



Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on “Conception” and “Assent”¹

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Abstract

According to the orthodox view in Aristotelian tradition concerning the division of knowledge (*‘ilm*), some knowledge in the form of conception (*taṣawwur*) and assent (*taṣdīq*) is attainable (*al-‘ilm al-ḥuṣūlī*). The attainable knowledge is divided into primitive and theoretical. Regarding primitive knowledge, concerning “the conception”, knowing the language and noticing the word is enough to understand it without asking anyone, and concerning “the assent”, the assertion of which its ingredients are already known is primitive and hence non-acquisitive if the knower immediately and without any investigation finds its truth-value. On the other hand, acquisitive knowledge is the knowledge about which the above conditions are not enough and the thinker should make some effort to obtain it, hence it is theoretical. However, according to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, a famous Muslim philosopher, logician, and theologian, all “concepts” and all “assents”, are non-acquisitive although they may be divided into primitive and theoretical. His view leads to the conclusion that all sciences are non-acquisitive, that is, mankind does not have the power to acquire them, which is a counterintuitive view. Ṭūsī is the most famous critic of Rāzī. In this paper, first, I have examined Rāzī’s views and arguments and Ṭūsī’s criticisms. Secondly, I have suggested that Rāzī’s view is rooted in his theological viewpoint, which is coherent with Ash‘arite doctrine.

Keywords

Fakhr al- Rāzī, Ṭūsī, conception, assent, non-acquisitive knowledge, Ash‘arite.

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Introduction

According to Aristotelian philosophers and logicians¹, science (*‘ilm* or knowledge) is divided into presential knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-ḥuḍūrī*) and attainable knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-ḥuṣūlī*). In presential knowledge, the known thing, *itself*, is presented to the knower while in attainable knowledge a concept or an image of the known thing is presented to the knower. For example, everyone knows himself (or herself) via presential knowledge; however, my knowledge of the table in front of me, is attainable. It is not the case that the table, itself, comes into my mind, but its concept or image comes. On the other hand, attainable knowledge is divided into conception (*taṣawwur*) and assent (*taṣdīq*). We may suppose that there is an agreement, among philosophers and logicians, regarding the meaning of “conception”. By “conception” we mean a simple (*sādhij*) concept with which no judgment (*ḥukm*) occurs. However, there are different opinions regarding the meaning or nature of “assent”. In asserting a sentence an assent takes place: the concept of the subject, the predicate, and the concept of the relation between the subject and predicate, all of them, are effective. However, regarding the nature of the “assent” itself, there are different views: a) Assent is the same as judgment and the conceptions of the subject and the predicate and the relation between them are *conditions* for the occurrence of that judgment; this view is attributed to the majority of Muslim philosophers and logicians; b) “assent” is the same as judgment; however, the mentioned conceptions are the *ingredients* of the judgment; this view is attributed to Fakhr al-Rāzī and he considers “assent” as a *compound* thing; c) “assent” is, in fact, a kind of *conception*, a conception concatenated with a judgment. Mullā Ṣadrā and some other philosophers hold this view (Mulla Sadra, 1999).

On the other hand, according to a famous view among philosophers, conception and assent are divided into primitive (*badīhī*) and theoretical (*naẓarī*). Being “primitive” means that we need no mental effort to get that conception or assent. Only noticing the subject matter is enough to know it. Conversely, being “theoretical” means that the subject matter is not enough; we should think and make some mental effort to get and understand it. Usually, for primitive conceptions, sensible things are given as examples such as the concept of the “sun”; but the “angel” may be an example of theoretical conception. For primitive assent we may consider “contradiction is impossible” and for theoretical assent “the universe is created”.

1. In this paper, I am mainly concerned with the Muslim followers of Aristotle.

Now, in between, we confront some rare and strange views Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī presents. He claims that *all* conceptions are non-acquisitive (*ghayr kasbī*). The majority of philosophers and logicians consider non-acquisitiveness and primitiveness as equivalent. Is Rāzī among them? Does he regard all conceptions as being primitive? Does he mean that no theoretical conception exists? On the other hand, if a judgment is a compound thing and its ingredients are non-acquisitive, it leads to the non-acquisitiveness of the judgment itself; does it mean that all judgments are primitive and there isn't any theoretical one? To find Rāzī's responses to the above questions we need to investigate his meaning regarding the notions of “non-acquisitive”, “primitive”, and “theoretical” and this is the main purpose of this paper.

Rāzī on the “non-acquisitiveness of all conceptions” and Ṭūsī's objections

Generally, we can find two views posed by Rāzī. When he is explaining or interpreting other philosophers, like Avicenna, he gives the famous views concerning the division of knowledge into presential and attainable and then the attainable into the “conception” and the “assent” (or judgement), just what was given in the section “Introduction”. However, when he presents *his* view and especially considers the theological issues, we can find very exceptional views. One of Rāzī's works is a famous book with a full title “*Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutiqaddimīn wa al-muti'akhirīn min al-'ulamā' wa al-ḥukamā' wa al-mutikkalimīn*” (literally: The Harvest of thoughts of ancient and later thinkers and philosophers and theologians). Today it is referred to under the short title “*Muḥaṣṣal*” and includes some logical subjects. Ṭūsī has commented on it and it is entitled “*Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*” (literally: The Abridgement of the Harvest). The reference I use has Rāzī's quotations and also Ṭūsī's commentary.¹

Rāzī holds that *all* conceptions are non-acquisitive. He offers two reasons for his view². His first reason is presented in terms of a deductive dilemma [cf. Text 1 in Appendix]: The supposed conception is either within the consciousness of the knower or not. If it is within the consciousness, then the knower knows it. So, he does not need to know it again; knowing something already known is impossible. And if it is not within the consciousness of the

1. As far as I have investigated, among Muslim philosophers, Ṭūsī is the only or main critic of Rāzī's view concerning the above issue; and because of this, I have confined to Ṭūsī's objections.

2. The related texts in Arabic and their translations are given in the appendix.

knower, it means that he is absolutely ignorant of it; so, he cannot grasp or attain it. Therefore, in any case, the supposed thing is non-acquisitive.

