

# Ethical Objections to Evolution in Contemporary Muslim Thought

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## Abstract

Muslim creationists often argue that the theory of evolution is inherently unethical, claiming that concepts such as natural selection, survival of the fittest, and differential reproductive success promote behaviors like selfishness, violence, and sexual promiscuity. This article explores the distinctions made by classical Islamic theologians between God's actions and humanity's actions and their potential to address ethical objections to evolution.

The question is examined with reference to two theological traditions: the Ash`ari and the Salafi. The first one distinguishes between God's creation of actions and humanity's acquisition (*kasab*) of actions. According to this approach, ethical valuation is understood to be an attribute of human volitional action. The second approach, followed by Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn Abu al-'Izz, and others of the so-called Salafi tradition, distinguishes between God's existential (*kawni*) will and legislative (*shar`i*) will. According to it, ethical valuation is restricted to the domain of what God legislates for His volitional creatures.

Although these approaches differ in how they contextualize ethical behavior, both of them place ethical valuation strictly within the context of human volitional action. As a consequence, God's actions in creation (and therefore what is observed in nature) can

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neither be taken as a pattern for determining ethical norms nor judged according to the ethical norms appropriate for human beings. The paper concludes that by making these distinctions, classical Islamic theology has the potential to effectively counter ethical objections to evolutionary theory.

## Introduction

The theory of evolution is a scientific theory that purports to explain natural phenomena. Like relativity, plate tectonics, gravitation, and the atomic theory of matter, it is purely descriptive. Specifically, it seeks to describe how living populations behave over time and how the diversity of life came about. Scientists working in the field of evolutionary biology freely concede the theory's purely descriptive nature and its inability to tackle moral questions. Richard Dawkins, in his *The Selfish Gene*, states quite clearly:

I am not advocating a morality based on evolution. I am saying how things have evolved. I am not saying how we humans morally ought to behave. I stress this, because I know I am in danger of being misunderstood by those people, all too numerous, who cannot distinguish a statement of belief in what is the case from an advocacy of what ought to be the case.<sup>1</sup>

Dawkins is stating the classic *is-ought* problem by distinguishing between what *is* the case and what *ought* to be the case.<sup>2</sup> Moral systems are prescriptive and not descriptive. Unlike scientific theories that purport to describe what is actually going on in the world, moral values instruct people as to what they should be doing in it. In other words, making an observation about what is going on in the natural world is not the same as saying how people ought to live in that world. In short, since evolution is a descriptive theory about the natural world, it can neither be used as a standard for ethical behavior nor be judged on the basis of ethical standards.

For example, evolutionary theory addresses how differential reproductive success is important to certain genes' survival, as well as to adaptive evolution, and explains what this means for the origin and development of species. Simply put, some organisms within a population contribute more offspring than do other organisms. Organisms possessing certain traits will reproduce more successfully than those who do not possess those traits, thereby perpetuating those traits within the population at the expense of other traits.<sup>3</sup> The principle of differential reproductive success is also commonly referred to as "natural selection."<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, reproductive success is a critical factor in determining evolutionary outcomes. This does not mean, however, that evolutionary theory draws conclusions about the morality or immorality of the decisions people make about their reproductive behavior (e.g., birth control, homosexuality, or abortion). Likewise, evolutionary theory tells us that extinctions have been going on throughout the history of life and are a necessary aspect of evolution. This does not, however, place a positive or negative moral value on conservation efforts or supply us with an answer to the ethical question of whether or not we, as human beings, have the right – deliberately or by inadvertent conduct – to drive certain other species into extinction.

Ethical considerations are certainly of paramount importance when dealing with the application of science and when confronted with difficult questions of how humanity should use its acquired scientific knowledge. For instance, this knowledge can enable us to clone a human being. This knowledge itself is morally neutral; it cannot tell us whether or not it is morally right for us to clone a human being. That is undoubtedly a separate ethical question.

