din Rāzi, who is considered

¹ For the definition and description of this term refer to chapter on "Shihāb al-Din Suhrawardī Maqtūl."

to be the reviver of Islam in the sixth/twelfth century as Ghazālī was in the fifth/eleventh.² Rāzi is in many ways a second Ghazālī; in fact, he may without exaggeration be considered to be one of the greatest Muslim theologians.

Abu al-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn 'Umar, known as Fakhr al-Din Rāzi and also as Imām Fakhr, ibn al-Khaṭīb, and *Imām al-Mushakkikīn* (the Imām of the Doubters),³ was born in Rayy in northern Persia in 543/1149 in a family of scholars who came originally from Ṭabaristān. His father, Diā' al-Dīn, was a well-known scholar in Rayy and was Imām Fakhr's first teacher. Later, Fakhr al-Din studied philosophy with Muḥammad al-Baghawī and Majd al-Dīn al-Jili (the latter being also the teacher of Shaikh al-Ishrāq Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī) and theology with Kamāl al-Dīn Simnāni in Rayy and Marāghah, and soon became a master of all the sciences of his time including even the mathematical, medical, and natural sciences.⁴

Having completed his formal studies, Imām Fakhr set out for Khwārizm to combat the Mu'tazilites, and from there journeyed to Transoxiana and was warmly accepted at the Courts of the Ghūr rulers, Ghiyāth al-Dīn and his brother Shihāb al-Dīn. But this stay terminated soon due to the opposition and jealousy of certain scholars and courtiers. Consequently, Imām Fakhr left the Ghūr Court for Ghaznah, where he taught for a while, and finally settled in Herāt where, under the patronage of Khwārizm Shāh 'Ala al-Dīn, a special school was built for him. There he spent the rest of his life as a teacher and preacher in comfort and honour among a large number of disciples and students who came from all over the Muslim world to study under him. He passed away at the height of fame and glory in 606/1209.⁵

The career of Imām Fakhr is in many ways a repetition of that of Ghazālī's. Like his great predecessor, he was of the Shāfi'i school, well versed in all the sciences and philosophy and yet opposed to many aspects of the Greek heritage, a critic of the Muslim philosophers, and drawn towards Sufism.⁶ In theology,

² According to a *ḥadīth*, in each century God sends a great sage and scholar into the world to strengthen Islam. Muslim historians, following this *ḥadīth*, have searched during each century for the fittest person to receive this honour.

³ He was given this title because he doubted so many of the views of the previous philosophers and even of the theologians.

⁴ In the *Wafayāt al-A'yān*, ibn Khallikān writes that Imām Rāzi was the greatest authority on the Greek sciences (*'ulūm al-awā'il*) in his time. The best sources for the biography of Rāzi are ibn abi Usaib'ah, *'Uyūn al-Anbā'*, ibn al-Qifti, *Tārīkh al-Hukamā'*, ibn Khallikān, *Kitāb Wafayāt al-A'yān*, Shams al-Dīn Shahrzūrī, *Nuzhat al-Arwāḥ wa Raḍat al-Airāḥ*, and ibn Taqī al-Dīn al-Subki, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyyat al-Kubra*.

⁵ Al-Subki, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyyat al-Kubra*, Maṭba'at al-Ḥusainiyyah, Cairo, 1324/1906, Vol. V, pp. 33-40.

⁶ Although not a great Sufi figure like Ghazālī, Imām Rāzi was nevertheless sympathetic towards Sufism, especially in the later period of his life. Subki, *op. cit.*, p. 35, writes that Rāzi was himself a Sufi, and some of his poems and frequent quotations from the Sufi masters like Ḥallāj and abu Sa'id certainly point in this direction.

in which he followed the Ash'arite school, he was certainly influenced by Ghazali and Imām al-Ḥaramain. In philosophy he came under the influence of his compatriot, Muḥammad Zakariya Rāzi, as well as ibn Sina, and in physics his master was without doubt abu al-Barakāt al-Baghḍādī. Like a series of anti-Aristotelian philosophers before him, Imām Fakhr tried to reconcile religion and rational philosophy by reliance upon ideas derived more from the *Timaeus* of Plato than the *Physics* of Aristotle.⁷

Imām Fakhr's main role in the intellectual life of Islam was to support the orthodox policy of the Caliphate of his time to suppress rationalistic philosophy in favour of theology. In the unified view of Islam, politics, religion, and intellectual life have never been divorced, so much so that the political struggle of minorities in the Caliphate, whether they were opposed to Arab domination or, like the Shi'ahs, to the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate as such, was reflected clearly in the intellectual and religious activities of the period. As the Caliphate supported the orthodox Sunni theologians against the rationalists, the philosophers sought refuge in the Courts of those minor dynasties that were opposed to the central authority of the Caliphs. So we see such figures as ibn Sina and Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī seeking favour of rulers opposed to the authority of Baghdād, and especially of Shi'ah princes.⁸ And, on the other hand, there appeared a series of great scholars and sages, mostly theologians and Sufis, of whom the most important were Ghazali, Imām Fakhr, and the Sufi masters like Shihāb al-Dīn Umar Suhrawardī, who lifted their pen in support of the Caliphate and used both theology and Sufism in order to combat rationalistic philosophy.⁹ The works of Imām Fakhr were above all else dedicated to this cause. Sunni theology reached its height in his works and weakened considerably with the fall of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, which came to an end about fifty years after his death.

