

**THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF KNOWING GOD  
ACCORDING TO AL-QĀDĪ<sup>c</sup> ABD AL-JABBĀR**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own composition and any references made to the sources are duly acknowledged. The thesis also has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

**Mohd Radhi Ibrahim**  
22<sup>nd</sup> May 2009

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## ABSTRACT

ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025) represented one of the most outstanding Muslim theologians in the fourth/tenth century. His importance stems from the fact that his writings are the longest that have survived among Muʿtazilite works. This study examines the relationship between ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s epistemology and his theological arguments on knowing God. Study of theological epistemology is important in order to identify the foundation of his theological arguments, which in turn will enable us to recognize the roots of contention among the *mutakallimūn*. The thesis also examines critical responses from the late Muʿtazilites toward ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theological epistemology.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One outlines the historical context of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theological epistemology. The topics discussed are the origin and the development of epistemology in Islamic theology. I will then briefly outline the biography of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, which includes an introduction to his scholarship and a brief examination of the sociopolitical background of his time. Chapter Two examines ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s view on the definition of knowledge. After a brief introduction on the theological background of the study, I will analyse ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s various definitions of knowledge in his works and examine the responses from the late Muʿtazilites to his arguments.

Chapter Three analyses ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s view on the types of knowledge. This discussion is important since the differences among the types of knowledge will result in a different set of theologies or a different set of arguments. Chapter Four is devoted to the discussion of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s arguments on the obligation of knowing God. The aim of this chapter is to examine how ʿAbd al-Jabbār establishes the obligation of knowing God based on his theory of knowledge. Chapter Five investigates ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s argument on knowing God. The foundation and the application of this proof in ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s arguments on knowing God will be the main concern of this chapter. I will also analyse Abū al-Ḥusayn’s responses to ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s arguments on these issues.

## TRANSLITERATION

### Consonant

Arabic	Symbol	Arabic	Symbol
أ	'	ض	ḍ
ب	b	ط	ṭ
ت	t	ظ	ẓ
ث	th	ع	ʿ
ج	j	غ	gh
ح	ḥ	ف	f
خ	kh	ق	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	dh	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	ه	h
ش	sh	و	w
ص	ṣ	ي	y

### Vowel and Diphthong

Long vowels	Short Vowels	Diphthongs
ا _____ ā	_____ a	و _____ aw
و _____ ū	_____ u	ي _____ ay
ي _____ ī	_____ i	

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## INTRODUCTION

‘Epistemology’ is the branch of philosophy which is concerned with knowledge, the value of knowledge, the tools of knowledge and what is related to it. It is an attempt to answer the fundamental question of how to differentiate between true and false knowledge. Its concern is to differentiate knowledge from feeling sure and mere belief.<sup>1</sup> Hence, what I mean by ‘epistemological foundation’ is the concept of knowledge that becomes a foundation of one’s doctrines and arguments relating to a certain issue; in this study it is the concept of knowing God. ‘Theology’ or ‘speculative theology’ is a translation of *‘ilm al-kalām* (the science of *kalām*). It is a branch of knowledge in Islam that discusses theological doctrines. One well-known definition of *kalām*, provided by al-Ījī (d. 756/1355), is ‘the science which is concerned with firmly establishing religious beliefs by adducing proofs and with banishing doubts.’<sup>2</sup>

Knowing God, according to ‘Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1015) is included in the knowledge that every mature person must know. For him knowing God can be achieved when one knows i) the existence of God, ii) the attributes of God, iii) the oneness of God, and iv) divine justice. I will analyse his argument on knowing God based on his epistemology. I will argue that his argument on knowing God is applicable only when it is based on a certain type of theory of knowledge. Otherwise the argument is flawed.

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<sup>1</sup> Baldwin, J. M. ‘Epistemology’, i, 333; Ferguson, B. S., ‘Epistemology’, 225.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Ījī, *Mawāqif*, 13. Another popular definition of *‘ilm al-kalām* was by Ibn Khaldūn (d. 807/1404). He defines *‘ilm al-kalām* as ‘the science that involves arguing with rational proofs in defence of the articles of faith and refuting innovators who deviate from the belief of early Muslims and Muslim orthodoxy.’ See Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, 2.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār is a prominent Muʿtazilite theologian, whose works have survived the longest from amongst Muʿtazilite literatures. Many have been published. In his works ʿAbd al-Jabbār discusses the theory of knowledge comprehensively. Based on this theory of knowledge, he develops his theological arguments based on reason, especially on knowing God. ʿAbd al-Jabbār is a supporter of the traditional Muʿtazilite arguments on knowing God, which are based on analogical reasoning. However, his view on this matter has been criticised by his immediate student, Abū al-Husayn al-Baṣrī (d. 435/1044).

Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī is the founder of the late innovative school of the Muʿtazilite *kalām*, the Ḥusayniyya. Based on his philosophical knowledge, Abū al-Ḥusayn criticises many of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s and traditional Muʿtazilites’ theological arguments, especially on knowing God. In this regard he offers a different type of argument. I suggest that the difference in Abū al-Husayn’s argument is due to his epistemological foundation, which is different from that of ʿAbd al-Jabbār.

Muʿtazilism is a school of rationalist Islamic theology, known as *kalām*, and one of the important schools of Islamic thought. They prefer the primacy of reason and free will and develop an epistemology, ontology and psychology which provide a basis for explaining the nature of the world, God, man and the phenomena of religion, such as revelation and divine law.

In this study, I do not intend to examine the whole of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s epistemology, but rather to focus on certain issues that demonstrate its influence on his proofs on

knowing God. Therefore, I will focus my discussion on the two essential aspects of his epistemology, namely ‘the definition of knowledge’ and ‘the types of knowledge’. Based on this knowledge I will examine how ʿAbd al-Jabbār develops his arguments on knowing God, which include the existence of God, His attributes, His oneness and His justice.

Before commencing the discussion on his proofs on knowing God, I will examine ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s arguments in order to establish the obligation of knowing God upon every rational person. I will also investigate how ʿAbd al-Jabbār develops the key proof of his argument on knowing God, which is the analogy between the seen world and the unseen (*istidlāl bi- al-shāhid ʿalā al-ghāʾib*). Finally, I will study the use of this proof in his argument on knowing God. During my discussion on these issues I will evaluate Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s critical view of his teacher’s arguments.

Some of the questions that will be examined are: What is ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s epistemological foundation in dealing with theological doctrines? How did ʿAbd al-Jabbār establish the obligation of knowing God based on his theory of knowledge? What is the significance of the epistemological foundation in the application of the proof of knowing God? What is the response of the late Muʿtazilites to ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s view on theological epistemology?

### **Sources on ʿAbd Al-Jabbār’s Theological Epistemology**

This study is mainly based on the method of textual analysis and historical study. In the discussion on ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theory of knowledge, I refer mainly to his *Mughnī*

*fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa al-ʿadl*, especially Book 12. This part bears the title Reflection and knowledge (*al-naẓar wa al-maʿārif*) and is divided into three major chapters. In the first chapter ʿAbd al-Jabbār discusses the reality of reflection, the definition of knowledge (*ʿilm*) and cognition (*maʿrifa*), the verification of the validity of knowledge, the proofs of its authenticity (*ṣiḥḥatīhi*), and the ways (*ḥuruq*) of immediate (*darūrī*) and acquired (*iktisābī*) knowledge. This chapter will be my main concern in this study. In the second chapter, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that human beings are capable of reflection. He suggests that there is no excuse for those who consider that reflection is something beyond human ability. Then, in the third chapter of *Mughnī* 12, ʿAbd al-Jabbār explains that after one knows that ‘reflection’ is an achievable duty for human beings, one must perform it (*fī l al-naẓar*). He believes that a person who performs it deserves a reward, and those who neglect it will be punished.

Beside Book 12, I will also consult the other parts of the *Mughnī*, especially Book 6, which discusses ethical knowledge, and Book 11, which covers the concept of *taklīf* (religious obligation). In the latter, ʿAbd al-Jabbār also discusses his view on the maturity of the intellect (*kamāl al-ʿaql*), which becomes the foundation of his concept of rational obligation (*taklīf ʿaqlī*). He maintains that immediate knowledge will contribute to the maturity of man’s intellect.

However, despite the vast number of volumes he has produced, the extant parts of *Mughnī* do not cover all of the discussion on the theory of knowledge adequately. The inclusive discussion on the type of knowledge, for instance, is not available in

the extant parts of *Mughnī*. This reality is due to the loss of the first three parts. Therefore, I need to refer to ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s shorter works, the *Uṣūl al-khamsa* and the *Mukhtaṣar fī uṣūl al-dīn*. Both works, however, only provide a brief mention of his theory of knowledge.

To examine ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s argument in detail I need to refer to the works of his students, such as *Taʿlīq sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa* by Mānkḏīm and *Majmūʿ al-muḥīṭ bi al-taklīf* by Ibn Mattawayh, to identify ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s views in the lost parts of the *Mughnī*. Margaretha Heemskerk has examined both works and concluded that the views of both scholars are very similar to ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s except in the area of the imāmate (*Imāma*), where Mānkḏīm holds a different opinion due to his Zaydīte inclination.<sup>3</sup>

After the recent discovery of the late Muʿtazilites’ works, I can verify ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s views reported in *Taʿlīq al-sharḥ* and *Majmūʿ al-muḥīṭ* by referring to *al-Muʿtamad fī uṣūl al-dīn* of Ibn al-Malāḥimī (d. 536/1141). The publication of *al-Muʿtamad* in 1991 after it was edited by Wilfred Madelung and Martin McDermott has revealed the systematic arguments of the last innovative school of Muʿtazilites, the Ḥusayniyya.<sup>4</sup> In this book and his other recently published work, *al-Fāʾiq fī uṣūl al-dīn* (2007), Ibn al-Malāḥimī systematically analyses the views of his Muʿtazilite predecessors, including ʿAbd al-Jabbār and Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. In both works Ibn al-Malāḥimī reports a critical view of Abū al-Ḥusayn towards the view of ʿAbd al-Jabbār and his other Muʿtazilite predecessors.