Ethical considerations are also extremely important to questions related to the professional conduct of scientists. But defining what constitutes ethical and unethical conduct is something quite distinct from the factual conclusions arrived at by the pursuit of scientific enquiry. As Stephen Gould points out, “while scientists must operate with ethical principles, some [of which are] specific to their practice, the validity of these principles can never be inferred from the factual discoveries of science.”<sup>25</sup>

Of course there is nothing to stop some people from believing that what *is* the case should be the basis for determining what *ought* to be the case. But this is a value judgment and not a scientific proposition. This means that even though the theory of evolution, as a purely scientific theory, does not assert any moral claims or ethical system, the question remains as to whether, from an Islamic perspective, moral values and ethical norms *should* be drawn from nature, so that if Muslims were to accept biological evolution as true, certain moral or ethical consequences would be implicit in their doing so.

Indeed, what disturbs some Muslim thinkers the most about evolutionary theory is what they perceive as the troubling moral values it seems to advance. They see biological evolution as embodying the values of might makes right, selfishness, and an overemphasis on material success and sexual prowess. Ruqaiyyah Maqsood writes that “the theory of evolution is repugnant to believers because it is totally in opposition to the good quali-

ties required by God of His servants. It is a theory of progress that sets a premium on sex, greed, selfishness and violence.”<sup>6</sup> K. Nadvi laments that Darwin’s theory offers “a peaceful life for the strong at the expense of the weak.”<sup>7</sup>

It is, of course, easy to refute such claims by simply pointing out that these ideas derive from an erroneous, or at best a highly oversimplified, understanding of evolutionary theory. For instance, the phrase “survival of the fittest” is misleading. Mere survival is not important, for what actually matters is how many healthy offspring an organism leaves behind. Reproductive success, not brute survival, is the real issue. In evolutionary theory, “fitness” is only relevant if we are speaking about “reproductive fitness.” “Survival” matters only to the extent that it is conducive to increasing the number of equally successful descendants.<sup>8</sup> Also, a number of altruistic behaviors have been demonstrated to increase an organism’s reproductive success.<sup>9</sup>

There is, however, a far more fundamental question at work here: Can moral values, for a Muslim, be derived from nature or, at least, be regarded by Islam as being enshrined in the workings of the natural world? An answer to this question can be gleaned from the fact that classical Islamic thinkers distinguished between God’s actions and the accountability that human beings have for the actions they perform out of their own free will. What goes on in nature is due to God’s will and therefore a consequence of His direct action. According to all orthodox schools of Islamic theology, God creates every action that takes place. This includes those events that take place in creation that conform to the natural laws that can be observed with regularity, the miraculous events that run contrary to those laws, and even the outward manifestation of those actions that God permits His creatures to perform out of their own volition.<sup>10</sup> This last point is the doctrine that God creates our actions, which was an early point of contention between Muslim orthodoxy and the Mu`tazili school.

From an Islamic standpoint, scientific explanations of what goes on in the natural world can be seen as an attempt to discern causative patterns in God’s actions as they are observed in nature. Indeed, al-Ghazali asserts that there are cause-and-effect relationships that we must, as observers, deem to be “certain” (*qat`i*), these being “causes whose effects are connected with them with absolute certainty, insofar that it is Allah’s decree and wish that the consistency between them never varies.”<sup>11</sup> When the action in question is carried out by a human being of his/her own free will, however, another dimension has to be considered: the person’s accountability as regards that

particular action. This, as we shall see, is the domain of human moral and ethical considerations in Islam.

Scholars of the orthodox theological schools differ in how they understand this distinction. One approach is to distinguish between how a volitional human action relates to God as the Creator of the action and to the human agent who chooses to carry out the action. Known as the doctrine of acquisition, Ash`ari scholars have developed this approach in great detail. The other approach is to draw a distinction regarding how God relates to what takes place in His creation – between His willing some action to exist on the one hand and His verbally commanding human agents to carry out the action on the other. Salafi scholars have developed this approach to great length.

