

# **EARLY ISLAMIC THEOLOGY: THE MU`TAZILITES AND AL-ASH`ARI**

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Texts and Studies on the Development  
and History of Kalam, Vol. II

Richard M. Frank and edited by Dimitri  
Gutas

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This volume contains xii + 384 pages

## FOREWORD

This is the second of three volumes reprinting the collected papers on Islamic subjects by Richard M. Frank, Professor Emeritus at the Catholic University of America. The first, published in 2005,<sup>1</sup> contains articles that study the lexical and intellectual context of Islamic theology (*kalām*) and explore its interactions with philosophy and mysticism. The present volume brings together studies on early *kalām*, the Muʿtazilites and the development of the thought of al-Ašʿarī, while the third will be devoted to articles on the Ašʿarites and the Ašʿarite tradition.<sup>2</sup>

The studies in the present collection represent an original attempt to make philosophical sense, and in particular understand the theoretical underpinnings, of what is in essence the great theological tradition in early Islam, the Muʿtazilite school of Baṣra. It opens with two pieces (I–II) on one of its greatest exponents, Abū I-Huḍayl al-ʿAllāf (whom some of his successors considered, perhaps rightly, as the real founder of *kalām*), continues with the masters of its classical period, the Ġubbāʾīs, father and son, and their followers (III–V), and ends with their most famous, but rebel, student, al-Ašʿarī (VI–IX). The first selection, the classic short monograph describing the theological system of Abū I-Huḍayl, lays the foundation for those that follow, for it articulates Frank’s original approach to understanding *kalām*. In sharp contrast to all previous studies in Western Islamic studies, which viewed *kalām* as “little more than a superficial and relatively unsophisticated way of stating and of arguing and defending one or another point of basic religious doctrine,”<sup>3</sup> Frank’s monograph views the task of *kalām* as one “of discovering analytically and setting forth objectively in formal language the underlying structure of the created world as it manifested the *lógos*,” the divine Word, “revealed in the *Koran*.” In the performance of this

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<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism in Medieval Islam. Texts and Studies on the Development and History of Kalām*, Vol. I, ed. Dimitri Gutas, Ashgate: Aldershot, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> A complete bibliography of Richard Frank’s publications, compiled by James E. Montgomery and Monica Blanchard, is published in the volume, *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy. From the Many to the One: Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank*, ed. by James E. Montgomery, Peeters: Leuven, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> R. Frank in his memoir “Yā Kalām,” selection I in the first Variorum volume cited in the first note above, p. 3. The memoir provides indispensable orientation to the development of Frank’s researches over the years.

task, the methods that were followed were deeply rational, and the goal of reason in this process was identified by Frank as being “not independently to uncover and make its own the truth of nature and its own existence,” but

to comprehend and verify out of its own experience of the world, through an analysis of the world, the truth which was already given to its pre-analytic understanding... . The initial assumption is not basically that the ultimate order of existence is of itself rationally and intelligibly ordered according to the norms of human reason, so that it may be discovered by and in the process of reflective thought, but rather that it manifests the creative Truth of God and that the underlying structure and coherence of this manifestation can be analytically described. This is important, for the kalām’s initial and unreflected attitude towards the kind of truth to be attained and the place of reason in its attainment determined its method as well as its form and content. (I, p.7)

I cite at length Frank’s statement of the goal and method of kalām because it describes kalām’s very foundation and the basic and irreducible way in which it differs from philosophy. The accuracy of Frank’s insight and his subsequent analysis of early kalām and the Aṣʿarite tradition can be gauged by how close it is to that of no less an authority than Ibn Ḥaldūn, who said the following on the subject:

The theologians, following preponderantly this line of argument, for the most part deduced the existence and attributes of the Creator from the existing things and their conditions. Physical bodies, which are the subject of the philosophical study of physics, form part of these existing things. However, the philosophical study of them differs from the theological. The philosophers study bodies in so far as they move or are stationary. The theologians, on the other hand, study them in so far as they serve as an argument for the Agent. In the same way, the philosophical study of metaphysics studies existence as such and its attendant requirements that are due to itself. The theological study of metaphysics, on the other hand, is concerned with what exists in so far as it serves as argument for Him who causes existence. In general, to the theologians, the object of theology is to find out how the articles of faith, which the religious law has laid down as correct, can be proven with the help of rational arguments, so that innovations may be repulsed and doubts and misgivings concerning the articles of faith be removed.<sup>4</sup>

As research on both kalām and philosophy in the Islamic world proceeds with increasing intensity, it is important to keep in mind this distinction which has been very effectively delineated in Frank’s incisive analyses of the formal structure and argumentation of kalām.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, ed. ‘Abdassalām aṣ-Ṣaddādī, Casablanca, 2005, III, 35; translation adopted, with slight modifications, from Frank Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, 2nd ed., Princeton, 1967, III, 52–3.

The next three studies (III–V) deal with classical Mu'tazilite teaching in the works of the Ġubbā'īs, mostly gleaned from one of the greatest manuscript finds of the twentieth century in the field of kalām, the *Muġnī* of the Qāḍī 'Abd al-Ġabbār. Frank's studies in this area culminated with his monograph on *Beings and their Attributes*, which should be consulted in connection with this set of articles.<sup>5</sup>

The final four pieces (VI–IX) form a unit of research. They discuss, among others, an issue already raised above, the role of reason in the procedures of kalām. Al-Aṣ'arī tried to render precise his position on this subject vis-à-vis both the Mu'tazilites, whom he renounced, and the *ahl as-sunna*, with whose cause he identified (though on his own terms, for he clearly felt that *taqlīd* is to be condemned). These studies are based on a careful analysis of three of al-Aṣ'arī's works in particular, his *Letter to the People of the Frontier* (R. *ilā ahl at-ṭaġr*), *Flashes in Refutation of Heretics* (K. *al-Luma'*), and *Exhortation to [Rational] Inquiry* (K. *al-ḥatt 'alā l-baḥṭ*). The text of the last of these is also presented in a new edition (IX), in exemplary fashion. As is frequently the case with classical Arabic texts from the first four centuries of Islam, their transmission is rarely straightforward; those that were of importance in the ideological battles fought among various factions – as were the theological treatises written after al-Ma'mūn's *miḥna* came to an end – underwent different kinds of manipulation to fit a particular viewpoint. As a result, their manuscript transmission frequently showed signs of interpolation, emendation, or elaboration, and the creation of different recensions of the text. Al-Aṣ'arī's K. *al-Ḥatt* happens to be one such text, as Frank discovered, and his detailed study of the manuscript tradition in elucidation of the various problems of transmission is a model of philological analysis. Philological accuracy is indispensable for all research whose primary sources are written, but especially so in the case of al-Aṣ'arī, himself a very precise author. Frank's admonition with regard to the study of al-Aṣ'arī, valid in any case for all the authors treated here, conveniently summarizes the import of this volume: “the more one studies the writing of al-Aṣ'arī the more one is impressed with its acuteness and precision; nothing is extraneous ... This remarkable economy of his style requires that it be read very closely” (VIII, 149).

Once more it is a pleasant duty to express, also on behalf of the author, my sincere gratitude to all the publishers of the original articles for permission to reprint them in this collection, and in particular the Netherlands Institute for the Near East (NINO) and its director, Dr J.J. Roodenberg, whose generous consent enabled us to make once more widely accessible the monograph on

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<sup>5</sup> *Beings and their Attributes. The Teaching of the Basrian School of the Mu'tazila in the Classical Period*, Albany, NY., 1978.

Abū I-Huḍayl. Dr John Smedley and Ashgate Publishing Limited are heartily to be thanked for including this volume in the Variorum Collected Studies Series. As before, the Viscusi Fund of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Yale University gratefully provided moneys to defray some expenses relating to the preparation of the volume. I am particularly grateful to Mr Alexander Treiger who, in an already overburdened schedule of studies, found the time for the careful preparation of the index. And a final and heartfelt word of thanks must go to the author himself for the opportunity to be once more engaged with his inspirational work.

DIMITRI GUTAS

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## **PUBLISHER'S NOTE**

The articles in this volume, as in all others in the *Variorum Collected Studies Series*, have not been given a new, continuous pagination. In order to avoid confusion, and to facilitate their use where these same studies have been referred to elsewhere, the original pagination has been maintained wherever possible.

Each article has been given a Roman number in order of appearance, as listed in the Contents. This number is repeated on each page and is quoted in the index entries.

