KIERKEGAARD AND THE ASH'ARITES ON REASON AND THEOLOGY

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Neither the Ash'arites nor Kierkegaard's systems of theology are anti-rational, for Kierkegaard regards the contradiction present in the object of faith as absolute rather than logical, suggesting thereby the existential dialectics for understanding this contradiction instead of resolving it. The Ash'arites also hold that one can understand the existence of God through absolute reason, or reason that is not commanded by *shar'* (religion), yet such understanding does not lead to any practical outcome. The anti-rationalism option is thus rejected. The other two options here are supra-rationalism and rationalism. Kierkegaard's theology is that of supra-rationalism while the theology of the Ash'arite is rationalist. Faith, Kierkegaard says, is not rational because it will be undecided by the abeyance and postponement of philosophical reasoning, by the approximation of historical evidence, and because of the lack of confidence in the Bible; however, it is not irrational because the contradiction is present in the understanding of faith rather than in existence. For the Ash'arite, however, faith can be made rational and justified through the command and guidance of *shar'* in order to find sound reasoning. Reason has no contribution in Kierkegaard's theology neither as a necessary nor as a sufficient condition. For the Ash'arite, nonetheless, reason is a necessary but not a sufficient condition and is in need of *shar'*. Reason, in Ash'arite theology, both fails to penetrate into all of the premises of the argument and falls short of binding man to accept its knowledge. It is *shar'* which comes into play in order to help reason both improve its objection and compensate the binding and obligation.[3]

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1. Kierkegaard on reason and theology

Kierkegaard is critical of producing faith through reasoning.

Philosophical and historical arguments for producing faith in God – as well as the arguments from the Holy Book – are rejected by Kierkegaard.

(1-1) The rejection of philosophical argument
Kierkegaard disagrees with any philosophical argument for producing faith in God for the following reasons:

a) The abeyance and postponement of argument
In the course of philosophical and theoretical investigations, some breaches and faults appear which may or may not be resolved, which are to be reexamined in the course of the entire argumentation or in its conclusion alone; how many possible irreparable objections may be caused by philosophical argument! In view of the fact that a sound assessment of such arguments are postponed to the future, and which is thus open to questioning, the pledge of faith in God would be recurrently postponed in abeyance. Indeed, there would not come a time for religious obligation and faith. The possibility of questioning in the theoretical argument does not allow for our absolute confidence and total faith in its conclusion. Principally, there will be no formative and determining argument (Climacus, 1992, p. 150).

b) The possibility of no arguments
Were philosophical arguments to prove religious doctrines, they should be arranged in some kind of perfect intellectual system in order to justify the entire world in one comprehensive intellectual system. Such a system will remain permanently incomplete for theoretical investigations never come to a perfect end, and because for a system to be a system it is necessary to be all-inclusive. Thus an imperfect system cannot be accepted as a system as such. Generally speaking, it makes no sense to speak of, let alone trust in, an imperfect system. Were one, for example, to offer an argument from design, one is required to consider all aspects of the issue in one comprehensive theory. The answer to the problem of evil is thus to be embraced as a completion for such an argument, and this makes the argument from design open to would-be considerations and thus imperfect (Climacus, 1992, p. 10).

c) Either faith in reason or in God
A philosopher, Kierkegaard says, may believe in Christianity either out of mere obedience or by means of intellectual research. When looked at from the former perspective, one is not worried about one's

intellectual research which proves to be a sort of misleading action and seduction in one's faith. When, however, looked at from the latter perspective, one is more worried about one's efforts and research than about one's faith (Pojman,1987,p.400).

d) Contradiction between intellectual reasoning and choice
An intellectual reasoning would not allow for a genuine decision to be made. He who has a decisive reason for something is not free to choose it, for such a choice is determined by reason. Therefore, those reasons offered for religious doctrines, if decisive, produce a mental state in man known as passive acceptance, which is a sort of compulsion. However, decision and choice are human activities that maintain freedom. If an individual believes in a particular faith in terms of decisive reason, then the honor of faith is with that reason rather than the individual himself; faith would then be the product of that reason rather than the choice of the man and we should praise the reason rather than the individual (Climacus, 1985, p. 83).