Historically, such a reason was first given in Plato's dialogues and today it is entitled "Meno's Paradox". In that dialogue Meno and Socrates are discussing the nature or definition of "virtue" and come to this point:

[Meno says:] But how will you look for something when you don't in the least know what it is? How on earth are you going to set up something you don't know as the object of your search? To put it another way, even if you come right up against it, how will you know that what you have found is the thing you didn't know?" (Plato, Meno, 80d)

And Socrates replies to Meno:

I know what you mean. Do you realize that what you are bringing up is the trick argument that a man cannot try to discover either what he knows or what he does not know? He would not seek what he knows, for since he knows it there is no need for the inquiry, nor what he does not know, for in that case he does not even know what he is to look for. (Plato, Meno, 80e-81a)¹

This paradox was known to some Muslim logicians, like Fārābī and Avicenna (Jacobsen, 2020, pp. 323-324; Erkmen, 2022, p. 365), and it seems that Rāzī, although did not mention its origin, was aware of it and rephrased it in some of his works.² Rāzī, himself, pays attention to the point that someone may reply to the first reason and says there is a third possibility: the supposed conception may have two aspects; according to one aspect, it is known and according to the other, it is unknown and hence can be known. In reply to this

1. In this section of dialogue, Plato tries to pose his "Doctrine of Recollection": Socrates shows Meno how Meno's servant succeeds in knowing the answer to a geometrical question, the answer that the servant had already known but was forgotten.

2. Cf. al-Razi, *Al-tafsīr al-kabīr (Maḥāṭib al-ghayb)* [literally, The great interpretation of Qurān (Keys of unseen)], vol. 24 (from 29 volumes) p. 541, <https://lib.eshia.ir/41730/24/395>; also, cf. Samih Daghim, *Mūsū'a muṣṭalihāt al-imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* [literally, The encyclopedia of terminologies of Rāzī], Pub: Maktabah Lebanon Nashirun, (entry: Tasawwurat, p. 173); also, cf. al-Razi, 2002. *Mantiq al-Molakhkhaṣ*, (Introduction, pages forty-five to forty-nine. In addition to the repetition of Rāzī's reasons and Ṭūsī's commentaries, it is said that the view is presented as a problem in some other of Rāzī's works such as *Sharḥ 'uyūn al-ḥikma* (literally, the commentary on the sources of wisdom [sources of wisdom is Avicenna's work]; and, also, is presented as a problem in *Al-risālah al-kamālīyya* [literally, the complete dissertation]).

objection, Rāzī continues to say that since these aspects are different and distinct, the same problem returns; we may say that concerning that aspect from which the supposed thing is within the consciousness, it cannot be acquired since it has already been known and concerning the other aspect from which it is not within the consciousness, it cannot be acquired since the knower is ignorant of it.

Ṭūsī, in his commentary on Rāzī, says that regarding a thing, we may know it briefly (*ilm ijmālī*) but not in detail (*ilm tafṣīlī*).¹ Knowing briefly causes the knower to know what he is inquiring after and it is not the case that he is ignorant absolutely of what is supposed to be known. On the other hand, the knower wants to complete his knowledge; that is, he wants to change his brief knowledge into a detailed one to the amount that he should try to attain the new information. So, it is not the case that what is already known is again to be known since the brief knowledge is not to be changed into brief knowledge or the detailed knowledge into the detailed knowledge (again), the impossible cases [cf. Text 2 in Appendix]. It seems the objection of Ṭūsī to Rāzī refers to Rāzī’s analysis of the subject matter. The explanation is that according to Ṭūsī, Rāzī considers the wanted thing as a whole which has ingredients (or parts). When it is said that the wanted thing is the object of the consciousness from one aspect, it means that some of its ingredients are known, and, hence, acquiring that ingredient already known is absurd or impossible. And when it is said that the wanted thing is unknown from another aspect it means that some of its ingredients are (absolutely) unknown and hence cannot be the object of inquiring. On the other hand, in Ṭūsī’s view, those aspects are not the ingredients of a whole, but that *unique* thing, as a whole, is both the object of brief knowledge and the object of detailed knowledge. In other words, there is only one aspect that is expressed under the title “brief knowledge” equivalent to “not being unknown absolutely” and this same aspect is supposed to be changed into “detailed knowledge”.

However, it is not obvious that this kind of interpretation of “aspect”, as the ingredient of a whole, is acceptable from Rāzī’s viewpoint; although occasionally we see the expression “brief knowledge” in his writings, notwithstanding, he still considers all the conceptions as non-acquisitive and claims that acquiring conceptions isn’t within one’s power. I will explain this view in the next section.

1. It seems that Ṭūsī has grasped such a response from Fārābī and Avicenna (Adamson & Benevich, 2023).

Rāzī's second reason for conceptions not being acquisitive is as follows [cf. Text 3 in Appendix]: Defining a quiddity is in terms of one of these ways: a) by itself; b) by its internal ingredients; c) by something outside of it; d) by combining these two last cases. Rāzī then continues to argue that all of these ways are impossible. (a) is impossible since it leads to equality of definiens (*mu'arrif*) and definiendum (*mu'arraḥ*). (b) is impossible since either all ingredients are considered, which leads to the previous impossibility because the ingredients as a whole, according to Rāzī, are identical to the quiddity, itself; or some ingredients are considered, which means that some ingredients are definiens of all ingredients in which one of them is itself and it leads to equality of definiens to definiendum and, also, that ingredient should be definiens of other ingredients that are not included in it which shows case (c); however, this case is, also, impossible since distinct quiddities may have a common external property and if that property is supposed to define one of those quiddities it should be known which of them is selected; it means that before being defined, that quiddity should be picked up (or defined) which, again, is impossible. (d) is impossible since it is the combination of (b) and (c) which are impossibles.

The objection of Ṭūsī to the second reason mainly refers to the premise that claims that the relation of quiddity to its ingredient is a whole/part relation and the quiddity is nothing but its ingredients. In Ṭūsī's view, quiddity is some entity over and above its ingredients. Therefore, the quiddity is not identical to the sum of its ingredients. So, defining it by some or all of its ingredients isn't like defining something by itself [cf. Text 4 in Appendix].

We may rephrase Ṭūsī's argument against Rāzī as follows: each ingredient of the quiddity has the property of being *before* that quiddity. The collection of ingredients is also qualified as being *before*. On the other hand, the quiddity itself is qualified as being *after*. What is *before* is different from what is *after*. Therefore, the collection of ingredients is not identical to the quiddity (contrary to what Rāzī believes).

