This book assesses some of the main forms of the Kalam cosmological argument. The author grapples with both medieval and contemporary interrogations of the argument with reference to Greek, Enlightenment and Medieval philosophers. It gives the reader an insight into some of the main areas of controversy (for example, discussions of infinity and contingency) and attempts to make critical assessments throughout. The book concludes with the author's understanding of the 'strongest forms' which attempt to postulate the most undercutting arguments for the existence of God.

KALAM
COSMOLOGICAL
A R G U M E N T S

S.A.L.A.M
SHARING, AFFECTION, LOVE AND MERCY

MOHAMMED HIJAB

Kalam Cosmological Arguments

MOHAMMED HIJAB

Contents Page

Chapter 1
Introduction

This book is a brief examination of the different kinds of cosmological arguments that were propounded by Kalam thinkers in the Islamicate region in the medieval period. It is a collection of three essays that aim to examine the two most prominent forms of the cosmological argument in this period, propounded by Ibn Sina and Al-Ghazali. As we will come to see with Ibn Sina's argument, it not only functions as a cosmological argument but also as an ontological and contingency argument (although some disagree with this taxonomy). I will bring forward some of the most common interrogations of these arguments and I will be referring to scholars of Jewish, Hellenistic, and Christian traditions. I will focus on the responses and arguments of Al-Ghazali and Ibn Sina. I have also incorporated some of the main objections from Western Enlightenment scholars – such as David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Bertrand Russell – to the cosmological argument. In this way, I hope that the medieval Arab discourse can re-contribute to the contemporary debate on the philosophy of religion in Western circles.

In his famous book *A History of Western Civilisation*, Bertrand Russell seems to have a cursory awareness of both Ibn Sina and Al-Ghazali (who he calls Gazel), as well as their arguments. In his famous debate with Copleston, Russell was forced to contend with some of the arguments of Ibn Sina. These arguments probably found their way to Copleston through Leibniz, whose version of the contingency argument is well known in

Western academic circles. One of the primary objections of Russell (and a concern for Kant as well) was his insistence that in order for propositions to be 'necessary', they must be 'analytic'/*a priori* rather than 'syncretic'/*a posteriori*. The standard ontological argument for God's existence, which works on a set of *a priori* first principles, was propounded by Anselm of Canterbury and proceeded in the following way:

> The Ontological argument may be put in many ways. In its original form, it states that God has all perfections and existence is among perfections that is the good is better if it exists than if it does not exist. Consequently, existence is of God's essence; to suppose that the most perfect being does not exist is self-contradictory. (Russell, 1900:173)

Russell dismissed this form of Anselm's ontological argument on the basis that "God may be defined without reference to the good as the most real being or the sum of all reality" (Russell, 1900:173).

In his book *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*, Russell criticises Leibniz's form of the cosmological argument by highlighting that it follows an *a posteriori* (cosmological) rather than an *a priori* (ontological) approach:

> It has a formal vice, in that it starts from finite existence as its datum, and admitting this to be contingent, it proceeds to infer an existent which is not contingent. But as the premiss is contingent, the conclusion also must be contingent. This is only to be avoided by pointing out that the argument is analytic, that it proceeds from a complex proposition to one which is logically presupposed in it, and that necessary truths may be involved in those that are contingent. But such a procedure is not properly a proof of the presupposition. If a judgement A presupposes another B, then, no doubt, if A is true, B is true. But it is impossible that there should be valid grounds for admitting A, which are not also grounds for admitting B. In Euclid, for example, if you admit the propositions, you must admit the axioms; but it would be absurd to give this as a reason for admitting the axioms. *(*Russell, 1900:175)

The first essay in this book is an exposition of Ibn Sina's argument for the existence of God. I will make the argument that it can be operational as a cosmological argument, a contingency argument, and an ontological argument all in one. This is significant as it allows us to fulfil the standard of truth that Kant and Russell demanded from the arguments.

The prime mover argument, favoured by Aristotle and reiterated by many others, will not be the focus of this book. This is because, although this argument provides evidence of a 'prime mover' and potentially a pre-eternal one, it does not provide evidence of an independent necessary being that explains all things in existence.

This book is not theological per se, although some of the key arguments in it relate to theology. The focus of this book is the logical forms and consistency of the arguments. These will be fleshed out in the third chapter.

(Russell, 1945)

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Chapter 2
Ibn Sina's "Cosmological Argument"

Immanuel Kant classifies arguments for the existence of God into three categories, namely, the cosmological, ontological, and teleological (Mayer, 2001:19). In commenting on Kant's understanding of Anselmian and Leibnizian ontological arguments, Paul Guyer notes that "Kant's rejection of it was based on the supposition that its proof is 'ideal' rather than 'real': that is, that it only unpacks what we may have included in the concept of God but can not establish that there is any object answering to that concept" (Guyer, 1998:28). Kant criticises the cosmological argument itself:

> Why have we instead accused the cosmological idea of falling short or exceeding its end, namely possible experience? The reason was this. It is possible experience alone that can give our concepts reality; without it, every concept is only an idea, without truth and reference to an object. (Kant, 1998:510)

For Kant, the reason why cosmological arguments are limited is the exact opposite reason of why ontological arguments are not. In other words, Kant viewed cosmological arguments as limited in that they are an attempt to prove the immaterial through the material. Kant also viewed ontological arguments – like those offered by Anselm and Leibniz – as limited for the exact opposite reason. An ontological argument is "a proof which argues for the existence of God entirely from *a priori* premises and makes no use of any premises that derive from our observation of the world" (Shihadeh, 2008:212), whereas a cosmological argument bases at least one of its

premises on an observable cosmic phenomenon. The question of whether Ibn Sina's argument for the existence of God is ontological or cosmological (or indeed a synthesis of both) is an interesting one, as it allows us to investigate the Kantian presupposition that there exists a sharp binary between the physical and the metaphysical; *a priori* and *a posteriori*. To what extent is there a divide between the two, such that there is applicability to one format if propositions are made in the other? More crucially, does metaphysical existence amount to 'actual' existence? What are the effects of these questions on argument made specifically in relation to God's existence? To what extent could Ibn Sina's argument(s) be seen as ontological and belonging solely in the realm of the metaphysical? The answer to these questions could change the discourse on this topic, especially in Western circles, where medieval/Enlightenment ontological proofs are most closely associated with Anselm, Leibniz, and Samuel. This essay will examine Ibn Sina's epistemology and its connection with his subsequent systematic theology. This will then be compared with other, more 'traditional' forms of cosmological argumentation to highlight the continuities and discontinuities between such arguments. Finally, the implications of this discussion on the philosophy of religion discourse will be mentioned, with some concluding remarks on the importance of such a study in the debate on positivism and idealism in philosophy.

