

Al-Ghazālī's View on Causal Necessity and the Theory of Divine Custom

Abbas Yazdani
University of Tehran, Iran

Abstract

Amongst Muslim theologians, the Ash'arite theological school in general and al-Ghazālī, in particular, opposed the necessity between cause and effect and rejected it by proposing the alternative theory of "Divine custom". The purpose of this article is to examine the motivations, arguments and critiques of al-Ghazālī's view in denying the causal necessity and the theory of Divine custom. The findings of the present study show that his main motivation in opposing the causal necessity was theological teachings such as miracles, God's omnipotent and active monotheism. This research paper is a library-based theoretical analysis reviewing and examining al-Ghazālī's written works to produce an account of his view on causal necessity. Then, critiques raised by Averroes on al-Ghazālī's view will be evaluated, and at the end, a proposal will be made to develop al-Ghazālī's view.

Keywords: Causal necessity, Ash'arites, Al-Ghazālī, Islamic theology, divine custom

Introduction

The principle of causality is one of the oldest philosophical and theological issues and at the same time one of the most important philosophical principles. This principle is the foundation of all human scientific and intellectual endeavors. Because any intellectual effort made by scientists to find out how things and phenomena communicate with each other and are linked between themselves is based on this principle. In definition cause is said to be something that from its existence, the existence of something else called effect occurs. (Al-Farabi, *Al-Talighāt*, n.d.: 6). And in the definition of causality, it is stated: causality is a relationship between two beings in the

sense that the existence of one is necessary and dependent on the other. In this connection, the dependent is called effect and the independent is called the cause. (Avicenna 1981, 11)

The proponents of the principle of causality, in addition to trying to prove the relationship between beings and events, claim several propositions for this principle:

A) Causal necessity: There is a necessary relationship between cause and effect in existence, that is, whenever the complete cause of an effect is occurred, the effect will necessarily follow it; and if we see an effect as existing, we will inevitably conclude that the cause has already been taken place. In philosophy, necessity is as follows: What is necessary, is the permanent existence that without that it can never be found at any time. If fire necessarily has the property of burning, it means that in the past, present and future, this property accompanies it, and the result is that, with the fulfillment of the conditions of effect, it is impossible for fire not to burn.

B) Appropriateness: In the sense that between each cause and its effect, there is consistency and proportion that is, each cause has a specific effect and each effect arises from a specific cause, not every cause produces every effect or every effect arises from any cause. The principle of appropriateness implies that the system of existence is a regular and lawful system, each component of which has a special place (Tusi and Razi 1984, vol. 1, 232).

1. Al-Ghazālī and the denial of causal necessity

According to how the principle of causality is often explained, if we interpret the principle of causality as a necessary connection between cause and effect, we can say that its first deniers in Islamic world were the theological school of Ash'arites who had a theological impetus. Imam Mohammad al-Ghazālī al-Tusi (1056-1111), one of the leading scientific figures of the Ash'arites, is the pioneer of all those who deny the causal necessity. In a way, al-Ghazālī accepts the relationship between cause and effect in phenomena and interprets it as following the Sunnah of God or the will of God. He says that it is the divine custom and tradition that creates heat as a product of fire. Fire has no effect on creating heat, but heat, like fire itself, is doomed

to God's providence and will, and the symmetry of these two wills and desires has become the source of the idea of the principle of causality. What al-Ghazālī denies is a necessary connection between cause and effect. He believed that by accepting the causal necessity, one could not believe in the Miracle and absolute power of God. According to al-Ghazālī, the necessary relationship between cause and effect conflicts with these two certain Islamic teachings. In the Miracle of Moses' staff becoming a serpent, the principle of necessity between cause and effect has been violated, because it is obvious that serpents do not necessarily come from a staff. To defend the occurrence of a Miracle, one must deny the necessity of causation, or provide an explanation that justifies the causal necessity without violating it.

Saad al-Din Taftazani, an Ash'arite thinker of the eighth century AH, the author and commentator of the book *Sharh al-Maqāssid*, discusses the impact of physical forces and goes on to say: in our view, physical forces do not have any effect, and therefore the emergence of their actions is not conditional on the situation (i.e. effective and affected confrontation), and the continuity of those actions is not restrained, because God can create the effect permanently without confrontation (Taftāzānī, 1992, vol. 2, 106).