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<sup>3</sup> See Heemskerk, *Suffering*, 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Rāzī mentions the existence of this school in his time, but does not elaborate their arguments in his work, see al-Rāzī, *ʿItiqādāt*, 42.

## Previous Studies

ʿAbd al-Jabbar’s view on the theory of knowledge has been discussed in several works. George Hourani’s *Islamic Rationalism* is one of the earliest works that discusses ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theory of knowledge. Hourani examines ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s concept of knowledge briefly as an introduction to his study on ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s ethical theory. Hourani states that knowledge (*ʿilm*) is looked on as a species of *ʿtiqāḍ*, normally translated as ‘belief’. He explains that, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, knowledge has two distinguishing characteristics: (1) it is related to its object as it is, that is, it has truth value; and (2) it occurs in such a way that it necessitates repose of mind.<sup>5</sup>

Another work on ʿAbd al-Jabbār that cannot be missed by Jabbarian students<sup>6</sup> is *God’s Created Speech* by Jean Peters. In this book, Peters provides a valuable overview of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theological philosophy and elaborates on some aspects of his theory of knowledge. He provides a definition of many epistemological terms, including *ʿilm*, *maʿrifa*, and *nazar*. Peters’ presentation in the book, however, lacks coherence, since he does not provide an essay that combines all the definitions together. Probably this approach is intentional, because he states at the beginning of Chapter Two, ‘Some remarks on ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s philosophy’, that it is only a bird’s-eye view of the problems.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Hourani, G., *Islamic Rationalism*, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Using the term introduced by Hourani, see his *Islamic Rationalism*, 16.

<sup>7</sup> Peters J., *God’s Created Speech*, 39-56.

The most comprehensive study of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theory of knowledge is by Marie Bernand. Two of her relevant works are *Le Problème De La Connaissance D’Après Le Mugnī Du Cadi ʿAbd al-Gabbār* and ‘La Notion De ʿIlm Chez Les Premiers Muʿtazilites’. Both works are very helpful in understanding the background of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s and the early Muʿtazilites’ theory of knowledge.

In both works, Bernand examines ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theory of knowledge and compares it with G. Vajda’s discussion of the passage in the *Mughnī* that relates to knowledge.<sup>8</sup> By doing this she covers what was not done by Hourani in his *Islamic Rationalism*.<sup>9</sup> However, despite her in-depth analysis of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theory of knowledge, which is very useful for my study, Bernand does not explicitly study the relation between ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theory of knowledge and his other theological doctrines, such as the concept of knowing God. In addition the views of the late Muʿtazilites on knowledge and their responses to their predecessors are not adequately studied. Therefore, further study is necessary on this issue especially after the discovery and the publication some of the late Muʿtazilites’ works.

In *Le Problème*, Bernand analyses two definitions of knowledge attributed to ʿAbd al-Jabbār. However, thanks to tireless efforts by Madelung and McDermott in editing the manuscripts of the Muʿtazilites, I managed to detect two other definitions of knowledge by ʿAbd al-Jabbār to make the total four. I will analyse all of these definitions in Chapter Two of my thesis.

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<sup>8</sup> Vajda, G, ‘La connaissance chez Saadia’, 135; Bernand, ‘La Notion De ʿIlm’, 23.

<sup>9</sup> See L. Bernand’s review of this work, 317.

For ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s argument on knowing God, again I need to refer to his shorter works, the *Uṣūl al-khamsa* and the *Mukhtaṣar*, for the basis of his view, and to his students’ works, *Taʿlīq al-sharḥ* and *Majmūʿ al-taklīf*, for its explanation. Based on Peters’ reconstruction of the content of the lost *Mughnī*, I suggest that ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s argument on knowing God is most likely in Book 3 of the *Mughnī*, which was lost.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile Abū al-Ḥusayn’s argument on knowing God can be examined in his work *Taṣaffuḥ al-adilla*, which was edited by Madelung and Sabine Schmidtke, and published in 2007. In this work, Abū al-Ḥusayn argues against the traditional views of the Muʿtazilites that were defended by ʿAbd al-Jabbār. Abū al-Ḥusayn disagrees with him on several issues; some of them are the concept of accident (*ʿaraḍ*), state (*ḥāl*), and motive (*dāʿi*). I will examine these concepts and some others that relate to the theory of knowledge and the arguments on knowing God. Abū al-Ḥusayn’s argument on the existence of God was summarized by Madelung in his article ‘Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s Proof for the Existence of God’. However, in this article Madelung does not discuss the relation between Abū al-Ḥusayn’s proof of the existence of God and his theory of knowledge.

There are some modern works on the argument about knowing God that I refer to in order to develop my understanding of this issue. A comprehensive examination of the proof of the existence of God is by H. Davidson, *Proof for eternity, creation and the existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish philosophy*. Another significant publication on the proof of the existence of God is by Ayman Shihadeh, ‘The

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<sup>10</sup> Peters, J., *God’s Created Speech*, 25-35.

Existence of God' in *The Cambridge Companion to classical Islamic theology*. In this work Shihadeh provides a useful overview of the arguments from design and the cosmological arguments defended by Muslim theologians in general. For the attributes of God, I mainly refer to Richard Frank's work, *Beings and Their Attributes*, for an understanding of the classical Mu'tazilites' view. Frank's other significant work is an article on the concept of attributes according to Abū al-Hudhayl al-<sup>c</sup>Allāf, 'the Divine Attributes According to the Teaching of Abū al-Hudhayl al-<sup>c</sup>Allāf'.

I also use an array of different sources on general Islamic theology, Islamic History and Islamic epistemology. In my discussion on the place of epistemology in Islamic theology, I refer mainly to *Knowledge Triumphant* by Franz Rosenthal. He made a comprehensive study on the theory of knowledge in Islam. In Chapter Three of his book, Rosenthal discusses 'books and chapters on knowledge', where he examines the discussion of knowledge among early Muslim scholars. From this discussion he states that the first work that discusses knowledge is *al-Muwaṭṭa'* by Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795) who dedicates a chapter to 'the search after knowledge'.<sup>11</sup> This discussion was expanded by other *ḥadīth* scholars, including al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Muslim (d. 261/875).<sup>12</sup> Rosenthal also discusses some definitions of knowledge among Muslim scholars. He provides a number of definitions of knowledge by Muslim theologians and considers that <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's *Mughnī* is one of the most

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<sup>11</sup> For more information on Mālik and *al-Muwaṭṭa'* see Yasin Dutton, *The Origin*, 43-80.

<sup>12</sup> For Rosenthal's analysis on knowledge in *ḥadīth* works, see his *Knowledge Triumphant*, 70-96.

complete references by classical Muslim theologians in dealing with the definition of knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

In my discussions on the biography of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, I refer to some classical works, such as his contemporary Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī’s *Mathālib al-wazīrayn* or *al-Imtāʿ wa al-muʿānisa*, Ibn al-Athīr’s *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh* and al-Dhahabī’s *Mizān al-ʿtidāl*. I also refer to Ḥākim al-Jushamī’s *Sharḥ ʿuyūn al-masāʾil* and Ibn al-Murtaḍā’s *al-Munya wa-al-amal*. For modern sources, I mainly refer to ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān’s work *ʿQāḍī al-Quḍāt Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī*. Two articles by S.M. Stern and Wilfred Madelung, both entitled ‘ʿAbd al-Jabbār’, in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* and *Encyclopaedia Iranica* respectively, are also helpful in providing an overview of his life. I also refer to some recent works on ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s biography, such as G. Reynold’s *A Muslim Theologian in a Sectarian Milieu*.

For historical data on the socio-political background of his time, beside the classical references such as *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh* by Ibn al-Athīr, I also benefited from Hugh Kennedy’s work *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*. In this work, Kennedy provides a concise and useful overview of the political development of the ʿAbbasid caliphate during the fourth/tenth century. For the Buyids, beside Kennedy’s previously mentioned work, I also refer to the article by Heribert Busse ‘Iran under the Buyids’, in *the Cambridge History of Iran*. Another important modern work that I

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<sup>13</sup> However, due to his relatively late access to ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s *Mughnī* 12 Rosenthal does not adequately examine ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s definition of knowledge, an approach that has been criticized by Peters, see his, *God’s Created Speech*, 48-50; Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 51-63.

use in order to understand the sociopolitical background of the time is *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam* by Joel Kraemer.

For the Qur'anic English translation, I have referred to M. Muḥammad Picktall, A. Yūsuf ʿAlī and M. A. S. Abdel Haleem making a slight modification to the translations where I considered it appropriate.

### **The Aims of the Study**

In this study, I will investigate ʿAbd al-Jabbār's theory of knowledge and its relationship to his arguments on knowing God. I will aim to evaluate the overall strength of his argument against other theologians, especially the late Muʿtazilites. This study will also include the critical responses from his student Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, the founder of the last innovative school of Muʿtazilite, the Ḥusayniyya.