e) That reason remains neutral as to both theism and atheism
For a theist, Kierkegaard argues, no critical argument may have an influence on his faith positively or negatively. For an atheist, arguments in favor of religious doctrines are not useful either (Climacus, 1992, pp. 26-29). It is taken for granted, in Kierkegaard's view, that no theist has acquired belief in his faith through reason, nor has an atheist become faithless through reason (Climacus, 1992, p. 150).

f) Reason is peculiar to science rather than faith
Religion provides us with eternal happiness, the concern of which demands one's heartfelt interest and psychological attention. Scientific knowledge is peculiar to sciences which demand reason and objectivity. However, in regard to faith, one is expected to deal with it subjectively and spiritually, for it is a matter of subjectivity and spirituality (Climacus, 1992, pp. 14, 17, 32).

g) *Petitio principii*
Kierkegaard denies the arguments for God through His works arguing that such an argument is begging the question, i.e., the existence of God which is to be proven has already been presupposed for His works. Wisdom, good, and providence may not directly be observed in the things themselves, but it is rather the case that we project our ideals onto things. If there is wisdom, good and design in the things

themselves, they are no more than the projection of certain attributes that we have considered for the ideal God (Climacus, 1992, p. 42). Kierkegaard has thus concluded that proving God through His works is *petitio principii*.

h) The importance of the ardor of faith

Affection and sentiment are the most significant aspects of man's faith, that is to say, a man who is devoted to his faith is ready to risk everything for it. A truly faithful individual insists on his religious doctrines and is ready to sacrifice his life, money, and honor for the sake of them (Climacus, 1985, p. 54, 59, 61; Hannay, 1998, p. 224). This essential qualification of a faithful individual, Kierkegaard argues, is irreconcilable with theoretical or philosophical certainty. Wherever there is a decisive reason of certainty for believing, there is no room left for a faithful person to risk everything nor is there a motive for him to expend what is valuable to him for the sake of his faith. A man of intellectual scrutiny fails to see any amount of zeal for making decisions or any need in religious obligation. What he has in front of him is completely lucid and clear and what he does is a kind of bargaining which does not allow for any enthusiasm or ardor. The significance of the emotive side of religion requires there to be no intellectual or philosophical certainty (Pojman, 1987, p.410); Bretal, 1946, p. 229).

1-2) The rejection of historical reasoning

Historical reports are one type of reasoning. History proves that the "God-man" used to exist, came into being, and lived for a period of time. Kierkegaard holds that history fails to prove the authenticity of Christianity given the following reasons:

a) The estimation and approximation of history

The foremost and firmest certitude that can be derived from historical evidences is no more than mere estimation and approximation; needless to say there is always the possibility of error or mistake in something which is suggested with estimation (Evans, 2006, p. 160; Pojman,1987, p.411). Thus Kierkegaard thinks that we cannot believe in God in terms of approximate reasoning (Climacus, 1985, pp. 26, 106; Climacus, 1992, p. 502; Evans, 2006, p. 154).

Kierkegaard, in this regard, gives the example of a researcher in the history of Christianity who is interested in history establishing his faith upon the Historical Christ and the Bible. He has conducted significant and documented investigations with which he is satisfied;

however, about fourteen days before his death, he comes across a very imperative historical document that may create a flaw in his previous investigations. What is this old historian, Kierkegaard asks, to do with his faith? He is either to discontinue his faith during the last days of his life or live his last days vainly hoping that he will somehow resolve the problem. In both cases, he is not certain about his faith (Pojman, 1987, p.403).

b) That there is no symmetry between historical knowledge and eternal happiness
By his belief in religion, a man tries to establish his eternal happiness, feeling an intense anxiety over his contentment. He would feel disappointed if he realized that such a thing which demands his limitless interest is dependent upon a historical matter; this is because historical matters are too weak to be a basis for his eternal happiness. Man, who has an unlimited interest in his eternal happiness, is entitled to have a categorical answer as to such happiness; evidently, history fails to provide him with such an answer (Evans, 1983, p. 251; Afham, 1845, p. 439). Accordingly, Kierkegaard says, if we felt a limitless anxiety over something in terms of estimation and approximation, yet wish to maintain our ardor for it, that would be a ridiculous paradox and we would end in bigotry **.**

c) That historical evidences do not work either positively or negatively in favor of theism or atheism
Kierkegaard compares a man who lived all his life with Jesus to a man who was not able to meet Jesus even once. The former would not perforce convert to Christianity nor would the latter necessarily convert from it (Evans, 1983, pp. 252-253). There is no relation between historical knowledge and faith in God; i.e., such knowledge is neither necessary nor sufficient for producing faith. This is because man's faith in God depends on his ardor and decision rather than his level of historical knowledge. One may not convert into Christianity directly because of certain historical information. The cause that may produce faith certainly has nothing to do with historical evidence but rather with subjectivity that is will and ardor (Evans, 1983, p. 257; Evans, 2006, p. 159).