Given that appropriateness means that not every phenomenon is the cause of every phenomenon and every event does not follow every event, but there must be a proportion between cause and effect; the question that arises is whether the Ash'arites, while denying the necessity of cause and effect, also deny the necessity of the appropriateness between cause and effect or not. Ash'arites' answer is that the appropriateness is void just as necessity is; that is, as the infinite power and absolute divine will does not require the creation of any event to follow another event, it also does not require a particular event to follow another particular event, and may choose any event to follow any other event.

By using the case of the burning of cotton on contact with fire, which has already been used as an illustration by Abū al-Hudhayl and Jubbāī and the majority of the people of the Kalam in their denial of causality (Al-Ash'arī 1929, 312), al-Ghazālī, one of the most prominent figures in Ash'ari theology,

argues that there is no proof that the fire is the cause of the burning, for “the only proof that the philosophers have is the observation of the occurrence of the burning when there is a contact with the fire, but observation proves only that the burning occurs when there is a contact with the fire; it does not prove that it occurs because of the contact with the fire.” (Al-Ghazālī 2000, XVII, 279) He thus concludes that it is God who “by His will creates the burning of the cotton at the time of its contact with the fire” (ibid. 283), and what is true of fire and its burning of cotton is true of any other succession of events.

2. Al-Ghazālī's theological motivation for opposing causal necessity

According to al-Ghazālī, accepting the necessary relationship between fire and heat, for example, means that in the fact of fire, there is no escaping heat, even if God does not want it to be so. Al-Ghazālī rejects the necessary relationship between cause and effect in natural beings under the heading of natural sciences in the book *Tahaft al-Falasifah* [The Incoherence of the Philosophers], and believes that accepting the necessity between cause and effect conflicts with accepting two obvious theological beliefs: One is the occurrence of a miracle and the second is the absolute power of God. The conflict is in the first case, which is the relationship between cause and effect, because it is based on the miracles such as dragging a staff, reviving the dead, and splitting the moon. According to causal necessity, all of these miracles should be impossible. At the beginning of the seventeenth issue of *Tahaft al-Falasifah*, al-Ghazālī states his most influential argument against necessary connection thesis as follows:

In our view, the connection between what are believed to be the cause and the effect is not necessary. Take any two things. This is not That; nor can That be This. The affirmation of one does not imply the affirmation of the other; nor does its denial imply the denial of the other. The existence of one is not necessitated by the existence of the other; nor its non-existence by the non-existence of the other. Take for instance, any two things, such as the quenching of thirst and drinking; ... They are connected as the result of the Decree of God (holy be His name), which preceded their existence. (Al-Ghazālī 2003, 243; my translation)

Al-Ghazālī also considers one of the consequences of accepting the causal necessity as a rejection of the Creativity of God. He states that the analysis of philosophers not only cannot prove the existence of a wise creator God, but also leads to the denial of the existence of a creator, that is, God (see *ibid.* 134-154). Thus, al-Ghazālī's conflict with philosophers on the issue of causality is a theological issue, for the sake of maintaining belief in miracles and absolute power of God as well as the Unity.

3. Interpretation of the uniformity of nature and the symmetry of beings and events

According to al-Ghazālī, the uniformity of natural phenomena, the symmetry and the simultaneous occurrence of two events is due to divine providence, not based on the necessity between the two, and this is called "Divine custom". Divine custom requires that things in the world be done contingently, but not in a necessary way. Therefore, God has the power and ability to do otherwise, just as in a miracle, God wills contrary to custom. He cites the example of the non-burning of Prophet Abraham (Arabic: *Ibrāhīm* إِبْرَاهِيمُ) and interprets it contrary to the custom, saying that when God does not want Prophet Abraham to burn, he has the power to either change the feature of fire or change the feature of the body of Abraham. He says:

We make it clear that fire is created in such a way that whenever two similar cotton meets it, it burns both and there is no difference between the two, because they are similar in every way, but we consider it permissible with all this, that a prophet be thrown into the fire and not burned, whether by changing the attribute of fire or by changing the attribute of the Prophet (peace be upon him) or by God or the angels in the fire, an attribute that reduces the heat of the fire on his body, so that his body should not penetrate and the heat of fire should be left behind and it should be in the form and truth of fire, but it should not show its effect and warmth, or in the body of the Prophet, they should create an attribute that repels the effect of fire. (*ibid.* 249; my translation)

4. Rejection of the philosophers' argument for the necessary connection

Al-Ghazālī accepts the view that a natural cause has a nature that brings about certain effects: fire, for instance, has a

nature such that it burns cotton. But this does not require that fire is a necessary cause. The nature of fire itself derives from God, and God chooses whether or not this nature will bring about its normal effect or not. This means that according to al-Ghazâlî's view, natural causes are only contingently causes.