### **The First Distinction: Between the Creation and the Acquisition of an Action**

Ash`ari and Maturidi scholars posit a distinction between God's creation of all things (through His direct action) and the person's acquisition of accountability for those actions attributed to his/her free will.<sup>12</sup> Known in Islamic theology as the doctrine of acquisition, it is a hallmark of Ash`ari thought. It is also mentioned by al-Tahawi, who writes it in his short treatise on theology: "The actions of the servants are God's creation and an acquisition of the servants."<sup>13</sup> Through this doctrine, Ash`ari thinkers seek to reconcile the idea of God's creation of all things, including all human actions, with the idea of human free will. Though God creates a person's actions, the person acquires those actions by freely choosing to carry them out. Maturidi scholars go further and call this the "power of acquisition."<sup>14</sup>

A person's accountability for any action is based solely on his/her acquisition of it.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, the person is held accountable only for what he/she acquires. Ash`ari theologians cite Qur'an 2:286 in support of this: "God holds no soul accountable except to the extent of its abilities. For it, it has what it acquires, and against it, it has what it acquires." This means that any action acquires moral significance only if it is acquired by a morally accountable agent. In other words, although God creates actions that can be described as evil with respect to the people who carry them out, evil can only be attributed to the one who acquires it. Ash`ari scholars define evil as what God has forbidden, and therefore immorality is only possible when a morally accountable being acquires an action in a way that constitutes disobedience to God.<sup>16</sup>

On this basis, people cannot take what God does in creation as a model for their own moral decisions, since human beings are not comparable to Him: “He is the doer of what He pleases” (85:16) and “He is not questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned” (21:23). Commenting on this last verse, al-Baqillani says:

It means that they will be asked about what they acquire and He will not be asked about what He creates, because there is no one above Him to command Him and there is no requirement upon Him in what He creates. Rather, the command and the requirements are upon them in what they acquire.<sup>17</sup>

God’s actions in nature, consequently, can never fall within the domain of moral discourse. They are neither subject to ethical considerations nor can such considerations be drawn from them, since the domain of moral and ethical considerations is that of human acquisition, of which natural phenomena, which are not attributable to human acquisition in any way, do not form a part.

### **The Second Distinction: Between the Existential and the Legislative Dimensions of an Action**

Some scholars, especially those who follow a Salafi approach to theology,<sup>18</sup> focus on the issue of God’s actions and human accountability by making a distinction between the “existential” and the “legislative.” They do so with respect to God’s decree, will, and command. Moral values and ethical considerations are relevant only to the legislative and not to the existential.<sup>19</sup> Ibn Abu al-’Izz sums this idea quite nicely when he says:

When he [al-Tahawi] says: “Everything takes place by God’s wish, His knowledge, His decree, and His ordinance” he means by this His existential and not His legislative decree, for indeed the decree might be existential or legislative. The same is the case for His will, command, permission, prescription, ruling, prohibition, words, and so forth.<sup>20</sup>

God’s existential decree is often illustrated by “So he decreed them to be seven heavens in two days” (41:12), which can be contrasted with His legislative decree in “And your Lord decreed that you should worship none but Him (17:23). The creation of the heavens and Earth came about by God decreeing that they would come into existence. This is an existential decree. Human beings are not morally accountable for the universe coming into

existence, since it did not come about as a result of human action. God also decreed that humanity should worship Him alone. This, however, is a legislative decree that people can choose to obey or disobey. Consequently, they are morally accountable for their decision.

In the same way, God's existential will and legislative will are contrasted. Ibn Abu al-'Izz writes:

The later scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah state that "will" in the Qur'an and Sunnah are of two kinds: (first) the ordained, existential, creative will, and (second) the religious, commanding, legislative will. It is the legislative will that relates to what God loves and is pleased with.<sup>21</sup>

He then cites the following verses to illustrate the distinction. For God's existential will, he cites: "And whomever God wills to guide, He opens his breast to Islam, and whomever He wills to lead astray, He makes his breast tight and restricted, as though he were climbing into the sky" (6:125). For God's legislative will, he cites: "God wills to make matters clear to you and to guide you to the good practices of those before you and forgive you. And God is knowing and wise" (4:26).