d) The impact of faith on historical evidence
It is not history, Kierkegaard argues, which leaves an impression that will produce faith. On the contrary, it is faith which effaces doubt in turn producing certainty and belief. Indeed, it requires man's commitment and faith in order for him to acknowledge any historical

event, for as explained earlier, the possibility of error makes it no more than a mere approximation. In its broad sense, therefore, believing in the historical event of Christianity necessitates man's faith. Furthermore, the historical event of Christianity has characteristics beyond human understanding and it is indeed a unique phenomenon. Thus, we may conclude that, not only in its broad sense, but also in its narrow sense, Christianity depends on man's faith (Evans, 2006, p. 266).

e) Either faith in God or in historical evidence
Were an individual's faith a product of historical evidences, religious faith would be replaced with them, because it is those evidences that had already changed his life. A man contemporary with Jesus, for example, believes in Jesus, but a Christian of the following generation who had only met the man can merely believe in the man who had allowed that Christian to know of Jesus rather than in Jesus himself. Kierkegaard has thus concluded that a student can only believe in his teacher, but not in another student (Evans, 1983, p. 215).

1-3) The rejection of reason from the Bible
In addition to the historical criticisms and inquiries about the life of Jesus, extensive scientific examinations of the New Testament of the Christians can be and indeed are being made. Is it possible to believe in God based on the authenticity of the Bible? There are a number of reasons why Kierkegaard holds a negative answer.

a) The impossibility of certitude in the authenticity of the Bible
Research on the authenticity of the Bible demands a decisive certainty in its perfection, in the confidence of its authors, and the guaranty of its divine revelation and inspiration. Due to its difficulties, it is quite a miraculous effort to base one's faith in God on the authenticity of the Bible; for were even a word of it open to doubt and suspicion, there would be no room for certainty and disputes would then begin.

b) That trust or distrust in the Bible has no influence on theism or atheism
Kierkegaard holds that the long and tiresome discussions among the historians and theologians on the Bible are futile. He mentions the so-called "theory of Evangel," namely, "attempts in order to find a reliable foundation from the Bible for man's faith in God" (Evans, 1983, p. 245). He argues that nothing may arise out of academic study to deal with man's faith which is tied up with man's decision and ardor. On the other hand, man's distrust in the Bible does not destroy his faith.

c) The role of faith in the acknowledgement of the Bible

Holy books, Kierkegaard argues, fail to provide us with some objective reason for Christianity to produce faith in God; on the contrary, it is faith in God that helps us with acceptance of the Bible. That is to say, if someone believed in God, one would consequently acknowledge the Bible; one would compensate for any amount of doubt left in it by his religious obligation. It is thus faith that sanctifies the Bible, not the Bible which brings about man's faith (Evans, 1983, p. 255).

1-4) The incarnation paradox

Jesus claims that he is both God and human, and this is an obvious paradox. Why? God has entered into existence and is thus personalized as a human being because having existence is peculiar to mankind. This matter is clearly an intellectual contradiction (Climacus, 1985, p. 37; Climacus, 1992, p. 504). The incarnation paradox is twofold. First, the Eternal has become temporal, appearing in the chronology of history, and second, a temporal being has become eternal, i.e., he became eternal through his relation with the temporal God. Therefore, the incarnation paradox has two aspects: 1) God in time and 2) Man in eternity (Evans, 1983, p. 226; Climacus, 1985, p. 46).

Is the incarnation paradox a logical or an absolute contradiction?