My study makes a contribution in two aspects. Firstly, it focuses on the relationship between ʿAbd al-Jabbār's theory of knowledge and his doctrine of knowing God. This information is important in order to identify the foundation of his theological doctrines. Secondly, this study also examines the critical responses from Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and his followers towards ʿAbd al-Jabbār's theological arguments on knowing God. The Ḥusayniyya school holds a different view from ʿAbd al-Jabbār on many aspects of theology, including the theory of knowledge and the attributes of God.

By knowing the foundation of the theological doctrines, one can comprehend the root of the disputes between Muslim theologians on various Islamic doctrines. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), an Ashʿarite theologian, is one of the *mutakallimūn* who observed the roots of contention among the *mutakallimūn*. He states that the dispute between the *mutakallimūn* is around the premise of the attributes of perfection (*kamāl*) and imperfection (*nuqṣān*). Every attribute of perfection should be established in God and every imperfect attribute should not be established in Him. The other premise is good and evil. Good actions must be performed and evil actions must be abstained from (*tark*). Explaining his argument, al-Rāzī writes:

[The dispute between] the followers of de-anthropomorphism (*tanzīh*) and anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) is that the former says, if God is a body or an atom or in a certain place, He must be similar to these creations (*makhluqāt*), which are imperfect. The similarity with imperfection implies imperfection. Therefore, this cannot be applied to God. Meanwhile the anthropomorphist says that if God is not partial (*mutaḥayyiz*) and cannot be perceived (*mushār*) by the senses, also He is not in a place; therefore, God is similar to non-existence (*maʿdūm*), which is the highest level of imperfection.<sup>14</sup>

One might observe that al-Rāzī's approach to this issue is 'understand your opponents'. He chooses to identify the roots of disagreement between the *mutakallimūn*. In his method, al-Rāzī is not only concerned with the question of 'what (*a*) says on (*x*) issue', which is a typical *kalām* method, but also 'why (*a*) says (*x*)'. By doing that, al-Rāzī manages to identify the ground for the dispute, and is therefore capable of dealing with it more efficiently. This unsurprising that we observe al-Rāzī emerging as one of the most prominent *mutakallimūn* in Islam.

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<sup>14</sup> Al-Rāzī, *al-Arbaʿīn*, 481-2.

While al-Rāzī bases his argument on perfection and imperfection, in this study I choose to examine the grounds for disputes among the *mutakallimūn* based on their theory of knowledge. °Abd al-Jabbār was chosen because his works on epistemology are the most extensive among the classical *mutakallimūn*, and his epistemology to a certain degree is purely *kalām*. I have also limited the study to the area of knowing God in order to make it more focused.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. In Chapter One I will discuss the historical context of °Abd al-Jabbār's theological epistemology. I will examine the position of epistemology in Islamic theology and argue that the command to know God originates from the Qur'ān. However, a systematic appearance of *kalām* epistemology is related to the introduction of Greek philosophy into the Islamic world through the translation project during the °Abbasid caliphate. I will then briefly outline the biography of °Abd al-Jabbār, which includes an introduction to his scholarship and a brief examination of the sociopolitical background of his time. The latter is important in order to understand the development of Islamic scholarship in the fourth/tenth century, which is considered by some as the renaissance of Islamic thought, and also the reason behind the survival of °Abd al-Jabbār's works until today.

In Chapter Two I will examine °Abd al-Jabbār's view on the definition of knowledge. Firstly, I will examine the theological background of this discussion in order to understand the stand taken by him and other Mu°tazilites on the definition of knowledge. Secondly, I will study the early definition of knowledge made by the

early *mutakallimūn*, including ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s predecessors, and his evaluation of their definitions. Thirdly, I will analyse ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s various definitions of knowledge in his works and examine the responses from the late Muʿtazilites to this, especially from the school of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī.

In Chapter Three I will analyse ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s view on the types of knowledge. This discussion is important in order to understand his foundation of knowledge. The differences in the type of knowledge will result in a different set of theologies or a different set of arguments. Therefore, I will compare ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s view with that of the Ashʿarites and the late Muʿtazilites. Here I will indicate that because of their disagreement on the type of knowledge with ʿAbd al-Jabbār, the Ashʿarites and the Ḥusayniyya faced difficulties in applying the analogical proof in their argument on knowing God that is based on the temporality of the world.

In Chapter Four I will examine the obligation to know God, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār. The aim of this chapter is to examine how ʿAbd al-Jabbār establishes the obligation of knowing God based on his theory of knowledge. Therefore, firstly I will examine the foundation of this rational obligation, which is the fear (*khawf*), the notion (*khāṭir*), and the basic principles of ethics. All these principles, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, are immediately known. Secondly, I will examine ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s concept of obligation (*taḳlīf*), with attention to rational obligation. Thirdly, I will investigate ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s view on ‘man’s first obligation’. Then I will examine the basis of obligation according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār and other Muʿtazilites. Finally I will analyse ethical realism from the perspectives of the *mutakallimūn*.

In Chapter Five, I will investigate ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s argument on knowing God. I will scrutinise the foundation of his proof, which is the analogy (*qiyās*) from the seen world to the unseen world. Then I will examine the application of this proof in ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s argument on the existence of God, His attributes, divine justice, and the oneness of God. Finally I will analyse Abū al-Ḥusayn’s responses to ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s arguments on these issues.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF ʿABD AL-JABBĀR'S THEOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGY

#### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the historical context of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's theological epistemology. This chapter is divided into two main sections. In the first section, I will examine the position of epistemology in Islamic theology. In this section, I will indicate that although the root of knowledge is available in the Qur'an, the systematic appearance of epistemology in *kalām* gained momentum after the penetration of Greek philosophy in the Islamic world through the translation project during the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate.

The second section will discuss a biography of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, which will include his educational background, his intellectual environment, and his contribution to the Islamic intellectual library. Also included in this section is the sociopolitical background of his time, the fourth/tenth to the fifth/eleventh centuries. The study of this background is important since ʿAbd al-Jabbār lived in a period considered by many scholars to be the renaissance period of Islamic thought,<sup>1</sup> and to understand the reason behind the survival of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's works.

#### 1. 1. Epistemology in Islamic Theology

Epistemology plays an important role in Islamic theology, since the difference in epistemology influences the formation of other theological doctrines. The decision about which epistemology to base one's theology on will influence the result of one's

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Joel Kramer, *Humanism*, 4.

belief and action. For instance, the difference between the views of the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites in their theological doctrines is partly due to the differences in the epistemological backgrounds they based their theological arguments on.

However, as S. Nuseibeh observes, to provide a complete outline of *kalām* epistemology is not an easy task. One of the problems is that there are diverse views held on the subject, not only between two classical schools, the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites, but also between adherents of the same school.<sup>2</sup> As a result, we do not as yet possess a complete consensus account of a *kalām* theory of knowledge. For every theologian (*mutakallim*) develops his theory of knowledge to suit not only his theological school but also his personal interpretation.

### 1.1.1. The Origin of Epistemology in Islamic Theology

The debate on the theory of knowledge is part of many disputes in Islamic *kalām*.<sup>3</sup> Albeit relatively late compared to other issues such as free will and predestination, the emergence of the epistemological issues in *kalām* is almost contemporary with the appearance of the problem of the createdness of the Qur'an (*khalq al-Qur'ān*). Both were widely studied during the time of al-Ma'mūn. However, because of political interference, the latter has become very significant while the former remains less significant.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Nuseibeh, S., "Epistemology" in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 831.

<sup>3</sup> For an introduction of the formation of *kalām*, see W. Watt, *Formative Period*, 182-204; J. Van Ess, "Beginning of *Kalām*", 87-111; M. Cook, The Origin of "*Kalām*", 32-43; M. Abdel Haleem, "Early *Kalām*", 71-88.

<sup>4</sup> Van Ess, "Beginning of *Kalām*", 89-92; Abdel Haleem, "Early *Kalām*", 78-80.

There are a very large number of references to knowledge in the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth*. Both exhort believers to make the best use of reason in their search for the ultimate and to make the acquisition of knowledge and scientific comprehension a part of the community's life. As for knowing God specifically, there is a verse in the Qur'an: "Know that there is no god but Allāh."<sup>5</sup> This verse indicates that the issue of knowing God originated from the Qur'an. Therefore, it is hard to agree with some scholars who state that there is no mention in the Qur'an about knowing God.<sup>6</sup>

However, in dealing with the Qur'anic proof, there is disagreement among the *mutakallimūn*. The Mu'tazilites,<sup>7</sup> for instance, accept the Qur'anic proof only after its validity has been proved by reason. For they consider that in the hierarchy of knowledge intellect is before the Qur'ān. Therefore, in their discussion on knowing God, they depend merely on reason.<sup>8</sup> I will investigate further their epistemological reason for this view in the discussion on the type of knowledge in chapter two.

Meanwhile, the Ḥanābila,<sup>9</sup> who maintain the superiority of revelation over reason, used Qur'anic evidence from the beginning. Accordingly, their arguments in theology must be based on revelation.<sup>10</sup> Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855),<sup>11</sup> for

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<sup>5</sup> Qur. 47: 19.

<sup>6</sup> F. Rosenthal in this regard most likely following A. S. Tritton's claim that there is no verse in the Qur'an that speaks on human knowledge of God. See Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 125; Tritton, "Theory of Knowledge" 253.