However, it seems, there is a trace of the Division Fallacy in Ṭūsī's argument. In the Division Fallacy, the property of ingredients is expected to be attributed to the whole, while the whole may not have that property; however, it does not lead to the conclusion that the whole is not identical to the collection of the ingredients. In Ṭūsī's view, too, it is expected that the quiddity as a whole has the property of precedence since all its ingredients have that property. We may consider the issue from another viewpoint: it is as if Ṭūsī is arguing that if the sum of ingredients is identical to the quiddity

itself, they should have the same properties (i.e., the Indiscernibility of Identicals attributed to Leibnitz). Now the quiddity has the property of being after and the ingredients have the property of being before; so, they are not identical. However, we should distinguish ontological from epistemological or semantic properties. The Indiscernibility of Identicals is considered only concerning ontological properties. Here, Rāzī may defend himself that knowing the ingredients before and knowing the quiddity after are epistemological properties and may be different; however, the sum of ingredients and the quiddity itself, ontologically, are identical (similar to the claim that naming Venus as “Phosphorus” and again as “Hesperus” does not lead to the result that Phosphorus not being identical to Hesperus, that is Venus is identical to itself). In summary, it seems that Rāzī’s claim concerning the non-acquisitiveness of all conceptions depends on the presupposition that a compound quiddity is nothing but the sum of its ingredients and Ṭūsī is trying to reject such a presupposition; however, his argument is not very persuasive.

On page 18 in *Muḥaṣṣal*, Rāzī poses a question that someone may seek the conception of the “angel” or “spirit”; so, they are acquisitive. He then replies that in these cases either the linguistic meaning is inquired about or the demonstration of their existence. And both of these are the “assent” (or judgment), not the “conception”. However, in his commentary, Ṭūsī replies that we may know the meaning of “spirit” and, also, we may believe its existence; however, there are still different opinions among philosophers concerning its nature (or quiddity) and this shows that the conception of its nature is not primitive (or non-acquisitive). He continues and says that concerning many things we may know their linguistic meaning and also perceive or decisively know their existence, however, conceiving of their nature or quiddity, for most people, is hard; for instance, motion, time, place, etc.

Rāzī in an annotation (*Muḥaṣṣal*, p.18) gives different kinds of notions conceivable by human beings: what is sensible; what is comprehended by inner feeling like “pain” or “pleasure”; what is rationally primitive like the concept of “existence” and “unity” and “multiplicity”; what is the combination of the previous kinds by using the intellect or phantasm. Other notions, according to Rāzī, are not conceivable. In his commentary, Ṭūsī gives some examples (*Talkhiṣ al-muḥaṣṣal*, p.18) for the phantasm combination such as “a ruby mountain” and “a flying person” (all notions in these cases are perceivable); and for the intellectual combination gives the examples of “rational animal” or “unique existence” (notions are understandable by the intellect); for the combination of intellect and phantasm he gives the

example of “unique black” and “universal warmth” (the former notions are contemplative and the latter are perceivable). However, the important point stressed by Ṭūsī is that Rāzī has confessed that some “conceptions” are acquired by a combination of other “conceptions” and these are just theoretical conceptions.¹ However, we may say, on behalf of Rāzī, if the ingredients of a compound conception are, themselves, non-acquisitive, the compound conception is also non-acquisitive, although it can be called “theoretical”. Therefore, it seems there is some difference between Rāzī and other logicians (or philosophers) concerning some keywords. The orthodox view is that if a conception is non-acquisitive, it is primitive, and vice versa. Also, the orthodox view says primitivity is the opposite of theoretical; so, if a “conception” is theoretical, it is acquisitive and vice versa. A “conception” is either primitive, hence non-acquisitive, or theoretical, and hence acquisitive. However, Rāzī’s criterion is different: a “conception” is either simple or compound. If it is simple, it is called “primitive”; if it is compound, it is called “theoretical”. However, both kinds are non-acquisitive. According to the orthodox view, if something is theoretical, its meaning (or quiddity) is unknown. So, we need to proceed from the known notions toward the unknown notions and finally make them obvious. So, we have a mental process from a known notion to an unknown one. Therefore, it seems that the criterion in the orthodox view for dividing “conception” into primitive and theoretical is *knowledge*: if the “conception” is known from the beginning it is primitive; otherwise, it is theoretical and acquisitive. However, for Rāzī, the criterion is *simplicity* (not knowledge since all conceptions are non-acquisitive): if a “conception” is simple, it is primitive and if it is compound it is theoretical. However, he considers both of them as non-acquisitive.

Rāzī on the “assent”

The above criterion regarding “conception” – being simple, hence primitive; being compound, so theoretical – cannot be applied to “assent” since in Rāzī’s view all assents are compound entities and there isn’t any simple assent. So, regarding “assent”, we see another criterion posed by Rāzī: if an assent (judgment) is known from the beginning, it is primitive. For example,

1. Ṭūsī continues to say that there are some conceptions that are not included in any of the mentioned kinds and he gives the highest genus: most of them are not comprehended by the senses or inner feelings or intellect or intellectual combination; they are not definable; however, they may be conceivable by description.

“contradiction is impossible” is primitive. If the subject and predicate are known it immediately leads to “assent” to the statement. However, some statements are theoretical: understanding the subject and predicate isn’t enough to approve the statement. For example, we may know the meaning of “world” and the meaning of “creation”; however, the statement “the world is created” may be questionable and is not obvious or primitive. It seems that, regarding the division of “assent” into primitive and theoretical, Rāzī’s view is very similar to the orthodox view. However, he considers both as non-acquisitive, contrary to the orthodox view; the orthodox view considers primitive statements as non-acquisitive and theoretical statements as acquisitive. Rāzī’s reason for his claim is mentioned in many of his works; one of them is *Mousū‘ah muṣṭalihāt al-imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (p. 169)¹. The explanation of his argument may be mentioned as follows: either the statement is primitive or theoretical. a) It is primitive: since an “assent” is the compound set of conceptions as its ingredients and those conceptions are non-acquisitive, the result is the non-acquisitiveness of the “assent” itself. b) It is theoretical: a theoretical statement is, in fact, the conclusion of some other statements as its premises. All those premises cannot be theoretical unless vicious regression occurs. So finally, the process of argumentation begins with primitive statements, which are non-acquisitive. Now, if these statements validly result in a conclusion, it means that the conclusion necessarily is obtained, hence the agent cannot reject it and should approve it and so, the “assent” is not within his (her) power, that is, it is non-acquisitive. On the other hand, if those premises collectively and necessarily do not result in the conclusion, the agent can hesitate and is not certain about it; if he (she) accepts it, that acceptance is by imitation. Therefore, the conclusion is not a scientific statement, the issue with which Rāzī deals [cf. Text 5 in Appendix].

A critical explanation of Rāzī’s views

In some of his works, especially when he is interpreting the views of other philosophers, like Avicenna’s, Rāzī presents Aristotelian logicians’ orthodox views: attainable knowledge is divided into “conception” and “assent” and each of them is divided into primitive and theoretical, and he gives examples for all cases. However, when he presents *his* views, we confront other interpretations. The characteristics of his views are as follows: a) all

1. The main text in that encyclopedia is addressed as “*al-Maṭālib al-‘ālīyya*” [literally, the excellent issues], vol. 9, p. 105, line 15.