Due to this contradiction, in Kierkegaard's view, a man's faith cannot be rational. Is Kierkegaard's faith then anti-rational or supra-rational? The former suggests that faith is contrary to human reason, while the latter suggests that faith is beyond the capacity of reason. Both views have proponents from among the commentators of Kierkegaard. Some of them are of the view that Kierkegaard is anti-rational. They say that the contradiction Kierkegaard illustrates of his faith and his so-called "leap of faith" solution perfectly matches anti-rational fideism. Other commentators hold that Kierkegaard is not really an anti-rationalist and the apparent contradiction he mentions in regard to his faith is not a real and logical one, but rather an absolute contradiction. He considers this paradox beyond reason rather than contra-reason.

Evans is of the view that, despite the challenge of reason made by Kierkegaard's faith, we are permitted to draw the conclusion that this contradiction is not a logical one (Evans, 2006, p. 118). Whenever Kierkegaard applies the term "contradiction," he principally means inconsistency rather than contradiction itself. For example, he says that it was possible for the contemporary people of Jesus to believe in him; however, if the following generations had wanted to believe in

him by relying on historical reports, it would have led to a contradiction (Climacus, 1985, p. 101). Obviously, there is no logical contradiction here; it is no more than a mere inconsistency between a subjective matter (faith) and an objective reason (history) (Evans, 2006, p. 121). Somewhere else, Evans says that Kierkegaard's use of the term "contradiction" is similar to Hegel's. Hegel used to construe the opposition as a contradiction that could disappear in the synthesis state (Evans, 1983, p. 215). Hence by his "contradiction of faith," Kierkegaard does not intend any logical contradiction lest it makes his faith contrary to reason. Furthermore, Kierkegaard had thoroughly embraced the principles of formal logic. When authoring *Either/Or*, for example, Kierkegaard obviously acknowledges the principle of logical contradiction. The dialectic seen in *Either/Or* is in perfect accordance with formal logic. Therefore, we cannot regard him as a believer in logical contradiction (Evans, 1983, p. 218).

Kierkegaard labors against rationalistic reason yet offers rational justifications for the rejection of such reason (Amesbury, 2005, p. 13). Pojman argues that in his disagreement with the objectivity of the epistemology of faith, Kierkegaard has operated according to logic, giving his syllogistic reasons:

- In order to find the truth one must have an objective or subjective approach.
- An objective approach is inappropriate for acquiring a religious truth.
- Conclusion: In order to acquire a religious truth one must have a subjective approach.
  or
- Historical research is merely approximation and estimation.
- Approximation and estimation are not sufficient for religious faith.
- Conclusion: Historical research is not sufficient for religious faith.

The former argument is a *modus ponendo tollens*, but the latter argument is a conjunctive syllogism. Pojman goes on to ask if somebody can call Kierkegaard a mad poet, as Mackey did, despite Kierkegaard's use of intellectual reasoning here (Pojman, 1977, pp. 75-93). Evans also holds that in his rejection of Hegel, who had confined truth solely to scientific and intellectual truth, Kierkegaard makes use of the same argument used by Hegel himself (Hannay, 1998, p. 103).

Evans adds to Pojman's point that there are a set of reasons in Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments* for proving religious doctrines through faith:

a) A divine source for belief in Christianity

There are some issues one cannot expect human reason to invent. One such issue is the belief in Christianity. Human reason fails to invent or produce a belief in Christianity. A belief in Christianity thus requires its existence from faith.

b) Incarnation, a super-natural doctrine

It is clear that the doctrine of incarnation could not have arisen from the human mind; it could never occur to man that God has become human or that a human being has become God. Thus this doctrine has some kind of supernatural source; hence, the incarnation doctrine has its source from faith.

c) An evidence from the atheism of the atheists

Atheists and those without faith do not acknowledge the veracity of Christianity, particularly the theory of incarnation, arguing that the theory of the "God-man" is a self-contradictory doctrine. This atheism and denial is an evidence for the fact that Christianity is of a divine source rather than an intellectual invention. The belief in Christianity, then, and particularly incarnation, has its source in faith.

In addition to these three reasons, in his review of Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*, Evans provides us with further reasons, all of which are in the course of establishing religious doctrines through the way of faith (Evans, 2006, p. 135-140).

