The Problem of the Epistemological Value of Revelational Evidence According to Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī

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Abstract: Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī (d. 722/1322) influenced the philosophy and kalām traditions with his works. How to understand the religious texts is one of the main research subjects of these disciplines, and al-Samarqandī debated this issue by using the arguments of the Ashʿarī theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) without mentioning his name, arguing that rational proofs express definite knowledge when interpreting the revelational attributes of God (e.g., His hands and face) while revelational proofs indicate supposition (*ẓann*). Al-Samarqandī also explained how revelational evidence has been exposed to probable errors while transferring grammar (*naḥw*) rules to the present day in addition to the different linguistic possibilities such as metaphor, homonymy, and transference of meaning (*naql al-lugha*). al-Samarqandī further developed al-Rāzī's theory of the presumptiveness of revelational evidence to reveal how presumptions and literal proofs are indicative of definiteness. This article focuses on the epistemological value of revelational evidence according to al-Samarqandī, as well as identifying the thinkers who had influenced him regarding this issue and determining his original ideas on the subject. The article's introduction will examine the revelational proofs and forms of signification in al-Samarqandī's system. Afterward, the article will discuss the disputes about the value of revelational evidence, followed by the epistemic value revelational evidence expresses according to al-Samarqandī.

Keywords*: al-Samarqandī, Arabic language and rhetoric, theology, hypotheticality of language, revelational proofs, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī

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Introduction

Revelational proof (*al-dalīl al-naqlī*),[1] also called literal (*lafẓī/sam'ī*) proof, consists of linguistic signs of expression and by its nature also undergoes certain semantic changes. Based on these changes, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and his followers claimed that literal proofs did not indicate definite knowledge,[2] and quite a few debates arose regarding this matter. According to al-Samarqandī, a later period *mutakallim* who was also involved in this conflict leading to the charge of unbelief (*takfīr*),[3] whether or not literal proofs indicate definiteness and how to know this if they do this were of great importance in terms of presenting the main principles of his theory of interpretation. Accordingly, this study deals with the epistemological value of literal proofs in al-Samarqandī's system.

No scholarly work with a focus on al-Samarqandī is found to have addressed the issue of the epistemological value of literal proofs. However, several studies have examined the interpretation of God's scriptural (*khabarī*) attributes, despite not looking into the definiteness of literal proofs. For instance, Yürük, Gökçe, and Okşar have works on the nature and types of the *khabarī* attributes, but they overlooked the matter of the definiteness of literal proofs despite being the most critical point of the matter.[4] Unlike previous works, this article deals with the epistemological value of literal proofs according to al-Samarqandī and associates the reason for his interpretation of *khabarī* attributes with the idea that literal proofs indicate probability. Moreover, the article will use cross-comparisons to demonstrate Fahkr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's direct influence on al-Samarqandī as well as the latter's distinctive aspects. Thus, the article seeks to fill an important gap in the field.

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1   Here revelational proof is used as the opposite of rational proof. Yusuf Şevki Yavuz, "Delil", Türkiye *Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2001), 9/136.

2   For detailed information, see: Mehdi Cengiz ve Şükran Fazlıoğlu, "Fahreddin er-Râzî'nin 'Dilde Kesinlik' Sorununa Yaklaşımı: Tespit ve Tercih", *Kutadgubilig: Felsefe Bilim Araştırmaları* 62 (2020), 37–62.

3   For detailed information, see: Mehdi Cengiz, "Dinî Dışlayıcılık Söylemi İnşa Eden Neo-Klasik Selefî Anlayışın Eleştirisi: Dilin Epistemik Değeri Hakkında Fahreddin Râzî'ye Yöneltilen Tenkitler Özelinde Bir Değerlendirme", *Nazariyat Journal for the History of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences* 7/2/ (2021), 139-56. For the argument that this discussion is superficial and its criticism, see. Mehdi Cengiz, "Dilde Kesinlik Konusunda Molla Gürânî'nin Birleştirici Yorumu ve Bunun Eleştirisi", Trabzon University Journal 8/2/ (2021).

4   İsmail Yürük, "Şemsüddin Muhammed b. Eşref el-Hüseynî es-Semerkandî'nin Belli Başlı Kelâmî Görüşleri: Allah ve İman Anlayışı" (Erzurum: Atatürk University, Institute of Social Sciences, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1987); Yusuf Okşar, "Şemsüddin Muhammed b. Eşref es-Semerkandî'nin İlmü'l-Âfâk ve'l-Enfüs Adlı Eserinin Tahkiki, Tercümesi ve Değerlendirmesi" (Adana: Çukurova University Institute of Social Sciences, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2016), 94-7; Yusuf Okşar, "Şemsüddîn es-Semerkandî'nin İlahi Sıfatlar Problemine Yaklaşımı", *Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University Journal of Faculty of Theology* 34 (2019), 175–212; Mehmet Cüneyt Gökçe, "Şemseddin es-Semerkandî'nin Sem'iyyat Konularına Bakışı", *Eurasian Journal of Social and Economic Research (EJSER)* 8/1 (2021), 191–204.

Because literal proofs are formed by combining words in a specific order, this study will first discuss how words signify their meanings based on al-Samarqandī's books on logic and philosophy. As for his kalām books, the article will determine his views based on matters relating to *sam'iyyāt* (eschatology) as the main application area of the discussion, for he did not treat the issue of the definiteness of literal proofs in any separate chapter in these books. The discussion regarding the definiteness of literal proofs is pertinent to prioritizing reason over revelation when they conflict with each other; in other words, the idea is that reason indicates definite knowledge while revelation indicates probability. In conclusion, due to no separate chapters being found regarding the epistemological value of literal proofs in al-Samarqandī's books on *kalām* or logic, his books on philosophy and logic will be used to discuss the signification of words, their meanings, and the types of significations. Meanwhile, his books on *kalām* (i.e., *al-Mu'taqad*, *al-Saḥāif*, and *al-Ma'ārif*) will be referred to when dealing with the definiteness of literal proofs. However, the article will firstly analyze the meanings of proof and literal proof in al-Samarqandī's system.