I

THE METAPHYSICS OF  
CREATED BEING  
ACCORDING TO  
ABŪ L-HUDHAYL AL-‘ALLĀF

A Philosophical Study of the Earliest Kalām

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- abû Rašîd al-Nîsâbûrî, *K. al Masâ'il* = Biram, Arthur, *die Atomistische Substanzlehre aus dem Buch der Streitfragen*, Berlin, 1902
- Baqillânî, *Tamhîd* = *al-Tamhîd fî l-radd 'alâ l-mulhîda wal-mu'tazila*, ed. M. Khodeiri and M. abû Rîda, Cairo, 1367/1849
- Farq* = 'Abd al-Qâhir al-Baġdâdî, *al-Farq bayn al-firaq*, ed. M. al-Kawthari, Cairo, 1367/1948
- Fişal* = Ibn Ḥazm, *K. al-Fişal wal-Milal*, 5 vol's, Cairo, 1320
- Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction* = *Introduction à la théologie musulmane*, Paris, 1948
- Ibn Taymîya, *Muwâfaqa* = *Muwâfaqa šahîh al-manqûl li-šarîh al-ma'qûl*, ed. M. 'Abdalḥamîd and M. Faqî, 2 vol's, Cairo, 1370/1951
- Intişâr* = abû l-Ḥusayn al-Khayyât, *K. al-Intişâr wal-radd 'alâ Ibn al-Rawândî l-mulhîd*, republished and translated by A. Nader, Beyrouth, 1957
- Maq.* = al-'Aš'arî, *Maqâlât al-'Islâmîyîn*, ed. H. Ritter, Istanbul, 1929-30
- Milal* = al-Šahrastânî, *K. al-Milal wal-Niḥal*, ed. M. Badrân, 2 vol's, Cairo, 1327/1910-1375/1955
- Nader, *Système* = A. Nader, *le Système philosophique des Mu'tazila*, Beyrouth, 1956
- Nihâya* = al-Šahrastânî, *Nihâyat al-'iqdâm fî 'ilm al-kalâm*, ed. A. Guillaume, Oxford, 1934
- Pines, *Beitrage* = S. Pines, *Beiträge zur islamischen Atomenlehre* Berlin, 1936
- Pretzl, *Atomenlehre* = Otto Pretzl, « die frühislamische Atomenlehre, » der Islam, 19 (1931), pp. 117-130
- Pretzl, *Attributenlehre* = *die frühislamische Attributenlehre* (Sitzbr. d. bayrischen Akad. d. Wiss., phil.-hist. Abteilung, 1940, 4) München, 1940

- Razî, *K. al-'Arba'in* = Fakhruddîn al-Râzî, *K. al-'Arba'in fî Usûl al-dîn*, Hyderabad, 1353
- Râzî, *I'tiqâdât* = , *I'tiqâdât firaq al-muslimîn wal-muš-rikîn*, ed. A. al-Naššâr, Cairo, 1356/1938
- Râzî, *Muḥaṣṣal* = , *Muḥaṣṣal 'afkâr al-mutaqaddimîn wal-muta'ahhirîn*, Cairo, 1323
- Šarḥ al-Mawâqif* = Ğurgânî, *Šarḥ al-Mawâqif*, ed. M. al-Na'sânî, 8 vol's, Cairo, 1325/1907
- Tabšîr* = abû l-Muzaffar al-Isfarâ'inî, *al-Tabšîr fî l-dîn*, ed. M. al-Kawthari, Cairo, 1359/1940
- Taftazânî = Sa'duddîn al-Taftazânî, *Šarḥ al-'aqâ'id al-nasafîya*, Cairo (Dâr 'Iḥyâ' al-Kutub al-'Arabiya, no date).
- 'Uṣûl = 'Abd al-Qâhir al-Baġdâdî, *K. 'Uṣûl al-dîn*, Istanbul, 1346-1928

## I. INTRODUCTION

Certainly one need make no apologies in justification of a study of abû l-Hudhayl al-'Allâf<sup>1</sup>. My purpose in this work, however, is somewhat broader than simply that of giving a detailed account or a synthetic doxography of his opinions on the 'questions' concerning creation, created being, and created beings, which were under so hot debate among various mu'tazilî authors in the 9th century. There are several more fundamental matters which must be studied before the significance and the meaning of a given author's thought and his particular views on a set of disputed questions can be evaluated and situated within the diversity of the whole mu'tazilî movement during its first phase, through abû 'Alî al-Ğubbâ'î and before the kalâm's great bifurcation into the traditions which bear the names of his son, abû Hâšim and of his pupil, al-'Aš'arî. We must first gain some basic understanding of and sympathy with the universe which they sought to explain. What I shall try to do therefore is to give a description of this universe as it is seen through the system of abû l-Hudhayl.

First and above all we must understand, insofar as is possible across a great cultural and chronological chasm, the meaning which the author is trying to express, — the meaning of which the formulae are the formulation. We must try somehow to recapture for ourselves, out of the texts, something of the comprehension, the *lógos* of the world which expressed itself in this particular form and to restate for ourselves what the author meant to say. Indeed, if, beyond its undoubted social and political significance in the history of Islam, the earlier kalâm was more than a *vanitas et cura superflua*, that is, if it represents a really serious and meaningful attempt of the human mind to understand the ultimate structure of being, it constitutes a 'new thing', an epochal moment in the history of human thought, and is deserving of our most serious consideration. To understand it on this level however, we must see the world through it; that is, in order to understand the meaning of the kalâm and the significance of its statements about reality and the world as an historically defined expression of a genuine human experience of the world, we must somehow grasp the context of potential meaning from within which these statements arose and according to which intended that meaning which is theirs.

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<sup>1</sup> For information concerning abû l-Hudhayl's life, etc., the reader may be referred generally to Nyberg's article on him in *EI*<sup>2</sup>.

More than a few scholars, have taken the attitude that the early kalâm represents little more than a puerile and inept effort to defend the dogma of the *Koran*, that it is nothing more than a polemic apologetic, aggravated by certain differences of opinion on the part of the writers, for the dogmatic content of the Islamic revelation. But such an attitude assumes a kind of bad faith on the part of the authors; it presupposes that even from the beginning there is a complete disjunction between the data of faith and the data of reflective experience and that the mutakallimîn set about to 'defend' the literal content of the former without honestly taking the latter into consideration. Yet such an assumption of bad faith is ultimately simplistic. It does not ask whence and how comes the understanding of the content of the revelation. One may always, after all, whether explicitly or not, say *distinguo* and, at the beginning, the meaning of the *Koran* had itself to be made explicit and defined. In the time of abû l-Hudhayl Islamic dogma had not yet become formally defined in any area. Rather, it was taking form, beginning to take on the definitive configuration of its peculiar character in and among a number of diverse sciences, each of which was to form its own sub-traditions and make its particular contribution to the elaboration of this dogma.

Although from the outset the *Koran* was assumed by the faith of the believer to be the intelligible paradigm through which all being and meaning was revealed and to be known, its meaning had yet to be "worked out;" the exegesis of that meaning which it was felt to make manifest and to render intelligible in the general experience of the community (or that of a particular group, for Islam as a socio-cultural entity was already extremely complex) had yet to be made explicit in thematic understanding and defined<sup>2</sup>. Within such a situation the believer can only come to grasp the meaning of the *Koran* simultaneously with and in the understanding of the world of which he takes it to be the paradigm. Its potentiality of meaning for the believer — its potentiality to give meaning to human existence — is to be discovered within the horizons of a more general hermeneutic situation; since he understands it as a paradigm only within his total experience of the world, his understanding of the sense of the revelation

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<sup>2</sup> I do not intend to enter here into the broader question of the place and rôle of the kalâm alongside of and in opposition to the other active disciplines (fiqh, ḥadith, falsafa, etc.) which contributed to Islam's cultural self-elaboration as each, variously influenced by the others, in the common milieu made its own contribution to the evolution of the total tradition; nor, again, would I wish to exaggerate the place of the kalâm in the overall context of the growth of the Islamic tradition, for Islam was, almost from the beginning, an extremely diversified socio-cultural complex. Rather, abstracting from the complexity of the whole milieu, but remembering that it did form the larger, defining matrix, I should like to focus attention in the following remarks on the single problem of the kalâm as it elaborated, from within and into this matrix, a uniquely islamic metaphysics.

can only be brought forth thematically and made explicit from within the structured framework of a pre-predicative grasp of the totality of the world in which his human experience of the world in general and of the *Koran* in particular are given, simultaneously together. The revelation thus becomes the objectively meaningful paradigm through which the world is understood from within a non-objectified total experience which embraces, within a dialectically structured whole, both the *Koran* and the world. The meaningfulness and validity of the *Koran* as a paradigm had therefore to be first understood and set forth in grasping thematically the meaningful and intelligible coherence of the world which was given to human presence, as it was coherent and intelligible, within the paradigmatic framework of the revelation.