According to al-Ghazâlî, natural phenomena do not involve necessary connections, and gives an example as follows: For we allow the possibility of the occurrence of the contact without the burning, and we allow as possible the occurrence of the cotton's transformation into burnt ashes without contact with the fire. [The philosophers], however, deny the possibility of this (Al-Ghazâlî 2000, 166–7).

Al-Ghazâlî asks the philosophers who claim the necessity between cause and effect (for example, the combustion between fire and cotton) for the reason that proves necessity. Then he himself answers that the only reason for the claimants of necessity is to observe the symmetry of the two events, while observation only indicates the attainment of this symmetry, not the proof of the necessity between them. The cause of the occurrence of this symmetry is divine providence and will.

Therefore, what is the reason that fire is active, and there is no reason for them, except to observe the attainment of combustion at the time of meeting the fire, and observation implies that attainment is at that time and does not imply that attainment is for the sake of it or from it, and he has no reason other than that (Al-Ghazâlî 2003, 244; my translation).

In al-Ghazâlî's example of fire and cotton, in any case, where cotton is exposed to fire, God creates burning in it, and cotton acquires this, meaning that burning is not in its nature. The real agent, in any case, is God Almighty.

In his argument al-Ghazâlî gives an example: if a veil is covering the blind eyes of a person that has not been made aware of the difference between day and night, and if during a day the veil is removed from his eyes and he opens his eyelids to see colors, he thinks that the agent of perception resulting from the colorful forms in his eyes is the opening of the eyes. What if his eyes are healthy and open, and the veil is open, and the object in front of him is colored, he necessarily sees, and does not think that he does not see, until the time when the sun

sets to make the surroundings dark, he then realizes that the real reason for the color meeting his eyes was the sunlight.

Hence, how does the rival know that there are no causes and causes in the foundations of existence that these events are manifested during the meeting between them? ... And it is from here that their scholars (philosophers) have come to the conclusion that these deviations and events, which occur at the time of the encounter between objects, and in general, at the time of the difference in proportions, are inferred only by the Gift givers. Therefore, the claim of the one who claimed that fire is the agent of burning in his soul, and the bread, the agent of satiety, and medicine, is the agent of truth, and also other than these, is void (*cf. ibid.* 246).

According to al-Ghazālī, if we attribute the events of this world to the direct will of God, then the question arises as to how one can believe in the order and lawfulness of the natural world. Al-Ghazālī's answer to this question is expressed by the term custom, which is a translation of the Greek word *ethos*. Custom refers to the fact that events do not always occur, but often happen in a specific way. According to him, it is possible that the "custom" will be broken by miracles.

5. The source of belief in the causal necessity between phenomena and events

Al-Ghazālī then seeks to answer a question from the epistemological view of causality that asks for the source of the belief in a causal necessity between phenomena and events. In response, he says that God has created in us a knowledge that, due to the recurring observation of the symmetry between things, we assume causal necessity between them. That is, the mental habit becomes the source of the belief in the necessity between cause and effect in us. However, such a necessity does not exist objectively. He says:

God Almighty has created a knowledge for us that these contingent things do not do those things naturally, and we do not claim that these things are obligatory, but that they may or may not happen, and that the habit of continuing them, one after the other will continue. Another in our minds has permeated their flow according to the past habits so that it cannot be separated from them. (*ibid.* 248)

Al-Ghazālī added that constant occurrence of habits, leaves in our mind the strong impression that their flow will continue according to the past habit. (Al-Ghazālī 2003, XVII, 285)

From this, it can be understood that custom theory is derived from imperfect induction or experience. According to al-Ghazālī, experience is different from perception. Because there is a Judgment in experience, but it is not in perception; we often see a stone fall to the ground, but due to the repetition of the same sequence of events, we make a generalization that every stone falls to the ground. It cannot be perceived through the senses. It is reason that issues a judgment. The reason, due to the repetition of tangible events through a hidden analogy that if there was no cause, this event should not happen in most cases and nothing happens in most cases; based on this secret analogy, reason will issue a general ruling that in the future the situation will be the same. However, since we have not examined all the cases, we cannot issue a necessary and definite judgment, but our judgment is a possible judgment, a probability that happens in most cases, but from the reason point of view it is possible to do the opposite. Therefore, from an ontological point of view, the relationship between causes and effects is not necessary. However, from an epistemological point of view, to repeat the observation of the symmetries of causes and effects objectively and to accustom our minds to seeing these symmetries, the mind dictates the necessity between them and expects that in the future, as in the past, the causes and effects will be realized uniformly.