<sup>7</sup> For the development of the Mu'tazilites, see Watt, *Formative Period*, 209-252; A. J. Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 83-7.

<sup>8</sup> *Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazila*. Cf. Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 59; Watt, *Formative Period*, 214.

<sup>9</sup> The Ḥanābila are the followers of the school of theology, law and morality which grew up from the teaching of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855). For more see H. Laoust, "Ḥanābila", *Et*<sup>2</sup>, iii, 158.

<sup>10</sup> See Abū Ya'lā, *al-Mu'tamad*, 19

<sup>11</sup> For his biographical note, see H. Laoust, "Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal", *Et*<sup>2</sup>, i, 272.

instance, rejects the rational methods of the *mutakallimūn* but derives religious doctrines and legal rules solely from the Qur'ān and the Traditions.<sup>12</sup>

The Ash'arites,<sup>13</sup> although maintaining the superiority of revelation over reason, are inclined toward reconciliation between the two previous methodologies by giving a middle role to reason between the view of the Ḥanbalites and that of the Mu'tazilites. The Ash'arites accept the use of reason for proving the existence of God and His attributes.<sup>14</sup> However, the knowledge of good and evil is only through revelation and not through reason.<sup>15</sup>

In the early works of Muslim scholars before the fourth/tenth century,<sup>16</sup> there is no systematic appearance of epistemology.<sup>17</sup> Most of the books in theology were written directly on the foundation of belief and the principles of theology.<sup>18</sup> We can observe this type of methodology being used by Abū Ḥanīfa (theologian and religious lawyer d. 150/767)<sup>19</sup> in his *al-Fiqh al-akbar (the Greater Fiqh)*. He starts his book by briefly mentioning the six pillars of belief (*īmān*). On this, he writes:

The basics of unity (*tawḥīd*) and that which makes faith (*īmān*) valid, that one says I believe in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, resurrection after death, and that the good and evil of destiny are from God Most High. I believe too in the

<sup>12</sup> Watt, *The Formative Period*, 292.

<sup>13</sup> Ash'arites are the followers of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī sometimes it was called, Ash'ariyya or Asha'ira. For more see, Watt, "Ash'ariyya", *EF*, i, 696.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. al-Ash'arī, *al-Lum'a*, 6-7.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-Dīn*, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Scholars of Islamic traditions such as al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), Muslim, and Abū Daud mention in their *sahih* and *sunnan* a chapter on knowledge in which they report some of the traditions related to knowledge. The discussion of their works in this respect is beyond the scope of this research. For more information, see Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 70-96.

<sup>17</sup> What I mean by systematic appearance here is the discussion which included the definition, division, source and the value of knowledge.

<sup>18</sup> For an overview explanation regarding the contents of major Muslim theological works, see Gardet L., *Introduction a La Theologie Musulmane*, 136-186.

<sup>19</sup> For his biographical note, see J. Schacht, "Abū Ḥanīfa Nu'mān b. Thābit", *EF*, i, 123.

accounting (*al-ḥisāb*), the scales (*al-mīzān*), hell and paradise.  
All the foregoing is reality.<sup>20</sup>

In this book, Abū Ḥanīfa elaborates these fundamental doctrines, especially the doctrine of *al-Tawḥīd*. There is no discussion of the theory of knowledge in this book. Abū Ḥanīfa mentions only the doctrines that one needs to believe without even providing any proof to support these doctrines. This type of method can also be observed in the work of Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/839),<sup>21</sup> *Kitāb al-Imān (the Book of Faith)*. The discussion of the theory of knowledge is not included in this book; rather, it focuses on the discussion of the faith.<sup>22</sup>

The discussion of knowledge among early Muslim scholars occurs only when they discuss the attributes of God. The perfect (*kamāl*) God is the one that has all the positive attributes including knowledge (*ʿilm*). To differentiate between God’s knowledge and a human’s knowledge, Abū Ḥanīfa says that God knows with knowledge, but His knowledge is not like ours. But Abū Ḥanīfa does not explain the nature of human knowledge in his work.<sup>23</sup>

### 1.1.2. The Development of Epistemology in Islamic Theology

After the expansion of the Islamic world through the conquest of the Umayyad and the ʿAbbāsīd empires, Muslims faced various kinds of people from different intellectual and religious backgrounds. The people of the book (*ahl al-Kitāb*), Jews

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<sup>20</sup> Abū Ḥanīfa, *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> For his biographical note, see H.L. Gottschalk, “Abu Ubayd al-Qasim b. Sallam”, *EI*, I, 157.

<sup>22</sup> The full name of this book is *K. al-Imān wa maʿālimihi wa sunanihi wa istikmālihi wa darajātihi*, edited by Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī. See Madelung, W., “Early Sunni Doctrine”, 234.

<sup>23</sup> See Abū Ḥanīfa, *Fiqh al-akbar*, 23.

and Christians have their own interpretation of religious concepts. The concept of God, for instance, was interpreted differently from that in Islamic teaching.

In addition, the translations of philosophical works from Syriac and Greek into Arabic during the reign of al-Rashīd (r. 170/786-193/809)<sup>24</sup> and al-Ma'mūn (r. 198/813-218/833) had exposed Muslims to new ideas in theological studies. The translation of Greek philosophy, especially the works of Aristotle, Plato, and the Sophists, changed the Muslim intellectual landscape forever through the influence of Greek philosophy on the latter's philosophy and theology.<sup>25</sup>

The influence of Greek philosophy in the Islamic world during the reign of al-Ma'mūn can be traced from the involvement of two well-known scholars in theological and philosophical debates at the court of al-Ma'mūn. The first figure is al-Kindī,<sup>26</sup> the first Arab philosopher who was influenced in some degree by the Mu'tazilite theology.<sup>27</sup> Al-Kindī worked as a translator or supervisor for translators in Bayt al-Ḥikma, a well-known library established by al-Ma'mūn. The second figure is Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf,<sup>28</sup> who systematized the theology of the Mu'tazilites and sometimes worked at al-Ma'mūn's court during *al-Miḥna*.<sup>29</sup> As for the scope of my

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<sup>24</sup> For his biographical note, see F. Omar, "Harūn al-Rashīd", *EI*, iii, 232.

<sup>25</sup> Epistemology also becomes a concern of Muslim philosophers. Ibn Sīnā (d.428/1037), in this regard reports that "a discussion of the theory of knowledge is a must to understanding a discussion of the concept of divinity", cf. *al-Najāt*, 23; al-Farabi (d. 339/950), *Ihsa' al-'Ulum*, 17; Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198), *Fasl al-Maqāl*, 4.

<sup>26</sup> For his biographical note, see J. Jolivet & R. Rashed, "al-Kindī, Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb b. Ishāq", *EI*<sup>2</sup>, v, 122.

<sup>27</sup> Netton, I., *Allāh Transcendent*, 56.

<sup>28</sup> For his biographical note, see H.S. Nyberg, "Abū al-Hudhayl l-ʿAllāf", *EI*<sup>2</sup>, i, 127.

<sup>29</sup> Nyberg reports that he enjoyed the favour of al-Ma'mūn, who often invited him to the court for theological disputes, cf. Nyberg, "Abū al-Hudhayl l-ʿAllāf", 127; Hourani, "Islamic and Non-Islamic Origin", 81.

study, the focus will be on the influence of Greek philosophy on Abū al-Hudhayl's theological epistemology.

According to Ibn al-Murtaḍā, Abū al-Hudhayl investigated Aristotle's works.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, probably due to that reason al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935-6)<sup>31</sup> accuses Abū al-Hudhayl of taking his view on the attributes of God from Aristotle.<sup>32</sup> However, this accusation seems to be contradicted by another report from Ibn al-Rāwandī. Based on a report by al-Khayyāṭ, Ibn al-Rawandī mentioned that nobody before Abū al-Hudhayl held his view regarding the attribute of God.<sup>33</sup> Based on these reports, we can conclude that although there is disagreement among the *Mutakallimūn* on the extent of the influence of Aristotle or other Greek philosophers on Abū al-Hudhayl, we can conclude that Abū al-Hudhayl is familiar with Greek philosophical terms and works.

However, no extant works of Abū al-Hudhayl survive today. His view is mostly based on reports from other scholars from the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites. Most of the early Mu'tazilites' works were lost. The earliest *kalām* work that discusses the theory of knowledge is non-Mu'tazilites. According to Rosenthal, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, by Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944),<sup>34</sup> is the earliest extant *kalām* work that discusses the theory of knowledge.<sup>35</sup> In this book, before engaging in a discussion of theological doctrines, al-Māturīdī discusses a theory of knowledge. He opens the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *Ṭabaqāt*, 44.

<sup>31</sup> For his biographical note, see Watt, "Al-Ash'arī", in *ET*<sup>2</sup>, i, 694.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, 485. Frank, "The Divine Attributes", 454.

<sup>33</sup> Al-Khayyāṭ, *Intiṣār*, 59; cf. Frank, "The Divine Attributes", 455.

<sup>34</sup> For his biographical note, see W. Madelung, "Al-Māturīdī" in *ET*<sup>2</sup>, vi, 846.