In the early period, when Islam's understanding of the meaning of the *Koran* as the model of the meaning and structure of its own existence had not yet been explicitly formulated and defined according to some kind of consensus of the group, there can be no question of a simple imposition of a dogmatic system upon the world and of the consciously arbitrary invention of a conceptual system which would "save the appearances" of the *Koran*, regardless of what non-sense (i.e., what violation of the lived sense of reality) might be perpetrated. Indeed, such an "apology" would be none at all, but would, on the contrary, constitute the believer's own demonstration to himself of the ultimate invalidity and incoherence of that very paradigm which his faith affirmed to make manifest the coherent meaning of all experience.

What kind of speculative system is the kalâm then? -what sort of an effort of the mind, to achieve what kind of understanding?

Unfortunately we have no statements concerning this matter which are attributable to the earliest mu'tazilî authors. The traditional attacks on speculation as such are of little help, for they represent, not simply rejections of particular conclusions regarding various points of dogma, but more fundamentally deprecate absolutely any attempt to dissolve or analyse the original compactness of the revealed and canonical sources of faith. For them, the purity and depth of faith is gained and maintained only in the immediate comprehending acceptance of its sources, wherein lies the only true knowledge (*'ilm*), all else being vain opinion (*ẓann*). They can therefore only tell us what a part of the Muslim community knew the kalâm not to be.

Again, it must be remembered that particularly during its first period, what passes under the name of the kalâm was far from a homogeneous whole. The Mu'tazila, from the standpoint of its overall theology, does not in any way form

a unified school or manifest a single consensus of teaching on any level; the "five theses" by which it is normally defined as a sect are significant chiefly from the standpoint of the heresiographer. The systems, for example, of abû l-Hudhayl, al-Nazzâm, and Mu'ammar are all three fundamentally incompatible with one another in terms of their basic outlook and understanding of the world. Our sources, too, are for the most part highly selective, their interest being all too often concerned with only those doctrines which are peculiar to an author and those in which he departs from some norm of orthodoxy. One must also keep in mind that the center of emphasis no doubt varied with different authors<sup>3</sup>; in the intellectual agitation of the time, the principal aim of some was indeed more speculative and theological than apologetic. Nevertheless, whatever the specific intellectual orientation of a particular author, there can be little doubt that the great majority of the Mu'tazila intended, on one plane or another, to define and validate the truth of Islam with the utmost fidelity to the revelation as they understood it. Nader's assumption of the contrary is untenable<sup>4</sup>. There is no evidence in the available texts which would show on the part of the early mu'tazilî writers anything but an effort to describe God and the universe systematically in conformity with a sincere understanding of the *Koran*. The fact that the individual would take to the discourse of rational understanding to defend and define the basic content of his faith indicates, of course, the presence of an apriori non-"traditionist" attitude already in his unreflected approach to the understanding of the revelation; he feels a need for one reason or another, for whatever explicit motive, to analyse the original compactness of his religious understanding into explicit and systematic formulation but this does not in any way indicate any impurity of his faith or denote a lack of sincerity and intellectual honesty in his effort to give a speculative account of Islam. One cannot "demonstrate" the existence of God or the truth of a particular position regarding human freedom and man's power of efficacious action without in some degree making explicit the underlying metaphysical structure of existence which gives coherence to the terms of the demonstration and according to which consequently it stands as a demonstration. *Per se*, the theological conclusions arrived at through the kalâm need not differ one iota from those of the tradition, though it must, of course, be admitted that formulation is very important; its statement is the expression of a particular mode of understanding and it is at this level that the two diverge. Albeit the effort is to see and verify analytically the order of universal being in its concordance with the revelation, as understood by the particular author, the criterion whereby certainty is guaranteed, (that which is felt to be the ultimate ground of the proof as such) remains always the *Koran*, understood in one way

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<sup>3</sup> Gardet and Anawati, *Introduction*, 47.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *infra*, ch. V, n. 9.

or another within the overall horizon of possible meaning. In this way, abstracting from particular conclusions, the first and irreducible difference between the traditionists and the mutakallimîn concerns their attitude towards the very effort to understand and the possible validity of this effort. But there can be no apology without analysis and if the traditionist would "rationally" defend the meaning of the tradition and discursively establish the validity of the content of his faith according to the understanding of the world which is defined in his comprehension of the tradition, he is forced in some degree to abandon the injunction against analytic "speculation" (*al-hawḍ/al-nazar*) in order to insist on the truth of the revelation precisely in its indissoluble compactness. There is, in fact, some evidence for the beginnings of a more "orthodox" speculation alongside the Mu'tazila prior to the time of al-'Aš'arî<sup>5</sup>.

From this standpoint then, the question of the kalâm in differentiation from the tradition is one of the degree or the rigidity with which one adheres to one or the other of the polar extremes and secondarily of the particular theological propositions ascribed to these extremes. To the extent that there could be, in the third century of the Hegira, a systematic speculative description of the structure of the universe which belonged to that central, native core of the islamic tradition, whose most conservative expression realised itself in the work of the traditionists, such a description is that of the earlier kalâm.

Still we must ask what — beyond the immediate, stated aim, which is that of an apologetic — kind of understanding is sought in establishing the theoretical foundations of the apology; what kind of knowledge of the basis of its own validity does it assume possible? What is the order of the truth which it seeks in establishing the foundation of its dogmatic assertions? From the outset it is apparent that the kalâm differs radically from Christian theology, even though this too was ostensibly apologetic in its first beginnings<sup>6</sup>. The kalâm did not seek to penetrate rationally into the mysteries of God and His creation, for that part of Islam which was represented by the earlier kalâm was not, like Christianity, the inheritor of the Greek assumption that human reason, of its own innate powers, could uncover ever more of the truth and render it intelligible through and within its own light nor that there was a truth "naturally" inherent in things and in the order of the world as world; faith did not seek understanding in the sense of a further penetration into what was revealed or hope to uncover the truth and order of created existence according to the light of human intelligence. The importance

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Schacht, *New Sources for the history of Muhammedan Theology*, *Studia Islamica* 1 (1953), 33.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Gardet and Anawati, *op. cit.*, 313 and generally *ibid.*, 303ff and Gilson, *L'Esprit de la philosophie médiévale*<sup>2</sup> (Paris, 1948), 17ff.

given to human understanding and the demands of reason varied somewhat, both explicitly and implicitly, from author to author, but the early kalâm as such, though having in some aspects the appearance of a kind of rationalism<sup>7</sup>, was not philosophical or theological in the sense formally assigned these terms in Western thought.

The kalâm was nevertheless, no matter how understood, a speculative science and as such its aim was understanding: truth. The question is, in a sense, the nature of the truth sought; it is, so to speak, not ἀλήθεια but rather *al-ḥaqq*. Here we must keep in mind that the *Koran* is a most singular book in a number of respects. Conspicuous among them is that, in the way in which it argues, pleads, and makes its threats and promises, it makes, in a certain sense, a kind of direct appeal, in a great number of passages, to a rational level of understanding. It contains remarkably few archetypal figures which of themselves, as they stand in the text, demand to be understood symbolically or allegorically. Unlike the Old or New Testament, the "history" which the *Koran* contains is not — and cannot be — presented as the constitutive historical past of the community to which the prophet addressed his message; it is not presented in such a way that it must be taken up in understanding as the ordered historical past of the believer in his present faith but rather, events are cited often as almost random examples of faith and disbelief, piety and wickedness, and of how God has dealt with men in the past. Again, the *Koran* gives frequently a very bold and almost conceptually elaborated picture of God's dominion over creation in a form culturally and psychologically little removed from the fundamental, unreflected world-view of a significant part of the milieu of the earliest mutakallimîn.