In order to understand what Ibn Sina tried to establish in his main argument, it is vital to understand his working epistemology. Such information is found in his book *al-Shifa* (The Cure), in the chapter on *al-Ilahiyaat* (metaphysics; lit. that which relates to divinity). However, where students of Aristotelian philosophy will be familiar with this choice of book title, Ibn Sina differentiates his arguments from Aristotle's through his use of antecedent metaphysical argumentation. Ibn Sina candidly differentiates the physical world (or the world of *tabia*) and the conceptual world, designating logical principles and mathematics as abstractions of the conceptual world (Ibn Sina, 1960:11). Ibn Sina states that, "Sensory experience [*mahsoosaat*] is premised on it [i.e. mathematical abstraction]. Therefore, it [mathematics] precedes in essence sensory experience" (Ibn Sina, 1960:11). Referring to logic, Ibn Sina argues, "looking at logic from an 'essence' perspective, it is clear that it is out of the scope of the sensory experience" (Ibn Sina, 1960:11). In fact, Ibn Sina lists many logical

precepts – such as the law of non-contradiction and, vitally, the 'possible' and the 'necessary' – as products of mental conceptualisations. Almost immediately, as if his reader is waiting for him to do so, Ibn Sina then discusses the Aristotelian 'prime mover' concept. Ibn Sina writes, "we need to find the first cause after initially conceptualizing its existence and not on account of it being the first mover" (Ibn Sina, 1960:14). As students of Aristotle are aware, this is a crucial point of departure from Aristotelian and post-Aristotelian physics and metaphysics. Such theories depend on theories of motion, concluding that there must be an initial mover. According to Ibn Sina, the parallel of using conceptual knowledge to determine physical realities is similar to using mathematical knowledge for engineering (Ibn Sina, 1960:14). In this point, Ibn Sina stands out in stark contrast to his predecessors such as Al-Farabi. Jon McGinnis says that the metaphysics of Ibn Sina is the "culmination and crowning achievement of his philosophical system" (McGinnis, 2010:149). One can anticipate here, as will be discussed, that Ibn Sina also sees the need to do the same thing with his argument for God's existence, in a similar way to an architect conceptualising geometric designs before putting these designs into action. Ibn Sina alludes to the fact that this methodology grants a definite and certain knowledge of God's existence (Ibn Sina, 1960:15). However, a few important points of consideration can be extrapolated. Firstly, Ibn Sina could be said to be a dualist insomuch as he accepts the existence of things other than the mental, and rejects a materialistic (or positivistic) account for the existence of things. This is also because he believes that there is an intersectionality between the material (*tabii*) world of existence and the conceptual world of existence. While Ibn Sina seems to be aware that other philosophers may have different epistemological dispositions to him, he not only produces the aforementioned counter argument to their positivistic claims, he also seemingly wants to produce an evidence acceptable to them. Moreover, a by-product of Ibn Sina's reasoning is that a strict idealist (in the 'modern' Berklian sense) may not need to engage with Ibn Sina's cosmological argument in order to be satisfied that 'a necessary existent' – one that all other contingent existences depend on – exists.

Ibn Sina makes his argument for God's existence in three main works: *Al-Shifa* (which we have been discussing), *Al-Najat*, and *Al-Ishaaraat and Al-Tanbihaat* (his shortest of all three). Ibn Sina preambles his discursive

explication with an epistemological exposition of a similar complexion to the one we find in *Al-Ilahiyaat*. He mentions emotions such as fear and anger as being non-sensory in the empirical sense in a way that attempts to remind us of the binary nature of the conceptual world and physically existent things (Ibn Sina, 1957:7). Crucially, he makes specific mention of 'truth' and says that "every truth should be regarded in accordance with its essential reality, which with it [the subject in question] is regarded as true" (Ibn Sina, 1957:12). To illustrate this point, Ibn Sina provides the example of a triangle and says that, "its reality is connected to [concepts of] straightness and lines … they configure it [the triangle] by reasoning its three sided nature as if it were its reason for being in a material sense" (Ibn Sina, 1957:12,13). In using the triangle as an example, Ibn Sina interestingly mentions that its composite configuration (three-sidedness) could either be an inherent characteristic or something which requires a causative agency; "*al-illah al-failiyah*" (Ibn Sina, 14). Two things can be noted here. Firstly, for Ibn Sina, causation is not designated to the cosmological setting, as even a triangle needs to be 'caused' through abstraction or causative configuration (i.e. putting three lines together). Secondly, mathematical concepts do not seem to be necessary in their existence. With this metaphysical conceptualisation in place, Ibn Sina then argues that, "if the cause was the first cause then it is a cause for all of existence" (Ibn Sina, 1957:18). In this way, it could be concluded that Ibn Sina has already made a full ontological argument. Subsequent arguments made in *Al-Isharaat* should be read as having features of linking-togetherness on the one hand, as well as characteristic stand-aloneness on the other.

Up to this point, it is philosophically justified for us to conclude that Ibn Sina's argument is not cosmological in that it requires as much reference to the cosmos as a triangle does. His argument is also completely ontological in that it requires only abstraction of the mind. Bearing this in mind, it is therefore conceivable to have a cause and effect (*illah* and *malool*) without any reference whatsoever to the world of *maadah* (substance) or *tabia* (material). More substantially, it is possible to make an Avicennian argument for a necessary existence without reference to cause and effect. However, Ibn Sina does transition to causality and says that "if the causative agency is a 'first cause' then it is the cause of everything" (Ibn

Sina, 1957:18). He divides existence as either possible (*mumkin* - or dependent on other than itself to exist), and necessary (not dependent on anything to exist) (Ibn Sina, 1957: 20,21). Ibn Sina then reasons that there can only be one necessary existence. It is from this point onward that Ibn Sina entangles cosmology with ontology. Thomas Mayer points out that "It will become clear that this crucial first *fasl* of the argument has stubbornly ontological traits, contradicting those who, like Davidson, deny any such element in the proof" (Mayer, 2001:22). Herbert Davidson, in his seminal work on Jewish and Islamic Kalam, does not see it this way:

> Avicenna does not regard the analysis of the concept of necessary existent by virtue of itself as sufficient to establish the actual existence of anything in the external world. He does not, in other words, wish to offer *a priori* or ontological proof for God's existence but rather, a new form of cosmological proof. (Davidson, 1987:298)

Davidson further discusses, "Ibn Sina without quite realising it, developed a cosmological proof that can dispense with the impossibility of an infinite regress" (Davidson, 1987:299). Aside from sidestepping the major philosophical debate on the nature and possibility of 'infinite regress' – which Ibn Sina himself rejects (Ibn Sina, 1957:102) – Davidson designates Ibn Sina's conception of existence and causation as belonging only in the material world. Ibn Sina makes a cosmological argument by mentioning the example of movement in the sky and its connection with a will (Ibn Sina, 1957:34). He references time, movement and power (Ibn Sina,1957:165), but the question is not whether his arguments can be seen to have cosmological elements, but whether they can be read as sufficient without reference to the cosmos. Another important question relates to the first principles that Ibn Sina uses to build his philosophy upon which, as we have seen. These principles are characteristically metaphysical and ontological. Ibn Sina's dualism does not prohibit him from being able to interweave otherwise purely cosmological arguments into theoretical abstractions, and vice versa.

Like Kant, many thinkers throughout history saw the problem in 'actualising' the abstract, instead preferring purely cosmological conceptions. A cursory examination of popular medieval cosmological

arguments facilitates an even more sharply demarcated reading of Ibn Sina's philosophy relative to such arguments. For example, Maimonides, who prefers an Aristotelian type of argumentation that depends on time and motion, still uses the language of the Avicennian argument. In *A Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides starts with the first cosmological principles referring to change (Ibn Mayoon, 1951:245), strength (Ibn Mayoon, 1951:251), movement (Ibn Mayoon, 1951:257), and time (Ibn Mayoon, 1951:254). Al-Ghazali also discusses a straightforward cosmological syllogism in *Al-Iqtisaad fi Al-Itiqaad*, saying, "everything that begins to exist has a cause, the world (*aalam*) began to exist, therefore the world has a cause" (Al-Ghazali, 2003:26). Thomas Aquinas also argues using creation in his first principles in all of his arguments for the existence of God. The example of Maimonides, Al-Ghazali, and Aquinas are some of the many medieval examples of how contingency arguments can easily take a cosmological form. In other words, there is no attempt in these examples to deal with the metaphysical as it may be assumed that these are 'ideal' rather than 'real', in the way Kant may have suggested. Much like Kant, the Ash'aris (specifically Al-Juwaini, Al-Baqillani, and Al-Ghazali) made the distinction between the external (real) and the mental (ontological). Fascinatingly, they attempted to bridge the gap using the theory of particularisation (*takhsis*) expounded at length by Al-Baqillani. In his *Tamheed*, Al-Baqillani uses the Aristotelian prime mover argument to discuss contingent things in the 'real world'. When discussing animal forms, Al-Baqillani writes that if contingent 'real' world objects had a reason to be a certain way rather than another, then that reason must have been either inherent or external (Al-Baqillani, 1957:24). In other words, contingent realities in the real world could be any other way, and the fact that they have a particular form could be explained either contingently or necessarily. If we consider that it is necessary, then there must have been an external particulariser since, in Baqillani's reasoning, everything with the same properties would emerge all at once (Baqillani, 1957:24). This reasoning by Al-Baqillani fits in with the occasionalism that Ash'aris believe in, and attempts to create a bridge between the ontological and the cosmological. Commenting on this reasoning and on Al-Ghazali's response to Avicenna, Ayman Shihadeh writes, "Al-Ghazali's objection, however, rests on two assumptions: first, that Avicenna has only one, rather simple account of possibility; second that possibility is either in the external world or in the

mind … Avicenna sees no mutual contradiction between the notion that possibility is, on one respect, a mental judgement and his assertion that the possibility of things that come to be present in a substrate" (Shihadeh, 1998:124). From this perspective, it is clear there is a tension between the first principle assumptions of Ibn Sina and that of his medieval Kalam counterparts. This is because, where they found a need to bridge the ontological to the cosmological using notions such as the theory of particularisation, Ibn Sina did not see such a need.

Ibn Sina seemed aware that a completely cosmological conception could have inductive limitations (pre-empting Hume). He therefore starts with a premise of mere existence (foreshadowing Descartes). Ibn Sina's famous declaration of "there is no doubt there is existence" (Ibn Sina, 237) bypasses the Cartesian presupposition of self-awareness in 'I' think therefore 'I' am, therefore also bypassing the Nietzschean criticism of the cogito. It is from this point that Ibn Sina proceeds to dividing existence into necessary and contingent, almost as if there is no evidence to suggest the philosophical illegitimacy in doing otherwise. There is no Platonic world of forms that Ibn Sina refers to; he simply conflates existence acquired through sense datum with that done so through abstraction. In this regard, Mayer says:

Next in the *fasl*, existence is mentally subjected to a dichotomy. Either it is necessary, or it is not necessary. On the basis of the first division, Ibn Sina immediately proceeds to infer the actual, extra-mental reality of God. Ibn Sina says that the first division will amount to God, *Al-Haqq* (the Necessarily Existent in Itself) and *Al-Qayyum* (the Self-Subsistent). In this, Ibn Sina makes the crucial ontological move from the idea of a 'necessary' division in the dichotomy of existence (expressed by the technical term *Wajib al-Wujud*), to the affirmation of a particular instance of it in reality, a divinity expressed by the scriptural terms *Al-Haqq* and *Al-Qayyum* (Mayer, 2001:23).

