

Examining Rational Reasons for Elemental Physical Resurrection

A Study for Theologians in the 7th to 11th Centuries AH

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Abstract

The quality of the human body in the concept of resurrection has been a contentious issue among philosophers and theologians. The fundamental question revolves around how resurrection manifests in human existence. Various viewpoints can be categorized into three main types: Ideal Body: Some propose an idealized form for the resurrected body, transcending earthly limitations. Elemental Body: Another perspective suggests an elemental body distinct from the worldly one. Worldly Body Itself: Advocates of this view assert that the resurrected body remains identical to its earthly counterpart. They often draw upon Quranic verses, while some also present rational arguments. The present work, through examining and critiquing the existing reasons, posits the hypothesis that these reasons lack the ability to prove the claim of identity theorists regarding the afterlife. Instead, they merely represent a superficial appearance of continuity between the postmortem body and the worldly body. The current study employs a descriptive-analytical approach. After collecting the relevant reasons, they are subjected to critique and evaluation, validating their relevance to the intended claim.

Keywords: Resurrection, Physical Resurrection Reasons, Rational Reasons for Resurrection, Reincarnation.

Introduction

Resurrection, as one of the fundamental principles of Islam, has always captured the attention of Muslim scholars. One dimension of this focus involves the effort to provide rational arguments for this concept. Consequently, a nuanced issue within the context of resurrection pertains to the nature of the human body during this event. Some scholars advocate for the reconstruction of the earthly human body, proposing the theory of identity. Others adhere to the concept of ‘similarity’, rejecting identity. The first group predominantly relies on Quranic verses and traditions as evidence, while some also provide rational arguments. On the other hand, proponents of the ‘similarity’ perspective base their claims on Quranic, narrative, and rational reasons. Within this framework, a crucial question emerges: How will the human body be in the hereafter? Will the same physical body that housed the soul in this world be reconstructed, or will the material body decay after death, with the soul assuming a form appropriate for the afterlife? Among the rational

reasons put forth by advocates of identity are considerations such as the justice of rewards and punishments, the pursuit of pleasures, the continuity of cosmic motion, divine wisdom, and justice, as well as the concept of reincarnation. Given the breadth of identity-based arguments, this research will specifically focus on evaluating the rational evidence for physical, elemental resurrection among scholars from the 7th to 11th centuries. Who were the proponents of bodily resurrection with an elemental form during this period, and what intellectual reasons did they present?.

Research Findings

One of the proponents of the identity perspective is Ibn Mitham al-Bahrani, who has argued for the injustice of rewards and punishments based on identity. He asserts that in this world, some individuals deserve rewards while others deserve punishment. However, this world lacks the capacity for proportional rewards and punishments. Therefore, bodily identity in the afterlife and the worldly realm is essential (Bahrani, 1406 AH: 140). However, this argument serves as evidence for the principle of resurrection (ma'ad), but it does not necessarily prove material bodily resurrection. Bahrani also considers the pursuit of pleasures as another reason for materialism. However, according to the Quranic verses, the purpose of creation is to attain servitude, perfection, and nearness to the Divine. Mansur Dashtaki regards divine wisdom and justice as evidence for identity. To comprehend rational truths of the hereafter and attain divine rewards, humans must be confined to a material body (Dashtaki, 1386, Vol. 1: 185). However, the claim that all humans can comprehend all truths lacks justification. Additionally, certain intellectual perceptions do not have sensory, imaginary, or illusory manifestations. For instance, general concepts or abstract ideas lack sensory, imaginary, or illusory foundations. Talaghani believes that: The human soul requires a material body for performing actions and perception. If the body accompanying the human in the afterlife is identical to the worldly material body, then the concept of resurrection (ma'ad) is established. Otherwise, it necessitates reincarnation (tanaskh), but reincarnation is impossible.” (Talaqani, 1377, Vol. 3: 176).

Conclusion

The rational arguments mentioned in the issue of identity do not possess the necessary power to prove their claims, and the rules of logic consider these arguments invalid. Consequently, the assertions of the speakers from the 7th to the 11th centuries are not substantiated.

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