God "created the heavens and the earth *bil-ḥaqq*;"<sup>8</sup> this *Truth* underlies and permeates all creation. All creation, again, stands as a "token" (*'āya*) or vast complex of innumerable "tokens" of God's omnipotent power and dominion. However, the *Koran*, as His Word addressed to man in human language, revealing and self-revealing, is the only token which explains itself, speaking to the hearer in articulate self-expression; it is ultimately the supreme *'āya* and the key which opens the only sure way to seeing and comprehending the true meaning of every other of God's tokens. It was this, I think, *viz.*, the fact that the *Koran* was its own articulate and self-interpreting token of God's Being and creative omnipotence, which forced itself of itself into his understanding, making all other tokens

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *infra*, ch II, n. 31 and ch. IV, n. 7.

<sup>8</sup> *Koran*, 14.22, 15.85, *et alibi*; cf. also the interpretation of this by Ibn Ḥanbal (*Radd 'alā l-zanādiqa wal-ḡahmīya* [Darulfünun İlahiyat Fakültesi Mecmuası, 1927] 321) and al-'Aṣ'arī (*K. al-Luma'* [ed. McCarthy in *The Theology of al-Ash'ari*, Beyrouth, 1953] §115).

visible and intelligible in its light, that the Prophet took as the 'i'ǧâz : its being its own compelling, self-sufficient evidence of its own validity and truth. So also the *Koran* remained for Islam, even though the 'i'ǧâz came to be taken in a literary sense, the paradigmatic 'âya for the understanding of all Being. It revealed not merely the order of the world and the being of creatures in their createdness but also, as the Word of the source of all Truth and existence, manifested the ultimate truth of creation : the meaning of creation and of the existence of creatures as a relationship to the Creator (*al-Ḥaqq*).

The task of the kalâm then, whether as apologetic or as speculation for its own sake, could neither be to penetrate into the revelation in such wise as to go beyond it and probe the mystery of God (*al-ġayb*)<sup>9</sup> nor to penetrate with the natural light of human reason into creation; the revelation as the expressed Word of God was of itself absolute while on the other hand, creation could have of itself no meaning to yield save its very createdness, the true understanding, of which (*al-'ilm*) was to be had with certainty only through the revelation. The task, then, was one of seeing reflectively and of systematically understanding the Truth of creation that was revealed paradigmatically in the *Koran* — of discovering analytically and setting forth objectively in formal language the underlying structure of the created world as it manifested the *lógos* revealed in the *Koran*. In this way then, the goal of reason was not independently to uncover and make its own the truth of nature and its own existence<sup>10</sup>, for this it already possessed. Rather it was to discover, in the reflective contemplation of reality, the metaphysical structure of being, whose truth was the created manifestation of the Truth; it was to comprehend and *verify* out of its own experience of the world, through an analysis of the world, the truth which was already given to its pre-analytic understanding, how the revealed paradigm was reflected in material creation, in order to validate thematically the believer's understanding of the revelation. The initial assumption is not basically that the ultimate order of existence is of itself rationally and intelligibly ordered according to the norms of human reason, so that it may be discovered by and in the process of reflective thought, but rather that it manifests the creative Truth of God and that the underlying structure and coherence of this manifestation can be analytically described. This is important, for the kalâm's initial and unreflected attitude towards the kind of truth to be attained and the place of reason in its attainment determined its method as well as its form and content. The place of reason is to bring to rational, systematic expression the truth of the paradigm as trans-

<sup>9</sup> Taking *al-ġayb* as the non-present, the non-phenomenal : that aspect of the Creator which remains completely transcendent and which He does not make manifest to man.

<sup>10</sup> Contemplation (*θεωρία*) is not valued as such in the kalâm; cf. *infra*, ch. III n. 31.

endent it underlies the multiple variety of discrete and individual events which make up the world. As was pointed out above, this does not mean in any way at all that there was a rude imposition of a pre-fabricated koranic model of the structure of created being upon the reality given in immediate experience, apart from and despite the "evidence" of such experience.

The necessity to question was not eliminated in the light of the revelation. In a sense, indeed, the revelation makes known that aspect of being which is not given to immediate reflection, *viz.*, its createdness from the point of view of the Creator, while leaving yet to be posed the question of the nature of created being as such, and it is to this that the kalâm had first to address itself, even as an apologetic, in order to make explicit the ground of its theological understanding. The primal question indeed, is that of being-created<sup>11</sup>. To the extent that he consciously puts out to describe the ultimate metaphysical structure of being in general, abû I-Hudhayl, for example, does in fact, albeit without an explicit "question" or philosophical doubt, set forth and attempt to answer the primeval question of all metaphysics: "why does anything at all exist rather than nothing?"<sup>12</sup> The kalâm is in this way an *universalis consideratio de veritate*<sup>13</sup> and by this fact has gone far beyond any simple primitivity or naïveté.

We must not be misled in our appreciation and understanding of the kalâm by its form and vocabulary on the basis of our being "accustomed to regard the Greek way of thinking as obligatory"<sup>14</sup>. If there is no abstract term for *being* but rather it is always spoken of as a being-created (*halq*) and the modes of being are the modes of being-created, this is no *prima facie* evidence of "primitivity"<sup>15</sup> but rather an indication that the central problem was, in fact, that of the nature of created being in its being created. So also we must keep in mind that if one finds no terms in the work of abû I-Hudhayl and the first generations of the Mu'tazila for "essence", such terms were nevertheless available; they were used by al-Kindî and can hardly have been totally unknown to abû I-Hudhayl and his contemporaries. If, then, the mutakallimîn refused them, the refusal must have a significance which is to be sought in the structure of the world of which they

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<sup>11</sup> Significantly there is no word in the earliest kalâm for God's being, for this is transcendent and altogether beyond the grasp of human understanding. *There is no univocal sense of Being.*

<sup>12</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*<sup>2</sup> (Tübingen, 1958), Iff, citing Leibniz.

<sup>13</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Metaphysica* III, lect. 1, §343, cited by K. Rahner *Geist in Welt*<sup>2</sup> (München, 1957), 73.

<sup>14</sup> Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind* (Harvard, 1953) introduction, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> It is considered by Pretzl to be so; *Attributenlehre*, 55.

sought to give an account. One does not choose a philosophical or theological terminology as he might a pair of socks. It is formed and taken up in the act of reflective consciousness which poses the question, in the act of posing the question; the possibility of a meaningful answer is given already in the form of the question as it, posed thematically within a total context of possible meaning. Any indifference regarding the terminology can only stand in direct proportion to an indifference of disengagement from the existential demand of the question.

To speak therefore of the "absolutely primitive and unscientific way of thinking of the founders" of the kalâm <sup>16</sup>, or to see in the early kalâm an inadequate "compromise between revealed religion and a poorly understood and somewhat naïvely handled pre-aristotelian philosophy <sup>17</sup>," or to find beneath its surface "fragmentary accounts of substance <sup>18</sup>" is to alienate it from itself and to judge it in terms of what it was not and did not mean to be. It is, in short, to demand that the structure and the horizon of the experience of being out of which arose the kalâm, ought to have been other than they were and that it ought to have taken up, or even wanted to take up, more exactly systems of thought which lay somehow in the margins of its past but in such a way that they were not and could not be existentially present to Islam <sup>19</sup>.

What I wish to suggest therefore is that the chief problem is one of understanding; first and above all we must grasp philosophically the philosophical content of the kalâm. We must get somehow behind the rethoric of its expression in order to see in and through the formulae the way in which reality revealed itself to a certain historically and culturally determined modality of human presence to the world and to understand its validity as a statement of the truth of human experience. It is only after this has been done that we can begin to make a valid and intelligent appraisal of the kalâm's debt to previous systems of thought and to understand it fully in the history of its own evolution, in itself and in the larger islamic context.

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<sup>16</sup> Pretzl, *Attributenlehre*, 8; cf. *infra* ch IV, n. 8 and ch. II, 46.

<sup>17</sup> Nyberg, *ʿAmr ibn ʿUbeid et Ibn al-Rawandi, deux réprochés*, in *Classicisme et Déclin culturel dans l'histoire de l'Islam* (Paris, 1957), 131.

<sup>18</sup> Fakhry, *Islamic Occasionalism and its Critique by Averroës and Aquinas* (London, 1958), 35; cf. *infra*, ch. IV, n. 5.