“conceptions” – whether simple or compound – are non-acquisitive. If we accept that being non-acquisitive equals being primitive, the result is that all conceptions are primitive, a claim that is very strange or counterintuitive. The main challenge, which Ṭūsī has pointed out, is whether a concept can be known briefly but unknown in detail. It seems the section on “definition” in logic books has been considered to provide such knowledge. Rāzī’s view leads to the redundancy of such a section. Some philosophers hold that according to Rāzī, all definitions are nominal (*sharḥ al-ism*) (Adamson & Benevich, 2023). However, Rāzī himself, in *Muḥaṣṣal* (p. 19), deals with the issue of “definition” and considers four modes based on whether the “conception” is simple or compound and whether each one of these is defining or not defining another compound concept. The detail is that the “concept” may be simple [primitive] and also does not define a compound concept (case a). Such a “concept” is neither definable nor definiens. The “concept” may be compound and defines another compound concept (case b). Such a “concept” is definable and also definiens. The “concept” may be compound and does not define another concept (case c). Such a “concept” is definable but is not definiens. The “concept” may be simple and defines another compound concept (case d). Such a “concept” is not definable; however, it defines something [cf. Text 6 on Appendix].

In his commentary on the above quotation (*Talkhiṣ al-muaassal*, p.19), Ṭūsī says that the following examples are given [by other logicians], respectively: the conception of “the necessary existence”; the conception of “animal”; the conception of “human”; the conception of “substance”. There may be some challenges regarding some of the examples; for instance, the conception of “necessary existence” is a compound one, not a simple conception. However, we may say that it is probable that the concept of “god” has been intended. Anyhow, we may say that, according to Rāzī, the criterion for a conception being definable is that it is a *compound* conception. So, a simple conception that does not have ingredients is not definable; however, it can be used to define a compound conception. The orthodox view is that if a conception is definable, it is theoretical and, hence, acquisitive. However, in Rāzī’s opinion, being theoretical and being acquisitive are not equivalent. Although a compound conception is constructed from some simple ones and may be called ‘theoretical’, it is non-acquisitive since those simple conceptions from which the compound conception is constituted, are all non-acquisitive. However, isn’t it possible that a thinker knows two different simple conceptions and *decides* to put them together to gain a new compound conception? A

decision which she, herself, makes and is within her power? Intuitively, it seems the response is positive. However, Rāzī’s answer is negative and we will soon see that his view is rooted in his theological views.

b) “Assent” (or judgment) is a compound entity, that is, the conception of the subject and predicate are the *ingredients* of “assent” (or judgment) and as was mentioned, this view is contrary to that of the majority of philosophers and logicians because they regard those conceptions as the *conditions* of the occurrence of the judgment, not its ingredients. It may be said that we are confronted with a different postulate supposed by each party. However, in some cases, different opinions result. Rāzī holds that if a judgment is non-acquisitive its ingredients are also non-acquisitive (*Muaassal*, p.19). On the other hand, most logicians accept that the conceptions of the subject and predicate may be acquisitive (or non-primitive) but the judgment itself is primitive (or non-acquisitive). For example, someone may not know the meaning of “bachelor” and “one who does not have a wife” and we define these conceptions for him. However, when he considers “a bachelor does not have a wife”, he immediately approves the judgment and it is primitive (not theoretical) for him.

c) All “assents” are non-acquisitive. Rāzī holds that the judgment may be divided into the primitive and the theoretical. However, both of them are non-acquisitive. Sometimes, his reason for the non-acquisitiveness of theoretical judgments goes alongside the axiomatic method and says that if all judgments are supposed to be theoretical, it leads to vicious regression. So, finally, it should reach a primitive judgment which is non-acquisitive. Therefore, every theoretical judgment should finally be obtained from some primitive judgments, and since these primitive judgments are all non-acquisitive, it results in the judgment being non-acquisitive. Considering the subject matter and the analysis from the above viewpoint, the axiomatic method is nothing to be rejected especially for deductive systems. However, when a thinker is, for example, representing a syllogism and using minor and major premises and all of them in her view are theoretical, *intuitively*, she is certain that she, herself, is making the syllogism and is obtaining the new conclusion and all of these actions are within her power; it is not the case that from the beginning all judgments were obvious and primitive for her; all these are contrary to Rāzī’s views.

d) All sciences (or knowledge) are non-acquisitive. This is the consequence of Rāzī’s view: if obtainable knowledge is divided into “conception” and “assent” and all different kinds of these are non-acquisitive, the result is that

all knowledge or science that a human being obtains is non-acquisitive, that is, they are not within his (her) power, the very counterintuitive result.

From an orthodox viewpoint, being non-acquisitive is a sign of being primitive (being known from the beginning). Hence, from this viewpoint, the result of Rāzī's claims is that the section on "Definition" in Aristotelian logic is redundant since we define something that is supposed to be unknown; now, if all conceptions are primitive, they are known and don't need to be defined. A similar issue may be held concerning at least some modes of "syllogism". For instance, if Barbara is the most famous (or primitive) among all modes and the minor and the major premises are non-acquisitive and hence primitive, the conclusion of the first mode of the first form of Aristotelian syllogism will be obvious or primitive for all instances, something which is counterintuitive. However, we see that Rāzī, like other logicians, deals with "Definition" and "Syllogism" in his logical works and does not consider them redundant. We may say that in such works, Rāzī's approach to the issue is in Peripatetic style and is interpreting the view of other logicians or we may say that his main aim is to give annotations; he may be considered as saying that although the conceptions are indeed primitive, however, they need to be annotated; if we define something, we are giving some annotation and giving some hint to the addressee to reach the primitive conception. Of course, there isn't any remark of such a reading from Rāzī's words and it is only a suggestion. Now we confront this question: What is the main point in his regarding the non-acquisitiveness of all conceptions and assents? I suggest the answer may be found in some of Rāzī's theological views. In short, the main meaning of "non-acquisitive", according to Rāzī, is that it is not within the agent's power to get the "conception" or "assent" of a sentence. The reason, he claims, is rooted in the Ash'arite view concerning the issue of "*determinism*" of which Rāzī is an adherent. The picture that Rāzī gives us is like this: all conceptions are non-acquisitive and what is non-acquisitive is not within the will or mental power of the agent; that is, whether the agent wishes to have or reject that conception, it is there within his (her) consciousness, and it is enough for the agent to notice and as a result, he (she) has that conception. Now, an "assent" (or assertion) consists of some conceptions, and since those conceptions are non-acquisitive, the assertion is also non-acquisitive; the same argument applies and the result is that all "assents" are non-acquisitive and are not within the mental power of the agent. Using the same reason, if these non-acquisitive assertions are the premises of a valid argument, its conclusion is also non-acquisitive; it is not within the agent's power to acquire (or reject) it

since that conclusion has been obtained necessarily. On the other hand, if those premises do not lead to a conclusion, that is, the argument is invalid, it means that acquiring the conclusion is impossible and it is obvious that what is impossible is not within the agent’s power. Therefore, in summary, according to Rāzī, acquiring a conclusion is out of the power of the agent, that is, it is non-acquisitive since either it is acquired necessarily from non-acquisitive premises or it is impossible to be acquired and in either case, it is not within the power of the agent to have or reject it since it is only within the power of God, the creator of the world, to induce knowledge whether in the form of conception or assent into agent’s mind; an Ash‘arite theological doctrine which I am not going to deal with it in this paper [cf. Text 7 in Appendix; also Adamson & Benevich, 2023].