On this basis, Ibn Abu al-'Izz asserts: "God wills sin to exist by His ordinance, but He does not love it nor is He pleased with it, nor does He command it. By contrast, He hates, loathes, and detests it."<sup>22</sup>

Again, with respect to God's command, he contrasts the existential command, which has no implications for human morality and ethics, with the legislative command.<sup>23</sup> God's existential command can be seen in "His command, if He wills something, is but to say 'Be!' and it is" (36:82), whereas His legislative command is: "Indeed, God commands justice, good conduct, and generosity towards relatives and forbids licentiousness, immorality, and injustice. He admonishes you that perhaps you will take heed" (16:90). According to this approach, just like with the Ash'ari one, what God does in creation cannot be taken as a model for human moral decisions. With respect to all existential matters, "He is the doer of what He pleases" and "He is not questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned." Ibn Taymiyah points out that these verses do not negate that God acts out of wisdom and justice.<sup>24</sup>

At the same time, human beings are not always in a position to understand the underlying wisdom and justice behind God's actions. Ibn al-Qayyim writes:

Comparing God's actions to the actions of His servants is one of the falsest of analogies. Likewise is comparing His wisdom to theirs or His attributes to theirs. It is acknowledged that the Lord knows that His servants will fall into unbelief, injustice, and wrongdoing and that He is capable of either not creating them or of creating them as one heart upon what He loves and is pleased with, or of preventing them from transgressing against one another. However, His infinite wisdom keeps Him from doing so and requires that He creates them the way they are.<sup>25</sup>

Ibn al-Qayyim is arguing here that the existence of unbelief, injustice, and iniquity in the world does not mean that God commands people to behave in such ways. Since these things take place in the world God must want them to exist, and He alone knows the wisdom behind their existence. But God neither commands people to disbelieve in Him nor to sin, nor is He pleased with them if they do so. The existence of such realities in God's creation does not imply that sin and iniquity are morally sanctioned.

### **An Illustrative Case: The Flood**

As we have seen, Ash`ari and Salafi theologians approach the issues of human action, free will, and accountability in very different ways. And yet a common thread links these two approaches: a clear distinction between the actions that God carries out in His creation and those actions for which human beings are morally accountable. As a consequence of this distinction, moral values and ethical norms in Islam are to be derived from religious teachings and not from events in the natural world. Muslims are not commanded to take natural phenomena as an example for moral conduct; rather, they are taught what is right and wrong by God and His Messenger and are further taught to take the Messenger as their example: "Indeed for you, in God's Messenger, is an excellent example to be followed for anyone whose hope is in God and the Last Day and who remembers God often" (33:21).

The Qur'anic account of the Flood provides an illustration of how the implications of the Ash`ari doctrine of acquisition and the Salafi distinction between God's existential and legislative decrees can be applied to ethical concerns. In the Qur'an, it is clear that God brought about the Flood in response to Noah's supplication to punish a community of unbelievers.<sup>26</sup> Regardless of its actual extent,<sup>27</sup> there can no question that the Qur'an depicts a formidable event that devastated the environment it affected – and not just for the recalcitrant human beings for whom it was intended.



Would it be right for a Muslim jurist or scholar of ethics to derive from the Flood the lesson that it is alright for people to lay waste to the environment in order to achieve a particular objective? Indeed not. The Flood, like any natural disaster, was not under the charge of human discretion. The Qur'an makes it clear that God caused it to happen. According to the doctrine of acquisition, human beings could not be held accountable for the Flood's destruction of the environment, since the acquisition of accountability is only for the actions that human beings perform out of their own free will.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, Muslims are not called upon to emulate such environmental destruction while pursuing their own goals, since the Flood was a matter of God's existential decree and will, and not of His legislative decree and will. In other words, the people of that time were not commanded to cause it to happen.

Still, are there any moral lessons that might be derived from this event? There might be. One of them can be found in what God commanded Noah, a legally and morally accountable human being, to do when the event occurred: to take on board "*of every set of mates a pair*" (11:40). Here is a direct command from God to one of His human creatures to salvage other living things for the future. This is something from which Muslim scholars of law or ethics may very well wish to derive moral teachings, such as the idea that human beings are morally liable to do what they can to preserve the natural environment for future generations, thereby providing an ethical basis in Islam for conservation efforts.

Essentially, this story contains two actions: (1) The Flood itself, an act of God that no human being was commanded to bring about. Therefore, it is not something people are to emulate in their own behavior, nor is it something from which they are to derive their standards of moral conduct, and (2) Noah's action of rescuing living things. God commanded one of His creatures to perform this action out of his own free will. Therefore, it is something from which Muslim scholars may derive moral and ethical teachings.