<sup>35</sup> Rosenthal, F. *Knowledge Triumphant*, 211; see also F. Kholeif's introduction to *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 3-11.

book with a chapter on the invalidation of uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*), and insists on the importance of knowledge and proof. He also highlights the high position of the intellect in addition to revelation as the ways to acquire religious knowledge.<sup>36</sup> Henceforth, most of the *mutakallimūn* who come after al-Māturīdī give a great emphasis to epistemology. We find that most of them start their works with a discussion of the theory of knowledge. They give great emphasis to the theory of knowledge as a foundation for theological discussions in their works.<sup>37</sup>

In the Ashʿarites school, at the beginning of its formation, the discussion of reflection and knowledge is not very extensive. One can observe from the book of *al-Ibāna ʿan uṣūl al-diyāna* by al-Ashʿarī that his arguments are mainly based on the Qurʾan and Sunna. However, in his later works, especially *Risāla fī al-istiḥsān fī al-khawḍ fī al-ʿilm al-Kalām*, al-Ashʿarī defends the vindication of reflection in *kalām*, which includes his defence of the use of reason in theology. His stand in *Istiḥsān* has become a foundation for later Ashʿarites to develop their *kalām* argument further. This task has been taken up by some scholars, and the two most prominent are Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013)<sup>38</sup> and Abū al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037).<sup>39</sup> In his book *al-Tamhīd*, al-Bāqillānī provides an introduction to knowledge, its divisions, and ways to obtain knowledge.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, al-Baghdādī elaborates in his book *Uṣūl al-Dīn* the reality of knowledge and its division as well as the ways of deriving knowledge.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 3-27.

<sup>37</sup> Al-ʿĀmilī, H., *al-Madhkal ilā al-ʿilm wa al-falsafa*, 11.

<sup>38</sup> For his biographical note, see R.J. McCarthy, “al-Bāqillānī”, in *EP*<sup>2</sup>, i, 958.

<sup>39</sup> For his biographical note, see A.S., Tritton, “al-Baghdādī, ʿAbd al-Qāhir”, in *EP*<sup>2</sup>, i, 909.

<sup>40</sup> Al-Bāqillānī, *al-Tamhīd*, 25-30.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-Dīn*, 36.

Both books *al-Tamhīd* and *Uṣūl al-dīn* present an excellent explanation of the theory of knowledge. These scholars' works, then, became the foundation for the later generation of Ash'arite scholars such as Abū al-Ma'ālī al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085),<sup>42</sup> Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111),<sup>43</sup> and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210),<sup>44</sup> to build their epistemological framework.

During the fifth/eleventh century, a systematic approach in epistemology influenced not only the Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite *mutakallimūn* but also some traditionalist scholars from the Ḥanbalite, such as Abū Ya'ālā al-Farrā' (d. 458/1066). In his work, *al-Mu'tamad fī uṣūl al-dīn*, he treats topics that are typical of *mutakallimūn*, namely, epistemology, the validity and value of sound reasoning, and the invalidity of *taqlīd*. He also argues about the proof of the existence of God based on the origination of accidents and atoms.<sup>45</sup> His approach to knowledge obviously differs from the typical Ḥanbalites who are concerned with the scripture and prophetic traditions. Therefore, Abū Ya'ālā was probably the first Ḥanbalite to use the method of *kalām* in theological argumentation. His methodology then was followed by later Ḥanbalites such as Ibn al-Zāghūnī (d. 527/1133) in his book *al-Idāh fī uṣūl al-dīn*.

<sup>42</sup> He also the teacher of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī For his biographical note see, C. Brockelmann, "al-Juwaynī" in *EF*<sup>2</sup>, ii, 605.

<sup>43</sup> For his biographical note, see Watt, "al-Ghazālī", in *EF*<sup>2</sup>, ii, 1038. From al-Ghazālī's works the influence of Greek philosophy become apparent. Al-Ghazālī writes two influential works on philosophy in his effort to refute the argument of Muslim philosophers; those two works are *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifa* (*The Intentions of the Philosophers*) and *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*). However, despite his rejection of the philosophical doctrine, al-Ghazālī accepts logic as an important tool of knowledge. The knowledge of a scholar who does not know logic, according to al-Ghazālī, is dubitable. His position in dealing with philosophy has become the foundation for Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī to reformulate the Ash'arites' arguments by using the philosophers' proof.

<sup>44</sup> For his biographical note, see G.C. Anawati, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, in *EF*<sup>2</sup>, ii, 751.

<sup>45</sup> See Abū Ya'ālā, *al-Mu'tamad fī uṣūl al-dīn*, 19-21.

With the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites, as I mentioned earlier, the discussion of epistemology was started by Abū al-Hudhayl al-Allāf (d. 226/841). When the translations of Greek philosophy were made during the reign of Harūn al-Rashīd, Abū al-Hudhayl studied some of the philosophers' books.<sup>46</sup> The influence of philosophy on Abū al-Hudhayl's theological proofs can be observed in his arguments on the attribute of God. He also introduced to the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites the concept of immediate knowledge,<sup>47</sup> the concept of the accidents (*al-<sup>c</sup>rāḍ*) of bodies, and that of the atom, which he called *jawhar*.<sup>48</sup>

However, despite their acceptance of his role as the founder of the school of Baṣran Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilite, Abū al-Hudhayl's successors seem to distance themselves from philosophy. Al-Nazzām, for instance, wrote a book criticizing Aristotle's idea on the atom<sup>49</sup> while Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī wrote a book rejecting Aristotle's logic.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, the discussion of knowledge continued among them. The pinnacle of this development can be observed through the work of <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025), *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawhīd wa al-<sup>c</sup>adl* (*Summa on [God's] unity and justice*). In one of the work's twenty volumes, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār specifies a discussion of the theory of knowledge entitled "*al-Nazar wa al-ma<sup>c</sup>ārif*" (*Reflection and knowledge*).<sup>51</sup>

After <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār, the influence of philosophy in Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilite's *kalām* re-emerged in the hand of his student, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044).<sup>52</sup> In his argument

<sup>46</sup> *Ṭabaqāt al-Mu<sup>c</sup>tazila*, 44-50. Cf. Hourani, "Islamic and non-Islamic Origins", 81.

<sup>47</sup> Abū al-Hudhayl's was reported to say that reason produces the immediate knowledge of the self which leads to the knowledge of God. His ideas then become the foundation for the later Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites A.S. Tritton, "Theory of Knowledge", 254.

<sup>48</sup> Nyberg, H. S. "Abū al-Hudhayl al-Allāf", *EL*<sup>2</sup>, i, 127.

<sup>49</sup> Frank, R. "The Divine Attributes", 455.

<sup>50</sup> See Van Ess, "Logical Structure", 21.

<sup>51</sup> The volume that was edited by Ibrāhīm Madkūr and supervised by Ṭaha Ḥusayn.

<sup>52</sup> For his biographical note, see Madelung, "Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī", in *EL*<sup>2</sup>, xii, 25.

on knowing God, Abū al-Ḥusayn employs some arguments from philosophers to refute traditional Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilite proof. Abū al-Ḥusayn's method in dealing with theological arguments has been criticized by other followers of <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār. Abū al-Ḥusayn was accused of pretending to agree with the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites but in fact was hiding some other motive.<sup>53</sup>

Therefore, in this study I will examine <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's concept of knowledge in relation to his arguments on knowing God. I will also investigate Abū al-Ḥusayn's comment on his teacher's arguments. From this study, I hope to indicate that the epistemological background plays a vital role in developing one's argument of knowing God. Therefore, a different epistemological foundation will result in a different set of theological doctrines. During the discussion, I will also indicate the philosophical influence in the arguments of the *mutakallimūn*.

## 1.2. The Biography of <sup>c</sup>Abd Al-Jabbār

### 1.2.1. His Early Life

The classical scholars of <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār are not unanimous in describing his early life. The first disagreement already presents itself as soon as we try to reconstruct his full name. Al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1347)<sup>54</sup> and Ibn al-<sup>c</sup>Imād (d. 1079/1668),<sup>55</sup> for instance, do not mention <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's ancestors except his father.<sup>56</sup> However, the most complete list of his name and ancestors is provided by al-Subkī (d. 769/1368),<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Al-Jushamī, *Sharḥ*, 387; Al-Baṣīr, Y. *Refutation*, 37.

<sup>54</sup> For his biographical note, see M. Bencheneb, "al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn", in *EP*<sup>2</sup>, ii, 214.

<sup>55</sup> For his biographical note, see F. Rosenthal, "Ibn al-<sup>c</sup>Imād", in *EP*<sup>2</sup>, iii, 807.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-ʿItidal*, ii, 553; Ibn al-<sup>c</sup>Imād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, iii, 202. See also Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, ix, 334; ; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-Mizān*, ii, 386.

<sup>57</sup> For his biographical note, see J. Schacht, "al-Subkī", in *EP*<sup>2</sup>, ix, 743.

when he reports °Abd al-Jabbār's full name as Abū al-Ḥasan °Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad b. °Abd al-Jabbār<sup>58</sup> b. Aḥmad al-Khalīl<sup>59</sup> b. °Abdallāh.<sup>60</sup>

°Abd al-Jabbār was born in the district of Asādabād in the province of Hamadhān, Irān.<sup>61</sup> The classical works, however, do not provide any exact date of his birth. Therefore, there are disagreements among modern scholars about determining the date of his birth. Ismā'īl Bāshā Baghdādī (d. 1338/1920) reports in his *Hidāyāt al-°Arifīn* that °Abd al-Jabbār was born in 359/969. This date was also accepted by Kaḥḥāla.<sup>62</sup>

However, other contemporary scholars disagree with this view. °Abd al-Karīm °Uthmān, for instance, believes that the date given (359/969) is not consistent with two points of historical evidence.<sup>63</sup> Firstly, the majority of classical historians and biographers such as al-Ḥākim Abū Sa'd al-Bayhaqī al-Jushamī (d. 494/1100),<sup>64</sup> al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1070), and al-Dhahabī agreed that °Abd al-Jabbār died between 414/1024 and 416/1026. Secondly, °Abd al-Jabbār reportedly died at a very old age, possibly more than ninety years old.<sup>65</sup> Hence, combining these two facts, it is unlikely that he was born in 359/969.<sup>66</sup> Instead, °Uthmān concludes that °Abd al-Jabbār was born in the mid-320s/930s.