The subject matter may be discussed in another way. According to Rāzī, if something is necessary or impossible, it is out of the agent’s power to acquire it. On the other hand, Rāzī’s view regarding “assent” is that it is a compound entity, that is, constructed from some conceptions as its ingredients. He also claims that all conceptions are non-acquisitive [=primitive] (it is not within the agent’s power to acquire them). Now if primitive conceptions entail an assertion, that assertion, necessarily, is acquired whether the agent wants or doesn’t want it; and if doesn’t entail an assertion, it means that the assertion is not scientific: the agent does not have a certain belief about it, the agent has some imitation toward it, and it means it is impossible to be regarded as scientific knowledge, and because of this, Rāzī considers such cases as out of scope of the issue (since the main issue is regarding what is science) and anyway, again, the power of the agent does not apply to it. On the other hand, it seems that such primitive conceptions or assertions are acquired and obtainable. Now if they don’t originate from human beings, what else remains except God: it is He who creates all kinds of sciences and induces them in man’s mind, a famous Ash‘arite doctrine [cf. Text 8 in Appendix].¹

There is a renowned doctrine among Ash‘arite theologians, namely the doctrine of *Kasb* (acquisition), which is somehow related to the theory of

1. Two other theological views are contrary to the Ash‘arite’s view: In the Mu‘tazilite view, the agent is completely independent in his actions and thoughts and, in fact, God is only responsible for creating the agent and doesn’t have any influence on him after creation. In the Imāmiyya’s view, the agent is neither completely independent (like the Mu‘tazilites believe) nor completely dependent (like the Ash‘arite view) and is in between: he is dependent on God for his having the power for action and intention to decide; however, he is independent in *how to use* his power or intention. The details of these theological views are beyond the purpose of this paper.

knowledge. It seems that the title of “*Kasb*” somehow refers to the agent’s contribution to acquiring the knowledge. On the other hand, “conception” and “assent” are issues related to that theory. An important question arises: What is Rāzī’s view regarding the doctrine of *Kasb*? The next section deals with it.

Rāzī on the doctrine of *Kasb*

Among theologians, it is well known that the Ash‘arite view somehow leads to determinism. On the other hand, the doctrine of *Kasb* is put forward by the Ash‘arites to have the proper interpretation of those verses in Qur‘ān that attribute actions both to God and humans, especially the verse: God creates you and what you do (*Sūrah al-Şāffāt, Verse 96*). Does it mean that the agent does not have free will (i.e., *al-Jabr*)? Or is he altogether free (i.e., *al-Qadar*)? It seems that the doctrine of *Kasb* is posed to give a proper answer: if an action is due to God it is entitled “creation” (*khalq*) and if it is due to an agent it is called “*kasb*”. However, among theologians, there are different interpretations regarding the meaning of *kasb*. Some of these interpretations are as follows (Tahiri Soltani, et al., 2020, p. 183): a) *Kasb* originated from contingent power (*qudrat al-ḥādith*) and Creation originated from preexistent power (*qudrat al-qadīm*); b) *Kasb* is that action that needs some instrument; c) *Kasb* is the action which leads to some benefit or some detriment. Anyway, it seems that there is an agreement among the Ash‘arite theologians that if the will and the power of the agent *contribute* to an action then *Kasb* occurs. However, some theologians hold that the agent’s power and will don’t affect actions; God’s manner (*‘ādat*) first creates the agent’s power and will and simultaneously creates that action (Tahiri Soltani, et al., 2020, p. 183). Of course, some authors have considered eight rational reasons for the doctrine of *Kasb* and refuted them (Ghadrdan Gharamaleki, 2016).

Moreover, some contemporary writers interpret *Kasb* in such a way that it accords with the doctrine of *al-amr bayn al-amrayn*, a doctrine that is attributed to the *Imāmīyya* theologians, which claims that an agent is neither completely free nor completely obliged and is somehow between these extremes. In other words, one is free in her doings in such a way that she is responsible for her actions, and therefore, most of one’s conceptions and assents are acquisitive, contrary to Rāzī’s view. However, one’s ability and decision are under God’s will (al-Rasyid, 2021; Suarning, 2023).

Now, what about Rāzī? Does he defend the doctrine of *Kasb*? First, I should stress that although the doctrine of *Kasb* is a theological doctrine, it is related to the theory of knowledge, in which the issue of “conception” and “assent”

and their acquisitions are discussed. And certainly, Rāzī has a theory of knowledge (Erkmen, 2022). Rāzī adheres to the Ash‘arite beliefs, and some writers hold that he is somehow dogmatic in his beliefs (Ceylan, 1980). Initially, he accepted the doctrine of *Kasb*. However, considering some philosophical insights, especially “causality”, he progressively began to review that doctrine and ultimately rejected it (or had his *own* interpretation) (Khademi, 2013). Concerning the doctrine of *Kasb*, some scholars hold that Rāzī’s view outlines that for performing an action, two factors are needed, that is, power and motive (will). Both of them are created (by God) and action occurs when they occur. His view leads to determinism. His distinction from the Ash‘arites is that he considers power as a deficient cause (*al-‘ilat al-nāqīṣah*) which affects action; however, Ash‘arites believe God, not the agent’s power, is the cause. In other words, in his analysis, Rāzī is somehow using necessary causation which is a philosophical issue; however, the Ash‘arites believe that it leads to the limitation of God’s power (Khademi, 2013).