<sup>19</sup> I cannot here go into the question of the falsafa; it began to reach its full and final form later than the kalâm and, as it developed, its real debt to earlier islamic thought was enormous, much more so than is often allowed. For all its appearances, the lógos of the system of Avicenna, *i.e.*, its most basic orientation in what makes it unique, can only be understood from within the islamic tradition which preceded it, not that of classical antiquity.

Remarkably little has been done towards the study and exposition of the early kalâm as a serious theological and metaphysical system; most of the work has been philological. Pines' *Beiträge zur islamischen Atomenlehre* contains yet the best description of certain aspects of the early kalâm but the scope of the work does not carry it much beyond the exteriority of the formulae and it remains fundamentally a doxography. Again Pretzl in his *Frühislamische Atomenlehre* and later in his *Frühislamische Attributenlehre* attempts with some success to penetrate deeper into the philosophical structure of the kalâm, but his work suffers from his explicit conviction that the early kalâm was absolutely naïve and simplistic and a preoccupation with finding the extra-islamic origins of certain of its elements. More recently Albert Nader has undertaken to study the philosophical and theological content of the mu'tazilî kalâm in his *Système philosophique des Mu'tazila*, a work which covers almost the entire range of mu'tazilî speculation in considerable and excellently documented detail. Finally, Majid Fakhry in the first section of his *Islamic Occasionalism* devotes a special chapter to the "metaphysics of atoms and accidents" but his discussion remains on a doxographic level without his treating the problems philosophically. The most penetrating insights into the meaning and intent of the early kalâm remain, I think, to be found in Massignon's *Passion d'al-Hallaj*, even though the treatment there is highly abbreviated and frequently somewhat gnostic.<sup>20</sup>

What I hope to do therefore in this work is to outline briefly the metaphysics of created being as it is found in the available fragments of the work of abû l-Hudhayl. It is best to deal with a single author since it is only within a unified system that any part of the whole manifests its validity and truth and carries whatever conviction it may have as a coherent vision of the totality. Whatever may have been their verbal agreement on the five theses, we can no more validly describe a single and unified consensus about the fundamental and detailed structure of being in the varied systems of the Mu'tazila than we can lump together the Dominicans, Augustinians, and Franciscans of the middle ages and say simply that "the scholastics say..." for there are between diverse authors, basic and fundamental differences of view which are nigh absolutely incompatible and great cataclysms of speculative thought hang often on a split hair.

The reasons for the choice of abû l-Hudhayl are obvious. The Mu'tazilî kalâm was, we must recall, for a century the only developed native theology in Islam and it forms, particularly in the school of Baṣra, the direct forerunner of most of the later kalâm. Allowing then for the typically mu'tazilî theological positions

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<sup>20</sup> There is a work, *Abû l-Hudhayl -al-'Allâf* (Cairo, 1369/1949) by 'Alî M. al-Ghurâbî, but it is totally inadequate and needs no further consideration.

and for a number of doctrines which are unique to his thought, even within the Mu'tazila, the work of abū l-Hudhayl stands at the very beginning of what was to become one of the mainstreams of islamic speculation. Certainly a good deal of serious and systematic thought preceded the founding of the great schools of the 9th century. Already in the time of the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik, fragmentary though our information be, we can discern in Ghaylān of Damascus, Ma'bad al-Ġuhanī, Ġa'd ibn Dirham, and perhaps Wāṣil ibn 'Aṭā'<sup>21</sup> the serious beginnings of later theological speculation, just as one can see beneath the homiletic fragments of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī a thorough foundation and outline of much of the thought of al-Muḥāsibī. The real significance and historical influence of the neoplatonist Ġahm b. Ṣafwān has yet to be assessed<sup>22</sup>. The system of abū l-Hudhayl however, remains the first which we can see clearly and it would seem most probable that it was first in his work that the kalām discovered the form which it sought and began to take on its definitive shape<sup>23</sup>. In his understanding of the metaphysical structure of created being we shall expect therefore to find Islam's earliest complete, systematic account of the universal order of being which it felt to underlie its world. Islam formed the milieu of an historically new and unique experience of being and we should expect to find in the work of abū l-Hudhayl one of the purest and most spontaneous transcriptions of certain aspects of this experience, as it was understood in those circles which sought to understand it analytically. The question of how the world is to be understood is still a question; the problem of understanding had not yet been lost and forgotten in the process of dealing with the already elaborated mechanics of its solution and turned into a debate over the terms of the account rather than the structure of the reality to be accounted for.

To the extent then that we are able to grasp the meaning of abū l-Hudhayl we may hope to gain some insight into the order of potential meaning out of which

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<sup>21</sup> To me it would seem probable that the propaganda of Wāṣil b. 'Aṭā' was almost entirely political (cf. Watt, *Political attitudes of the Mu'tazila*, JRAS 1963, 52ff and Pellat, *le Milieu Basrien et la formation de Ġāḥiḡ* (Paris, 1953), 176) and the theological theses attributed to him (e.g., *Mīlāl*, 84ff) may in great part be simply the projection of mu'tazilī doctrine back upon the quasi eponymous founder. We have no clear cause to speak of abū l-Hudhayl's having a "theology inherited from the school of Wāṣil" (Nyberg, art. *abū l-Hudhayl* in *EI*<sup>2</sup>) for the background is certainly more complex than this; cf. n. 23.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. R.M. Frank, *The neoplatonism of Ġahm b. Ṣafwān*, le Muséon, 78, (1965), pp. 395 ff.

<sup>23</sup> Nyberg suggests (*E I*<sup>2</sup> art. cit.) that it was abū l-Hudhayl who introduced atomism into islamic theology. Certainly he is the earliest author within the horizon of our present knowledge by whom a thorough atomism is elaborated. In my opinion however, it is too thoroughly articulated in the work of abū l-Hudhayl and too expertly treated in terms of its basic problems to have been original with him; further I cannot agree with Nyberg (*ibid.*) that he was naïve as a thinker.

the kalâm was generated and understand the experience and the truth which it meant to manifest.

I shall here restrict myself insofar as is possible to the metaphysics of the system, avoiding those questions which are purely theological as well as those which concern abû l-Hudhayl's position on the troubles which divided the early Muslim political community. Thus the "five theses" which are commonly used to define the Mu'tazila, viz., the Unity of God (*al-tawhîd*), God's Justice (*al-'adl*), the promise and the threat of punishment and reward in the next life (*al-wa'd wal-wa'id*), the "intermediate position" (*al-manzila bayn al-manzilatayn*), and the obligation to fraternal correction (*al-'amr bil-ma'rûf wal-nahy 'an al-munkar*) will not be treated at all. So also the question of the createdness of the *Koran* will be omitted and, finally, that of man's power to effect his own acts (*al-qudra*) will be considered, not in terms of God's justice, but only insofar as it constitutes a determinative element in the structure of human existence and forms a point of indetermination in creation.

In the discussion of the texts I have tried to avoid logical abstractions and such terms as "essence" which are basically foreign to the system, hoping to maintain the focus, like that of the author, as concrete as possible. Wherever practical within the limits of clarity and English usage I have tried to retain the author's terminology. Thus "thing" (*šay'*) has been used in almost all places instead of "being" (*ens/Seiendes*) and the term "substance" rigorously avoided, since it carries, out of its history in Western philosophical thought, a whole set of connotations which have no place in abû l-Hudhayl's thought. "Accident" I have retained to render *'araḍ*, always in quotation marks, since I could find no really suitable term in English.

*Allâh al-Musta'ân*

## II. THE BEING OF THE CREATED COMPOSITE

### A. *The Thing as a Composite*

The things that make up the created world are corporeal bodies which are ultimately composed of "atoms" and their inhering "accidents."<sup>1</sup> Body exists as such through the creation of the "accidents" of composition (*ta'lîf*), juxtaposition (*iğtimâ*), contiguity (*mumâssa*), and conjunction (*muğâma'a*) in the "atoms". It has its specific configuration as being such a body and in being that particular body which it is, with its particular attributes and accidents, through God's creation in its "atoms" of those specific "accidents" of composition, etc., as they are determined in the individual instance, together with such other "accidents" as determine and define every particular property, attribute, and state which may qualify the being of the thing at a given moment. In the composite, each "accident" inheres separately in the individual "atoms," as many as may belong to it<sup>2</sup>. The reality of the thing, then, in its being what it is, consists in the presence (*wuğûd*) of the total complex of its separate "accidents" in their inherence in the atoms" which belong to it, as their substrate.