Evans agrees with those commentators who regard Kierkegaard's irrationalism as supra-rationalism. Kierkegaard considers the contradiction of faith as an absolute rather than a logical inconsistency. An absolute contradiction is not a relative one, it has no limit, and having no limit means that it is not a logical contradiction; no reason can fathom or efface it. Thus, an indecipherable mystery determines the limits of reason showing that there are many things that cannot be thought about or known. Kierkegaard considers the concept of the "God-man" to be such a contradiction – a contradiction that is the limit of our reason and our reason is not qualified to figure it out (Evans, 1983, pp. 217-224). The term "absolute contradiction" was used by Kierkegaard himself instead of logical, apparent, verbal, or relative contradiction (Climacus, 1985, p. 46). Kierkegaard does not say that the "God-man" is a contradiction; rather he says that the "God-man" is an absolute or unique contradiction (Evans, 2006, p. 122; Climacus, 1992, p. 182). Jesus is both perfectly a man and perfectly a God. All attempts to remove such contradiction imply that one comes to consider it objective despite the impossibility of its

objectivity. Were it considered objective, the belief in it would deteriorate into a foolish effort. Due to its failure to understand the absolute contradiction of the "God-Man," reason is tempted to announce it to be senseless and absurd, arrogantly debasing and abolishing it altogether (Evans, 1983, p. 238). Reason, however, is qualified to understand that it cannot understand things beyond its capacity; it is able to realize its limits. At this point, where reason realizes its limit, faith becomes accessible (Climacus, 1992, p. 568; Climacus, 1985, p. 104; Evans, 2006, pp. 125-129).

By such an account of Kierkegaard, Evans considers his fideism supra-rational, rather than anti-rational. What is unintelligible, in Kierkegaard's point of view, is different from what is meaningless; faith is unintelligible but not meaningless. In addition, reason may embrace the unintelligible but not the meaningless (Climacus, 1992, p. 504; Evans, 1998, p. 153).

Is the incarnation paradox a contradiction in understanding or in being?

Kierkegaard holds that, principally, one cannot say that there is a contradiction in the being of something; rather the contradiction may be in our understanding. The "God-man" paradox is two-fold – an eternal being becomes temporal (the being of Jesus), and a temporal being becomes eternal (that man in his relation with the Eternal God becomes an eternal being); this is a case of both eternity and temporality. Eternity and temporality are in the sphere of being rather than thought (Climacus, 1992, p. 568; Evans, 1983, pp. 209-211). As a result, although we may, as temporal beings, come to think of the eternal being as a contradiction, there is no contradiction in the position of being.

2. The Ash'arite on reason and theology

Reason is able to understand the existence of God and His attributes. It can, for example, reach the conclusion that God exists, is the author of universe, and is eternal and One through the argument of *Hudūth* (temporal creation). Reasoning from the qualifications of temporality and eternity, thus inferring the existence of God, can be sound and valid. It is possible for the natural reason, before the entrance of His attributes such as might, justice, and wisdom, in terms of the temporal creation of universe, to establish the existence of God (Ibn Fūrak, 1425, p. 30; Baghdadi, 1401, pp. 24-31; Shahristani, 1295, v. 1, p. 115). This knowledge and understanding is not faith.

2-1) The approach of non-commanded reason

Firstly, reason often suffers from neglect, errors, and forgetfulness.

The kind of reason which is possessed by the majority of people does not seek to know God; preoccupied by worldly transient matters, many of them overlook issues such as God and using their reason to know Him. Therefore, reason is in acute need of the warnings of *shar'* to guide us toward the issue of God (Juweini, 1422, p. 56; Juweini, 1416, p. 8).

Secondly, reason remains merely in the boundary of theoretical knowledge failing to engage in the sphere of practical obligation. It cannot make anything incumbent upon us (Sābiq Ṣiqilli, 2008, pp. 142-144; Juweini, 1422, pp. 184-204). Therefore, intellectual reasoning does not issue any judgments about the existence of God thus leaving us in limbo and suspension. Theoretical knowledge seemingly has no practical outcome. Reason cannot withdraw the acknowledged truth either heartily, verbally or practically from men (Ibn Fūrak, 1425, p. 31; Juweini, 1422, p. 57; Bāqillāni, 1407, p. 35).