I think it is true that there may be some differences in Rāzī’s analysis of the doctrine of *Kasb* compared to the Ash‘arites; however, it seems that the core idea of the Ash‘arites view constitutes Rāzī’s view. I mean that whether Rāzī’s philosophical insights contribute to his analysis of the doctrine of *Kasb* or not, according to Rāzī, *all* factors considered in the agent’s act are caused by God and the agent is not independent or free in his (her) doings; among them, his (her) thinking to get the knowledge in terms of “conception” or “assent”. And this interpretation accords well with all of Rāzī’s theological views. Concerning Rāzī’s view about the doctrine of *Kasb* and its relation to his theory of knowledge, we may put forward these characteristics: a) Rāzī considers theology as the *cornerstone* of all sciences (Khazaeli, et al., 2012, p. 46). It means that his theory of knowledge should be consistent with his theological views. b) Rāzī is a critic of Avicenna’s theory of knowledge, that is, he rejects the *theory of abstraction* attributed to Avicenna and instead, he holds that knowledge is *relation (idāfah)* (Erkmen, 2022, p. 145), that is, it is something that is given or added to the knower. So, the knower does not acquire the knowledge. Knowledge, in all its forms, is given to him (her) by God. c) Although Rāzī is a philosopher and logician, he is also a dogmatic Ash‘arite, in such a way that he is a critic of the doctrine of *Kasb*, in which the agent’s contribution to acquiring knowledge is somehow approved. The sum of Rāzī’s criticism regarding the doctrine of *Kasb* is that all factors that contribute to an action, among them the power and emotion of the agent,

originate from God and His will.

According to the above characteristics, I suggest it is very probable that Rāzī's view concerning the non-acquisitiveness of "conception" and "assent" is rooted in his theological views.

Conclusions

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, a famous Muslim theologian, philosopher, and logician, has two views concerning "conceptions" and "assents". As a commentator of Avicenna's work, he deals with those issues consistent with the orthodox view that science (or knowledge) is divided into presential and attainable and then attainable knowledge into "conception" and "assent" and, also, each of them into "primitive" and "theoretical" (or "acquisitive"). He gives some examples for each case. However, when we confront Rāzī's views which are presented in some of his works, such as *al-Muḥaṣṣal* and *al-Maṭālib al-ʿālīyyah* and also *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* and *Mantiq al-molakhkhaṣ*, we see that some different doctrines are mentioned: all conceptions, as well as all assents are non-acquisitive, doctrines which are opposed to the orthodox view. Concerning the non-acquisitiveness of all conceptions, Rāzī presents two arguments which are reviewed and rejected by Ṭūsī. In the first argument, Rāzī says either a conception is known or unknown. If it is known, then trying to know it again is impossible (or trivial) and if it is unknown the agent is ignorant about it, and again trying to acquire it is impossible. This reason originates from Meno's dialogue, mentioned by Plato, although Rāzī is not explicit about it. Ṭūsī's reply is based on the view that knowing and ignoring is not absolute and something may be briefly known but in detail not known and Ṭūsī claims that Rāzī himself has such an opinion on some issues. Ṭūsī's reply is also rooted in Fārābī's and Avicenna's dealings with Meno's paradox. In the second argument, Rāzī considers different ways that a quiddity may be defined: by itself, by its inner ingredients (all or some), by outer ingredients, and by the combination of inner and outer ingredients and rejects all of them. The pillar of Ṭūsī's criticism is based on whether the relation of quiddity to its ingredients is a whole/part relation. He thinks Rāzī considers it as a whole/part relation and Ṭūsī disagrees with this. Their disagreement relates to an issue not considered in this paper; however, Ṭūsī's rejection does not seem very persuasive. The main conclusion we can get is that Rāzī's view concerning the meaning of "theoretical conception" is different from the orthodox view: if a conception is a compound, it can be defined, hence is theoretical, although it is non-acquisitive; while the orthodox view says that all

theoretical conceptions are acquisitive. The main point in Rāzī’s view concerning the non-acquisitiveness of all assents is that he regards “assent” as a compound thing, as a judgment which has some conceptions as its ingredients: the conception of subject and predicate and the copula. Now, since the conceptions of which an assertion is constituted are non-acquisitive (or primitive), the assertion itself is also non-acquisitive (or primitive).

On the other hand, it seems that Rāzī’s views are related to the doctrine of *Kasb* presented by the Ash‘arites. This doctrine is introduced to justify the relationship between God’s and the agent’s power and will regarding an action. Although different interpretations are given regarding the doctrine of *Kasb*, it seems that at least some of them go toward the point that some actions are attributed to the agent. However, Rāzī reviews the doctrine and concludes that all agent’s actions, for example, her thinking, including its acquiring “conception” and “assent”, are dependent on God’s will and the agent has no free will, a view which leads to determinism. It means that determinism is predominant in the world; if an agent understands something, it is God who introduces the known thing in the agent’s mind; obtaining that thing is actually out of the agent’s power. This interpretation is consistent with Rāzī’s theory of knowledge in which knowledge is a *relation* or something *added* to the knower and is not earned by the knower himself (herself). The result is that since all sciences, whether in the form of “conception” or “assent”, are introduced by God to mankind’s mind, therefore, all of them are not within the power of the agent, himself, that is, are non-acquisitive; a view which is contrary to the orthodox view of logicians.

Appendix: Quotations in Arabic texts and their translations

[Text 1] "القول في التصورات

و عندى أن شيئاً منها غير مكتسب، لوجهين.

الأول أن المطلوب إن لم يكن مشعوراً به استحالة طلبه؛ لأنّ ما لا شعور به البتّة لا تصير النفس طالبة له. و إن كان مشعوراً به استحالة طلبه؛ لأنّ تحصيل الحاصل محال. فان قلت: هو مشعور به من وجه دون وجه. قلت: فالوجه المشعور به غير ما هو غير مشعور به. و الأول لا يمكن طلبه، لحصوله؛ و الثاني لا يمكن طلبه أيضاً، لكونه غير مشعور به مطلقاً." (الطوسي، تلخيص المحصل، صص. ١٦-١٧)

"On the conceptions

I believe that all of them are non-acquisitive for two reasons.