The unity of the thing, therefore, in its being that thing which it is, is constituted by its being a body and it is for this reason that "accidents" are said to inhere or to occur (*halla, hadata*) in bodies (*'ağsâm*), although strictly speaking the corporality and the specific configuration of the individual body are themselves the results of the inherence of the created "accidents" of composition, conjunction, etc., in the specific multitude of "indivisible parts" or "atoms" that form the substrate. In this way, the oneness of the thing is that of an agglomerate sum; its basic constitutive units are the "atoms," each with its inherent "accidents," and it is constituted as a unity, in its being a thing, by the mutual adherence together of its "parts" in spatial isolation from and exclusion of others which are

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<sup>1</sup> On the ontology of the composite in the composition of "atoms" and "accidents" *cf. infra* ch. IV. It must constantly be borne in mind that the term "accident" is not here taken in the usual, Aristotelian sense; rather it is a quite distinct concept which is to be understood and defined from within the system.

<sup>2</sup> That is, the "accidents" adhere separately in each individual "atom" of the thing, but a single "accident" may, in some cases, belong only to a part of the whole, adhering only, thus, in a particular set of "atoms;" *cf. Maq.*, 319 and 330.

not part of the specific composite. Its oneness consists, thus, in one sense, in its spatial unity alone. From another standpoint however, the unity of the thing in the spatial conjunction of its parts is not a mere conjunction and nothing more, for to the extent that the "composition" which founds the oneness of a particular body is grounded in a unique and separate act of creation which determines it as this body and this thing, its unity in being itself and its distinctness and separation from every other thing is quite absolute<sup>3</sup>. Considered in itself, however, it is a unity of a multitude of discrete parts whose cohesion in forming and determining the thing as a specific thing is founded in the actuality of a particular set of "accidents" which the parts share together, each in its individuality. The thing is thus constituted and defined as a thing, in the wholeness and unity of its being what it is, through the created inherence of a set of specific "accidents" in a particulate substrate. The foundation of its existence in the world (*i.e.*, in space or "place" — *makân*) as that thing which it is, is the composition and conjunction of its "parts" or "atoms" as a body and it is therefore by the thing's being such a body that it is defined. However, although the body, in its spatial, composite unity (the "composition of parts") forms the material ground of the possibility of the being of most other "accidents" in the thing<sup>4</sup>, it does not, as such, in any way constitute an intrinsic principle which specifically determines the existence of the particular set of other attributes or "accidents" that may inhere in it<sup>5</sup>. That is, while the composite substrate forms, in the composition of its "atoms," the possibility of the existence of other "accidents," it is not otherwise, in and of itself, the cause of the inherence, in its parts, of any specific set of "accidents," for each "accident" is created by God, in the body, as He wills. There can, thus, be no question of "essences," for there is no intrinsic principle according to which there must exist in a given material body one or another single "accident" or specific complex of "accidents," which, in their total, common inherence in the unified substrate, constitute the total character or nature of a particular existent thing. Although the real presence of certain "accidents" does, in several cases, constitute the immediate possibility of the presence of certain others,

<sup>3</sup> This is a separate question which will be treated in ch. V.

<sup>4</sup> With several exceptions (*viz.*, movement, rest, contiguity, isolation, and *kawn*) all those "accidents" which may belong to a thing can adhere *only* in a composit substrate, not in a single "atom," (*cf.* references cited *infra*, ch. IV, n. 17); *i.e.*, their being is to inhere in a composit plurality of "atoms" (an extended body) even though they inhere separately in each "atom."

<sup>5</sup> In the later kalâm, the "accident" of "being in place" (*taḥayyuz*: the act of being actually existent in a specific location in the world) is taken as the principle of individuation (*cf.* for example abū Rašīd al-Nisābūrī, *Kitāb al-Masā'il*, 6f). For abū l-Hudhayl however, that a thing exist at all is that it exist in a place (*i.e.*, a defined substrate), since it has, in itself, no being at all outside that of its reality in the world (*cf. infra*, esp. ch. V, n. 9). There is, therefore, no question of an "essential" unity of the thing in being that which it is, apart from its actual existence in the world in the spatial unity of its substrate.

one "accident" does not arise from another as a necessary consequent from its principle <sup>6</sup>. Each separate "accident" which contributes to the total being of a thing in its being what it is at a specific moment, is the object of a separate and independent act of creation.

The being of the thing is then that it exist as a specific composit totality, but its existence as such a totality is that it be a sum, created so in each of its elements. It has no essence, nature, or intrinsic principle, by and of itself in its being what it is, that determines the individual qualities and attributes which characterize its being that which it is. It exists, thus, simply as a composite whole (*ǧumla*) of a finite number of discrete elements (the separate "atoms," each with its own compliment of "accidents") to which a given name is applied <sup>7</sup>. In short, the specific attributes and properties which make up its total being, in its being that which it is, have no common principle of their unified inherence together in the thing, other than the creative act of the divine will which made the body a body and the several "accidents" to exist in it.

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<sup>6</sup> There may be several exceptions to this principle, as he would seem to have "length" (*viz.*, extension in space) arise directly as a function or consequent of the "accident" of composition (*cf. infra*, ch. IV, nn. 13f) and to hold that motion and rest are consequent directly upon *kawn* (*cf. infra* ch. II, n. 17). Generally however, each "accident" is considered ontologically separate and independent of every other, forming a distinct and separate object of God's creative power. Thus he says that God may suspend a heavy stone in the air for a period of time "without creating an act of falling or descending" and may conjoin fire and cotton "without there occurring an act of burning" (*Maq.*, 312; *cf. also infra*, ch. III, n. 12). In order, thus, to maintain the distinctness and independence of the separate "accidents," *abū l-Hudhayl* (as well as a number of other early *mu'tazili* authors) consistently avoids stating directly that the actual presence (*wuǧūd*) in the thing of one "accident" is the condition of the possibility of the presence of another, but rather reverses the formulation; for example, he says that "it is impossible that God conjoin [in the same substrate] the power of effective action, the act of knowing, the act of willing, and death, just as it is impossible that He conjoin life and death" (*Maq.*, 568). Though he thus, in a way, maintains the logical distinctness of these "accidents" and seeks to affirm their ontological independence of one another, he has nevertheless effectively stated that life is the condition of the existence of *qudra*, etc., given his definition of the contrary as that which exists when its contrary does not (*Maq.*, 376). This is in noteworthy contrast to later formulations which make, for example, life the condition (*šart*) of these "accidents" (*cf. for example, 'Uṣūl*, 28ff and 105) and represents a radically different view from that which speaks of them as "consequents" (*tawābi'*) of life, as *Šarḥ al-Mawāǧiǧ*, 4, 184: *وقالت المعتزلة بأسرهم توابع الحياة كالعلم والقدرة والارادة وسائر ما يشترط في قيامه بمحملة الحياة* (*cf. also ibid.* 2, 215). <sup>7</sup> *الجملة التي وقع عليه اسم ...* (*Maq.*, 329). Names are given to those things (*entia*) which are perceived in their existence as distinct entities, God being the author of perception (*cf. infra* ch III, nn. 11f) and so the guarantor of the reality of the named (*cf. also the Koran, Sūrat al-'Insān* (76), v. 1 and the remarks of Massignon *Passion*, 549). On the use of *ǧumla* for the whole thing insofar as it is a body, *cf. also Farq*, 79: *الجزء الذي قامت به الحركة هو المتحرك دون غيره من اجزاء الجملة*.

B. *Becoming*

Strictly speaking, abû l-Hudhayl does not recognize becoming or the process of change in the sense in which western thought generally gives these words; *i.e.*, he does not know the *coming-to-be* of a thing out of something which was not it nor admit of alteration or change as a continuous process of becoming, such as the *metabolai* which are treated by Aristotle in *Physics* V or the "motions" (*ḥarakât*) listed by his contemporary, al-Kindî in his *Risâla fî l-'illa al-garîba lil-kawn wal-fasâd* <sup>8</sup>. However, albeit he does not know the categories of coming-to-be and passing-away in one sense, things do in fact come to be and thereafter undergo change while remaining themselves what they are and this fact the system must and does account for in its own way. The ontology of the becoming of things is one of the foremost problems of the system.