## **Implications of Both Approaches for Addressing Ethical Objections to Evolution**

From this vantage point, we can see the fallacy of the argument that the ideas advanced by evolutionary theory are incompatible with Islam's moral values and ethical standards. For instance, the claim that this theory encourages sexual immorality is due to the objector's focus on the evolutionary princi-

ple that differential reproductive success causes certain genetic and physical characteristics to become more prevalent in a living population. They extrapolate from this an ethical position that places a premium on sexual prowess and, consequently, interpret the theory of evolution as endorsing unbridled promiscuity. The fallacy in this, from the perspective of the ethico-theological approaches we have examined, is that God, as opposed to living agents, determines differential reproductive success. The Qur'an attributes this phenomenon entirely to God's will and power:

To God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the Earth. He creates what He wishes. He bestows females upon whom he wishes and bestows males upon whom He wishes. Or he gives them both males and females. And He renders whom He wishes childless. Indeed He is knowing and capable. (42:49-50)

In this verse, the Qur'an attributes reproductive success to God's decree and places it under His control. Moreover, it shows that all individuals are not equally successful in this matter. Some people have only female progeny, and others will have only male progeny. Some have both, while others leave no descendants at all. This verse follows immediately after another verse discussing God's mercy and the misfortunes that befall humanity.<sup>29</sup> Al-Nasafi points out the significance of this context:

Since God mentions a person's experiencing mercy and being afflicted with its opposite, He follows this up by mentioning that His is the dominion and that He distributes blessings and hardship as He wills. And He bestows upon His servants progeny as He wishes. To some He gives only females, to some only males, to some he gives children of both sexes, and some He makes childless.<sup>30</sup>

Al-Nasafi places reproductive success squarely in the domain of God's blessings and outside of human control. If Muslims believe that reproductive success is part of God's decree, it follows that they should have no reason to object to a scientific theory in which differential reproductive success plays a crucial role in the history of life. Moreover, accepting such an idea would not mean endorsing sexual promiscuity as a moral norm. Instead, moral norms and ethical teachings regarding sexuality and fertility would be sought in the commands and prohibitions enshrined in the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. For instance, Muhammad commanded his followers to get married and have many offspring.<sup>31</sup> Since this is a command, it has moral implications and indeed has provided some contemporary Muslim

scholars with a basis for advocating an ethical position that discourages birth control.<sup>32</sup> But the same textual basis also enshrines a moral imperative for marriage. Furthermore, it has nothing to do with the reproductive outcomes of the marital union, which ultimately are understood by orthodox Muslims to be determined by God alone.

## Conclusion

Evolutionary theory, as a descriptive theory, seeks to explain certain aspects of what takes place in the natural world, particularly the dynamics of change within populations of living things over time. From a Muslim perspective, this means that it seeks to describe patterns in God's actions, specifically patterns relating to the development of life on Earth. A Muslim who accepts this theory would attribute the mechanisms and patterns in nature described by the theory to God's actions in nature. There is no human acquisition of those actions, and according to the doctrine of acquisition the ethical dimension is restricted only to what human beings acquire.

Likewise, the distinction made by Salafi scholars between God's existential and legislative decrees would place the large-scale progression of natural history within the domain of the existential and not the legislative. The evolution of life over the course of geological time is certainly not something human beings are commanded by God to bring about. There are, consequently, no ethical implications for them since the ethical dimension is restricted to God's legislative decree, will, and command.

According to both approaches, then, there is no basis for deriving moral norms or ethical standards from what evolutionary theory or, for that matter, any other scientific theory says about the development of life on Earth. Therefore, the ethical objections being advanced by Muslim creationists against the Muslims' acceptance of evolution are invalid from the standpoint of classical Islamic theology.

## Endnotes

1. Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), 2-3.
2. David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature* (London: John Noon, 1739), 469. Hume identifies this problem when he complains: "In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary ways of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when all of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is, and

is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought, or an ought not. This change is imperceptible; but is however, of the last consequence. For as this ought, or ought not, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it shou'd be observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time that a reason should be given; for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it."