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. al-Jushamī, *Sharḥ*; al-Khatīb, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, xi, 113; Brockelmann, *GAL* s i, 343; Anawati, G, °Abd al-Jabbār, in *ER*, i, 3; Stern, S., °Abd al-Djabbār" in *EL*<sup>2</sup>, i, 59.

<sup>59</sup> al-Ziriklī, *al-°lām*, iv, 47; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, xvii, 244.

<sup>60</sup> Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā*, v, 443; cf. al-Rāfi'ī, *al-Tadwīn*, iii, 117; Kaḥḥālah, U.R., *Mu'jam al-Mu'allifīn*, v, 78.

<sup>61</sup> Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, v, 224.

<sup>62</sup> Kaḥḥāla, *Mu'jam al-Mu'allifīn*, 78. Cf. Baghdādī, Ismā'īl Bāshā, *Hidāyāt al-°Arifīn*, i, 498.

<sup>63</sup> °Uthmān, A. K., *Qāḍī al-Quḍāt* 70.

<sup>64</sup> For his biographical note, see Madelung, "al-Ḥākim al-Djushamī", in *EL*<sup>2</sup>, xii, 343.

<sup>65</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, ix, 334.

<sup>66</sup> °Uthmān, A. K., *Qāḍī al-Quḍāt*, 72.

Another indication that contradicts the date given by Baghdādī is a report from Yāqūt which indicates that ʿAbd al-Jabbār used to study with several teachers who lived in the first half of the fourth/tenth century, such as Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qaṭṭān (d. 345/957) and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ziʿbaqī al-Baṣrī (d. 333/945).<sup>67</sup> Therefore, Baghdadi’s date is inconceivable, since that implies that ʿAbd al-Jabbār studied with teachers who were deceased.

Based on this evidence, the birth of ʿAbd al-Jabbār has to be earlier than his teachers’ deaths by several years.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, in agreement with ʿUthmān’s conclusion, I prefer the view that ʿAbd al-Jabbār was born around 325/935. This date is also consistent with the dates given by modern scholars regarding ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s birth.<sup>69</sup>

Similar to his date of birth, scholars also disagree about ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s date of death. Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233) says that he died in 414/1024, when he was more than ninety years old.<sup>70</sup> Meanwhile, al-Jushamī and Ibn al-Murtaḍā (d. 840/1437) state that ʿAbd al-Jabbār died between 415/1025 and 416/1026.<sup>71</sup> However, the majority of his biographers believe that he died in 415/1025.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Udabāʾ*, ii, 116. See also al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh al-Baghdād*, xi, 113.

<sup>68</sup> Al-Jushamī, *Sharḥ*, 366; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, xvii, 244; al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh al-Baghdād*, xi, 113; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Syadharāt al-Dhahab*, iii, 202.

<sup>69</sup> Based on a similar argument with ʿUthmān, S.M. Stern concludes that ʿAbd al-Jabbār was born in 325/937, cf. Stern, *EF*, i, 59.

<sup>70</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, ix, 334.

<sup>71</sup> Al-Jushamī, *Sharḥ*, 366; Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *Munya*, 95.

<sup>72</sup> Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 443; Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, xvii, 244; Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam al-Muʿallifīn*, v, 78; al-Ziriklī, *al-Aʿlām*, 47; Brockelmann, C., *GAL*, s i, 343.

°Abd al-Jabbār is referred to as al-Asādabādī,<sup>73</sup> al-Hamadhānī,<sup>74</sup> al-Rāzī,<sup>75</sup> and al-Mu°tazilī.<sup>76</sup> His title (*laqab*) was *Qāḍī al-Quḍāt*, (chief judge), a post he held for several years under the Buyid *amirs* in Rayy, the capital city of the province of Jibal. He is also called °*Imād al-Dīn* (the pillar of religion),<sup>77</sup> but he was well-known among the supporters of the Mu°tazilites by the title *Qāḍī al-Quḍāt*.<sup>78</sup>

### 1.2.2. Educational and Intellectual Environment

°Abd al-Jabbār started his quest for knowledge in his hometown of Asādabād. After studying with the scholars there, he pursued his education in neighboring cities such as Hamadhān, Iṣfahān, and Qazwīn.<sup>79</sup> In the beginning, °Abd al-Jabbār studied the traditions (*ḥadīth*) and *fiqh* of the Shāfi°ite school of law. In theology at that time, he was a follower of the Ash°arite school.<sup>80</sup>

°Abd al-Jabbār studied *ḥadīth* and °*ilm al-rijāl* (the science of the men of *ḥadīth*) under Abū Muḥammad °Abd al-Rahmān b. Hamdān al-Jallāb (d. 342/954), °Abdallāh b. Ja°far b. Fāris al-Iṣfahānī (d. 346/958),<sup>81</sup> and al-Zubayr b. °Abd al-Waḥīd al-

<sup>73</sup> Al-Khāṭib, *Tārīkh al-Baghdād*, xi, 113; al-Rāfi°i, *Akhbār Qazwīn*, iii, 117.

<sup>74</sup> Ibn al-°Imād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, iii, 202; Kaḥḥāla, *Mu°jam al-Mu°allifīn*, v, 78.

<sup>75</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, ix, 334.

<sup>76</sup> Ibn al-°Imād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, iii, 202; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, ix, 333.

<sup>77</sup> The attributions of those names to °Abd al-Jabbār occur for various reasons which are: al-Asādabādī refers to his birth place, al-Hamadhānī refers to where he studied religious sciences, al-Rāzī because he was in his peak when in Rayy, and al-Mu°tazilī because of his theology.

<sup>78</sup> Al-Jushamī, *Sharḥ*, 365. According to al-Khayyāt, the Mu°tazilites are those who adhere to the five principles: Unity (*al-Tawḥīd*), Justice (*al-°Adl*), the Promise and the Threat (*al-Wa°d wa al-wa°°id*), the Intermediate Position (*al-Manzila bayn al-manzilatayn*) and Commanding the Right and Forbidding the Wrong (*al-Amr bi al-ma°rūf wa al-nahy an al-munkar*). See al-Khayyāt, *Intiṣār*, 13.

<sup>79</sup> Al-Jushamī, *Sharḥ*, 365; Anawati, “°Abd al-Jabbār” in *ER*, i, 3; Madelung, “°Abd al-Jabbār,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, i, 116.

<sup>80</sup> Madelung was in doubt with the statement that the original theology of °Abd al-Jabbār is Ash°arite, therefore he inclines towards Shāfi°i traditionalist but he did not provide any indication. See Madelung, °Abd al-Jabbār, in *E. Ir.*, i, 117.

<sup>81</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 61.

Asādabādī (d. 347/959).<sup>82</sup> In other fields of knowledge, such as Arabic grammar, °Abd al-Jabbār learned from Abū al-Ḥassan °Alī b. °Ibrāhīm b. Salamā al-Qaṭṭān (d. 345/956). According to Ibn al-°Imād al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1080/1670), al-Qaṭṭān was a very pious person and had memorized more than 100 thousand *hadith*.<sup>83</sup>

After completing his study in these areas, °Abd al-Jabbār traveled to Baṣra, one of the important cultural centres of the Buyid Emirates and a centre of Mu°tazilite learning.<sup>84</sup> In Baṣra, °Abd al-Jabbār had the opportunity to study and debate with many Mu°tazilite scholars, one of whom was Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. °Ayyāsh (d. 386/996), a disciple of the prominent Mu°tazilite scholar, Abū Hāshim °Abd al-Salām b. Muḥammad al-Jubbā°ī (d. 321/933).

During his study in Baṣra, °Abd al-Jabbār transformed his theological views from Ash°arite to Mu°tazilite. After arguing and debating with several Mu°tazilite scholars, especially Ibn °Ayyāsh, °Abd al-Jabbār accepted Mu°tazilite doctrines and became one of its most staunch and systematic advocates in Islamic theological history.<sup>85</sup> However, in *fiqh*, he remained loyal as a follower of the Shāfi°ite school of law.<sup>86</sup> Without neglecting other sciences, °Abd al-Jabbār committed himself to the study of *kalām*. On this issue, al-Jushamī reports that °Abd al-Jabbār achieved a high position in *fiqh*, but he filled his days with *kalām*. Al-Jushamī reports that °Abd al-Jabbār

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<sup>82</sup> Al-Rāfi°ī, *Akhbār Qazwīn*, iii, 125; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, v, 443

<sup>83</sup> Ibn al-°Imād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, iii, 202. The number of *ḥadīth* mentioned is probably out of respect (*adab*) since there is no clear system for measuring the amount of *ḥadīth* memorized by certain scholar.

<sup>84</sup> Heemskerk, M. T, *Suffering*, 38.

<sup>85</sup> *Ṭabaqāt* 328. Cf. al-Jushamī, *Sharḥ*, 366; Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *Munya*, 94.