The first [reason] is that if the wanted thing [*al-maṭlūb*] is not the object of consciousness, then inquiry of it is impossible; since what is surely not an object of consciousness, one does not inquire about it; and if it is known then inquiring it is impossible, since obtaining [knowing] what has already been obtained [known] is impossible. If you say: it is known from one aspect and unknown from another, I reply that the known aspect is different from the unknown aspect. Inquiring about the former is impossible since it has already been known, and about the latter is impossible since it is absolutely not the object of consciousness." (al-Tusi, pp. 16-17)

[Text 2] "أقول: في هذا الكلام مغالطة صريحة، فإنّ المطلوب ليس هو أحد الوجهين المتغايرين، بل هو

الشيء الذي له وجهان. و ذلك الشيء ليس بمشهور به مطلقاً، و ليس غير مشعور به مطلقاً، بل هو قسم ثالث، و سيصرّح هو أيضاً بذلك في تقسيم المحدثات في مسألة «إنّ المعلوم على سبيل الاجمال معلوم من وجه و مجهول من وجه» عند قوله: «الوجهان مجتمعان في شيء ثالث» و لم يقم هيئتها حجة على امتناع طلب ما يكون من هذا القبيل، إنّما بيّن امتناع القسمين الأولين فقط." (الطوسي، تلخيص المحصل، ص. ١٧)

"I say: in this reasoning, there is an explicit fallacy; what is wanted is not one of those distinct aspects, it is only *one* thing with two aspects. This *unique* thing is neither within consciousness absolutely nor within non-consciousness absolutely; however, it is a third kind and he [Fakhr] himself soon refers to it in the issue of division of non-eternals in the problem 'Something briefly [*ijmālan*] known is known from one aspect and is unknown from one aspect' when he says: 'these two aspects come together in a third thing' and here [in his reason] he does not offer an argument for the impossibility of a wanted thing of this third kind; he reasons against only the previous two kinds." (al-Tusi, p. 17 [note 1]) (my emphasis)

[Text 3] "الثاني أنّ تعريف الماهية إما أن يكون بنفسها او بما هو داخل فيها، او بما هو خارج عنها، او بما

يتركّب من الأخيرين. أمّا تعريفها بنفسها فمحال، لأنّ المعرّف معلوم قبل المعرّف. فلو عرّفنا الشّيء بنفسه لزم تقدّم العلم به على العلم به وهو محال. و أمّا تعريفها بالأموال الدّاخلية فيها فمحال، لأنّ تعريفها إمّا أن يكون بمجموع تلك الامور، وهو باطل؛ لأنّه نفس ذلك المجموع. فتعريفها بذلك المجموع تعريف الشّيء بنفسه، وهو محال؛ او ببعض أجزائها، وهو محال، لأنّ تعريف الماهيّة المركّبة لا يمكن إلّا بواسطة تعريف أجزائها. فلو كان جزء من الماهيّة [معرّفا لها لكان ذلك الجزء] معرّفا لجميع أجزاء الماهيّة، فيكون ذلك الجزء معرّفا لنفسه، وهو محال. و لسائر الأجزاء، وذلك يقتضى كون الشّيء معرّفا لما يكون خارجا عنه، وذلك هو القسم الثالث. وهو محال، لأنّ الماهيات المختلفة يجوز اشتراكها في لازم واحد. و إذا كان كذلك فالوصف الخارجيّ لا يفيد تعريف ماهيّة الموصوف إلّا إذا عرف أنّ ذلك الموصوف هذا الموصوف به دون كلّ ما عداه. لكنّ العلم بهذا يتوقّف على تصوّر ذلك الموصوف وعلى تصوّر كلّ ما عداه، وذلك محال. أمّا الأوّل فلاّنه يلزم منه الدّور، و أمّا الثّاني فلاّنه يقتضى تقدّم تصوّر جميع الماهيات الّتي لا نهاية لها على سبيل التفصيل. و أمّا تعريفها بما يتركّب من الدّاخل والخارج، فبطلان ما تقدّم من الأقسام يقتضى بطلانه. (الطوسي، تلخيص المحصل، صص. ١٧-١٨)

“The second reason is that to define a quiddity is by [using] itself or by its internal ingredients or by something outside of it or by combining these two latter cases [and all of these cases are impossible]. To define it by itself is impossible since definiens is known before definiendum. Now, if we define a thing by itself, it leads to the precedence of knowledge of a thing to the knowledge of itself which is impossible. To define quiddity by its internal ingredients is impossible since that definition is either by using all its ingredients, which is impossible since the quiddity is identical to that sum; so defining it by that sum is defining a thing by itself which is impossible, or [by using] some of its ingredients and it is [also] impossible since a compound quiddity cannot be defined except by the definition of all of its ingredients; then if some ingredient of the quiddity defines it, that ingredient is definiens of all ingredients of that quiddity; so it will be the definiens of itself which is impossible, and it is [also] definiens of other ingredients, and it requires that a thing is definiens of those which are outside of it and this is [in fact] the third kind. And it is impossible, since different quiddities may have one common inseparable property. If that is the case, then that common external property does not define a qualified quiddity except it is known that the quiddity is this quiddity defined by this common property [and is] distinct from all others. However, knowing this amount depends on the conceptualization of the qualified quiddity and [also] all other quiddities distinct from it, which is impossible, since the former necessitates a vicious circle and the latter necessitates the precedence of the conceptualization of all infinite quiddities in detail. And to define the quiddity by using the combination of internal and external ingredients is [also] impossible from what was said concerning the

previous cases.” (al-Tusi, pp. 17-18)

[Text 4] “أقول: قوله: «إنّ مجموع أجزاء الماهية هو نفس الماهية» ليس بصحيح، لأنّ الجزء متقدّم على الكلّ بالطبع. و الأشياء التي كلّ واحد منها متقدّم على شيء متأخّر عنها يمتنع أن تكون نفس المتأخّر، و يجوز أن تصير عند الاجتماع ماهية هي المتأخّرة، فيتحصل معرفتها بها...” (الطوسي، تلخيص المحصل، صص. ١٧)

“I say his [Rāzī’s] saying “the sum of the ingredients of quiddity is the quiddity itself” is not correct, since naturally, the ingredient is *precedent* [prior] relative to the whole. [Now] the objects [ingredients] each one of which is precedent to an object [the whole] which is *after* [subsequent] is impossible to be identical to that posterior thing and it is possible that the collection of those ingredients becomes a quiddity which is subsequent, hence, its knowledge is obtained by using them...” (al-Tusi, p. 17 [note 2]) (my emphasis)

[Text 5] “فقول: أما التصديقات البديهية، فشيء منها غير مكتسب. لأنّ ذينك التصوّرين. إن حضرا، كانا موجبين لذلك التصديق – و الإنسان لا قدرة له في تحصيل ذينك التصوّرين – و عند حضورهما فلا قدرة له في استلزامهما لذلك التصديق. بل إن حضرا لكان عند حضور ذلك التصديق واجبا. و إن لم يحضر إلا واحدا منهما، كان حضور ذلك التصديق ممتنعا. فثبت: أنّ الإنسان لا قدرة له البتّة على التصديقات البديهية. و أما التصديقات النظرية. فلا قدرة له أيضا على شيء منها. لأنّ تلك البديهيّات، إن كانت مستجمعة للأمور المعتبرة في استلزام تلك النظريات، كان حصول تلك النظريات عقيب تلك البديهيّات واجبا. فلم يكن للإنسان قدرة عليها. و إن لم تكن مستجمعة للأمور المعتبرة في ذلك الاستلزام، امتنع كونها مستلزما لتلك النظريات. و الممتنع لا قدرة عليه” (دغيم، ٢٠٠١، ص. ١٦٩)