The question of ontology is an interesting one that can be envisaged as either a purely ontological argument, or a synthesis between ontology and cosmology. If there can be no logical reason that dictates that *a priori* propositions are as real as empirical ones, there is no philosophical

justification to give more epistemic weight to one proposition over the other. Parviz Morewedge disagrees with this, taking the Kantian view that ontological arguments are not satisfactory after designating Ibn Sina's argumentation to pure ontology (Mayer, 2001:25). However, this in itself is an unsatisfactory conclusion, as it does not properly regard the aspects of Ibn Sina's argumentation, which have been discussed above as clearly cosmological in nature. For example, Ibn Sina's discussion on motion and planetary orbit could be invoked as evidence. Ibn Sina's preference of an ontological argument in the first instance, namely, the cosmological argument of motion mentioned by Aristotle, does not mean that he rejected such arguments. However, Ibn Sina did not see these arguments as foundational, as Jon McGinnis notes, "While Avicenna was convinced that physics could demonstrate that there was some, first, unmoved mover, he did not think one was justified in justifying this cause with God … at best this entity is the cause of motion in our cosmos, but not the very existence of the cosmos itself. In contrast, God is the very cause of all existence itself" (McGinnis, 2010:151).

Mayer puts forth a similar point to this:

> The complete argument can now be evaluated. Morewedge and Davidson are both correct in that the proof as a whole is simultaneously ontological and cosmological. Ibn Sina initially divides existence into the necessary and the contingent. Then: the necessary must be affirmed to exist, unconditionally. This is an ontological train of reasoning. (Mayer, 2001:35-36)

However, where Mayer is accurate in his understanding Ibn Sina's argument as synthetic, he is less accurate in his saying of the contingent only existing 'by another'. This means that while it may comprise an infinity of individuals, it cannot be self-sufficient; this follows a cosmological train of reasoning (Mayer, 2001:36). Mayer might have been on safer ground had he cited one of many examples where causality or contingency are applied to aspects of the cosmos itself, since infinity itself is a concept that could be said to exist only in abstraction.

If one concludes – as Kant has in our introduction – that establishing the 'existence' of something should be done empirically, there is a hidden naturalistic presupposition. The problem with Kant's interrogation is that it is circular. It assumes that a methodological physicalism should be presupposed in the study of something that may be proved - in subsequent discursive rationalisation - to be metaphysical. It could be argued that this is equivalent to attempting to detect mathematics through scientific experimentation. These forms of interrogation, together with other types, were central to the debate between positivists and other philosophers in the early twentieth century. This debate rendered both positivism and verificationism as less credible, which was ultimately reflected in the Popperian shift to falsificationism in the philosophy of science. In philosophical hindsight, these debates are critical to our conceptions of cosmological arguments and their relationship with ontological ones. Would dualists like Ibn Sina consider sensory existence as more 'factual' than metaphysical existence? Does the Kantian tripartite typology presuppose a methodological naturalism that renders ontological arguments – as Morewedge would concur – an unreal part of existence? Is the proposition of an 'unreal existence' possible in the first place? The answers to these questions all depend on one's epistemological expectation. Perhaps what Ibn Sina did – which was truly innovative – was filling the gap in the philosophical market for metaphysical explanations that would appeal to dualists and idealists as much is it would to physicalists. In his effort to leave no epistemological stone unturned, Ibn Sina premised his entire argument on ontological first principles before proceeding to mention things that are specific to the cosmos as additional evidence. Returning to Kant's original complaint, it would seem that Ibn Sina anticipated his objections. He attempted to offer evidences that would satisfy the mind's curiosity as well as the empiricist's enquiry for sense datum. For Ibn Sina, the necessary being which depends on no-one or nothing for its existence, and yet everything depends on it for its own, is equivalent to a mathematical equation which is already actualised in the workings of the cosmos through physics.

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NB: Dates in brackets represent the publication dates.

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Chapter 3
Al-Ghazali's Cosmological Argument

The issue of the eternality of the world or '*qidum al aalam*' is a central Kalam element in discussions on proving God's existence, especially in conjunction with the cosmological argument. Continuing the Asharite legacy passed down to him directly from Al-Juwaini, Al-Ghazali made the cosmological argument that every originated thing has an originator; since the world is an originated thing, the world has an originator (Al-Ghazali, 2003:26). The discussion of eternity is particularly important as the notion of an eternal world confutes the second premise of Al-Ghazali's cosmological argument, namely, that the 'world' came into existence in the first place. If the 'world' need not come into existence (by logical necessity or otherwise), this would entail a serious limitation on the soundness of Al-Ghazali's syllogism. Connected to this is the idea of an infinite regress of causes, time, movements, and bodies. The complex question relating to 'infinity' was debated fiercely by intellectual proponents of almost every age. Al-Ghazali, as we will come to see, exerts much philosophical energy attempting to refute Aristotelian notions of the eternality of the world. Such ideas would be passed down to Al-Farabi, Al-Kindi, and Ibn Sina, who all argued for an impossibility of an infinite regress of causes and the logical necessity of the eternality of the world. Although this essay will not focus on theological matters, important Islamic theology relating to the attributes of God will be referred to when such references affect the logical argument. Volition, which God is seen to exhibit, is important because Al-Ghazali argues that a God with volition ought to be able to select 'times' and 'places' to do whatever He wants. Believing that this is not the case implies that God is compelled to co-exist with the eternal world. In other words, Al-

Ghazali sees the eternity premise as one that bereaves God of His will (Davidson, 1987:4). Al-Ghazali's argument from particularisation is linked to his understanding of God's will. Moreover, Al-Ghazali argues that the way we see the world in one way rather than in another possibly conceivable way is evidence for a 'specifier' or '*mukhasis*'. On this point, it is conceivable that the *mukhasis* can choose a specific time and place for the creation of the world. On this view, God can choose to cause the existence of time, place, and matter through 'creation'. I will begin this essay by outlining some of Al-Ghazali's arguments for the impossibility of eternity/infinity, as well as some of the main objections to these arguments. I will attempt to answer a fundamental question: to what extent is the idea of an eternal world (or infinite regress) of causes, bodies, movements or time logically acceptable? With this in mind, another question can be asked: what overall impact does the implications of infinity/eternity have on Al-Ghazali's cosmological argument for God's existence?