One part of the issue is that the understanding of reason is filled with error and forgetfulness and we are not obliged to accept it. The other is that the essence of faith includes the nature of command and law of *shar'*. Faith and atheism are the obedience and disobedience of God and imply that there is a command of God that can be obeyed or disobeyed. When there is no command, it makes no sense for there to be obedience or disobedience, i.e., faith or atheism. Before beginning to practice command, the faith of a wise man may not be embraced as faith and accordingly he does not deserve a reward from God for his faith. And from another aspect, before prophets were sent, if a man went astray by doing wrong despite the existence of the signs of God in the universe, he should not be called an infidel or wrong-doer and thus does not deserve Hellfire for his faithlessness. Before prophets are sent and the religious call is made, faith is not an obligation nor is it a prohibition (Baghdādi, 1401, pp. 14-25; Bāqillāni, 1407, pp. 32-39), for where there is no command, it makes no sense to obey or disobey.

The result of these two different aspects, the non-obligatory of what is understood by reason from one side and that the command of faith is a *shar'i* one on the other, implies the difference between the approach of faith from that of non-commanded reason or absolute reason. The outcome, however, of intellectual understanding is that it is not anti-rational, thus reason gives permission to practice *shar'* and the obligation of people to believe in God. As a result, faith is not anti-rational, for theism is not fully absurd nor is it an unintelligible illusion to be fathomed merely by faith.

2-2) The entrance of *shar'* and the prophetic call

When prophets introduce *shar'*, the religious call begins. Prophets perform miracles to prove the authenticity of their call. Ash'ari says: "Miracles establish the authenticity of the prophetic call, and those who withdraw their belief from the faith deserve punishment. When a prophet performs a miracle the authenticity of his call is established and his people are obliged to acknowledge and obey him" (Ash'ari, n.d., p. 43; Baghdādi, 1401, p. 173). Does he mean that miracles logically and intellectually prove the authenticity of the prophetic call so that reason fails to deny it?

Ash'ari says: "Miracles are in no need of intellectual argument. It is our hearts that are addressed by miracles that acknowledge them. Miracles apply our hearts which are thus motivated by extraordinary practices to acknowledge the authenticity of prophets." Ash'ari (n.d., p. 32-52), Juweini (1416, pp. 273-280; 1422, pp. 225-226; 1407, p. 196), Nasafi (1990, v. 1, pp. 31-32), and Taftāzāni (n.d., p. 208) have all tried to explain the meaning of Ash'ari – the denotation of miracles that a prophet's call is authentic is not akin to the denotation of intellectual reasoning in relation to their meanings. Miracles, in our view, do not have perfect authority over reason thus leaving it to falter, due to the fact that some contemporaries of the prophets, who, despite their evident miracles, became faithless. This obviously shows that miracles indicate otherwise. They fulfill their denotations only for those who, by some internal sense, are certain that such an extraordinary action is beyond human will and is in fact the product of the absolute will and might of some supra-human being who can do what He wants. Miracles can only prepare the grounds for that internal certainty.

When *shar'* comes into play and a man has already become certain psychologically, man is invited to reflect on God. The first thing that man is commanded to think about subsequent to miracles is to see the signs of God in order to deduce the existence of God and have faith in Him (Ash'ari, n.d., p. 46). The acquisition of the consciousness or awareness of God does not remain in the frame of the religious call, rather it commands us to have faith in it and withdraw from its denial. *Shar'* admires those who pursue knowing God, considering them suitable for the bestowal of great rewards, but blames those who withdraw from it, considering them suitable for punishment. The second command given by *shar'* is faith and our profession that God exists (Ibn Fūrak, 1425, pp. 271, 250, 285, 292-293; Baghdādi, 1401, pp. 25, 31; Juweini, 1360, p. 120; Bāqillāni, 1407, p. 22). For the Ash'arite, the necessary course of the theoretical gnosis of God comes from *shar'*, and in view of such, they resort to various verses and traditions including:

"و ما كنا معذبين حتى نبعث رسولا"

"We do not punish until we send a prophet" (17: 15).

"فانظر الى آثار رحمة الله كيف يحى الأرض بعد موتها"

"So observe the effects of Allah's mercy: how He revives the earth after its death" (30: 50).

They believe that anybody addressed by the religious call and the command of *shar'* needs to acquire the theoretical knowledge of God as soon as he comes of age (Juweini, 1416, p. 25, Bāqillāni, 1407, p. 29).