The initial coming-to-be of a thing is "its being made to be or its being created after its not being," God's "initiation of its existence after its non-existence, for the first time <sup>9</sup>." We may thus speak of an absolute coming-to-be as of the total composite of the thing in the initial "composition" of its body, together with such other "accidents" as may simultaneously be created in it. In this same way, we may also speak of the initial creation of the existence of but a single "accident" which "comes to be in the body" (*yahdutu fî l-ġism*), as for example, whiteness or an act of perception on the part of man. In the coming-to-be of the whole composite as in the coming-to-be of a single "accident," considered from one aspect, the cases are ontologically identical, in that they represent, in one case

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Rasâ'il al-Kindî*, ed. M. abû Rida, I (Cairo, 1369/1950), pp. 214ff, in which he treats (pp. 216ff) motions which are *مكانيّة و ربويّة واضمحلالية واستحالية*. The terms *kawn* and *fasâd* as they are used by al-Kindî and the *falâsifa* meaning "coming-to-be" and "passing-away" do not occur in abû l-Hudhayl or the other early kalâm authors. Again, where abû l-Hudhayl uses the term "creation" (*ḥalq*) and the "initiation (of existence)" (*ibtidâ'*), al-Kindî uses *تهوى* (*op. cit.*, 161f) which is possibly derived from Syriac *ܬܘܘܝܬܐ*, though the editor (preface, p. 21) considers it to be taken from the pronoun *هو* (without taking into account that the term *هوية* is probably in the translations, a transcription of Syriac *ܘܘܝܬܐ*; cf. R. Frank, *The origin of the Arabic philosophical term* *أنيّة*, *Cahiers de Byrsa*, 6 (1956), 188, n. 4). Al-Kindî also uses for this '*ibddâ'*' (*op. cit.*, 165, where it is defined) and *ta'yis* (*ibid.*, 183). With al-Kindî, as with the *falâsifa* generally, the concepts are altogether different from those of the kalâm, as he speaks (*ibid.*, 217) of *أما ذاتية وعرضية* and of *fasâd* as *انتقال عن عينه الى عين اخرى* (*ibid.*), where abû l-Hudhayl would use *fanâ'* or *bullân*.

<sup>9</sup> *Maq.*, 363f, *et alibi*.

as in the other, the coming-to-be of "accidents" in their being created in the substrate <sup>10</sup>.

Abû l-Hudhayl does speak of an "accident" of "becoming" (*kawn*, pl., 'akwân), wherein he does recognise a kind of continuous process, viz., a defined process of becoming in time and place from "this" to "that." In this sense, it is a specific becoming through time, in space and direction. We must keep in mind however that the objects of God's will are realised simultaneously with the act of His willing <sup>11</sup>, so that individual "accidents" are complete and perfect as they are created in the thing at the moment of their creation. Within the system then, the ontological reality and being of a thing, in all the states of its being, whatever successive alterations of state it may undergo, lie not in any continuum of progression or process, marked and measured by the act of a given state, but in the discrete acts of the perfected realisation, through creation, of the "accidents" whose actuality *is* these states. He conceives the succession of states not as moments which the mind notes and designates by name as "points" along a line of continuous becoming but rather the apparent, ontic continuity of being in becoming is a line which the mind plots through the points which are the moments of the realisation of the successive states in the actuality of a succession of ontologically discrete "accidents" in the thing. To this we shall return shortly.

The being of a thing in movement or rest <sup>12</sup> (and so, consequently, also the being of movement and rest as "accidents") does not consist in the duration in being and becoming through and between two points of time in space <sup>13</sup>. Rather, the reality of movement lies in the final and perfect realisation of its "passage" between two particular moments (*waqtân*) in specifically designated points in space, as the reality of "rest" is the perfected actuality of being in the same place in the second moment <sup>14</sup>. *Kawn*, on the other hand, is a "becoming in space"

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<sup>10</sup> On the creation of the "atoms" or the substrate as such, cf. ch. IV.

<sup>11</sup> *Maq.*, 418.

<sup>12</sup> Diverse types of movement and rest are listed in *Maq.*, 345, 361, *et alibi*.

<sup>13</sup> The term "space" of course is not used by the author, nor does the term *hald'* (the void) occur in any of the fragments. He would, however, seem to conceive of a kind of space as a homogeneous milieu of potential local existence; note that he says (*Maq.*, 323) that a thing may "move from nothing to nothing," for place is defined by the presence of the thing — a single atom or a body in the defined multitude of its atoms.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the references cited *infra*, n. 17. Abû l-Hudhayl's conception of time is obscure and one cannot tell to what extent his thought on the subject was elaborated. Like all other created things, time is an "accident" but since it cannot belong to the corporeal being as inherent in it and a part of its reality, it does not occur in any substrate (*Maq.*, 367 and 369), i. e., it is immaterial. (On "accidents" not in substrates, cf. also *infra*, ch. V, concerning the act of creation). Time is created by God in discrete

and as such is "distinct from motion, rest, and contiguities;"<sup>15</sup> it is, we might say, the extended moment of being in space, whose reality is the realisation of spatio-temporal directionality, relative to and within two specifically defined limits of before and after and, if movement is involved, of here and there<sup>16</sup>. The act and reality of *kawn*, therefore, as a "becoming in space" is other than the realised act (in abū l-Hudhayl's terminology, "accident") of motion or rest which may be involved in such a becoming, as its term<sup>17</sup>. Within the paradigmatic framework of a universe wherein all being is realised in discrete "quanta," abū l-Hudhayl thus conceives *al-kawn* as the act of being temporally located in space, as this act is distinct from the perfected actuality of movement or rest, etc.<sup>18</sup>

As such then, *al-kawn* is, within its own real termini, a single indivisible act ("accident"), realised in the thing, whose unity is constituted between the spatio-

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units and "accidents" are divided (*inqasama*) in their being according to the single moments of time (*Maq.*, 319), motion occurring in discrete acts in each time (*waqt, zamān*) (*ibid.*). The sources unfortunately do not furnish us with the information by which its relation to the being of things can be fully analysed.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Maq.*, 325, 351, and 355; he is no doubt using "contiguity" (*mumāssa*) here to imply also the "accidents" of juxtaposition, separation, etc. Abū l-Hudhayl's position in this differs from that of most other authors, who take *kawn* as a general term embracing motion and rest, etc. (e.g., Nazzām (*Maq.*, 351), Muḥammad b. Šabīb (*ibid.*, 354), al-Ġubbā'i (*ibid.*, 352, 355), et al.). Later, with both the Mu'tazila and the 'Ašā'ira, *al-'akwān* is used almost universally to indicate the "accidents" classed under *ḥaraka, sukūn, iḡtimā'*, and *iftirāq*.

<sup>16</sup> Massignon notes (*Passion*, 560) that "Allāf et 'Ash'arī ont donné une coloration matérialiste, spatialisation, au mot *kawn* en le liant par un nexus à l'atome qui y surgie;" in this he would seem to be taking the word in the wrong sense of "becoming," viz., as a coming to be out of something. At any rate, his equation (*ibid.*) *kawn* = 'ayn = *makān* (following *Šarḥ al-Mawāqif*, 5, 7ff?) is not applicable to abū l-Hudhayl, albeit he cites him. Much more exact is the statement of Pretzl (*Attributenlehre*, 47) that the '*akwān* are the "Seinsweisen des Dinges im Raum," although here too, since he is discussing the use of the term in the majority of the Mu'tazila, what he has to say is not fully applicable to abū l-Hudhayl. Nader's rendering of *kawn* by the word *génération* (*Système*, 170ff, passim) is misleading.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. references cited *supra*, n. 15. It is thus that he says (*Maq.*, 325) that "the body, at the moment of God's creating it is كَائِنٌ لَامْتَحَرِكٌ وَلَا سَاكِنٌ (cf. also the remarks of Ġurġānī and Siyālkūti in *Šarḥ al-Mawāqif* 2, 216 and 6, 166 and also *infra*, ch. IV, n. 17). As the term *kawn* is used in the few fragments in which it occurs in context (cf. esp. *Maq.*, 237 and 350f) it seems at first somewhat obscure, though if it be taken as I have here defined it, the meaning is clear enough; what he is saying in these two passages is simply that if a man effect, in "the first moment," a *kawn* (viz., an act of spatially oriented becoming) towards the right, the movement, at the instant of its realisation "in the second moment" will be to the right, etc. Al-Baġdādī, who is not the most perceptive of our sources, says (*Uṣūl*, 40f) that despite his efforts, abū l-Hudhayl was unable himself to make sense of this distinction between *kawn*, motion, rest, etc.; cf. the same kind of polemic, *ibid.*, 92 and 134.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *supra*, n. 6, concerning the ontological separateness of "accidents."

temporal limits which define the indivisible discreteness of its being<sup>19</sup>. As an "accident," although again it is the realisation in the thing of the extension of being-between two points of time in space, it remains in itself ontologically distinct from movement and rest and most importantly, though a kind of becoming in the unity of its being-between its temporal and spatial termini, it is altogether distinct from the existence of the thing as the ground of its reality and from its being in its continuation and perdurance in existence (*al-baqâ'*)<sup>20</sup>.