Al-Ghazali identifies many arguments of the *falasifa* (philosophers) for the eternality of the world and attempts to show the philosophical ineffectuality of such arguments (Leaman, 2000:41). Firstly, the philosophers believed in a godly emanation that led to the existence of the world (Leaman, 2000:41). This emanation could be seen to be analogous to the relationship between the sun and its transmitted light; one (the sunlight) always exists with the necessary presence of the other (the sun). This view of emanation was famously elaborated upon by Ibn Sina in his works. Al-Ghazali's counter-argument was to wonder "why God can't post-date the creation of the universe" (Leaman, 2000:41). Al-Ghazali mentions the following regarding this argument:

> The adversary will ask: if it was originated by the origination of Allah, why did it originate now (i.e. at one specific time) and why not before this time? Is it because of the lack of instrument or ability or objective reason to do so or natural reason? (Al-Ghazali, 2003:96)

Al-Ghazali goes on to further state that, "The objection is premised on two points. The first is to ask 'what do you say to the one who says that the world had been originated by a pre-eternal entity which allowed its existence in the time in which it allowed to be, and that nothingness would occur for the time period which it would occur for" (Al-Ghazali, 2003:96). Al-Ghazali proceeds to give the example of a man who wants to postpone a divorce with his wife. The main argument is that creation ex nihilo does not

contradict the will of God. Al-Ghazali, like al-Juwaini and al-Baqillani before him, attempted to argue God's will through the theory of particularisation. Al-Ghazali makes the argument that the existence of possible things in one time, rather than another, or one place as opposed to another, is evidence of an external particulariser. For example, an external will decides on movement rather than rest (Davidson, 1987:194). Physical evidence for this in the cosmos is the existence of temporal beings with arbitrary properties (such as height, colour, and shape). Such material realities require a 'voluntary sorting agent' (Leaman, 2000:45). Al Baqillani, the teacher of the teacher of Al-Ghazali (through whom Al-Ghazali inherited this argument), argued that if the reason for the emergence of things in one way rather than another was due to something inherent within such things, all things consisting of the same properties would emerge at once (Al-Baqillani, 1957:24). The argument from particularisation from this perspective could be said to denote both a temporal and quantitative contingency of things that come into existence. An issue with this line of reasoning is that, if understood in conjunction with Al-Ghazali's syllogism mentioned above, a certain kind of circularity is created. That is to say, if one presupposes that God is the only cause for all that exists, and one starts with the premise that 'every originated thing has an originator', such a premise may be accused of begging the question. In order to avoid such circularity, some concession must be made concerning the initial explicability of causation without direct reference to God. In his book *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, David Hume exhibits a similar degree of scepticism of cause and effect. Hume reasons that there is "no argument to convince us that kinds of event that we have often found to be associated in the past will be so in future … If we reason *a priori*, anything may appear able to produce anything. The falling of a pebble may, for all we know, extinguish the sun; or the wish of a man may control the planets in their orbits" (Hume, 2017:82). As we will come to see, Al-Ghazali (almost pre-empting Hume's enquiry) asks why, for instance, the orbits are one way rather than another (Al-Ghazali, 2003:97). Al-Baqillani reasonably argued that, had the reason been inherent to the physical object in question, all such objects with identical properties would come about at the same time and place, and in the same way.

Al-Ghazali makes a series of arguments that aim to show the impossibility of a physical existence of infinity in the cosmos. He does this

in many standard ways, including the argument of rotating planets. This argument, put forth before Al-Ghazali's time, questions the real existence of both infinite time and infinite movements. Foreshadowing David Hilbert's hotel paradox, Al-Ghazali specifically chooses cosmological examples that suppose the impossibility of an infinite amount of 'things' in the 'real world'. Al-Ghazali provides a thought experiment of rotating planets in an eternal universe, which takes different times to complete a rotation. Planet A (Al-Ghazali uses the comparison of Saturn and the Sun) may take 1 year to complete a rotation, whilst planet B may take 30 years. If one were to divide the number of rotation years of planet A by planet B, one should expect two mathematical answers: one answer is 1/30, and the other is infinity. In the physical world, this would constitute a contradiction. The 14th century Jewish philosopher Gersonides puts this another way, saying,

"If the universe was eternal, the number of lunar eclipses would be infinite, which means that the moon would be in a state of eternal eclipse" (Davidson, 1987:123). This argument is similar to Aristotle's commentary of Zeno's dichotomy paradox. Such a paradox details running to a half-way point from distance A-B, then the half-way point to that distance, ad infinitum. It would be assumed that such a distance cannot be traversed as it is theoretically infinite. From this, Zeno concludes that motion is illusionary and there is no actual movement from one point to another. Aristotle responded by indicating the feasibility of dividing the time taken just as we divide the distances taken to run. In this way, we should have a fractional answer rather than an infinite one. Aristotle then made a distinction between a continuous line and a line made of parts (Hughlett, 2019). From this perspective, Al-Ghazali's interrogations on eternality/infinity (*ma la nihaya*) are, to some extent, consistent with Aristotelian cosmological themes in that they are based on one main supposition: representations of infinity in the physical world would entail the contradiction of bigger and smaller infinities. John Philoponus advanced this argument half a millennium before Al-Ghazali, making the point that "whatever is susceptible to greater or lesser is finite" (Davidson, 1987:118). He summarised his version of the argument in three main ways, all of which were consistent with the Ghazalian conceptions. Philoponus said that the world must have a beginning, since an infinite regress of past events would not be possible. This is because the past would not be completed and the future would never be reached (Davidson, 1987: 118). Secondly,

Philoponus stated that the past must have a beginning, since the past is continually increased and infinity cannot be possibly increased (Davidson, 1987:118). Thirdly, Philoponus stated that, since planets move at different speeds, an infinity would include the absurdity of one's infinity being a multiple of another (Davidson, 1987:118). It is in this last example that we are reminded of Al-Ghazali, whose example of the rotating planets is almost identical with that of Philoponus. Al-Ghazali's rotating planets argument, while not particularly innovative to the pre-existing medieval discourse, is not easily refutable without outward reference to other phenomena that consider eternality/infinity as logically necessary. Such phenomena include the Aristotelian notion that "everything comes into existence from a substratum" (Aristotle, 1983 I:7) and the fact that "there can be no before and after without time" (Aristotle, 1983:220a).