In *Ādāb* and *Qistās al-Afkār*, al-Samarqandī defines proof as that which entails the knowledge of the proven as soon as it is known.[5] In *Sharhu Mansha' al-Naẓar*, he adds the term probability to this definition. Accordingly, a proof is that which entails the knowledge or a presumption about something else upon being known or presumed. In this definition, the term knowledge (*'ilm*) is used for definite matters, while presumption is used for presumptive, possible, and probable matters.[6] In al-Samarqandī's first definition above, the terms of proof and sign have entirely different meanings, whereas in the second definition, proof also refers to sign. In *Ādāb*, al-Samarqandī differentiates between proof and sign, associating proof with definite knowledge and sign with presumption.[7]

By dividing proofs into several categories based on their relative fields, al-Samarqandī makes a tripartite classification of the proofs related to jurisprudence and dialectics as rational proofs, revelational proofs, and combined rational and

5   Adem Güney, "Kemâlüddîn Mes'ûd b. Hüseyin eş-Şirvânî'nin (905/1500) Şerhu Âdâbi's-Semerkandî Adlı Eserinin Tahkik ve Değerlendirmesi" (Sakarya: Sakarya University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 2010), 143; Şemsüddin es-Semerkandî, *Kıstâsü'l-efkâr: Düşüncenin Kıstası (eleştirmeli metin-çeviri)*, trans. Necmettin Pehlivan (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2014), 85.

6   Necmettin Pehlivan - Hadi Ensar Ceylan, "Şemseddin Muhammed b. Eşref es-Semerkandî el-Hüseynî et-Türkî'ye Ait İki Yeni Eser: Şerhu Menşe'i'n-Nazar ve Şerhu'n-Nikât", *Nazariyat*, 6/1 (2020), 166.

7   Güney, "Kemâlüddîn Mes'ûd b. Hüseyin eş-Şirvânî'nin (905/1500) Şerhu Âdâbi's-Semerkandî Adlı Eserinin Tahkik ve Değerlendirmesi", 143–6.

revelational proofs. In classical logic, however, he categorizes them as literal and non-literal proofs. For instance, in *Sharhu Mansha' al-Naẓar*, he divides the proofs into two categories: mere rational proofs and combined rational and revelational proofs. He explains the reason for his exclusion of mere revelational proofs by claiming the nonexistence of a proof consisting of only revelation, for behind the revelational proof lies the belief in its conveyor's truthfulness, which is known by reason and not by revelation, and to know a proof by revelation would lead to a vicious circle (*dawr* or *tasalsul*).[8] Based on all his explanations above, al-Samarqandī considers the Qur'ān, Sunna, and Ijmā (consensus of the *'ulamā*) to be revelational proofs, while placing syllogism, implication, and vicious circle into the category of rational proofs. In his logic book titled *Qistās al-Afkār*, he divided proofs into two categories as literal and non-literal proofs and examines them in two parts: conventional (*waḍ'ī*) and non-conventional (*ghayr al-waḍ'ī*) proofs. Conventional proofs are again subdivided into two parts, namely those that are derived from the senses (*ḥissī*) and those that are rational, the first falling under the category of literal proofs and the other falling under the category of non-literal proofs. al-Samarqandī exemplified *ḥissī* proofs using signs and monuments (*nuṣ'ab*)and rational proofs using syllogisms.[9] Non-literal and non-conventional proofs that occur through natural intuition, such as the exclamation "ahh!" uttered out of pain, are called natural (*ṭabī'ī*) proofs, and those that do not occur in such way, such as the sound coming from behind the wall indicating the person speaking, are called intuitional (*ḥadsī*) proofs. The latter is also called rational signification.[10] Due to the subject matter in the present article being about literal proofs, *ḥissī* and rational proofs will not be addressed here.

1. The Issue of the Epistemological Value of Literal Proofs Prior to al-Samarqandī

Language is constitutive of communication among people. However, because linguistic data involve signs, they often may not convey their meanings precisely or entirely without the help of a supporting element such as a contextual connection (*qarīna*). This is because linguistic signs, similar to non-linguistic signs, take their

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8   Pehlivan - Ceylan, "Şemseddin Muhammed b. Eşref es-Semerkandî el-Hüseynî et-Türkî'ye Ait İki Yeni Eser: Şerhu Menşe'i'n-Nazar ve Şerhu'n-Nikât", 167.