Therefore, Bāqelānī believes that custom has a complete dependence on the knowledge of the agent on the one hand and the existence of an object on the other. In other words, we can talk about the custom when there are two of the following characteristics: a) an object or an event repeatedly continues to exist outside; b) there must be a world and the knowledge of that world be repeatedly associated to this object or accident. Bāqelānī's word on this is: "And the intention is on the truth, but it is the repetition of the knowledge of the world and the existence of the object of obedience to the one and only way, but with the repetition of the one and only." (Bāqelānī 1958, 10; my translation)

6. Averroes' response to al-Ghazālī's criticism

As mentioned earlier, Aristotelian natural philosophy relies in part on repeated observation in constructing the principle of causation. Ash'arite theologians deny such the principle on the basis of the repeated observation of accompaniment and contend that it is not evidence of causation. In *Incoherence of the Philosophers* by distinguishing different positions, al-Ghazālī argues as follows:

The first position is for the opponent to claim that the agent of the burning is the fire alone, it being an agent by nature [and] not by choice—hence, incapable of refraining from [acting according to] what is in its nature after contacting a substratum receptive of it. And this is one of the things we deny. On the contrary, we say: [t]he one who enacts the burning by creating blackness in the cotton, [causing] separation in its parts, and making it cinder or ashes is God, either through the mediation of His angels or without mediation. (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 167)

In the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, section of “about the natural sciences” (first discussion), Averroes, the most prominent medieval Muslim Aristotelian, responds to al-Ghazālī's criticism of the philosophers' account of causal necessity as follows:

Further, are the acts which proceed from all things absolutely necessary for those in whose nature it lies to perform them, or are they only performed in most cases or in half the cases? This is a question which must be investigated, since one single action-and-passivity between two existent things occurs only through one relation out of an infinite number, and it happens often that one relation hinders another. Therefore, it is not absolutely certain that fire acts when it is brought near a sensitive body, for surely it is not improbable that there should be something which stands in such a relation to the sensitive thing as to hinder the action of the fire, as is asserted of talc and other things. But one need not therefore deny fire its burning power so long as fire keeps its name and definition. (Averroes 1954, 318–19)

Although Averroes holds that natural substances, such as fire, are causes, he asserts that given fire's nearness to cotton, it does not necessarily nor certainly burn the cotton, because there may be an impediment, for instance the cotton could be covered in talc, which hinders the action of the fire. By this, he means that, if the impediment is lacking the burning

would necessarily and certainly would take place. Therefore, Averroes' response to al-Ghazālī's argument against necessary connection is that al-Ghazālī misreports the philosophers' account of causal necessity in nature. According to his own interpretation of the philosophers' account of causal necessity, he claims that the philosophers' account is true.

7. Averroes' critique of the arguments of the deniers of causality

Averroes criticizes the Ash'arite theologians' denial of causality by five arguments:

1- In his first argument, Averroes' criticism of al-Ghazālī is that if we consider natural causes as contingently causes, there is no possibility for human knowledge. He stated that if al-Ghazālī's denial of causality is accepted, there is no true knowledge of anything, because true knowledge (*yaqīnī*) is the knowledge of the thing according to what it is in itself in reality (see Averroes 1954, 325). In *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* in response to the skeptical argument, Averroes says:

Logic implies the existence of causes and effects, and knowledge of these effects can only be rendered perfect through knowledge of their causes. Denial of cause implies the denial of knowledge, and denial of knowledge implies that nothing in this world can be really known, and that what is supposed to be known is nothing but opinion, that neither proof nor definition exist, and that the essential attributes which compose definitions are void. The man who denies the necessity of any item of knowledge must admit that even this, his own affirmation, is not necessary knowledge. (Averroes 1954, 319)

To respond Averroes' objection to al-Ghazālī, we could say that it does not seem to be relevant. Averroes argues that al-Ghazālī rejected the possibility of knowledge, but as it mentioned above, al-Ghazālī does not in fact completely reject natures; he maintains that natural causes bring about certain effects, but this nature and causation are always subject to God's will. If natures only possibly bring about their effects, then our knowledge of them is not necessary, but only probable.