<sup>86</sup> Al-Yāfi°ī, *Mir°āt al-Jinān*, iii, 29; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, v, 443; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-M°ẓān*, 385.

said, “Those who study *fiqh* seek the things of the world. But *kalām* has no goal other than God the most high.”<sup>87</sup>

To develop his theological knowledge, °Abd al-Jabbār moved from Baṣra to Baghdād, to study with Abū °Abdallāh Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 350/961), the leader (*Shaykh*) of the Baṣran Mu°tazilites<sup>88</sup> at the time. He was a devoted Mu°tazilite and a pupil of Abū Hāshim and Abū Ishāq al-Naṣībī.<sup>89</sup> According to al-Jushamī, °Abd al-Jabbār had a very close relationship with Abū °Abdallāh Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. The latter was one of the influential teachers in the development of °Abd al-Jabbār’s intellectual personality. The attachment of °Abd al-Jabbār to Abū °Abdallāh was strong enough that °Abd al-Jabbār wanted to read Ḥanafīte jurisprudence (*fiqh*) with Abū °Abdallāh, but he refused. The latter argued that every scholar (*mujtahid*) is correct in this knowledge (*fiqh*); therefore, °Abd al-Jabbār should remain as a follower of the Shāfi°ites in *fiqh*.<sup>90</sup>

From these two teachers, Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. °Ayyāsh and Abū °Abdallāh Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, °Abd al-Jabbār was able to master the theology of the Baṣran Mu°tazilites, especially that of Abū °Ali Muḥammad b. °Abd al-Wahhāb al-Jubbā’ī (d. 303/915)<sup>91</sup> and his son Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā’ī. Subsequently, after the death of Abū °Abdallāh

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<sup>87</sup> Al-Jushamī, *Sharḥ*, 367.

<sup>88</sup> There are two major schools of thought amongst the Mu°tazilites: the first is the Baṣran and second is the Baghdād school. Abū al-Hudhayl al-°Allāf is considered the founder of the first school, while Bishr b. al-Mu°tamir is the founder of the latter. See Watt, *Formative Period*, 217.

<sup>89</sup> *Ṭabaqāt*, 328; cf. Kraemer, J., *Humanism*, 73.

<sup>90</sup> See al-Jushamī, *Sharḥ*, 367; cf. Ibn Murtaḍā, *Munya*, 112. For °Abd al-Jabbār’s view on Abū °Abdallāh Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, see °Abd al-Jabbār, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mu°tazila*, 325-328.

<sup>91</sup> For his biographical note, see Gardet, L., “Al-Djubbā’ī Abū °Alī”, in *EF*, ii, 569.

al-Baṣrī in 369/979, ʿAbd al-Jabbār became the undisputed head of the Baṣran Muʿtazilites.<sup>92</sup>

The following generations of prominent Muʿtazilite scholars were mostly his students.<sup>93</sup> Thirty-four were mentioned by al-Jushamī in his *Sharḥ al-ʿuyūn* with some biographical details.<sup>94</sup> However, ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s students were from not only the Muʿtazilites but also other various theological backgrounds such as the Zaydites and Imamites. His teaching also attracted thinkers from non-Islamic groups such as the Karaites (Judaism). Interestingly, the survival of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s works until today was through non-Muʿtazilite channels. The first is through the Yemenite Zaydites, and the second is through the Karaites.<sup>95</sup> We mention some of them, mainly because their works have survived today, and some of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s discussions that are missing in the lost parts of the *Mughnī* were found in their works.<sup>96</sup>

One of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s influential students was Mānkḏīm Shashḏīw (d. 425/1034), a Zaydite Muʿtazilite.<sup>97</sup> He is the author of a critical paraphrase (*taʿlīq*) of ʿAbd al-

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<sup>92</sup> Al-Jushamī, *Sharḥ*, 386.

<sup>93</sup> For details information on ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s students, see Ibn al-Murtaḏā, *Munya*, 97-100. c.f. Madelung, “ʿAbd al-Jabbār”, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, i, 117.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. al-Jushamī, *Sharḥ*, 382-93.

<sup>95</sup> For more information on the Karaites, see K. Kohler & A. Harkavy, “Karaites and Karaism” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vii, 438-46.

<sup>96</sup> I mentioned three of his students due to their significant influence in understanding ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theological epistemology. His other students whose works survived until today include Abū Rashīd al-Nīsabūrī (d. 445/1053) and Sharīf al-Murtaḏā (d. 436/1044). Abū Rāshid originally is a follower of the Baghdād school of Muʿtazilite then embraced Baṣran Muʿtazilism under ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s influence. After the death of his mentor, Abū Rashīd became the leader of Baṣrian Muʿtazilites. Sharīf al-Murtaḏā studies Islamic theology with ʿAbd al-Jabbār, however, in the concept of leadership (*Imāma*) he disagrees with his teacher. His book *Kitāb al-Shāfi fī al-Imāma*<sup>96</sup> is a defence of the imamate of the Twelve Imāms against ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s concept of leadership in the *Mughnī*. cf. al-Jushamī, *Sharḥ*, 382-90.

<sup>97</sup> For his biography see Heemskerck, *Suffering*, 60-2.

Jabbār's *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, which has survived until today. At the beginning, this book was wrongly attributed as ʿAbd al-Jabbār's work. However, a later discovery indicated that this book was the work of his student, Māndkīm. This work is a handy reference on the views of the Muʿtazilites in general.<sup>98</sup>

Another influential student was Abū Muḥammad Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Mattawayh (d. 468/1075). In his *al-Majmūʿ fī al-muḥiṭ bi al-taklīf*, Ibn Mattawayh presents the doctrine of ʿAbd al-Jabbār by paraphrasing and criticizing a few points in the latter's lost work, *Kitāb al-Muḥiṭ bi al-taklīf*.<sup>99</sup> In addition to the *Mughnī* 11, I refer to Ibn Mattawayh's *al-Majmūʿ* to observe ʿAbd al-Jabbār's views on religious obligation (*taklīf*).<sup>100</sup>

ʿAbd al-Jabbār's third student who deserves our attention is Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044). He studied *kalām* and legal methodology (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) with ʿAbd al-Jabbār.<sup>101</sup> In his doctrine, however, Abū al-Ḥusayn was influenced by the ideas of the philosophers and deviated from the teaching of his teacher.<sup>102</sup> Notable points on which he differed from the Bahshamiyya<sup>103</sup> were his

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Heemkerk, *Suffering*, 60-2.

<sup>99</sup> Madelung, "Ibn Mattawayh, Abū Muhammad al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad" in *EP*<sup>2</sup>, xii, 393.

<sup>100</sup> The views of both Māndkīm and Ibn Mattawayh has been studied by Heemkerk and she concludes that these are in agreement with ʿAbd al-Jabbār's in most of their theological argument. Cf. al-Jushamī, *Sharḥ*, 368. Cf. Heemkerk, *Suffering*, 53-7.

<sup>101</sup> In Islamic legal methodology his work "*al-Mūʿtāzīlī fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*" has become an influential work in the field. Ibn Khallikān reports that Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, in his *Kitāb al-Maḥṣūl*, and Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, in his *Kitāb al-Ihkām fī uṣūl al-ahkām*, relied extensively on it. See Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt*, iv, 271.

<sup>102</sup> Heemkerk, *Suffering*, 57-9.

<sup>103</sup> The followers of Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʿī. For more, see Heemkerk, *Suffering*, 14-21.

rejection of their theory of modes (*aḥwāl*) and their thesis that the non-existent (*maʿdūm*) is a thing.<sup>104</sup>

The extant part of his book *Taṣaffuḥ al-Adilla* was recently published by Wilfred Madelung and Sabine Schmidtke. In this book, Abū al-Ḥusayn criticized traditional Muʿtazilite's arguments that had been defended by ʿAbd al-Jabbār and the Muʿtazilites in general. In this study, I will also examine Abū al-Ḥusayn's view of the theological epistemology based on the works of Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *al-Muʿtamad fī uṣūl al-dīn* and *al-Fāʾiq fī uṣūl al-dīn*.<sup>105</sup> The discovery of Ibn al-Malāḥimī's works has shed light on the views of the school of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, the Ḥusayniyya, the last school of the Muʿtazilites.<sup>106</sup>

### 1.2.3. His Career

ʿAbd al-Jabbār's expertise in religious matters both in *kalām* and *fiqh* caught the attention of the minister (*vizier*) of the Buyid emirate of Jībāl at the time, Abū al-Qāsim Ismaʿīl b. ʿAbbād (d. 385/995). Hence, in 367/977 he appointed ʿAbd al-Jabbār as chief judge (*Qādī al-Quḍāt*) in Rayy, which was ruled by Muʿayyid al-Dawla (r. 366/977-373/983).<sup>107</sup>

Ibn ʿAbbād was a student of Abu ʿAbdallāh Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, ʿAbd al-Jabbār's teacher in Baghdad. It is not clear which religious school Ibn ʿAbbād adhered to. His

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<sup>104</sup> See Madelung, "Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī", *EF*<sup>2</sup>, xii, 25.

<sup>105</sup> Both works were edited by W. Madelung and M. McDermot.

<sup>106</sup> Madelung, W., Introduction for *al-Muʿtamad*, 17. There is a report from al-Rāzī on this school when he states that the only available Muʿtazilite school during his time is al-Bahshamiyya, the follower of Abū Hāshim and al-Ḥusayniyya, the followers of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, see al-Rāzī, *ʿItiqādāt*, 42.