The writings of Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzi, of which nearly a hundred are known, deal almost with every aspect of Muslim intellectual life and include all the sciences of his time.¹⁰ Some of these, like the commentary upon the *al-Ishārāt w-al-Tanbihāt* of ibn Sina and upon his *'Uyūn al-Ḥikmah* and the *Mabāḥith al-Mashriqiyyah*, are written as criticisms of Muslim philosophers,

⁷ For an outline of the ideas of the group of Muslim thinkers who were influenced by Platonic physics, see S. Pines, *Beiträge zur islamischen Atomenlehre*, Berlin, A. Heine GmbH., Gräfenheimeichen, 1936.

⁸ It is far from accidental that the philosophy and the sciences which were connected with the Greek heritage flourished especially in the fourth/tenth century when most of the Muslim world was governed by the Shi'ah Buwaihids and Fātimids.

⁹ The opposition of this group to Greek philosophy was primarily against its rationalistic and syllogistic aspects. The cosmological and certain metaphysical doctrines of the Greeks were not only not criticized but were also openly accepted by them. So we see a Ghazali using Hermetic symbolism or a Fakhr Rāzi writing numerous treatises on the cosmological sciences.

¹⁰ For a bibliography of his works, see Subki, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-40 and Imām Rāzi's *I'tiqādāt Farq al-Mustimīn w-al-Mushrikīn*, Maktabat al-Nahḍat al-Miṣriyyah, Cairo, 1356/1937, Introduction by Shaikh 'Abd al-Razzāq, pp. 27 ff.

especially ibn Sina, and on general problems of philosophy.¹¹ Others deal with the many branches of the intellectual sciences including logic, mathematics, metaphysics, and the natural and the esoteric sciences.

Still another set of books deals with theology, of which the most famous are the *Kitāb al-Arba'in fi Uṣūl al-Dīn*, *Lawāmi' al-Bayyināt*, and the *Muḥaṣṣal*, a classic among writings on the *Kalām*. Fakhr al-Dīn also wrote a large number of works on particular sciences, like the commentary upon the syntax of Zamakhshari, *Kitāb al-Sirr al-Maktūm* on astrology and astronomy, *Manāqib al-Shāfi'i* on history, the commentary upon the *Qānūn* or *Canon* of ibn Sina, and many other treatises dealing with medicine, geometry, physiognomy, agriculture, theurgy, etc. Besides these writings, Imām Fakhr composed a large number of works on the purely Islamic sciences of exegesis and jurisprudence, of which the most famous are the *Maḥāṭib al-Ghaib*, the voluminous commentary upon the Qur'ān, and *al-Ma'ālīm fi Uṣūl al-Fiqh* on the principles of jurisprudence. Throughout these writings the character of Imām Fakhr as a critic and "doubter" is evident. He criticizes not only the philosophers, but also theologians like Ash'ari and historians like Shahrastāni, whom he accuses of plagiarizing Baghdādī's *al-Farq bain al-Firaq* in his *al-Milal wa-al-Nihal*.¹² Imām Fakhr's particular genius for analysis and criticism is evident in whatever field he turns his attention to, so that in the annals of Muslim thought he has quite justly become famous as one who is a master in posing a problem but not in solving it, in entering into a debate but not in concluding it.

B

THEOLOGY (KALĀM)

Muslim theology known as *Kalām* began as a reaction against the rationalistic school of the Mu'tazilites, and only gradually developed into a complete science. In the earlier centuries the theologians, following the lead of abu al-Ḥasan al-Ash'ari, tried to use logic, the instrument of their enemies, in order to defend the truths of revelation. From the fourth/tenth century onward, this defence itself became more subtle and systematic, reaching its height in the works of Imām al-Ḥaramain abu al-Ma'ālī 'Abd al-Malik al-Juwaini, such as the *Irshād* and the *Shāmīl*.¹³ With Ghazali *Kalām* took a new

¹¹ Imām Rāzi's pupil, Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, wrote many works answering his teacher's criticism of ibn Sina and other philosophers.

¹² See Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzi, *Munāzarāt*, Dairatul-Maarif-il-Osmania, Hyderabad, 1355/1936, where he also criticizes certain parts of Ghazali's *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* on the motion of the planets. See also P. Kraus, "Les 'controverse' de Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzi," *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte*, t. XIX, 1936-37, pp. 187-214.