“So, we say: all primitive assents are non-acquisitive. Since, if these two conceptions [the conceptions of subject and predicate] are present, then they cause the “assent” to occur – and [already we said that] the agent does not have the power to get these two conceptions – and as soon as they are present, the agent has no power regarding the occurrence of that assertion. That is, if these two conceptions are present, assertion necessarily occurs. And if only one of them is present, then the occurrence of the “assent” is impossible. Therefore, it is proved that the agent has no power regarding the primitive assertions. However, regarding the theoretical “assents”, he has no power over them, since if those primitive assertions collectively and validly imply those theoretical assertions, then obtaining the theoretical assertions as the conclusions is necessary; so the agent doesn’t have the power to get [or reject] them. And if they don’t imply this, then it is impossible for them to result in those theoretical assertions and [again] what is impossible is not within the agent’s power.” (Daghim, 2001, p. 169)¹

1. The main text in that encyclopedia is addressed as “*al-Maṭālib al-‘ālīyya*” [literally, the excellent issues], vol. 9, p. 105, line 15.

[Text 6] “الاول البسيط الذي لا يتركب عنه غيره لا يعرف ولا يعرف به. والمركب الذي يتركب عنه غيره يعرف ويعرف به. والمركب الذي لا يتركب عنه غيره يعرف ولا يعرف به. والبسيط الذي يتركب عنه غيره لا يعرف ولا يعرف به.

و المراد من هذه التقسيمات التعريفات الحديثة.” (الطوسي، تلخيص المحصل، صص. ١٩٠)

“[a]The primary simple [conception] from which no compound conception is constructed is not defined and does not define [something else]. [b] And the compound [conception] from which some other conception is constructed is defined and [also] defines [that conception]. [c] And the compound [conception] from which some other conception is not constructed is defined but does not define. [d] And the simple [conception] from which some other conception is constructed is not defined but defines [that conception]. And in these divisions, the essential definition is considered.” (al-Tusi, p. 19)

[Text 7] “في بيان أنّ شيئاً من التصديقات غير مكنسب: هو أن نقول: لا شك أنّ تلك التصديقات الكسبية، لا يمكن إيقاعها إلا في تصوّرات حاضرة في الذهن. فنقول: عند حضور تلك التصوّرات، إمّا أن يكون ذلك التصديق ضرورياً، أو لازماً، أو لا يكون كذلك.

فإن كان حصول ذلك التصديق عند حضور تلك التصوّرات لازماً أو ضرورياً، لم يكن للعبد قدرة عليه، و لا اختيار له فيه. لأنّ تلك التصوّرات لا قدرة للعبد عليها البتّة. وعند حضورها تكون مستلزماً لذلك التصديق استلزماً لا قدرة للعبد عليه. فعلى هذا التقدير، امتنع أن يكون ذلك التصديق واقعا بكسب العبد و باختياره.

و أمّا إن كان حصول التصديق عند حصول تلك التصوّرات غير ضروريّ و لا لازم، فحينئذ لم يكن ذلك التصديق علماً و لا يقيناً، بل هو اعتقاد تقليدي، أتى به الإنسان من غير موجب. و هو أيضاً محال. و متى حاول الإنسان تشكيك نفسه فيه، أمكن ذلك و قبل هذا لا يكون علماً و لا يقيناً. فثبت بما ذكرنا: أنّ العلوم إمّا تصوّرات و إمّا تصديقات. و ثبت:

أنّ كل واحد منهما خارج عن قدرة العبد و عن وسعه. فثبت: أنّ المعارف و العلوم خارجة عن قدرة البشر، و أنّ حصولها ليس إلاّ بخلق الله سبحانه.” (دغيم، ٢٠٠١، ص. ١٧٠)

“On all the “assents” are non-acquisitive: we say: there is no doubt that it is impossible to make the acquisitive assertion except by using the conceptions present in the mind. Then we say: when those conceptions are present in the mind either the assent [or assertion] is necessary or not. If the acquisition of the assertion, when the conceptions are present, is necessary, then the servant [agent] has no power and authority relative to it since those conceptions are not, of course, within the agent’s power. And when they are present [in the mind] they entail the assertion, the entailment that the agent has no power over. So according to such supposition, it is impossible that the “assertion” is acquired by the agent’s effort and will. Now, if the acquisition of the “assent”, when those conceptions are present, is not necessary, in such a case, the “assent” is not regarded as science and conviction, but is an imitation view

that the agent has without necessity. And it is also impossible. And whenever the agent wants to have some doubt about it, he can and before this, it is neither science nor conviction. Therefore, by what we said, it is proved that all sciences are either conceptions or assents and that each one of them is out of the power [or control] of the servant [agent]. So it is proved that all knowledge and sciences are out of the power of human beings and their acquisition is not but by the creation of Allāh, glorified be He.” (Daghim, 2001, p. 170)¹

[Text 8] ”في بيان أن التصديقات بأسرها غير كسبيّة، و ذلك لأنّ هذه النظريات إن كانت واجبة اللزوم عن تلك البديهيات التي هي غير مقدورة كانت تلك النظريات أيضا غير مقدورة. و إن لم تكن واجبة اللزوم عن تلك البديهيات لم يمكن الاستدلال بتلك البديهيات على تلك النظريات، فلم تكن تلك الاعتقادات الحاصلة في تلك النظريات علوما، بل لا تكون إلا اعتقادا حاصلا للمقلّد و ليس كلامنا فيه.” (دغيم، ٢٠٠١، ص. ١٧٠)

“On the issue that assents, all of them, are non-acquisitive: the reason is that if these theoretical assents are the necessary results of those primitive [assents], which themselves are not within the power of the agent to acquire them, then they are also not possible. And if they are not necessarily the result of those primitives, then there is no argument from primitives for theoretical assents. So what is acquired from these theoretical assents is not considered science. They are not but views obtained for imitation and our issue does not relate to it” (Daghim, 2001, p. 170).²

Conflict of Interests

The author has no competing interests.

1. The main text in that encyclopedia is addressed as “*al-Maṭālib al-‘ālīyya*”, vol. 9, p. 106, line 18.

2. The main text in that encyclopedia is addressed as “*Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*”, vol. 2, p. 143, line 26.

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