Because all of us are subject to the command of acquiring knowledge of God, there is no room for following others in regard to faith (Ibn Fūrak, 1425, p. 5, 251-252; Ash'ari, 1400, p. 2; Baghdadi, 1401, pp. 255). The *shar'* law, in regard to those who have acquired their faith through mere imitation, says that because of their belief in the truth, they are not *mushrik* (polytheist) or *kafir* (infidel), because infidelity and truth are irreconcilable. However, they do not deserve to be called believers. We can only ask for their forgiveness from God because they are not *mushriks* or *kafirs* (Baghdadi, 1401, pp. 255, 248-249). Accordingly, we have no term to describe "the faithful imitator," for such a person has violated the first necessary commandment of knowing God.

2-3) The approach of commanded reason

Abdurrahmān Badawi has explained that the Ash'arite argument for the existence of God differs drastically from that of the Mu'tazalite. There is not a vestige of Hellenic thought, intellectual line of reasoning, or natural theology in Ash'arite belief. On the contrary, it is non-abstract and dependent on common sense. In addition to this, one may see many phrases of the Qur'an and traditions from their premises to their conclusions (Badawi, 1374, pp. 571-581). Despite his elucidation, Badawi does not explain why this is so.

The commanded confirmer and awakening reason is with *shar'*, borrowing its course of reasoning from *shar'*. Hence, verses of the Qur'an from their premises to their conclusions, as well as their arguments, are non-philosophical and non-abstract (Ash'ari, n.d., pp. 33-38; Bāqillāni, 1407, pp. 33-37). Ash'ari has explained that the course of this guidance and the awakening of reason is to find reasoning by *shar'*. Having performed a miracle, and thus the authenticity of his call established, a prophet invites people to ponder the temporal creation of man and the world in order to discover the created nature of themselves and the world, thus offering reasons for the existence of the author of things. A report from the Prophet

suggests that this world, including all its parts, had they not existed in the first place, would have come into being. Therefore, they have an author and maker who has existed from eternity and did not need to come into being. As a result, in Ash'ari's point of view, the argument of the temporal creation of man and the world, which proves that there is a creator, is regarded by *shar'* as an effort of reason (Ash'ari, n.d., pp. 51-62, 87-88). It is at this point that Ash'ari raises a severe criticism of the way of the philosophers and Qadarites (freewillers and libertarians), supposedly considering them to be perverted and innovators. They prove the existence of God through substances and their accidents; they also necessitate the recognition of many things that are too difficult to be known thus invalidating the argument for the existence of God. Having been provided with substances and accidents, and given that accidents cannot stand on their own by themselves, substances are not free from accidents, and that infinite regress is impossible for accidents and the like, philosophers aren't in any need of prophets and can attain knowledge by their own natural reason. Such an approach will surely annul *shar'*. Ash'ari goes on to say that reports from prophets have clearer, simpler, and more evident suggestions that there is a God and so therefore none of those complicated unreachable premises are needed. This is why our pious preceding masters were strongly determined to collect the traditions of the Holy Prophet. They used to make enormous efforts to acquire even a few words from the Holy Prophet. We believe that the traditions of the Holy Prophet show us the way to knowing God, and this is why God Almighty told the Holy Prophet, "Now you have fulfilled your mission," or the Prophet himself said: "I am leaving you while I am certain that you have already acquired knowledge as you can distinguish day from night." If we were to know the existence of God through certain philosophical reasons that necessitate many issues to be known, neither God nor the Holy Prophet could be sure about the acquisition of such knowledge (Ash'ari, n.d., pp. 51-61).

2-4) The argument from the temporal creation of the world (*Hudūth*)

As mentioned earlier, the Ash'arite hold that *shar'* teaches us the way of establishing the author of the world through the temporal creation of the world, thus commanded reason must pursue ways which prove the existence of the creator.

a) The temporal creation of man and his states

When considering the process of his creation, man realizes that he has passed through different phases, beginning from the state of embryo to adulthood, which constantly changes from one state to another. It is

evident that he could not create these things himself. As a result, he would discover that the Almighty Omniscient Creator created him (Ash'ari, 1408, pp. 18-19; Shahristāni, 1295, v. 1, pp. 120-122).