¹³ For a history of Muslim theology, especially of the Sunni school, see Shibli Nu'māni, *Tārīkh 'Ilm-i Kalām*, tr. M. Fakhr Dā'i Gilāni, Rangin Press, Teheran, 1328/1910, and L. Gardet and M. M. Anawati, *Introduction à la théologie musulmane*, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, Paris, 1948.

turn; opposed as it was from the beginning to the school of the philosophers, it now began to employ the syllogistic method, intellectual ('*aqli*) evidence, and certain theses of the philosophers, thus laying the foundations of the school of philosophical *Kalām* of the later theologians.

Imām Fakhr is the greatest master of this later school of theology, surpassing in many ways even the more illustrious Ghazālī. With Imām Fakhr philosophical *Kalām* reaches its zenith of power and perfection; his works became consequently a continuous source of influence over the later theologians, whether they were Sunnis like al-ʿIjī and al-Taftazānī or Shīʿahs like Khwājah Naṣīr.¹⁴ Properly speaking, Rāzi must be credited with the foundation of a new school of *Kalām*, and certain writers have even considered him to be the Third Teacher after Aristotle and Fārābī.¹⁵ Actually, he composed works characteristic of both the first period of Muslim theology—marked by a revolt against the philosophers and yet by a dependence upon their methods and even some of their ideas—and the second period, after Ghazālī, in which theology became a more independent science and lost much of its defensive and apologetic quality. Among the first type of writings one may name *Muḥaṣṣal* and *al-Arabī'n fi Uṣūl al-Dīn* and among the second *Asās al-Taqādis* and *Lawāmi' al-Bayyināt*.

The theology of Imām Rāzi is marked by the integration of theological themes with other sciences. For example, in his Persian treatise, *Asrār al-Tanzīl*, he combines theology with ethics; and in the *Lawāmi' al-Bayyināt*, theology with Sufism, giving theology a fragrance of spirituality and a beauty not found in most writings. In the sixth chapter of the *Lawāmi'* he gives a detailed and profound discussion concerning *dhikr*, the invocation of one of the divine names, which is the basic technique of Sufism. Concerning one of the interior forms of *dhikr* he writes: "The third kind of *dhikr* is that man should contemplate the creatures of God until each particle of the essence of creation becomes a polished mirror before the unmanifested world so that when he looks into this mirror with the eye of wisdom the ray of the eye of his soul will fall upon the world of Majesty. This is a station without end and a sea without limit."¹⁶ In this way Imām Rāzi raises theology to a height approached only by Ghazālī, far surpassing the usual level of this study.¹⁷

To understand Rāzi's approach to theology, it is enough to analyse the structure of one of his treatises. We take as an example perhaps the most

famous of his theological works, the *Muḥaṣṣal*, which became a classic source-book on the *Kalām* almost from the moment of its composition.¹⁸ Here, Imām Rāzi divides theology into four parts (*arkān*): Preliminaries, Being and its divisions, rational theology (*ilāhiyyāt*), and traditional questions (*sam'iyyāt*). The preliminaries include the principles of logic, the sufficiency of demonstration (*dalīl*) to prove the existence of God, and the obligation upon each believer to prove God's existence.¹⁹ The section on Being and its divisions considers the questions of Being and Non-Being, attributes of Being, the negation of modes between Being and Non-Being, the relation of the One to the many, cause and effect, etc. Rational theology which is interlaced with passages from the Qur'ān concerns the Necessary Being, His attributes and acts and the divine names. Finally, the traditional questions, which are exclusively scriptural, concern prophethood, eschatology, the Imāmate, the faith, and other related subjects. As a whole, therefore, Imām Rāzi's theology combines the transmitted or traditional elements of revelation (*naqli*) and the intellectual and rational evidence concerning religious and metaphysical questions ('*aqli*) into a science which takes into account the problems of religion while participating in many of the discussions of philosophy.

In the method and problems of theology, Imām Rāzi followed the Ash'arites. As he writes in his *Kitāb al-Arba'in*: "We (the Ash'arites) believe that God is neither body nor substance, and that He is not in space; yet, we believe that we can see God." But to show his independence of judgment he goes on to assert: "Our companions (the Ash'arites) have given an intellectual reason for the possibility of seeing God, but we have brought twelve objections against it which cannot be answered. Therefore, we only say that we can see God by appealing to transmitted reasoning, i. e., the Qur'ānic text."²⁰

Imām Rāzi also criticized Ash'ari on the question of atomism which is such an essential aspect of the Ash'arite theology. Rāzi rejected atomism in his earlier works like the *Mabāḥith al-Mashriqiyyah* and wrote his *Kitāb al-Jawhar al-Farq* to refute it, but in later works like the great Qur'ānic commentary, the *Majātib al-Ghaib*, he accepted it once again. (Atomism does not play a major role in his theology as it does in the system of other Ash'arites like Bāqillānī.) This change of position occurs also in the rejection of infinity, the void, and the plurality of worlds in the earlier writings and their acceptance in later works like the *Majātib*.