Where Al-Ghazali may have been successful in demonstrating the incongruence of mathematical notions of infinity, physical time, amount of bodies, and movements, there still remained some important questions unanswered by his arguments. Such questions pertain to the initial Aristotelian differentiation (and by later philosophers) between an infinite regress of causes and an eternal universe which existed pre-eternally. Aristotle argued for the eternality of the world on account of the contradiction in the necessary proposition that time would need to be created in time in order for it to come into existence (Davidson, 1987:27). On this point, the statement 'before time' is itself a contradiction as one presupposes the latter in order to affirm the former. This conception is based on the Aristotelian assumption that so long as there is movement there must be time, and there must always have been movement and time. In this way, Aristotle did not conceive of a reality external to that of this universe. John Philoponus makes this argument by saying that time "does not constrain God whose essence and actuality transcend the universe" (Davidson, 1987:30). Pre-empting David Hume's famous white swan example, the Mu'tazilite Abd Al-Jabbar points to the problem of induction and its relation to generalising a sample group. Foreshadowing Hume, Abd Al-Jabbar mentions, perhaps rather crudely, that black men cannot think that all men are black (Abd Al-Jabbar, 1964:224). This line of reasoning, while legitimate in essence, also places some limitation on Al-Ghazali's

syllogism, which depends on a generalisation of demonstrated causes in the cosmologies to conclude that 'every originated thing has an originator'. This prompted Bertrand Russell to famously respond to Copleston in his radio debate, saying, "every man who exists has a mother, and it seems to me your argument is that therefore the human race must have a mother" (Allen, 1989:6). Here, Russell outlined what he saw to be a fallacy of composition in the cosmological argument. The ignorance of the proponent (both theist and atheist) of an eternalist/creation ex nihilo argument for the entirety of instances where all of time can be conceived either in or out of the universe makes the problem of induction an ever-persistent consideration for all. In this way, the problem of induction – and the claim to a fallacy of composition – can only be finally made when perfect knowledge of the whole is acquired. The Aristotelian propositions of "everything comes into existence from a substratum" (Aristotle I:7) and "there can be no before and after without time" (Aristotle, 7:220a) are as cosmologically valid as the Ghazalian proposition that 'every originated thing has an originator'. Al-Ghazali would have had to reason metaphysically in order to break this philosophical deadlock, and he seems to do this with an argument that is original and potentially undercutting.

Like Aristotle, both Ibn Sina and Al-Farabi believed that the world was eternal. They viewed an infinite regress of causes as impossible. Ibn Sina and Al-Farabi both believed that, in order for infinity to be impossible, two conditions must be fulfilled: the objects in question must exist together (at the same time), and they must be arranged in order (Davidson, 1987:128). In response to this, Al-Ghazali writes:

> Even if we admit that [our attempt to establish that the argument from correspondence] is annulled by [the philosophers' acceptance of] successive temporal events [that have no beginning] has been obviated, the argument [from correspondence] can nevertheless be annulled [for the philosophers] by [their doctrine of] human souls. For despite being, according to them, infinite in number, [human souls] are coexistent, since, as they claim, they endure eternally after the corruption of the body. (Shihadeh, 2011:150)

In this way, it would seem that Al-Ghazali had undercut his philosophical rivals by providing them with the two conditions required in order to make a case for infinity. The 15th century Ottoman scholar Khojazada responded to Al-Ghazali with the following objection:

> [This argument from] human souls, too, fails to annul [the argument from correspondence for the philosophers]. For since there is no order whatsoever, with respect to either position (*waḍʿ*) or nature (*ṭabʿ*), among [human souls], the aforementioned demonstration [from correspondence] will not apply to them. For it will not follow from the correspondence between the first [soul] from the first of two sets [of souls] and the first [soul] from the second set [of souls], that the second [soul from the first set] will correspond to the second [soul from the second set], the third [from the first set] will correspond to the third [from the second set], and so forth until the correspondence is set out fully, unless, perhaps, if the mind considers each individual [soul] from the first set and treats it as corresponding to an individual [soul] from the second set. The mind, however, is incapable of perceiving infinite things, individually, whether concurrently or within a finite period of time, for the [method of] correspondence to become possible, and for [al-Ghazālī's] *reductio ad absurdum* to work. Rather, [the method of] correspondence becomes inapplicable as soon as it ceases to take its cue from both the imagination and reason. (Shihadeh, 2011:150)

Al-Ghazali, anticipating this form of interrogation, makes the following point of importance:

> The positional [order among human souls] follows from the order of the moments of time in which they come into being, while the natural [order among human souls] follows from [the fact that the existence of] a child's soul [presupposes the existence] of his body, which [in turn] presupposes the soul of the parent, which generates the matter of the child's body. (Shihadeh, 2011:153)

To this, Khojazada adds:

> Hence, it is not possible to conceive of all [souls] as being ordered in succession simply on account of the successive order of the points in time [in which they come into being]. Some [souls] may indeed be

ordered in chronological succession, such as the souls of Zayd and his forefathers *ad infinitum*. However, with respect to their being related to the moments of their coming into being they do not coexist, since it is inconceivable for those moments to coexist, and without them they cannot be ordered [chronologically]. (Shihadeh, 2011:153)

This argument seems wholly unsatisfactory as it only serves to prove the point Al-Ghazali set out to make in the first instance: that the philosophers are inconsistent with their treatment of one infinity (the conceivable infinite amount of human souls) and the infinite time that the 'world' has been in existence pre-eternally. But where this argument successfully points out the inconsistencies of the philosophers, it acts as a philosophical double-edged sword for Al-Ghazali. This is because it undermines his earlier arguments that indicate to the impossibility of an infinite amount of 'things' in a pre-eternal way. If the existence of an infinite amount of immortal souls post-eternally is conceivable through God's will, then the pre-existence of an infinite number of time or bodies pre-eternally should also be conceivable if connected to God's will.

It is perhaps at this philosophical juncture that Ibn Taymiyyah's works become of great importance. In *The Rejection of Conflict Between Reason and Revelation*, written in response to Fakhr Al-Din Al-Razi (who had an identical position to Al-Ghazali on infinity), Ibn Taymiyyah writes:

> That he (i.e. Al-Razi) says 'if the originated thing was pre-eternal then the regression of originated things would have stopped at a pre-eternal non-originated entity', we say, we do not submit to this since the pre-eternal entity could have been co-extensive with originated things which also have no beginning. (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2011:231).

Ibn Taymiyyah proceeds to claim that there is nothing in the Quran which explicitly details creation ex nihilo (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2011:68). This, of course, is a theological area of research which may be the subject of another paper. The point worthy of note is that, just as Al-Ghazali, Al-Razi and others were able to identify the problematic nature of the *falasifa* believing in a post-eternity (say, in the conceivability infinite amount of human souls) on the one hand, while rejecting the logical possibility of a pre-eternity of bodies or movements. So too does Al-Ghazali believe in the impossibility of an infinite regress of time, bodies, or movement, which may not be co-extensive with the pre-eternal God. To this end, it is unclear

why Al-Ghazali did not view it logically possible for God to have chosen to continue creating pre-eternally into the past through his will.