9   Samarqandī, Kısṭās al-afkār, 85.

10   *Ibid*, 85.

meanings from the society in which they have been formed and change in line with different circumstances. To be more precise, a linguistic sign, depending on time and place, may undergo semantic narrowing, broadening, or some other semantic change.[11] For instance, al-Rāzī pointed to linguistic changes to state that meanings exist with people unchanged, while the utterances used to indicate these meanings change according to time and place. For example, the meaning of *hājj*, which had been used to mean "to intend" in Jahiliya Arabic, changed with the advent of Islam and underwent semantical narrowing in the sense of visiting certain places for worship. Similarly, the word *dābba*, meaning "a moving creature," was used to refer to the donkey in Egypt and the horse in Iraq.[12] Also, the Turkish word *aşevi* had initially been replaced by the Italian word *lokanta* and then by the French-origin word *restoran* and is presently used, however, to describe a place that gives free meals to the poor.[13]

Previously described linguistic changes in words generally take place over a long period. However, because semantic differences of such kind are ultimately under the control of the speaker, words may undergo a semantic change at any time. Pinpointing the exact time of the related change is very challenging as the process of change that words undergo generally takes place over a long period. In addition, if the addressed person does not ask about the meaning of a word that a speaker uses in a different sense during a conversation, that person might misunderstand it and not notice the change/difference, and this can obscure the meanings of words. Apart from changes and transformations in the meanings of signs, linguistic factors such as metaphors (*majāz*) and homonymies (*mushāraka*) muddy the signification of words and lay them open to various semantic possibilities. That being said, the aspects described above and other similar ones make linguistic signification vague and keep the addressed person from definitively grasping the sense intended by the speaker.

No disagreement exists in theory about the fact that literal proofs that have gone through the previously mentioned changes indicate definite knowledge when transmitted through uninterrupted transmission (*tawātur*) and that they should be respected. Despite that, several issues have arisen in the application of this accepted

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11   Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Khalq al-Qur'ān bayn al-Muʿtazila and Ahl al-Sunna* (Bairut: Dār al-Jīl, 1992), 52.

12   For a detailed explanation, see: Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī, *Nafāʾis al-uṣūl fī sharh al-Maḥṣūl* (Mecca: Maktabatu Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1416), 2, 569.

13   Bahattin Sav, "Anlam Değişmeleri Üzerine Artzamanlı Bir İnceleme", *Journal of Gazi University Faculty of Education* 23/1 (2003), 154.

principle. For instance, different opinions have been expressed about whether a revelational proof whose literal sense is in contradiction with reason should be respected or interpreted (*ta'wīl*). The critical point of this controversy is whether or not literal proofs indicate definiteness, because when one assumes a literal proof to indicate definiteness, it cannot be interpreted even when contradicting reason. Instead, literal proofs can be interpreted when they are assumed to indicate probability, not definiteness.

The traditions of *kalām* and jurisprudence have discussed how literal proofs signify their meanings and, thus, whether literal proofs, especially linguistic data, indicate definiteness. In this context, many theories have been put forth concerning the definiteness of literal proofs. Identifying theories that had previously been presented about the issue prior to identifying al-Samarqandī's opinion will assist in finding the schools of thought that influenced al-Samarqandī as well as any differing approaches to the problem. In this respect, looking into Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 688/1289) classification of proofs as had been presented up to al-Samarqandī's time would be appropriate in regard to the definiteness of literal proofs. The related classification is as follows:

(i) Literal proofs indicate definiteness.

(ii) Literal proofs do not indicate definiteness.

(iii) Literal proofs can only be achieved by contextual connections that are directly experienced (*mushāhada*) or transmitted through an uninterrupted transmission.

While al-Isfahānī attributed the first opinion to most Ash'arites and Mu'tazilites, he did not address the second one. As for the third opinion, he associated it with al-Rāzī.[14] Khalīd al-Azharī attributed Hashwiyya with the idea of the definiteness of literal proofs and Mu'tazilites and most Ash'arites with the idea of the probability thereof. He also ascribed the notions of *qarīna* and *mushāhada* to Āmidī (d. 631/1233), al-Rāzī, al-Ījī (d. 756/1355), and Taftāzānī (d. 792/1390).[15] Even though the attribution of the ideas to their owners is implausible, al-Isfahānī's

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14   Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Kāshif 'an al-Maḥṣūl fī 'ilm al-uṣūl* (Bairut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1419), 2/494.

15   Abū al-Walīd al-Azharī, al-Simār al-yawāni' 'alā jam' al-jawāmi' li al-Ṣubkī (Rabat: Wizārat al-awqāf wa al-shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya, 1427), 1, 79–80.

classification has been transmitted by succeeding scholars with minor changes.[16] One particular study on the issue categorized the opinions on the probability of proofs as follows:
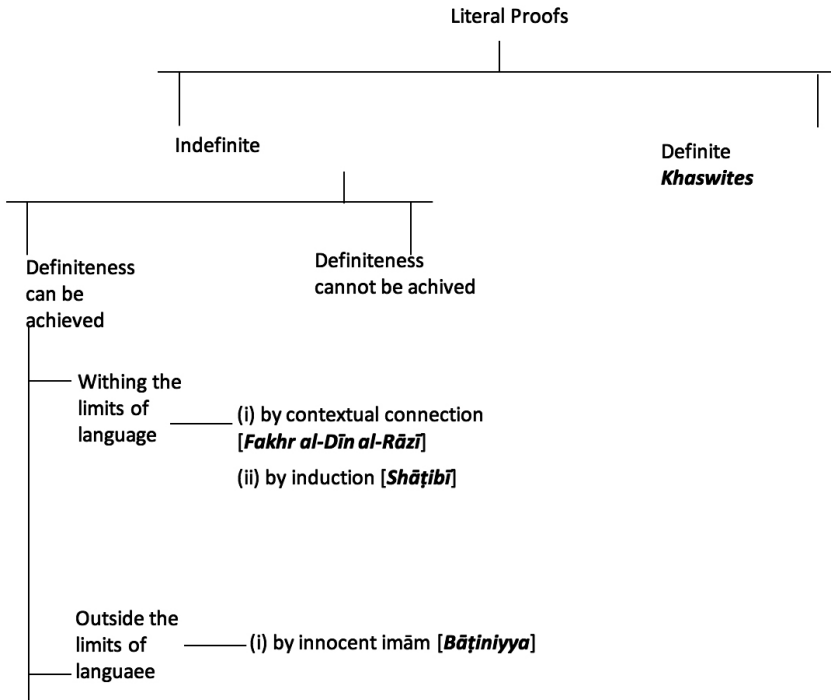

Figure 1. Opinions on the definiteness of literal proofs.