There are several points in Imām Rāzi's theology which are of special interest in so far as his particular point of view is concerned. One relates to the

¹⁴ The theological masterpiece, the *Tajrid*, of Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dīn Tūsī, who is the greatest of the Shī'ah theologians, is to a large extent influenced by Imām Rāzi's *Masā'il al-Khamsīn*.

¹⁵ This title, however, is more commonly given to Mir Dāmād, the master of theology and philosophy during the Ṣafawid period.

¹⁶ Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzi, *Lawāmi' al-Bayyināt*, Library of Imām Riḍa, Meshed, MS. Cat. No. 233.

¹⁷ Imām Rāzi, like the Christian theologians, considered *Kalām* to be the queen of the sciences and subordinated all the other rational sciences like philosophy and the mathematical and natural sciences to it.

¹⁸ For a more detailed discussion of this work, see L. Gardet and M. M. Anawati, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-64.

¹⁹ In all Muslim theology it is considered obligatory upon each Muslim to prove the existence of God according to his intellectual ability. See F. Schuon, "Nature et arguments de la foi," *Etudes Traditionnelles*, Vol. 54, Dec. 1953, pp. 344-63.

²⁰ Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzi, *Kitāb al-Arba'in fi Uṣūl al-Dīn*, Dairatul-Maarif-Il-Osmania, Hyderabad, 1353/1934, p. 190.

question of faith in which he joins most theologians in regarding faith as the necessary and sufficient requirement for being saved. Hell is not for those who have committed evil acts accidentally but for the infidels who have no faith. Man is of course responsible for his work but ultimately all is determined by the divine will. Imām Rāzi is very emphatic in his determinism and overthrows even the theory of acquisition (*kasb*) of the Ash'arites. His Qur'anic commentary is full of arguments for determinism, which he defends more openly and ably than any other theologian. God is the creator of both good and evil, faith and impiety, benefit and injury; all these qualities are decreed by the determination of the divine will (*qada' wa qadar*). Yet, none of the divine acts can be considered to be inappropriate or blameable since God is the creator and ruler of the world, and whatever He does in His kingdom is His own affair and is as such appropriate.

According to Imām Rāzi, God's attributes and names must be interpreted symbolically (*tā'wīl*) in order to be understood. He follows the method of Imām al-Ḥaramain in applying *tā'wīl* to the Qur'ān, especially to those verses in which God is attributed with such anthropomorphic qualities as sight, hearing, etc. This does not mean that Rāzi tries to overcome the rational difficulties of certain of the principles of faith by *ta'wīl*, as did many of the philosophers. For example, on the question of resurrection, unlike the philosophers who believed only in the resurrection of the soul, Imām Rāzi asserts that at resurrection God will create for each soul the same body, made of the same elements as those it possessed in this life.

On the question of knowledge and the process of reasoning, Imām Rāzi is of the view that reason is neither the cause of which knowledge is the effect nor the source which produces knowledge. There is an intelligible succession between the two; God creates a reasoning which knowledge follows necessarily.²¹ He accords a definite value to the rational faculty; his aim in theology is in fact to create a science which combines and harmonizes reason and revelation, '*aql* and *naql*. In his Qur'anic commentary he calls those who have succeeded in integrating these two elements the Muslim sages (*ḥukamā' islāmīyyah*), and praises them greatly. His own importance in Muslim theology lies in his success in establishing the school of philosophical *Kālām*, already begun by Ghazālī, in which both intellectual and revelational evidence played important roles.

C

PHILOSOPHY

The importance of Imām Rāzi in philosophy lies more in his criticism of the philosophers than in the establishment of a new school. Influenced by the writings of Ghazālī, he studied philosophy to such an extent that he became

²¹ Many theologians before Rāzi considered this relation between reason and knowledge to be custom (*'ādah*), but he explicitly rejects this notion.

a definite master of it. Unlike the theologians who rejected Greek philosophy totally or the Peripatetics who followed it strictly, Imām Rāzi criticized many points of Greek philosophy while accepting certain others. In the introduction to the *Mabāḥith al-Mashriqiyyah*, the most important of his philosophical works, he writes: "Our associates belong to two groups: one consisting of those who imitate the Greek philosophers, permit no one to discuss their thought, and take pride in being able to understand their sayings, and the other comprising those who reject all of their ideas without exception. Both of these groups are wrong. We have delved deep into the writings of the previous philosophers and have affirmed the true and rejected the false. We have added certain principles to this philosophy and have put forth some new ideas."²²