b) The creation of substances and their accidents
This world is composed of substances and accidents. Substances are not free from accidents. The latter are created, hence the former are also created, and, as a result, the whole world is created. Therefore, there must be a creator called God who is eternal. Bāqillāni and Juweini have both studied this argument in detail, from its premises to its conclusion (Ash'ari, n.d., p. 33; Ibn Fūrak, 1425, pp. 36-37; Bāqillāni, 1407, p. 29; Bāqillāni, n.d., p. 34; Juweini, 1416, pp. 39-51; Juweini, 1407, pp. 90-91; Juweini, 1360, pp. 32-150; Juweini, 1422, pp. 127-129).

c) That each substance has its peculiar accidents is something created
Each substance has its peculiar accidents and to assign some accidents to a substance is something created which is in need of a being to create it and to assign those accidents to it; such a being is God (Bāqillāni, pp. 45).

d) That some things are created before some other things itself is temporally created
Some things were created prior to the creation of other things which may come into being afterwards. Such priority and posteriority are themselves temporally created and in need of a being to create them, making some of them prior and others posterior. Such a being is God (Bāqillāni, 1407, p. 21; Bāqillāni, n.d., p. 45; Juweini, 1360, p. 363).

All these reasons are presented by the Ash'arites under the heading of the temporal creation of the world and the argument from creation (Ash'ari, n.d., p. 25; Baghdādi, 1401, pp. 14, 33-72). The approach of commanded reason is no more than one reason for the establishment of the existence of God from the creation of the world. *Shar'* itself shows us how to accomplish this argument. It can be said that the approach and the method of the argument comes from *shar'* but the achievements are provided by reason.

3. Comparison and assessment
3-1) The rejection of the anti-rationalism of Kierkegaard and the Ash'arites
Faith, in the analysis of Kierkegaard and the Ash'arites, is not anti-rational. Kierkegaard holds that the contradiction within the object of

faith can at best be absolute, not logical, suggesting the existential dialectic for understanding faith rather than removing it. The Ash'arite also hold that the absolute or non-commanded reason is able to understand the existence of God, though such understanding does not have certain practical outcomes.

3-2) Kierkegaard's supra-rationalism and the Ash'arites' rationalism

Due to the abeyance and postponement of philosophical reasons, and the estimation and approximation of historical evidences and the lack of authenticity of the Bible, Kierkegaard's faith is not rational, but because of its absolute contradiction, it is supra-rational. The Ash'arite faith, however, can be made logical and justified through the command and guidance of *shar'*, thus it can be made rational. It can therefore be concluded that rationality in Kierkegaard's faith is neither possible nor desirable, however, in the Ash'arites, it is both possible and commanded.

3-3) Theology and reason in Kierkegaard and the Ash'arites

Reason plays no part in Kierkegaard's theology, neither as *sine qua non* nor as a sufficient condition. In Ash'arite theology, however, it is a *sine qua non* but is not sufficient for it necessitates *shar'*. Kierkegaard holds that reason does not stand against human existential issues that require existential relations, nor does it contradict spiritual issues such as Christology. He considers them beyond reason, leaving them with the existential understanding that can be practical through existential dialectic. In its encounter with the absolute contradiction of the "God-man," Kierkegaard's reason recognizes its boundaries, cuts its coat according to its cloth, and does not stand against his faith as a logical paradox. However, reason for the Ash'arite has meaning in theology, though one is not obliged to acknowledge it. Reason is able to understand the existence of God, nonetheless it is not qualified to give us assent from one side, and the nature of theological issues, the Ash'arites say, is of the command category and verdict, from another side. Surely, that which is unable to provide assent cannot work for something whose essence is command and verdict. As a result, the Ash'arite would conclude that despite its meaning in theology, reason still requires *shar'* which in its turn makes up for the deficiency of our reason. *Shar'* plays the role of a guide for reason in regard to the premises and compensates the command and verdict.

Therefore, Kierkegaard's view differs from the Ash'arites in its intellectual theology. Kierkegaard argues that had reason come into play in the scene of theology, it could eliminate the apparent

contradiction therein; it will change the subject matter of theology thus it will no longer be unintelligible. Hence reason denies its meaning in theology arguing for a supra-rational or revealed theology. The Ash'arites, nonetheless, do agree with the intellectual theology regarding the positive role of reason for theology, yet they say that the inadequacies of our reason both in creation and legislation are to be made up for by traditional theology.

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