According to this classification, al-Rāzī and Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388) maintained that literal proofs do not indicate definiteness but definiteness can be achieved within the limits of the language. Despite their differing opinions, the Khashwites, Ibn Taymiyya, and Ibn Qayyim al-Jazwiyya (d. 751/1350) all stated that literal proofs indicate definiteness on their own/by themselves.[17] Moreover, the Batinites and some self-claimed Sufi groups argued for the definiteness of some non-linguistic elements rather than looking for the definiteness within the limits of the language. Even though different opinions have been found on the issue, two theories in particular have prevailed in the Islamic tradition. According to the

16   Azharī, *al-Simār al-yawāniʿ*, 1/79–80.
17   Ṭaqiyy al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾu taʿāruḍ al-ʾaql wa al-naql (Muwāfaqatu ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl li-sarīḥ al-maʿqūl, Muwāfaqatu sarīḥ al-maʿqūl li-saḥīḥ al-manqūl)* (Riyad: Jāmiʿa al-Imām Muḥammad ibn Ṣuʿūd al-Islāmiyya, 1399), 1/80.

Ash'arites of the later period, while syllogisms all have premises that are necessary (*ḍarūrī*) or certain (*yaqīnī*) and indicate definite knowledge, revelational proofs that consist of linguistic signs do not indicate definiteness in terms of signifying their meanings, even if their chain of ascription (*sanad*) is *mutawātir*.[18] However, in Ibn Taymiya's opinion, literal proofs indicate definiteness.[19]

2. The Epistemological Value of Literal Proofs According to al-Samarqandī

al-Samarqandī makes a point of keeping a balance between reason and revelation while explaining kalām-related issues. What is meant by keeping a balance is not equating reason with revelation but assuming the predominance of reason over revelation. To be more precise, when a conflict occurs between reason and revelation, reason must be prioritized over revelation. According to al-Samarqandī, the reason for this is the fact that revelational knowledge is not valid without reason. This is because the Prophet's words can only indicate knowledge in the case of him speaking the truth, and this can only be known through a miracle, which in turn can only be known by reason. Therefore, the relationship between reason and revelation is such that reason is more effective than revelation, so when reason is considered faulty, revelational proofs must also be considered the same.[20] Based on this, if a rational proof shows the impossibility of something, the literal meaning of the revelational proof must be abandoned, and the proof must be interpreted outside of the literal meaning of the related text.

al-Samarqandī does not take revelation into account about the issues related to rational signification. Similarly, his opinion is that reason is not an independent proof in *sam'iyyāt*-related matters and is insufficient to prove these types of matters. For instance, he states that reason is not an independent source of knowledge regarding God's speech (*kalāmullāh*) or God's visible appearance (*ru'yatullāh*). In other words, reason can only decide the possibility of these matters. Issues related to the afterlife, such as *ḥashr* (resurrection), *ḥasāb* (reckoning), *mukāfāt* (reward),

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18   For an example, see: Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād ilā qawāṭiʿ al-adillati fī uṣūl al-iʿtiqād* (Qahira: Maktaba al-Saqāfat al-Dīniyya, 2009), 280-2; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl fī ʿilmi uṣūl al-fiqh* (Bairūt: Muassasa al-Risāla, 1412), 1/90–391.

19   Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾu taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql*, 1/80.

20   Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī, *al-Ṣaḥāʾif al-ilāhiyya* (Quwait: Maktaba al-Falāḥ, 1405), 374; Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī, *al-Maʿārif fī Sharḥ al-ṣaḥāʾif* (Amman: Jāmiʿa al-ʾulūm al-Islāmiyya, 2012), 286; For an example about the balance between reason and revelation, see: al-Samarqandī, *al-Ṣaḥāʾif*, 394.

'adhāb (punishment), and ru'yatullāh, are also considered in the same manner.[21] Therefore, Samarqandī relies on revelational proof regarding the issues in which reason is not independent. For instance, when discussing whether miracles of saints (karāmāt) are possible, he gives Omar's and Ali's miracles of saints as examples.

al-Samarqandī claims that a social agreement must be present for a literal or non-literal hypothetical, suppositional, and presumptive (ẓannī) proof to be understood. However, if a person is unaware of the said agreement, they will not be able to understand the meaning of that proof. For instance, when an agreement exists about using the index finger to indicate an object intended to be shown, if this characteristic of the related sign is known by the addressed person, then this sign is indicative of a meaning. However, a stranger unaware of this use of the index finger needs to know the agreement to understand the given meaning. Otherwise, the sign is unable to perform its function. This also shows that conventional proofs operate in two directions. Namely, even though conventional proofs take their meaning from a social agreement, this agreement is not fixed and varies according to its addressees. Given that a sign that is agreed upon takes its meaning from individuals, a society can change a previously existing agreement. Accordingly, while the meaning of conventional proofs is fixed in one aspect, it is also changeable in another aspect. Consequently, this obscures the signification of linguistic signs.

al-Samarqandī categorized literal and conventional proofs based on their significations, and according to him, a word's signification of its entire designated meaning is called correspondence (muṭābaqāt). For instance, the word human indicates a rational animal through muṭābaqāt. On the other hand, only indicating the rational or animal constituents denoted by the word human is called signification by inclusion (taḍammun). As for the word's reference to "that which can attain knowledge," this is the word implying a connotation beyond its designation and is called signification by implication (iltizām).[22]

Signification by inclusion and implication are directly related to muṭābaqāt; therefore, if a word's meaning that is signified by mutābaqāt is not known, then its taḍammunī and iltizāmī meanings are indeterminable. For example, if the word horse was not known to denote (by muṭābaqāt) a neighing animal, the word's indication of "neighing" as being taḍammunī would also be unknown. Similarly,

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21   al-Samarqandī, al-Ṣaḥāʾif, 444; al-Samarqandī, al-Maʿārif, 279; Also see. al-Samarqandī, al-Muʿtaqad li iʿtiqadi ahl al-Islām (Ankara: Araştırma Yayınları, 2011), 10.