The new ideas of which Imām Rāzi speaks are mostly those pertaining to the rejection of certain basic elements of Aristotelianism and in some cases of Platonism. In the *Mabāḥith* he rejects the Platonic ideas, since in the Ash'arite perspective all infinite modes of Being are absorbed in the Absolute. He also criticizes the Platonic notion of knowledge as reminiscence and the idea held by certain Muslim philosophers that light is a body. One of his most important and penetrating discussions involves criticism of the principle that from Unity only unity can issue forth, *ex uno non fit nisi unum*, a principle held by nearly all medieval philosophers. Imām Rāzi puts this view to the test of his severe judgment and criticizes it with his usual genius for analysis. He asserts, on the contrary, that from Unity multiplicity can issue forth, but does not pursue the proof of this assertion very far.

The *Mabāḥith* deals with many other subjects treated in the well-known texts of Muslim philosophy like those of Ibn Sina. In each case it is the acute criticism of commonly held Peripatetic notions that is of interest. In his commentary upon the *al-Ishārāt w-al-Tanbihāt* of Ibn Sina, which after the *Mabāḥith* is his most important philosophical work, this type of criticism and doubts about Peripatetic philosophy continue—doubts which his pupil, Naṣir al-Din Ṭūsī, tried to answer in his own commentary upon the *Ishārāt*. Ever since these works were written, nearly every student of Peripatetic philosophy in the Muslim world, especially in Persia, has reached this philosophy through the criticism of Imām Rāzi, so that the thought of Imām Rāzi has become a permanent heritage of Muslim philosophers. His other philosophical works, like the commentary upon the '*Uyūn al-Ḥikmah, Lubāb al-Ishārāt* and many treatises on logic and metaphysics, are also significant, but his greatest philosophical importance lies in the criticisms and doubts cast upon the principles of Peripatetic philosophy, which not only left an indelible mark upon that school but opened the horizon for the other modes of knowledge like *ishrāqi* philosophy and gnosis, which were more intimately bound with the spirit of Islam.

²² Fakhr al-Din Rāzi, *al-Mabāḥith al-Mashriqiyyah*, Dairatul-Maarif-il-Osmania, Hyderabad, 1343/1924, Vol. I, p. 4.

D

THE SCIENCES

There have been very few Muslim theologians who have had as much knowledge of the mathematical and natural sciences as Imām Rāzi. His pre-occupation with the sciences is itself of great interest, because usually the Sunni theologians and doctors of Law shunned any discipline outside the sphere of the strictly religious sciences. Imām Rāzi, on the contrary, studied all the *awā'il* sciences, that is, the sciences inherited from the Greeks, and was considered by many of his contemporaries to be the greatest authority of his time on them. There is hardly a science in which he did not compose a treatise—although he never occupied himself with the study of nature in the manner of ibn al-Haiṭham or Bīrūni. His main importance in the sciences was in considering their principles and their relation to theology and to the spirit of Islamic revelation.

A field in which Imām Rāzi excelled is medicine, a discipline the mastery of which one hardly expects from a theologian. He wrote several treatises on health, pulse, and anatomy, and a medical encyclopaedia entitled *al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr* or *al-Ṭibb al-Kabīr* which he never completed. His most important medical work was his commentary upon the *Qānūn* of ibn Sīna, which he often criticized, basing himself on the opinions of Galen and the Muslim physicians, especially Muḥammad Zakariya Rāzi. The commentary is sufficient evidence that Imām Rāzi did not learn medicine by reading one or two manuals but studied it thoroughly and was well versed in it. He was in fact famous in Herāt for his ability and exactitude in diagnosis.

Imām Rāzi also wrote several treatises on geometry, astronomy, agriculture, politics, history, and comparative religion.²³ Also of interest are his works on the esoteric sciences (*'ulūm ḡharībah*), to which he devoted much attention. There remain among his writings treatises on theurgy (*ṭalismāt*), geomancy (*raml*), physiognomy (*firāsah*),²⁴ astrology, and other similar subjects. It is curious that Imām Rāzi wrote all these treatises, although he was opposed to certain of these subjects like astrology which he attacked throughout his writings.²⁵ He was, however, more sympathetic to the study of esoteric sciences than either the theologians or the philosophers, as is illustrated by his defence of alchemy against the charges of ibn Sīna.²⁶

Of particular interest to the history of Muslim sciences is the scientific

²³ His historical works include *Kitāb Faḍā'il al-Ṣaḡābah* and *Kitāb Manāqib al-Imām Shāfi'*, and his work on comparative religion, the *I'nḡādāt Farq al-Muslimīn w-al-Mushrikīn*.

²⁴ See Y. Mourad, *La physiognomonie arabe et le Kitāb al-Firāsah de Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzi*, Librairie Orientaliste, Paul Geuthner, Paris, 1939.