McGinnis defends al-Ghazālī against Averroes' argument and remarks that while Averroes' argument from natural science may succeed against some versions of the

skeptical argument, it is not clear that it succeeds against its immediate target, al-Ghazālī's skeptical argument. The latter argument may leave open the possibility that natural bodies, such as fire, are causes (McGinnis 2007). Because in his argument al-Ghazālī does not deny that fire is a cause of the burning; rather, he denies that the fire alone is the agent of burning. So, the fire is the agent based on God's will. Likewise, Stephen Riker says "The only type of causality Ghazālī denies is necessary causality, whereby the omnipotence of God is constrained by the natural order which God Himself created (Riker 1996, 322).

According to this interpretation, al-Ghazālī's view is that natural causes do not bring about their effects necessarily alone. He also considers divine choice and God's will in terms of phenomena and particular events. So, Averroes' argument from natural science does not succeed against al-Ghazālī's skeptical argument. Al-Ghazālī does not deny the relationship between cause and effect, which requires the denial of scientific knowledge. What al-Ghazālī denies is the connection of necessary between natural causes and their effects, so that their nature is independent and necessarily of a particular effect. Al-Ghazālī believes that God's will and providence is that every object must have a special effect, although God is able to destroy the will of a particular cause or not to affect the cause in certain circumstances. This is something that may happen in miracles, although it is traditionally impossible because it happens against the custom, and that is why the miracle is called breaking custom.

2- In his second argument, Averroes also says: "To deny causes altogether is to alienate from human nature that which properly belongs to it." (Averroes 1859, 112; my translation)

Responding to this argument is similar to that of his first argument. Al-Ghazālī does not deny the cause-and-effect relationship in general. He accepts the principle governing the relationship between objects, but with a description of the possibilities, of course, although not with a necessity of description. In fact, this criticism is based on the view that denies the cause-and- effect relationship at all, whereas what

al-Ghazālī denies is not the cause-and-effect relationship, it is the necessary relationship between cause and effect.

3- Al-Ghazālī has discredited his statement by denying the causality. Averroes cites al-Ghazālī's statement that "... the men of truth, who believe that the world came into being and know by logical necessity that which comes into being does not come into being by itself but needs a Maker." (Averroes 1952, IV, 133; my translation) This argument of Averroes refers to al-Ghazālī's argument regarding the creation of the world. The same phrase of al-Ghazālī cited by Averroes clearly shows that al-Ghazālī believed in the relationship between cause and effect.

Here, too, Averroes' argument is erroneous. What al-Ghazālī and other Ash'arite theologians deny is the necessity between natural causes and natural effects in God's creatures, not any relationship between natural causes and effects, nor the causal relationship between God and creatures, which is the subject of discussion in the argument of the creation of the world.

4- "It is obvious that objects have essences and attributes which determine the specific actions and by them the essences, names and definitions of objects differ from each other. Accordingly, if an object has no special act and special nature, it would not have its own name and definition, and the result will be that all things would be the same." (Averroes 1954, XVII)

This argument can also be dismissed, because al-Ghazālī does not deny that certain objects or specific phenomena have specific properties, but he believes that these properties and proportions between causes and effects are based on the divine custom, not based on the natural necessity of objects and phenomena, so with God's will and providence it is possible that they will occur contrary to the expectations of custom.

5- In his fifth argument, Averroes tries to refute three possible meanings of the theory of custom: (1) that it is the custom of God to act repeatedly in the same way; (2) that it is the custom of things to come into existence repeatedly in the same way; (3) that it is the custom of man to form a judgment that the coming of things into existence is repeatedly in the same way. In refuting the first meaning he says: "if custom is used in the sense of its being the custom of God, it would follow

that God had acquired the custom to act repeatedly in the same way by His having acted often in that same way, for custom is a habit which an agent acquires and from which a repetition of his act follows often.” But acquisition requires change in God, and would be contrary to the Qur’anic teachings: Thou shalt not find any change in the way of God; yea, thou shalt not find any variations in the way of God. (35: 40, 41). If they mean that it is a custom in existent things, then [they are wrong, for] custom applies only to an animate being, and if it is used regarding an inanimate object, its real meaning is nature, but this is not being denied (by philosophers), that is to say, [it is not at all denied by the philosophers] that existing things have nature which determines the [action of each] thing either necessarily [that is, always] or for the most part (Averroes 1954, XVII). Averroes argues against the third possible meaning of the theory of custom in the following way:

If the term custom means judging existing things, it is nothing but the act of reason, but philosophers do not deny such a habit. Therefore, the acts that is the result of habit must rightly be hypothetical. But if this were the case, then all existing things would be hypothetical and there would not be in them any wisdom from which it might be inferred the wisdom of the Creator. (ibid. XVII)

In the encounter with these problems, we can defend al-Ghazālī, that according to the divine custom, the universe and all its components are uniform, and that the uniformity of natural phenomena, of two events being symmetrical and simultaneous, is all due to divine providence and is not based on the necessity between them. This is what al-Ghazālī calls the divine custom. Therefore, God has the power and the will to do otherwise, just as in a miracle, God wills against the habits. Custom refers to the fact that events do not always occur, but often in a specific way. According to him, it is possible to break it with miracles. The theory of divine custom does not mean chaos and lawlessness in natural phenomena. From all these five problems set forth by Averroes on al-Ghazālī's views and the answers I posed, it is clear that Averroes' critiques do not have the sufficient strength and by no means can dismiss al-Ghazālī's doctrine.

8. Monotheism of Actions (*al-tawhid al-af'ali*), and the relation of the activity of God and the activity of creatures

As it has been shown in the discussions so far, the main motive of Ash'arites in general and al-Ghazālī in particular in denying the necessary relationship between cause and effect was a theological impetus, to defend Islamic teachings such as miracles, absolute power of God and monotheism. Al-Ghazālī's theory of divine custom seems to be more defensible, including the belief in the monotheism of actions (*al-tawhid al-af'ali*). The monotheism (unity) of actions means that the occurrence of all actions in the universe, such as creation, provision, contemplation, etc., originates from a single origin and their only true and independent effect is the Holy essence of God. No creature other than Him is independent in his actions. Questions may arise as to whether the activity of the creatures in the universe, such as plants, animals and humans, is incompatible with the activity of God. If we consider all actions as divine actions, does this not contradict human free will? How is the role of natural factors justified? For example, in the creation of a tree, the intervention of things such as sunlight, soil, oxygen, water, etc. is necessary, and without them, a tree will never exist. The answer is that in the world of matter and nature, God's actions are mediated by natural conditions and preconditions. In fact, God's will is that actions be mediated by natural factors. In other words, the activity must be divided into two types: longitudinal activity, and transverse activity. Transverse activity is like several people doing something without interdependence. For example, several architects build several separate buildings without interdependence. Longitudinal activity means that multiple agents do something dependently that is not possible without another; these agents are longitudinal activists. A clear example is the actions of human beings that are issued from our souls. Consider the act of writing, the activity of the soul, the arm, the hand, the finger, and the pen, all of which perform the act of writing with dependence. The act to write can be attributed to the soul, it can be attributed to man, and it can be attributed to the movement of the pen. Such is the activity of God and the

activity of creatures. That is, the activity of creatures is at the longitude of the activity of God and they have no independence and are dependent on God. Hence God addressed the Prophet of Islam in the Qur'an: And it was not you who launched when you launched, but it was Allah who launched (17: 8).

In other words, there are two types of activity: one is the independent agent and the other is the agent that he and his activity depend on the main agent to which the Qur'an explicitly refers: 'But you cannot will, unless Allah wills' (81: 29).

If He does not want to, you cannot do anything, but He wants to. If He does not want to, my hand will not move, but He wants me to move with my will. Ash'arite theologians do not pay attention to this point, and for this reason, they have said that there is no activity and causality among phenomena, and causality is limited only to God Almighty. In addition, the monotheism of actions is not in conflict with human authority. These two are not incompatible; rather, the activity of human beings is during the activity of the Supreme Being. God's will is that man should do his deeds of his own free will. In fact, the voluntary action deserves punishment and reward. Therefore, by attaching the principle of monotheism of actions to the theory of divine custom, it could be presented as a reasonable interpretation of the causal relationship between natural phenomena. Accordingly, the interpretation of Ash'arite and al-Ghazālī's causality does not seem unjustified.