22   al-Samarqandī, Qiṣṭāş al-afkār, 85.

the word ceiling in reference to wall being *iltizāmī* would also be unknown without signification by *mutābaqāt*. Hence, a word's primary signification is *muṭābaqāt*, and the other two are the extensions of the meaning as denoted by *muṭābaqāt*.

According to al-Samarqandī, inclusion and implication require signification by *muṭābaqāt*. Namely, something's signification of its constituent or concomitant can only be understood after being signified by its designated name (*musammā*). However, correspondence does not entail inclusion. For example, a word such as point that is coined for a simple meaning does not have a *taḍammunī* signification because the meaning signified by the word point does not have a constituent meaning. Similarly, *muṭābaqāt* does not entail implication because the designated name is able to lack having an apparent concomitant. According to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, however, *muṭābaqāt* entails implication due to thinking about the meaning of a word entailing the concepts internal to this word.[23] al-Samarqandī disagreed with Rāzī's opinion and objected to him as follows: Conceptualizing words' meanings does not always entail the implicated meaning.[24] For instance, one may only conceptualize "rational animal" for the word human and not "the animal that is capable of writing and knowing."

Based on the classification described above, al-Samarqandī states the prerequisite of indication by implication to be not the external but the mental entailment.[25] Namely, a difference exists between the implication of two or more things regarding one another in the mind and the actualization of this implication in the external world. Therefore, associating the implicating with the implicated differs between the mind and the external world. The association of these two existing in the mind is called mental entailment (*al-luzūm al-dhihnī*). For example, when the word sun is conceptualized, the meaning of light occurs without any effort. It is a mental implication that results from experience. On the other hand, the occurrence of something in the external world that causes the occurrence of another thing is called extramental entailment (*al-luzūm al-khārijī*). For instance, sunrise is a word that entails/implicates the occurrence of daytime. However, no mental entailment exists between the sun and daytime.[26] Thus, mental entailment is necessary for signification by implication, because if no mental entailment is

23   Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fī al-manṭiq wa al-ḥikma* (Amman: al-'Aṣlain li al-dirāsāt wa al-nashr, 1441/2021), 42.

24   al-Samarqandī, *Sharḥ al-Qiṣṭāṣ*, (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Rağıp Paşa, 892), 10b.

25   Samarqandī, *Qiṣṭāṣ al-afkār*, 85.

26   Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta'rīfāt*, (Bairut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1983), 191.

present, the related word will not imply any meaning beyond its designated name. In other words, a word initially is not coined to imply an extramental meaning. For example, blindness is something non-existential and signifies seeing, which is a disposition by implication. In other words, although blindness does not entail seeing in the external world and is even contradictory to it, it does entail this in the mind.[27] Accordingly, one can say that extramental and mental contaminants of words obscure the meanings of expressions, because a word can signify its designated name alongside its mental and extramental connotations, which causes the meaning's indication to be indefinite.

Due to the present study's focus on the epistemological value of literal proofs in al-Samarqandī's thought, all three connotations of a word (i.e., signification by correspondence, inclusion, and implication) fall within its scope, because when expressing an intention, a *mutakallim* may refer to the metaphor rather than the truth. For instance, al-Samarqandī associates significations by correspondence, inclusion, and implication in *Sharh al-Mansha' al-Naẓar* with truth and metaphor. According to him, a word that signifies all the components of its designated name (e.g., the word human connotating a rational animal) is called a truth. However, sometimes a word signifies only one component of its designated name. This component is either a part of the designated name (e.g., the word human simply signifying rational) or a mental concomitant of said name, such as when the word human signifies "that which is capable of knowing." Having the word human signify a part or mental concomitant of its denotation is called metaphor.[28] In that regard, the possibility of a word to imply a metaphor (i.e., signification by inclusion and implication) must be emphasized to cause the signification of revelational proofs to be indefinite, making it open to various alternatives.[29] To be more precise, a word's openness to metaphorical meanings obstructs the definiteness of its signification. For example, when the two meanings of the word *istawā*, namely meaning to be seated (truth) and to rule over (metaphor), are considered in the context of the verse "God *istawā* the throne" (Qur'an 20:5), both meanings seem possible. According to *kalām* scholars, the second meaning is intended here, so the first meaning is disregarded. Based on rational proofs, the reason for this is the impossibility of God being seated on a throne (i.e., the rational connection [*al-*

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27   Afḍal al-Dīn al-Khūnajī, *Kashf al-asrār 'an ghawāmiz al-afkār* (Tahran: Muassasa-i Pajūhash-i Hikmat wa Falsafa-i Īrān, 1389), 11; Ibn Amīr al-Hājj, *al-Taqrīr wa al-takhbīr* (Bairut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1403), 1/133.