²⁵ See *Munāzarāt*, pp. 20–24.

²⁶ See *Mabāhith* . . . , p. 214.

encyclopedia of Imām Rāzi, the *Jāmi' al-'Ulūm*.²⁷ This work offers a good source for the names, definitions, scope, and major principles of the various Muslim sciences. Imām Fakhr begins with a discussion of traditional religious sciences such as theology, jurisprudence, dialectics, comparative religion, inheritance, will and testament, Qur'anic commentary, and reading of the Qur'an and Ḥadīth; and then passes on to the linguistic sciences dealing with grammar, syntax, etymology of words, prosody and poetic metre, and, after that to history. Having considered the transmitted (*naqli*) sciences, he devotes the rest of the book to the intellectual (*'aqli*) sciences which include natural philosophy, interpretation of dreams, physiognomy, medicine, anatomy, pharmacology, the science of the occult properties of things, alchemy, theurgy, agriculture, geometry, science of weights, arithmetic, algebra, optics, music, astronomy, astrology, metaphysics, ethics and its various branches, and even chess and other games. Imām Rāzi describes the principles, scope, and major problems of each science. Despite the fact that his discussion is always general and characteristic of an encyclopedist and never penetrates too deeply into any single science, the work is perfect evidence of his vast erudition and encyclopedic knowledge. In this respect Imām Rāzi is similar to the Ismā'ili and the later Twelve-Imām Shī'ah theologians of the Ṣafawid period many of whom, like Shaikh Baha al-Din Āmili, took great interest not only in philosophy but also in all the cosmological and mathematical sciences. Imām Fakhr's importance in the Muslim science is, therefore, mostly in bringing closer together the theological and cosmological traditions which until his time had been far apart, and in studying nature with a view to discovering God's wisdom in creation, as was done by many other Muslim scientists.²⁸ In this case, as in so many others, he advanced upon a path already trodden by Ghazālī.

E

COMMENTARIES UPON THE QUR'ĀN

Imām Rāzi's fame in the Muslim world lies as much in his commentaries on the Holy Qur'an as in his theological works. He was greatly devoted to the Qur'an from childhood and studied Qur'anic commentary with his father. His study of all the other sciences by no means reduced his love for the Qur'an. As he wrote in old age: "I have experienced all the methods of theology and all the ways of philosophy, but I did not find in them the benefit

²⁷ This work Imām Fakhr wrote for Khwārizm Shāh abu al-Muzaffar ibn Malik al-Mu'azzam. It has always been a popular scientific encyclopedia and was printed in a lithographed edition in Bombay in 1323/1905.

²⁸ Imām Fakhr's writings are full of passages in which he appeals to various natural phenomena as "signs" of the different divine qualities and names. See his *Asrār al-Tanzīl*, Teheran, lithographed edition, 1301/1883, pp. 68ff.

which could equal the benefit I derived from the reading of the exalted Qur'ān."²⁹

Imām Rāzi's Qur'ānic commentaries include the *Tafsīr al-Fātiḥah*, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Baqarah*, *Asmā' Allah al-Ḥusna*, and *Risālah fi al-Tanbīh 'ala ba'ḍ al-Asrār al-Maw'izah fi al-Qur'ān*, which last is a theological commentary combined with Sufi ideas in which metaphysics (*ilāhiyyāt*) is based on the chapter (*sūrah*) *al-Ikhlās*, prophecy on the chapter *al-A'la*, resurrection on the chapter *al-Tin*, and the recording of human actions on the chapter *al-Aḡr*. The most important of Imām Rāzi's commentaries is the voluminous *Mafātīḥ al-Ḡhaib*, known as the "Great Commentary" (*Tafsīr al-Kabīr*), which was collected and organized by ibn al-Khu'i and Suyūṭi after his death. This work is the most important theological commentary ever written on the Qur'ān. Imām Rāzi makes this also an occasion to expose his encyclopedic knowledge in that he intermingles history, geography, and other branches of knowledge with the commentary of the Qur'ānic text wherever possible. He mentions and praises often in this work the Muslim sages who combine intellectual principles with the principles of Islamic revelation. He also analyses the stories of the Qur'ān and interprets their theological and metaphysical meanings. Despite its volume and the number of topics which do not seem very relevant to the immediate subject-matter, the *Mafātīḥ* is an impressive theological Qur'ānic commentary. In its intellectual interpretation and the combining of 'aql and naql, of reason and authority, and in the understanding of the sacred Scripture it remains one of the major commentaries upon the Qur'ān.