3. Mark Ridley, *Evolution*, 3d ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 6.
4. Monroe W. Strickberger, *Evolution*, 3d ed. (Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2000), 648. He defines natural selection as: "Differential reproduction or survival of replicating organisms caused by agencies that are not directed by humans." When human beings cause differential reproductive success, it is called artificial selection.
5. Stephen Jay Gould, *Rock of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life* (London: Vintage, 1999), 5.
6. Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood, *The Sign of the Gnat: A Study of the Mysteries of Life, Evolution and Life after Death* (Delhi: Adam Publishers & Distributers, 2000), 46.
7. K. S. Nadvi, *Darwinism on Trial* (Moben, South Africa: Islamic Medical Association of South Africa, 1986), 118.
8. Ridley, *Evolution*, 684 defines fitness as: "The average number of offspring produced by individuals with a certain genotype, relative to the number produced by individuals with other genotypes."
9. There are different types of altruistic behavior. See Douglas J. Futuyma, *Evolutionary Biology*, 3d ed. (Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates, 1998), 594-95 and Strickberger, *Evolution*, 499. One type is referred to as reciprocal altruism, for which the following example is often cited: the sharing of blood among vampire bats. Not all bats succeed in finding a meal during their nightly excursions. These bats, however, form partnerships. When they return to their cave, successful bats often share their gains with their unsuccessful partners by regurgitating some blood into their mouths. However, if a bat is found to cheat by accepting blood when he/she is starving but not donating to others when he/she is successful in finding a meal, that bat will be abandoned.

Another type of apparently altruistic behavior has to do with a concept known as inclusive fitness, that an organism's reproductive fitness has two components: direct fitness and indirect fitness. Direct fitness is the measure of how successful an organism is at producing viable descendents that pass on its genes. Indirect fitness is how successful it is in helping other closely related individuals, like siblings – which share many of its genes – pass those shared genes on to the next generation.

To understand this, we must keep in mind that an animal's full siblings share one-half of its own genes. An animal's cousins share one-eighth of its genes. Therefore, any behavior that an animal exhibits that helps its close relatives

in their reproductive success indirectly helps perpetuate its own genes. This means that natural selection can often favor behaviors where an animal acts to the detriment of its own reproduction in favor of that of its relatives. To illustrate this point, J. B. S. Haldane remarked that he would gladly lay down his life if by doing so he saved two siblings or eight cousins.

10. Abd al-Malik al-Juwayni, *Kitab al-Irshad*, ed. Muhammad Yusuf Musa and Ali Abd al-Mun'im Abd al-Hamid, 3d printing (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanji, 2002), 187; Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Ghaznawi, *Usul al-Din* (Beirut: Dar al-Basha'ir al-Islamiyyah, 1998), 166-68; Ali b. Ali b. Abu al-'Izz, *Sharh al-'Aqidah al-Tahawiyah*. ed. Abd Allah b. Abd al-Muhsin al-Turki and Shu'ayb al-Arna'u, 2d ed. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah, 2003), 2:662.
11. Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, 4:379.
12. *Ibid.*, 1:161.
13. Al-Tahawi, *Al-'Aqidah*, published with Ibn Abi al-'Izz, *Sharh al-'Aqidah*, 2:662.
14. Al-Ghaznawi, *Usul al-Din*, 167-68. Whether, and to what extent, this acquisition has an effect or influence on the creation of an action is a matter of considerable disagreement among the scholars who follow this approach, especially between scholars of the Ash'ari and Maturidi schools of thought, though also among the Ash'ari scholars themselves. Refer to al-Juwayni, *Al-Irshad*, 188-91. This dispute has no bearing on the question we are presently exploring.
15. Abu Bakr Muhammad b. al-Tayyib al-Baqillani, *Tamhid al-Awa'il fi Talkhis al-Dala'il*, ed. Imad al-Din Ahmad Haydar, 3d printing (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqafiyah, 1993), 346.
16. *Ibid.*, 347-48.
17. *Ibid.*, 358.
18. Ash'ari and Maturidi scholars did make investigations in this direction, by asking whether God's will (*iradah*) is identical to or different from that which pleases Him (*rida*). This led to considerable debate on the matter, and no consensus was ever achieved on the issue within either school. Abu Adhbah identifies the confusion with semantics; essentially with how different scholars define "will" and "pleasure." Ultimately, he resolves the issue by stating that God's pleasure and displeasure are none other than God's will in connection with His rewards and punishments for complying with His commands, which, in turn, relates to the acquisition of an action by a legally accountable agent. See Abu Adhbah al-Hasan ibn Abd al-Muhsin, *Al-Rawdah al-Bahiyah fi ma bayna al-Ash'ariyah wa al-Maturidiyah* (Beirut: Alam al-Kutub, 1989), 29-35. This means that Ash'ari and Maturidi scholars would have no tangible objection to the Salafi position outlined here. Their inability to arrive at a coherent position on this point, however, means they never developed a fully realized ethical-theological system on this basis, which Salafi scholars were able to do by making a clear distinction between God's existential and legislative will and command.