28   Pehlivan - Ceylan, "Şemseddin Muhammed b. Eşref es-Semerkandî el-Hüseynî et-Türkî'ye Ait İki Yeni Eser", 167.

29   Cengiz - Fazlıoğlu, "Fahreddin Er-Râzî'nin 'Dilde Kesinlik' Sorununa Yaklaşımı: Tespit ve Tercih", 42.

qarīna al-ʿaqliyya]). However, some scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya contrarily did not deem this word's use for God impossible and claimed it to be used in its true sense.[30] This variation in the connotations of the word *istawā* is substantial in demonstrating that signification by correspondence, inclusion, and implication impedes the signification of words.

Literal proofs consist of words that refer to various meanings through signification by correspondence, inclusion, and implication. Therefore, the presumptive (*ẓannī*) nature of the linguistic structures constituting these proofs prevents literal proofs from immediately indicating definiteness. In al-Samarqandī's thought, the epistemological value of literal proofs in addition to the possibilities mentioned above appears to be directly related to the interpretation of the obscure (*mutashābih*) verses in the Qur'an. Accordingly, whether the literal meaning of God's scriptural attributes should be taken into consideration or whether these attributes should be interpreted or relegated to God is related to whether those who are of high standing in knowledge (*rāsikhūn*) as mentioned in the verse below are able to know the meaning of the obscure verses.

﴿هُوَ الَّذۤي اَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ اٰيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ اُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَاُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَاَمَّا الَّذينَ فۤي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوۤيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوۤيلَهُ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ اٰمَنَّا بِه كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ اِلَّا اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ﴾

He is the one who sent you the Book. Among its verses there are those muḥkam, they are the basis of the Book, while the others are mutashābih. Those who have deviance in their hearts, seeking to cause disruption and wanting to interpret, follow the mutashābih ones. Yet, only God knows its interpretation. Those who have a high standing in knowledge say "We believed in Him, all is from God." Yet, only people of reason are aware of it. (Qur'ān 3:7)

While describing Mujassima's approach toward religious texts (*naṣṣ*), al-Samarqandī gives an explanation of the above verse. According to him, *khabarī* attributes that belong to humans and cannot be associated with God must be interpreted (*ta'wīl*) or relegated to Him (*tafwīḍ*) because revelational proofs

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30   Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ al-fatāwā* (Madina: Majmaʿ al-Malik Fakhd, 1426), 5/527.

cannot contradict rational proofs. Here, Samarqandī is discussing the manner of the interpretation of the related verses and refers to the verse above as evidence of relegation. In his opinion, a pause occurs after the expression "Yet, only God knows its interpretation." Therefore, the phrase "those who are of high standing in knowledge" should be regarded as the subject of the sentence, and the predicate of this sentence should be "say." Therefore, the meaning of the verse should be "Yet, only God knows its interpretation. As for those who are of high standing in knowledge, they say, 'We believe in Him, all is from God,'" and not "However, only God knows its interpretation as well as those who are of high standing in knowledge." al-Samarqandī reasoned why the verse should be interpreted in the described manner based on the following points:

- The literal meaning of the verse is "Yet, only God knows its interpretation. As for those who are of high standing in knowledge, they say 'We believe in Him, all is from God.'"

- Ibn Abbas also reported that a period occurs after the word "God."

- In the copy from Ubayy, the verse is written as "Yet, only God knows its interpretation. As for those who are of high standing in knowledge, they say, 'We believe in Him...'"

- In the copy from ʿAbdullah ibn Masʿūd, the same verse appears as "Certainly, its interpretation is from God. As for those who are of high standing in knowledge, they say, 'We believe in Him...'" (وإنَّ تأويلَه عند الله والرَّاسخون يقولون آمنَّا). The word *rāsikhūn* [those of high standing in knowledge]´is in the nominative case in this expression. However, if this word were to be ascribed to God, it would have been in the ablative case. Due to being in the nominative case, this expression is understood to consist of two separate sentences.

Stating how the above reasoning can be opposed by introducing the definition of knowledge as "a belief that corresponds to the facts and contains certainty,"[31] al-Samarqandī points out that the disappearance of knowledge does not require the disappearance of its elements. Hence, knowledge being negated in the verse does not mean that these people's beliefs do not correspond to the truth. Moreover, the verse may also mean that no one can know the meanings of the obscure verses initially, but they can perceive it through divine inspiration.[32]

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31   For Samarqandi's definition of knowledge, see: Mehdi Cengiz, "Şemseddin es-Semerkandî'de Bilginin Tanımı Problemi", *Tasavvur* 8/1 (June 2022) 161–83.

32   al-Samarqandī, *al-Maʿārif*, 287–8.

Although al-Samarqandī states the method of relegating the meaning of the *khabarī* attributes to God to be closer to salvation as it was the method of the *ṣahāba*, *ṭābi'ūn*, and *zāhid imāms*,[33] he also considers the method of interpretation permissible and practiced it himself. For instance, while explaining the verse "God *istawā* the throne," (Qur'an 20:5) he notes that the word *istawā* can also mean to be equivalent, to investigate, to be superior, and to be mighty, and therefore the verse can be interpreted in different ways.[34]

Despite permitting the use of relegation and interpretation in obscure verses, al-Samarqandī does not take the literal meanings of God's scriptural attributes when interpreting them and justifies his stance based on the following arguments, which indicate that revelational proofs cannot contradict rational proofs.

(i) Revelational proofs are open to various possibilities such as transmission (*naql*), metaphor (*majāz*), homonymy (*ishtirāk*), omission (*ḥadhf*), ellipsis (*iḍmār*), particularization (*takhṣīṣ*), and invalidation (*naskh*). Moreover, because narrators (*rāwī*) have the possibility of making a mistake during the process of transmitting words' meanings through the rules of morphology-syntax, as well as *taqdīm-ta'khīr* being possible, revelational proofs rather than rational proofs are therefore open to interpretation.