F

JURISPRUDENCE (FIQH)

Although primarily occupied with theology, Imām Rāzi occasionally devoted himself to jurisprudence as well. The few works like *al-Maḥṣūl fi al-Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, *al-Ma'ālim*, and *Iḥkam al-Aḥkām* bear evidence to his mastery of jurisprudence which he interpreted according to the school of the exegetes. As already mentioned, he belonged to the Shāfi'i school of which he was considered to be one of the 'ulamā' and authentic interpreters. Imām Rāzi was particularly well versed in the principles of jurisprudence (*Uṣūl*), which he treated in a manner similar to theology. This subject has, in fact, never been able to divorce itself from *Kalām*, and is still studied almost as if it were one of its branches. The importance of Imām Rāzi in Shāfi'i jurisprudence lies more in his contribution to the theoretical principles of *Fiqh* than in their actual application embodied in the *fatwās* of the various Shāfi'i 'ulamā'.

²⁹ Ibn abi Uṣaibi'ah, *'Uyūn al-Anbā' fi Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā'*, Maṭba'at al-Wahābiyyah, Cairo, Vol. II, p. 27.

G

DIALECTIC, RHETORIC, AND POETRY

Following the example of Ghazālī, Imām Rāzi became a dialectical theologian and, as his works testify, excelled in dialectics. He was famous for his eloquence in persuasion and argumentation, for the quickness of his intelligence and keenness of wit. These gifts were combined with a rhetorical power which made him the most famous preacher in Herāt. Hardly would a scholar dare enter into debate with him; those who took sides against him would soon feel the thrust of his dialectical and rhetorical weapons. The *Munāzarāt* bears ample evidence of these traits. In its pages one sees Imām Rāzi as a tiger who pounces mercilessly upon his helpless adversary and has little regard for softness in discourse. Much of his energy throughout the life was spent in attacking bitterly the small sects which arose against the main orthodoxy, such as the Karrāmiyyah, who probably finally poisoned him.³⁰ As the *Shaiḫh al-Islām* of Herāt, his main duty was to preach and defend Islam; and he took the opportunity of using his remarkable gifts of rhetoric and dialectic in a manner which made him one of the most famous of Muslim preachers.

Imām Rāzi had also the gift of poetry, and many verses both in Arabic and Persian are attributed to him. As in the case of so many other sages like Khayyām, poetry became for Imām Rāzi the vehicle for the expression of gnosis and the form of "ignorance" which lies above all formal knowledge. In a quatrain in Persian he writes:

"My heart was never deprived of science;
There is little of the mysteries that I did not understand.
For seventy-two years I thought night and day,
Yet I came to know that nothing is to be known."

H

SUFISM

There is little doubt that Imām Rāzi was sympathetic to Sufism, especially in later life, when he wrote most of his poems like the one mentioned above. Moreover, many of his works are, like his Qur'ānic commentary, full of Sufistic ideas, and in his *Lawāmi' al-Bayyināt* he outlines the degrees of knowledge

³⁰ There is a story told of Imām Rāzi's opposition to the Ismā'ilis. He used to attack them bitterly in public, accusing them of having no proofs for their doctrines. One day one of their agents, posing as a student, found Imām Rāzi alone in his library, pulled out a knife and pointed it to his chest saying, "This is our proof." Henceforth, Imām Fakhr never attacked the Ismā'ilis in public. One day the disciples asked him why he no longer spoke against this group—the group which he had opposed so bitterly before. He replied, "Because I have seen their proof." This story appears in nearly all the biographies of Imām Fakhr which we have already mentioned and is characteristic of his wisdom in public life.

in a manner very similar to the Sufi treatise of Suhrawardi, *Safir-i Simurgh*.³¹ He is altogether a theologian with sympathies towards Sufism.

What is difficult for us to discover is whether Imām Rāzi was a practising Sufi or not. Certainly Sufism is not so evident in his writings as in Ghazālī's, and his life, rich in worldly fame and wealth, had none of the ascetic elements of the life of his great predecessor. There is even an extant letter from the master of gnosis, the Anadalusian Sufi, Shaikh al-Akbar Muhyi al-Din ibn 'Arabi, advising Imām Rāzi to leave dialectic and discursive thought and try to reach the stage of gnosis and contemplation, telling him that in heaven medicine and geometry will do him little good.³² Moreover, in his writings as in his life, Imām Rāzi displayed an aggressiveness and fighting quality hardly characteristic of the lives and writings of the Sufis.