Conclusion

Despite most philosophers, al-Ghazālī, from an ontological point of view, denies the necessary relationship between cause and effect, although he accepts the relationship between cause and effect. The reason for his opposition to causal necessity is that he believed that accepting causal necessity would conflict with two indisputable Islamic teachings, the miracle and the absolute power of God. Instead of considering causal relationship based on necessity, he proposed the theory of divine custom. As I have shown in this article, Averroes' critiques of al-Ghazālī are not strong enough to dispel al-Ghazālī's view. According to al-Ghazālī, from an

epistemological point of view, to repeat repeat the observation of the conjunction of causes and effects objectively and to make our minds accustomed to observing these symmetries, the mind dictates the uniformity of natural phenomena and the necessity between them. The theory of divine custom, while resolving the challenge posed by the miracle, also interprets the absolute power of God well. Nevertheless, it raises questions about the lawfulness of the universe and human free will, which defenders of al-Ghazālī's point of view can easily provide an answer to, by referring to the principle of monotheism of actions in order to provide an acceptable explanation of the relations of creatures with each other as well as the relationship of creatures with the Creator. However, how God influences and changes the natural world is beyond the scope of this article.

REFERENCES

Al-Ash'arī, Abū l-Ḥasan. 1929. *Maqālāt al-islāmiyīn wa-iḥtilāf al-muṣallīn* [The book of Islamic articles]. Edited by Hellmut Ritter. Istanbul: Maṭba'at al-dawla.

Al-Ghazālī, Mohammad. 2000. *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. Translated by M. Marmura. Provo (Utah): Brigham Young University Press.

_____. 2003. *Tahafut al-Falasifah*. Translated into Persian language by Ali Asghar Halabi. Tehran: Jami Publication.

Averroes (Ibn Rushd). 1859. *Kitāb al-kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla fī 'aqā'id al-milla* [Exposition of the sorts of arguments [found] in religious creeds]. Edited by M.J. Müller. München: G. Franz.

_____. 1952. *Tafsīr mā ba'd al-tabī'a* [The Interpretation of Metaphysics]. 4 vols. Edited by M. Bouyges. Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique.

_____. 1954. *Averroes' Tahâfut Al-Tahâfut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence). Translated by Simon van den Bergh. Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust.

Avicenna (Ibn Sina), Hussein ibn Abdullah. 1981. *Ibn Sina's Treatises*. Translated by Zia-ud-Din Dori. Tehran: Central Publication.

Bāqelānī, Abibakr Mohammed Ibn-Tayyeb. 1958. *Kitab Al-Bayan*. [Arabic]. Beirut: Eastern Library.

Fārābī, Abū Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad. *Al-Talighāt* [Arabic]. n.d. n.p. n.s. Manuscript number 1733 from Iran National Council Library.

McGinnis, Jon and David Reisman. 2007. *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources*. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Pickthall, M, M. 1994. *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*. Pakistan: Centre for Islamic Information. (First published 1938, Hyderabad-Deccan, India).

Riker, Stephen. 1996. "Al-Ghazali on Necessary Causality in *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*". *The Monist* 79(3): 315-324.

Taftāzānī, Sa'ad al-Dīn. 1992. *Sharh al-Maqassid*. [Arabic]. Five volumes. Qom: Razi Publication.

Tusi, Nasir al-Din and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. 1984. *Sharh al-esyarat*. [Arabic]. Qom: Ayatollah Najafi Library Publication.

Abbas Yazdani is an Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Tehran. Dr. Yazdani holds a PhD in Philosophy of Religion from Nottingham University, UK. His research focuses on religious studies, philosophy of religion, religious epistemology. He is author of *Rationality and Theism* (2020, University of Tehran Press), *Evidentialism and The Rationality of Religious Belief* (2011, Lambert), "An Internalist Model of Immediate Awareness of God From an Islamic Philosophy Perspective" (chapter in *Classic Issues in Islamic Philosophy and Theology Today*, edited by A.-T. Tymieniecka and N. Muhtaroglu, Springer, 2010). He has published more than 45 articles in national and international journals.

Address:

Dr. Abbas Yazdani
Associate Professor of Philosophy
Faculty of Theology
Mofatteh Avenue,
P.O. Box: 15766-4411
University of Tehran, Iran
Email: a.yazdani@ut.ac.ir