(ii) The consideration of revelation as evidence is contingent upon knowing the existence of God, upon believing in His omniscience as a free agent and that He has sent prophets, and upon knowing miracles and prophethood. However, these are perceived not through revelation but through reason. Therefore, [the literal meaning of a revelation that contradicts reason], in other words prioritizing revelation over reason and rational premises, harms the evidential characteristic of reason.

After revealing these two arguments, he states that when a conflict occurs between reason and revelation, either revelation should be interpreted appropriately, or its meaning should be relegated to God.[35]

al-Samarqandī associates the idea of the indefiniteness of revelational proofs with the fact that words as verbal indicators are open to a variety of possible meanings and environmental conditions and claims that literal proofs do not

33   *Ibid*, 287.
34   *Ibid*, 286–7.
35   *Ibid*, 286.

indicate definite knowledge. This approach of al-Samarqandī has parallels with al-Rāzī's opinion, in which revelational proofs do not indicate definite knowledge on their own. Furthermore, al-Samarqandī's justifications above are similar to al-Rāzī's reasoning because by using the same points, al-Rāzī had also argued for the prioritization of reason over revelation.[36] The possibilities that al-Samarqandī enumerated to explain the presumptive nature of revelational proofs (i.e., *naql*, *majāz*, *ishtirāk*, *ḥadhf*, *iḍmār*, *takhṣīṣ*, *naskh*, and *taqdīm-ta'khīr*) and the possibility narrators have to make mistakes are identical to those al-Rāzī had listed. This shows that, despite not referring to his name, al-Samarqandī had been influenced by al-Rāzī regarding the definiteness of revelational proofs.

Comparing the possibilities the two scholars deemed to be obstacles to the definiteness of revelational proofs in the table below is appropriate for showing al-Rāzī's influence on al-Samarqandī.

Table 1.
Factors Hindering the Definiteness of Literal Proofs

	Possibilites listed by Samarqandi	**Possibilities listed by al-Razi**
1	Transmission of language	Transmission of language
2	Metaphor	Metaphor
3	Homonymy	Homonymy
4	Omission	Omission
5	Ellipses	Ellipses
6	Particularization	Particularization
7	Invalidation	Invalidation
8	The possible mistakes that might have been made by those who transfer the meanings of words	The possible mistakes that might have been made by those who transfer the meanings of words
9	The possible mistakes that might have been made by those who transfer the rule of *ṣarf-naḥw*	The possible mistakes that might have been made by those who transfer the rule of *ṣarf-naḥw*
10	*Taqdīm* and *ta'khīr*	*Taqdīm* and *ta'khīr*

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36   Fahreddîn al-Dīn el-Râzî, *Ana Meseleleriyle Kelâm ve Felsefe: el-Muhassal*, trans. Eşref Altaş, (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2019), 44.

Even though some differences occur in the number and names of the possibilities that prevent revelational proofs from being definite, al-Rāzī almost always refers to logical contradiction (*al-muʿāriḍ al-ʿaqlī*) whenever he speaks of the related possibilities.[37] However, al-Samarqandī does not include logical contradiction in *al-Maʿārif*. When considering that al-Rāzī refers to logical contradictions in all but one of the nine works where he discussed this matter,[38] the question arises as to why al-Samarqandī did not mention this possibility. The reason for this is al-Samarqandī's second argument mentioned above regarding revelational proofs not contradicting rational proofs. This is because what a logical contradiction is has already been explained by the second justification that states consideration of revelation as evidence to be known by reason and not revelation and that reason should therefore be prioritized when a conflict occurs between revelation and reason. Accordingly, the fact that al-Samarqandī had, unlike al-Rāzī, counted logical contradiction as a possibility different from the previously stated ones is critical for the current study. In fact, the absence of logical contradiction is the reason for using either method of relegation or interpretation while explaining a revelational text whose literal meaning is contradictory to reason.

While analyzing the issue of the definiteness of revelational proofs in *al-Maʿārif*, al-Samarqandī does not expound on how these types of proofs indicate definiteness. Based on this, one can argued that literal proofs never or rarely indicate definiteness according to al-Samarqandī, just like Ibn Labbān. However, this is inaccurate, because al-Samarqandī refers to various Qurʾānic verses and claims the definiteness of the related verses while discussing the possibility of bodily resurrection, yet gives a justification for this using the *fa in qāla* method (a method of speculation) after realizing the discrepancy between his claims about the indefiniteness of literal proofs and the bodily resurrection. al-Samarqandī states the argument that literal proofs do not indicate definiteness and therefore bodily resurrection cannot be attested to be able to be rebutted as follows: Prophets' clarifications about the intent [of these verses] is transmitted by *tawātur*, and therefore definiteness is achieved.[39] Even though the only reason for the definiteness of literal proofs seems to be by *tawātur*, al-Samarqandī reveals in his *ḥāshiya* that these religious texts (*naṣṣ*) follow from definite contextual connections. For instance, the interrogative expressions in the verses "And he has set forth for Us a parable and forgotten his own creation saying, 'Who revives these

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37   For the possibility al-Rāzī mentioned, see: Cengiz, *Dilde Kesinlik Sorunu*, 71–203.

38   *Ibid*, 194.