Yet, despite all this negative evidence, some of his later writings do show the clear influence of Sufism upon him, and it may be that, because of his social position even after joining the circle of the Sufis, he to a large extent hid his sympathies and affiliations in order to avoid any external opposition. His own poems and his great love for the blind Arab poet abu 'Alā' al-Ma'arri, the gnostic who often appears like a sceptic to the uncritical eye, on whose *Diwān* he is said to have commented, point to the fact that Imām Rāzi was not an ordinary theologian but knew that there is another form of knowledge, gnosis, which lies above all rational sciences like theology. Whether he actually participated in this knowledge in an effective way, is a question too difficult to answer from either historical evidence or internal evidence from his own writings.³³

There is a poem of Imām Rāzi which is in itself almost sufficient evidence for his Sufism. In the original Arabic it is so beautiful and effective that hardly any of his biographers has failed to mention it. Written in old age by a man who was the leading scholar and theologian of his day and who enjoyed all the comfort and glory of the life of this world, it is a vivid reminder that beyond the sphere of all human life and knowledge there is another reality which man must seek in order to remain faithful to his own intimate nature. The poem begins with these verses:

"Our souls fear our bodies as if they want to separate from them.
The result of our life in this world has been nothing but pain to others and sin.

³¹ See the chapter on "Shihāb al-Din Suhrawardi Maqtūl."

³² See Fakhr al-Din Rāzi, *al-Risālat al-Kamāliyah fi al-Haqā'iq al-Ilāhiyyah*, Teheran University Press, 1335 Solar, Introduction by Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir Sabziwāri, p. (kt).

³³ There is a story told that Imām Rāzi met the Sufi Najm al-Din Kubra in a gathering and boasted of his religious knowledge and said that he knew a hundred proofs for the existence of God. Najm al-Din answered, "Is not each proof due to some doubt? God has placed in the heart of the Sufi a light of certainty which dispels all doubt, so that he no longer has need of proofs." Imām Rāzi hearing this answer surrendered himself to the Shaikh and was initiated into Sufism.

For all the discussions and debates of our life
We have derived no benefit but senseless noise.
How often have we seen men and kingdoms
All perish quickly and cease to exist!
How was their glory once more exalted than a mountain,
Yet, men perish and the mountain remains the same!"

I

THE SIGNIFICANCE AND INFLUENCE OF IMĀM RĀZI

The many-sided genius of Imām Rāzi, to which the previous pages bear partial witness, makes him one of the most colourful figures in Islam. Following the example of Ghazālī, by whom he was profoundly influenced and whose retreat in Tūs he visited, Rāzi spent a life-time in combating the rationalistic aspect of Greek philosophy. Although not of equal stature to Ghazālī in Sufism and ethics, he, nevertheless, exercised as much influence, especially in theology, as did his more famous predecessor. Possessed of a special gift for posing problems and for analysing philosophical questions, he left an indelible mark upon all later Muslim philosophers, especially upon Khwājah Naṣir al-Din Tūsi, his pupil, who was the reviver of Muslim philosophy after Imām Rāzi, and was also the most famous of Shi'ah theologians.

Imām Rāzi's role in Muslim intellectual life, besides establishing the school of philosophical *Kalām* begun by Ghazālī, was to intensify the attack against Peripatetic philosophy, thereby preparing the way for the propagation of the metaphysical doctrines of the Ishrāqīs and Sufis who, like Imām Rāzi, opposed the rationalism inherent in Aristotelianism. With the method of doubt in which he was the greatest master in Islam, he analysed and criticized Peripatetic philosophy in a way hardly ever equalled by anyone except Ghazālī. Yet, he was a theologian also interested in the cosmological, natural, and esoteric sciences.³⁴ Imām Rāzi played an important role in bringing theology closer to the sciences and even to Sufism, with which he flavoured his theological works. In the centuries when the Muslim world was turning away from Peripatetic rationalism toward modes of thought more akin to its own spirit, Imām Rāzi played a major role in this transformation. He remains as one of the most arresting figures among Muslim theologians, a figure the power of whose thought spread over the whole Muslim world at the very moment when the Mongol onslaught was putting an end to the Caliphate, to the survival of which his work was to a large extent dedicated.

³⁴ It is of great interest that not only in the Muslim world but also in medieval Christianity and in China many of those who preoccupied themselves with the science of nature, like the Taoists, Ikhwān al-Ṣafa, and the Franciscans, were opposed to philosophical rationalism and accepted some form of esoteric and metaphysical doctrine based on intellectual intuition and revelation.

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Part 5. Political Thinkers

Chapter XXXIII

POLITICAL THOUGHT IN EARLY ISLAM

In this chapter we try to elucidate the political thought which laid the foundations of society and State in the early days of Islam, and the changes that crept into it during the first century and a quarter of the Hijrah.

A

PRINCIPLES OF ISLAMIC POLITY

Muslim society that came into existence with the advent of Islam and the State that it formed on assumption of political power were founded on certain clear-cut principles. Prominent among them and relevant to our present discussion were the following: —

1. Sovereignty belongs to God, and the Islamic State is in fact a vicegerency, with no right to exercise authority except in subordination to and in accordance with the Law revealed by God to His Prophet.¹

¹ Qur'ān, iv, 59, 105; v, 44, 45, 47; vii, 3; xii, 40; xxiv, 55; xxxiii, 36.