19. Ahmad Ibn Taymiyah, *Majmu` al-Fatawa* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Obaykan, 1998), 8:58.
20. Ibn Abi al-`Izz, *Sharh al-`Aqidah*, 2: 677.
21. *Ibid.*, 1:174.
22. *Ibid.*, 1:173.
23. *Ibid.*, 2:677.
24. Ibn Taymiyah, *Majmu` al-Fatawa*, 13: 225.
25. Muhammad b Abi Bakr Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Shifa` al-`Alil* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1998), 423.
26. Isma`il Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, ed. Abd al-Razzaq al-Mahdi, 2d printing (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 2002), 6:317; Abu Bakr ibn al-Arabi, *Ahkam al-Qur`an*, ed. Ali Muhammad al-Bajjawi (Beirut: Dar Ihya` al-Turath al-Arabi, 2001), 4:283-84; and Shihab al-Din al-Alusi, *Ruh al-Ma`ani*, ed. Muhammad Ahmad al-Amin and Umar Abd al-Salam al-Salami (Beirut: Dar Ihya` al-Turath al-Arabi, 1999), 29:126.
27. Qur`anic commentators have differed on whether the Flood covered all or part of Earth. A great number of scholars hold the former view, basing their understanding on the traditions handed down by Jews and Christians. Others, including Ibn Atiyyah, favor the view that it was a local event. Among later commentators, al-Alusi favors a regional flood. See Abd al-Haqq ibn Atiyyah al-Andalusi, *Al-Muharrar al-Wa`iz fi Tafsir al-Kitab al-`Aziz* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 2002), 918-19 and al-Alusi, *Ruh*, 12:353.
28. Human beings would be morally accountable for consequences in nature that came about as a direct result of human action, for instance, global warming and ozone depletion.
29. The previous verse: "And indeed when We let man taste mercy from Us, he rejoices in it, but if evil befalls him for what his hands have put forth, then indeed man is ungrateful" (42:48).
30. Abd Allah b. Ahmad al-Nasafi, *Madarik al-Tanzil wa Haqa`iq al-Ta`wil*, ed. Marwan Muhammad al-Sha`ar (Beirut: Dar al-Nafa`is, 1996), 4: 162-63.
31. It is reported that Muhammad said: "Marry the one who is loving and fertile, for I will be proud of your great numbers on the Day of Judgment," *Sunan Abi Dawud* (2050) and *Sunan al-Nasa`i* (3227). Abu Dawud Sulayman b. Ash`ath al-Sijistani, *Sunan Abi Dawud* (Riyadh: Bayt al-Afkar al-Dawliyyah, n.d.), 234, and Abu Abd al-Rahman Ahmad b. Shu`ayb b. Ali al-Nasa`i, *Sunan al-Nasa`i* (Riyadh: Bayt al-Afkar al-Dawliyyah, n.d.), 342.
32. For instance, see Muhammad b. Ibrahim al-Salih Al al-Shaykh, "Hukm Tahdid al-Nasl," in *Fatawa al-Mar`ah al-Muslimah*, ed. Abu Muhammad Ashraf ibn Abd al-Maqsud (Riyadh: Maktabah Adwa` al-Salaf, 1996), 2:975; Abd al-Karim Zaydan, *Al-Mufassal fi Ahkam al-Mar`ah wa Bayt al-Muslim fi al-Shari`ah al-Islamiyah* (Beirut: Mu`assasat al-Risalah, 2000), 7: 255.