We have been able to analyse a few of Al-Ghazali's main arguments and have seen that some were recovered from Aristotelian tradition, while others (as Ibn Rushd highlights) were not in line with such traditions. A third category of arguments were intended to undermine the Aristotelian positions. The major strengths of Al-Ghazali's arguments relate to his argument from particularisation, his ability to demonstrate prima facie inconsistencies between mathematical notions of infinity and cosmological (physical) ones, as well as his successful ability to demonstrate the theological/philosophical positions of the philosophers concerning infinity in conjunction with the existence of an infinite amount of human souls. The main limitation of his arguments relates to his indecision to refute a pre-eternal infinite number of bodies, movements, or time if such things are directly connected to God's will. Al-Ghazali would have been able to make an argument against this infinite regress of co-extensive bodies which have been created by God by reasoning that it would bereave God of His will if such bodies are the direct product of God's will. In this way, Al-Ghazali's insistence on creation ex nihilo as the only logical possibility could be said to be questionable. Despite Hume and Russell's assertions that causality itself is questionable as it relates to the universe, this notion cannot be not ruled out. Perhaps if causality were reasoned metaphysically, one may bypass the abovementioned problem of induction. Perhaps if Al-Ghazali, like Maimonides and Ibn Tufayl, was able to argue the existence of God from two parallel tracks (Davidson, 1987:4), he may have left less room for doubt.

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Chapter 4
Ibn Taymiyyah, The Qur'an and the Cosmological Argument

Despite his critique of the philosophers and the Ash'arites, Ibn Taymiyyah has made important contributions to the cosmological argument. Some of his works on this argument include *Dar' Al-Ta'rrud, Al-Safadiyah*, *Mas'alah Hudooth Al-Aalam,* and *Sharh Aqeedah Al-Isbahani*. We will focus on the latter text, which translates to *An Explanation of the Creed of Al-Isfahani*. Ibn Taymiyyah undoubtedly affirmed not only the term *wajib al-wujood* (necessary existence), but also the rationale that led to it. Ibn Taymiyyah connects this kind of rationalisation with Qur'anic arguments and alludes to the fact that the argument is, in effect, Qur'anic. This is similar to Al-Ghazali in his book *Al-Qistaas al Mustaqeem*. After mentioning the standard ways in which the philosophers and Ash'arites have argued the existence of God, Ibn Taymiyyah writes:

> And from that which demonstrates the many ways in which one can argue for the existence of the Maker, Glory be to Him, is dividing existence into possible and necessary, and using possible existences to prove necessary existences. The genus 'necessary existence' is clearly relative to 'possible existence' (for this reason). This is similar to dividing existence into emergent and eternal, and using emergent things to reason the existence of the eternal. So, if someone says, that is the existent thing, it is either possible or necessary, and the possible

thing ultimately requires a necessary thing (in order to exist). This affirms the existence of a necessary in all circumstances. We can then say the existent thing is either emergent or eternal, and the emergent requires an eternal thing which affirms the existence of the eternal thing in all scenarios. It is said that the existent thing is either dependent or independent (self-sufficient). The dependent thing requires an independent thing to depend on, and this affirms the existent of the independent in all circumstances. Likewise, it could be said that the existent thing could either be created or uncreated. This necessitates the existence of a creator which is uncreated in all circumstances. [From] this meaning, many of the later theoreticians such as the author of this creed [Al-Isfahani] and his like affirm the existence of knowledge of the creator. So, they affirm that he is a necessary existence, and this is correct in meaning and is some of which the divine texts have indicated with reference to Allah's divine names and attributes. However, the texts also indicate many meanings which comprehensively link this meaning and others similar to it from the perfect characteristics of Allah. This is not limited to the fact that Allah is referenced as *Al-Qayyum* [the Self-sufficient/Maintainer] and *Al-Samad* [the Sovereign/Independent). This is even present in his names the *Rabb* (Master) and *Ilaah* (Deity), and other such words. We have mentioned the exegesis of *Surah Al-Ikhlaas* in another publication, and also the meaning of it being equivalent to one-third in the Quran in another place. We have also mentioned that the term *Al-Samad* (means) that He is the independent one (from everything other than him), and everything apart from him is dependent upon him. This includes the meaning that He is the necessary existence in and of Himself reliant upon Him. This also includes that all of existence is existence by Him and from Him. (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2009:60-61)

As we saw with Immanuel Kant in Chapter 1, Ibn Taymiyyah saw the need for the argument to have practical applicability in the real world. He starts his discursion (before the quote abovementioned mentioned) by mentioning that, in order for the category of 'possible existence' to have any 'real' meaning, it must be applicable in the real world. From this, Ibn Taymiyyah's discursive rationalisation is not dissimilar from that of the Ash'arites in many ways, including proving possibility based on

cosmological elements. The final chapter of this book will assess some of the logical points, as well as the strengths and limitations, of these arguments. The 'strongest form' of these arguments from a logical perspective will be proposed.

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Chapter 5
The Strongest Form of the Arguments

Before discussing the 'strongest forms' of the arguments, it is perhaps important to revisit the two main arguments that have been elaborated in this book, namely, the arguments made by Al-Ghazali and Ibn Sina. Al-Ghazali writes:

> We say that the occurrence of every occurrence has a cause, the world is an occurrence it necessarily follows that it has a cause … we mean by the world all existence other than God. And we mean by all existence other than God the bodies and their forms… We have included two principles; our opponent might deny them. We say to him: which of the principles do you dispute? He might say I dispute your statement that every occurrent has a cause, how did you know this? We say this principle must be affirmed because it is *a priori* and necessary according to reason. We mean by that which is occurrent that which was non-existent and then became existent. Thus, we say, was its existence before its existence impossible or contingent? If it is false it would be impossible, since what is impossible can never exist if it is contingent, then we mean by contingent only that which is possible to exist and is possible not to exist. However, it is not a necessary existence because its existence is not necessitated by its essence… We do not intend by a cause anything other than a giver of preponderance. In summation, for a nonexistence whose non-existence

continues, its nonexistence would not change into existence unless something comes along that gives preponderance to the side of existence over the continuation of non-existence. If the meaning of these terms is fixed in the mind then the intellect would have to accept this principle. (Al-Ghazali, 2013:27)