Motion or movement (*al-ḥaraka*) is a created "accident" which "comes to be in a body" or some part of a body<sup>21</sup>. Although movement is a thing's "transference from the first place and its departure from it",<sup>22</sup> it is not a "becoming" (*kawn*), as was noted, but an "accident" which comes to be in the thing as a completion or perfected act of *having moved*. This is not in any way to say that abū l-Hudhayl does not consider the act of a body's passing from one point to another in space as continuous along its path; he expressly rejects any notion of a "quantum leap"<sup>23</sup>. The problem is rather that in discussing the "accident" of movement, he is not treating of the fact of traversing a trajectory through space, as this constitutes a continuous event, but of movement as a moment in the being of a thing, which qualifies and defines the thing as being in a place other than that in which it was in the previous instant. That is, the focus of the discussion is on movement in the ontology of the thing as a composite of "accidents" and "atoms" not on motion as a physical event. Thus conceived, movement is *in* the thing, its reality consisting in the perfection of the being of the thing in its being "in the second place" at the first moment of its being there<sup>24</sup>. Movement, thus,

<sup>19</sup> Concerning the kind of thought which underlies this view of things, cf. the remarks of Henri Bergson *Matter and Memory* (N.Y., Anchor Books, 1959), 203f and *Evolution Créatrice*<sup>86</sup> (Paris, 1959), 303ff; *n.b.* also the remarks of J.P. Sartre on the concept of the "instant," in *l'Être et le Néant*<sup>55</sup> (Paris, 1957), 544.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *infra*, ch. V.

<sup>21</sup> *Maq.*, 321f and *Farq.*, 79; since the thing is one in the unity of its body, we say that the thing has moved and the movement is attributed to the whole composit, even though only a part of it may move (*Maq.*, 319); al Baḡdādī (*Farq.*, *loc.cit.*), either for polemical reasons or through ignorance, distorts the intention of abū l-Hudhayl in this point.

<sup>22</sup> *Maq.*, 355.

<sup>23</sup> *Maq.*, 321.

<sup>24</sup> The "accident" belongs to the "second moment," for its reality in being is the perfection of its actualisation; thus he says (*Maq.*, 233) : وهو يفعل في الاول والفعل واقع في الثاني : لان الاول وقت يفعل والثاني وقت فعل (cf. also *Mīlāl*, 73f, *Šarḥ al-Mawāqif* 6, 100). This statement should not be dismissed as a simple play on the aspects of the Arabic verb, through some simplistic understanding of the relationship between language and perception.

has its being as a discrete moment ("accident") in the reality of the thing <sup>25</sup>. It can have no perdurance or continuance in existence (*baqā'*) <sup>26</sup> since it is terminated in its coming to be at the very instant of its actualisation as an "accident," when the thing of which it is the perfection either comes to rest or goes on to a second movement. Thus also a single "atom" may have only a single motion at a time, although a single body may be moved in its several parts simultaneously by more than one agent, in which case we speak of a single movement of the body as a whole <sup>27</sup>.

While motion has no duration whatsoever, other "accidents" may endure (*qad tabqā'*) through a period of time or, more strictly, over a succession of moments. The body (*ġism*) may endure through the perdurance of the "accidents" of "composition," etc., together with a number of other "accidents" which determine certain more or less permanent characteristics of its being that thing which it is, e.g., color, life, etc. <sup>28</sup> There is thus, according to abū l-Hudhayl, a real continuity of being in a thing, in the perdurance in existence (*baqā'*) of a particular set of "accidents" over and through the passing into and out of existence of others. We say that "an 'accident' comes to be in a body" since the body, in its corporeal actuality, remains stable in its existence through the perdurance of the "accident" of composition, which is the basis of its being a body <sup>29</sup> and is modified in the states of its being by the coming to be of a new "accident" and the annihilation of the contrary, which it supplants <sup>30</sup>.

In this respect, then, body is conceived as the basic, stable or quasi permanent foundation of the being of things in their real presence in the world and the basis of their continuity of being in their existence. We must remember however that

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<sup>25</sup> Motion, like all other "accidents" which belong to a substrate, "comes to be" (*hadaṭa*) in the thing (*Maq.*, 355) and inheres (*halla*) in it (*Maq.*, 319). According to Nader (*Système*, 175ff), abū l-Hudhayl speaks of the "penetration" of motion into the body through the activity of the agent. The expression is not, I think, altogether exact if one takes into account the fact that abū l-Hudhayl is not primarily discussing the physical event in, the same way that he does not mean by *qudra* or *istiḥā'a*, as "accidents" belonging to man, the mere ability to cause the transfer of physical energy to a material object (cf. *infra*, ch. III, n. 22). Nader's statement (*ibid.*, 177) that, for abū l-Hudhayl, movement is an *écoulement* involves the same misunderstanding.

<sup>26</sup> *Maq.*, 358, *et alibi*.

<sup>27</sup> *Maq.*, 319; thus he says (*ibid.*) that "accidents" are divided according to time, place, and agent, i.e., that each one is distinct as the product of a single agent (*fā'il*), inhering in a single "atom" (cf. *supra*), at a particular moment.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Maq.*, 358f, *Šarḥ al-Mawāḍiʿ* 5, 27 and 38f, *'Uṣūl*, 50f.

<sup>29</sup> He speaks of *baqā' al-ġism*, *Maq.*, *loc. cit.*; on its being in the act of composition (*ta'liḥ*), cf. *infra*, ch. IV, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. his definition of contraries, *Maq.*, 376, *cit. supra*, n.6.

the "body", which constitutes the unity of the thing in its being and its continuity in being in identity with itself, is not "corporality" or an abstract principle of the thing's being, but is always to be understood as the specific, real individual body, qualified by its particular dimensions and configuration and such other enduring "accidents" as may have been brought to actuality in it, while its act of existence and the permanence in existence of whatever enduring "accidents" may belong to it, for so long as each may individually endure, is grounded in God's act of creation and His further maintaining the several "accidents" in being. That is, the thing, as that which continues in existence, identical with itself, through change, is the created composite of undifferentiated, indivisible parts, in which adheres a given set of enduring "accidents." However, since each "accident" which inheres in the corporeal composite is ontologically distinct and independent of every other in its created inherence, there is no principle intrinsic to the particular complex of "accidents" which formally constitutes the being of the thing in the unity of its being that which it is. Each corporeal thing is ontologically unique in its being a particular agglomerate sum of "accidents," the object of a particular act or series of acts of creation. A thing is, therefore, pragmatically defined or *named* as being a body having such a particular set of attributes<sup>31</sup>. As such, however, things do have a permanence in being and a continuity in their identity with themselves over the successive changes which come to be in them.

The becoming of a thing, as its initial coming-into-existence, is the absolute initiation of its being in an act of creation which has no ontological continuity with any preceding being. On the other hand, its becoming, in the sense of the alteration and change of certain of its particular "accidents" is a kind of progress in the thing of a series of discrete and discontinuous states whose actualisation in being is achieved through the immediate activity of an outside agent in the creation of particular "accidents" and the simultaneous annihilation of their contraries in the thing. In the case of the creation of these "accidents" there is a continuity of being in the thing, nevertheless, with its existence in its previous states, in that each new "accident" does in fact supplant its contrary. In each case, the contrary, in a certain sense, underlies the real possibility of the realisation of a given "accident," so that in their alternate inherence in the composite thing the actualisation of a given "accident" is, in a sense, founded in a potentiality of the thing, represented by its prior state as qualified by the inherence of the contrary

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. for example, the definition of man, *Maq.*, 329. There is a remarkable similarity to modern biological definitions of species (*viz.*, a list of physical characteristics) and Massignon is quite right in speaking of "un positivisme tranchant, et un matérialisme implicite, (qui) amenaient donc à refuser absolument toute existence aux idées générales." (*Passion*, 553).