39   al- Samarqandī, *al-Ṣaḥāʾif*, 442.

bones, decayed as they are?'" (Qur'ān 36:78) and "Does man suppose that We shall not gather his bones?" (Qur'ān 75:3) are contextual connections for the following verses: "They will say, 'Are we to be restored as we were before? What! When we have become decayed bones? They say, "This, then, would be a ruinous return! Yet it shall be but a single cry." (Qur'ān 79:10-14).[40]

The above passage cited from al-Samarqandī about the bodily resurrection, especially the part about taking revelational proofs as evidence despite their indefiniteness, has the same meaning as what al-Rāzī states in *al-Muḥaṣṣal*. al-Samarqandī could even be said to have quoted al-Rāzī without mentioning his name. Similarly, al-Rāzī also offers an argument for the bodily resurrection: Hadiths narrated from the Prophet are not pertinent to the spiritual resurrection but to the bodily resurrection. Therefore, bodily resurrection is not a matter agreed upon by all prophets. The signification of the Prophet's sayings is not definite but presumptive. Literal signification does not indicate definiteness. al-Rāzī responds to this objection in the following manner: The fact that the Prophet established the bodily resurrection is justified by *tawātur* and not open to interpretation.[41]

Accordingly, what al-Rāzī says in *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl* is noteworthy. In his opinion, God can create all possible things, and because bodily resurrection is possible, *samʿī* (revelational) proofs can be used in this matter. Consequently, the occurrence of the bodily resurrection, regarding which consensus exists among the prophets, must be said to be definite. al-Rāzī explains the way to respond to the rebuttal of one who refutes the consensus of prophets and argues that expressions present in the religious texts about the bodily resurrection are not definite due to being literal proofs as follows: "For this reason, we did not use a verse or a hadith as evidence but instead refer to the bodily resurrection present in the religion of the prophets."[42]

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40   al- Samarqandī, *al-Maʿārif*, 319. Translations of the verses are taken from *The Study Quran*: Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al. (ed.), *The Study Quran: a new translation and commentary* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2015), 1083, 1446, 1470.

41   Naṣīr al-dīn al-Ṭūṣī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal* (together with *Muḥassalu afkār al-mutaqaddimīn*), ed. Ṭāḥā ʿAbd al-Raūf Saʿd (Eygpt: Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyya, n.d.), 233–4; Fahreddin er-Râzî, *Ana Meseleleriyle Kelâm ve Felsefe*, 211.

42   Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl fī dirāyat al-uṣūl* (Beirut: Dār al-Ẓahāir, 1436), 4/125–134; ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥu Maʿālimi uṣūl al-dīn*, (Cairo: Dār al-Fatḥ li al-dirāsa wa al-nashr, 1431), 603; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Masāil al-khamsūn fī uṣūl al-dīn* (Cairo: al-Maktab al-Thaqāfī li al-Nashr, 1989), 65; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyya, 1406), 2/60–61,63; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Ishāra fī ʿilm al-kalām* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Azhariyya li al-turāth, 2009), 388.

Based on what has been explicated above, al-Samarqandī claims that even though a revelational proof does not indicate definiteness without an indicator, definiteness can be achieved through various indicators such as contextual connections and, unlike al-Rāzī, he takes the *context* and the *question* as indicators and holds that they lead to definite knowledge. However, instead of considering revelation as evidence, al-Rāzī relies on the consensus of prophets in order to reach definite knowledge. Consequently, while literal proofs in al-Rāzī's opinion appear to need indicators that are *mutawātir* or observed by the senses in order to indicate definiteness, indicators leading to definiteness are not limited in al-Samarqandī's opinion to what al-Rāzī had stated; instead, definiteness can be achieved through contextual connections.

Conclusion

Unlike rational proofs consisting of propositions of certitude (*yaqiniyyāt*), revelational proofs composed of verbal signs do not indicate definite knowledge. The reason for this is that linguistic data constituting revelational proofs change conventionally according to time and place. In addition, words being open to possibilities stemming from the nature of the language, such as figures of speech and homonymy, obscure the signification of linguistic signs to their relative meanings.

By examining the proofs that were classified in different respects into two parts (i.e., literal and non-literal) in the discipline of logic, al-Samarqandī states the signification of words regarding their relevant meanings happens through convention (*mutābaqā*), inclusion (*taḍammun*), and implication (*iltizām*), with the last two kinds of signification constituting the basis of metaphor as studied in rhetoric. For this reason, the signification of words regarding their meanings weakens and becomes obscure. al-Samarqandī, similar to his predecessor al-Rāzī, argued for the definiteness of rational proofs and the presumptiveness of revelational proofs. He proposed two reasons for his argument: the possibility of transmitters (*rāwī*) making a mistake during the process of transmitting words' meanings and the rules of morphology-syntax and the possibility of words being subject to transmission (*naql*), figures of speech (*majāz*), homonymy (*ishtirāk*), omission (*ḥaḍhf*), ellipses (*iḍmār*), particularization (*takhṣīṣ*), invalidation (*naskh*), and putting forward-taking off (*taqdīm-ta'khīr*).

al-Samarqandī agrees with al-Rāzī on the assumption that literal proofs do not indicate definiteness in the absence of contextual connections. That being said, even

though al-Rāzī maintained that literal proofs do not indicate definite knowledge, he believed the possibility of achieving definiteness through contextual connections transmitted by way of *tawātur*. While al-Rāzī provides no explanation or example about the contextual connection, al-Samarqandī dissimilarly claimed on the issue of bodily resurrection that the question (*su'āl*) and context (*siyāq*) are contextual connections leading to definiteness. Based on what has been represented here, the theory of the presumptiveness and probability of literal proofs appears to be adaptable and to have been interpreted diversely and further developed within the *kalām* tradition.

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