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the main objections to this argument relate to the second premise, namely, that the world had a beginning. We discussed how a post-eternal infinite set of things is not inconceivable, even on a Ghazalian conception, so long as such infinity is linked with the will of God. Al-Ghazali attempts to prove the will of an external sorting agent through the argument from particularisation. A second objection relates to the idea of causation, which was also mentioned in the previous chapter. David Hume made reference to the problem of induction, while Bertrand Russell highlighted the fallacy of composition. Both Hume and Russell aimed to show that causation of the universe ought not to be a philosophical 'given'. The issue with this is that it may assume that the universe is all that exists. In defining the *aalam*, Al-Ghazali described it as everything that exists other than God. Moreover, some take causation of the universe to imply temporality and cannot imagine cause and effect as happening without a preceding cause and a succeeding effect. In this way, as we have seen in the previous chapter, it is impossible to argue for a time 'before time', as the latter proposition would be required for the affirmation of the former.

As one may predict, discussions on metaphysical causation and mereology are not lacking in the philosophical literature. Linking back to Chapter 1 of this book, I will argue that these discussions are unnecessary in reaching a conclusion about the necessary/independent existence. As a reminder, Ibn Sina's argument is summarised in the following quote:

Now, the proof for the existence of God runs as follows. There is no doubt that there is existence. Every existent, by virtue of itself, is either possible or necessary. If necessary, then this is the existent being sought, namely God. If possible, then it will ultimately require the necessary existent in order to exist. In either case, God must exist. (Shihadeh, 2008:213)

As alluded to in Chapter 1, a possible existence is an existence that could not be any other way or in non-existence. The opposite of this is a necessary existence, in that the existence cannot be any other way – like

2+2=4 – and is completely independent. Ibn Sina, and many of the Ash'arites who were influenced by him, argued that the independent necessary being could not be a series of infinite possible things, since such a series can be conceived of in another way and would be dependent on its parts. It could not be more than one, since one of the two of 'necessary beings' would have to be conceived of differently compared to the other being. It is illogical to presume the existence of two independent beings.

Arguing on these two tracks (as proposed by Maimonides and Ibn Tufayl in the previous chapter) could take the following conditional form. There is no doubt that there is existence. The world is in existence. If the world had a beginning, it is likely to have had a cause. If it had a cause, we can infer strength, knowledge, will, and ability from that cause. That is because the effect of that cause exhibits the consequences of an agent with those attributes.

If the world is eternal (or part of an infinite order of multi-verses), it must be either a possible/dependent existent or a necessary/independent one. It cannot be a necessary/ independent one since it can be conceived of in another way. It must therefore be possible/dependent. If this is so, it must be dependent on either dependent entities or independent ones. If it is dependent upon other dependent entities *ad infinitum*, then such an aggregation of entities will form a series of dependent possible things. Such series can be conceived of differently and are dependent on their constituent parts. What is required is an independent, necessary being with no parts and which cannot be conceived of in any other way. There cannot be more than one of such a being since it would entail that at least one of these beings is differentiated, possible, or dependent.

As seen in Chapter 1, the second track of the argument can be made either ontologically (in the mind) or cosmologically (in the 'physical' world). In this way, it is applicable in all conceivable realms and satisfying to materialists, dualists, and idealists. Although this argument was initially made by Ibn Sina with reference to causation, it does not require causation. In this way, the arguments about causation become tertiary matters of philosophical consideration. For these reasons, the argument made in this way is what I consider the strongest form of the argument. It would seem

that the only way to refute such an argument is either to deny the categories of necessities/possibility, or to reason that only possible existences can exist, and that existence is not contingent on a necessary existence.

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Chapter 6
Conclusion

The argument presented in the chapter discussing the 'strongest form' is not only one that is logically consistent from the first principles, but also one that would be theologically uncontroversial considering Judaism and Islam in particular. Any medieval rendition of the cosmological argument may be in total disagreement with trinitarian conceptions of God, since such trinitarian conceptions do not conclude with a respectable monotheism. Is Jesus a necessary being, as are the father or the Holy Spirit? As we have shown, this postulation would require a redefinition of the concepts of necessity and independence.

Within Islam, Ibn Sina was ex-communicated (*takfīr*) by many traditionalist scholars due to his transgression of prima facie textual understanding of Islamic texts. Al-Ghazali ex-communicates Ibn Sina for three reasons. These reasons include Ibn Sina's externalist beliefs, his claim that God does not know particulars, and his disbelief in bodily resurrection (Al-Ghazali, 2013:312-18). These three reasons for *takfīr* are not represented in the arguments of Ibn Sina to the extent to which we have concluded in the final chapter of this book. In this way, Ibn Sina's arguments do not contradict a Ghazalian (Ash'arite) understanding of God. Al-Ghazali himself accepted the phraseology *'wajib al-wujood'* (the necessary existence) and accepted the parts of Ibn Sina's arguments that he did not see as transgressing the primary texts of Islam. Similarly, Ibn Taymiyyah, whilst showing his reservations with the Ghazalian (and

Razian) rendition of the cosmological argument, did not reject the phraseology of '*wajib al-wujood*' or its implications. For this reason, such phraseology is ubiquitous in some of Ibn Taymiyyah's famous credal, texts including *Al-Tadmuriyyah.* Mu'tazilites like Abdul-Jabbar, the author of *Sharh al-Usul al-Khamsa*, also accept the phraseology of Allah being *wajib al-wujood*. Shi'a thinkers such as Tusi, who commented on Ibn Sina's *Al-Isharat*, also showed no rejection of such phraseology. Thus, the argument presented by Ibn Sina was widely accepted in the Muslim world. Perhaps the reason for this may be theological, since the exact attributes of God seem to be in congruence with the basic definition of God in Chapter 112 of the Quran; a chapter where the basic definition of God is outlined. Though this may be the case, it makes more sense to suggest that consensus was achieved at least on the part of Ibn Sina's argument that affirms God's necessary existence, due to the sheer strength of his logical argument.

S.A.L.A.M

SHARING, AFFECTION, LOVE AND MERCY