<sup>107</sup> For his biographical note, see C.E. Bosworth, *EF*<sup>2</sup>, vii, 272.

biographers, his friends, and his enemies disagree completely when it comes to specifying to which school he belonged. Some Shi'ites such as Ibn Bābūya unhesitatingly claim him; others attach him to the Zaydites, to the Ḥanafites, to the Shafi'ites, or to the Ḥashwiyya.<sup>108</sup> But, in fact, he considered himself to be a pupil of the Mu'tazilites.<sup>109</sup>

Ibn 'Abbād favored Mu'tazilism, and probably for this reason appointed a Mu'tazilite as a chief judge. Ibn 'Abbād wanted to propagate Mu'tazilism, and 'Abd al-Jabbār supported Ibn 'Abbād in his aspirations. Some of 'Abd al-Jabbār's works such as *al-Mukhtaṣar fī uṣūl al-dīn*, which was written at the request of Ibn 'Abbād, may have been intended to spread the theology of the Mu'tazilites.<sup>110</sup>

'Abd al-Jabbār became a chief judge in Rayy in 367/977. This appointment granted him authority over several provinces, such as Rayy, Qazwīn, Abhār-Zanjān, Qumm, Suhraward, and Danbawand.<sup>111</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār held the position of chief judge for a period of eighteen years, when he was dismissed by the ruler of the Buyid government at the time, Fakhr al-Dawla (r. 373/983-387/997). This dismissal happened in 385/995, after the death of Ibn 'Abbād.<sup>112</sup> Fakhr al-Dawla dismissed 'Abd al-Jabbār and confiscated his possessions. According to some biographers, this was punishment for his refusal to pray and to pronounce the mercy statement (*tarahūm*) for Ibn 'Abbād at his funeral. Some add that 'Abd al-Jabbār had refused

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<sup>108</sup> Ḥashwiyya is used, in a narrower sense, of the *Aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* who, uncritically and even prompted by prejudice, recognize as genuine and interpret literally the crudely anthropomorphic traditions. See "Ḥashwiyya" in *El*<sup>2</sup>, iii, 269.

<sup>109</sup> Cahen, Cl. & Pellat, Ch., "Ibn 'Abbād Abū al-Kāsim Ismā'īl", in *El*<sup>2</sup>, iii, 671.

<sup>110</sup> Heemskerck, *Suffering*, 41.

<sup>111</sup> Heemskerck, *Suffering*, 42.

<sup>112</sup> For more detailed information regarding the end of the judgeship of 'Abd al-Jabbār, see Heemskerck, *Suffering*, 48-50.

to pray for God's remission of Ibn ʿAbbād's sins because he had not repented of these before he died. Whatever the reason, Fakhr al-Dawla confiscated ʿAbd al-Jabbār's possessions, just as Fakhr al-Dawla seized the property of several other high officials, including what belong to Ibn ʿAbbād himself.<sup>113</sup>

There are other controversial remarks by some scholars regarding ʿAbd al-Jabbār at the end of his judgeship. His contemporary Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī referred to ʿAbd al-Jabbār as the servant (*ghulam*) of Ibn ʿAbbād. Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī also showed overt disgust for ʿAbd al-Jabbār's vocation as a *mutakallim*. Ibn Shākir al-Kutūbī (d. 764/1463) claimed that ʿAbd al-Jabbār collected millions of dirhams while he was in Rayy; therefore, Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449) insisted that ʿAbd al-Jabbār should not have been entrusted with the post of chief judge.<sup>114</sup>

ʿUthmān made a reasonable observation when analyzing the case. He observes that the main reasons for the appearance of that kind of statement were personal as well as sectarian clashes. Ibn Shākir, for instance, was a follower of the Ashʿarite school, the main rival of the Muʿtazilites. Meanwhile, Ibn Ḥajar narrated this story from Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023), who was well-known for his enmity toward Ibn ʿAbbād and his followers. This could be proved by his book *Mathālib al-Wazīrayn*.<sup>115</sup>

However, it is undeniable that after ʿAbd al-Jabbār's appointment as chief judge, his life was better. According to al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418), the salary of a chief

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<sup>113</sup> For more on this controversy, see G. Reynolds, "The Rise and Fall", 3-18.

<sup>114</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-Miʿān*, iii, 386. c.f. ʿUthman, A.K., *Qāḍī al-quḍāt*, 30.

<sup>115</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *Mathālib al-Wazīrayn*, 75.

judge at that time was one hundred dinars, exclusive of other facilities.<sup>116</sup> Therefore, it is conceivable that when Fakhr al-Dawla confiscated °Abd al-Jabbār's belongings, the amount was three million dirhams.<sup>117</sup> °Abd al-Jabbār was replaced by Abū al-Ḥasan °Alī b. °Abd al-°Azīz al-Jurjānī (d. 392/1002).<sup>118</sup>

#### 1.2.4. His Works

In spite of °Abd al-Jabbār's duties as chief judge, he found time to write and dictate many books. He completed the twenty volumes of the *Mughnī* in 380/990, which he had started in 360/970 before he became chief judge.<sup>119</sup> At the end of the *Mughnī*, °Abd al-Jabbār mentioned some other books that he wrote during the same period as the *Mughnī*.<sup>120</sup> During his lifetime, °Abd al-Jabbār composed numerous works on various subjects of Islamic sciences, including *kalām*, *tafsīr* (exegesis of the Qur'ān), *ḥadīth* (tradition), and *uṣūl al-fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). More of °Abd al-Jabbār's works have survived compared to other Mu°tazilite theologians.

After the discovery of a large numbers of the works of °Abd al-Jabbār and other Mu°tazilites by Egyptian scholars during their research expedition in Yemen in 1951,<sup>121</sup> for the first time modern scholars were supplied with ample references on Mu°tazilite theology. Before this discovery, studies of Mu°tazilite theology were limited to a small number of Mu°tazilite books that had survived. Some of the works

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<sup>116</sup> Al-Qalqashandī, *Subḥ al-A°shā*, iii, 212.

<sup>117</sup> According to Abū Shujā°, °Abd al-Jabbār raised this money by selling a thousand Egyptian garments. See Abū Shujā°, *Dhayl tajārib al-umam*, 264. For °Uthmān's view on this, see *Qāḍī al-Quḍāt*, 32; Reynolds, "Rise and Fall," 8.

<sup>118</sup> Yāqūt, *Mu°jam al-Udabā'*, vi, 599.

<sup>119</sup> Peter, *God's Created Speech*, 45.

<sup>120</sup> *Mughnī*, xx (2), 258.

<sup>121</sup> For more on this expedition, see K. Nāmī, *Bi°tha al-Mi°riyya*, 25. See also below, 55.

are *al-Kashshāf ʿan ḥaqāʾiq al-tanzīl*,<sup>122</sup> a Qur’anic commentary by al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), *Kitāb al-Intiṣār wa al-radd ʿalā Ibn al-Rāwandī al-mulḥid*<sup>123</sup> by al-Khayyāt, and *Masāʾil al-khilāf bayn al-Baṣriyyīn wa al-Baghdādiyyīn*,<sup>124</sup> by Abū Rashīd al-Nīsābūrī, a pupil of ʿAbd al-Jabbār.

The other sources of Muʿtazilite study before the publication of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s works are the books by their adversaries. Some of the most important are *Kitāb Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa iktilāf al-muṣallīm* by Abū Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firāq wa bayān al-firqa al-nājiya minhum* by Abū al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037, Ashʿarite Shāfiʿite), *al-Fiṣal fī al-milal wa al-ahwāʾ wa al-niḥal* by Ibn Ḥazm Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī b. Aḥmad (d. 456/1064, Zāhirite jurist),<sup>125</sup> and *al-Milal wa al-niḥal* by Abū al-Faṭḥ Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153, Ashʿarite theologian).<sup>126</sup>

Based mostly on the manuscripts found in Yemen, ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān has made a survey of the known titles of the works by ʿAbd al-Jabbār in thematic order. ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān searched ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s works and many other sources and manuscripts to make a list of all his writings. In his first attempt, he mentioned only fifty-nine titles in his introduction to the book *Taʿlīq sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, which

<sup>122</sup> This work has been published in two volumes in 1272/1856 in Calcutta. See Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 424.

<sup>123</sup> This book has been edited and translated into French by A.N. Nader. It was published in 1957 in Beirut. See J. Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 423.

<sup>124</sup> This book has been translated to German by M.Horten, *Die Philosophie des abu Raschid* and published in 1910 in Bonn. See Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 4.

<sup>125</sup> For his biographical note, see Arnaldez, R., “Ibn Ḥazm, Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Saʿīd”, in *EL*<sup>2</sup>, iii, 790.

<sup>126</sup> For his biographical note, see Monnot G., “al-Shahrastānī, Abū al-Faṭḥ Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Aḥmad, Tadj al-Dīn,” in *EL*<sup>2</sup>, ix, 214.

he wrongly attributed to ʿAbd al-Jabbār. Later, in his other works,<sup>127</sup> ʿUthmān added another ten titles and arrived at a total of sixty-nine titles.<sup>128</sup> He does not present them in chronological order because the dates of some of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s works are difficult to determine. Only some can be traced, since at the end of the *Mughni* ʿAbd al-Jabbār mentions works he dictated before he started dictating that work and works he dictated during the twenty years it took him to dictate the *Mughni*.<sup>129</sup>

Among the sixty-nine titles listed by ʿUthmān, forty-five refer to *Uṣūl al-dīn*, five were on Qur’anic sciences, two on *ḥadīth*, two on religious mission and guidance (*al-daʿwa wa al-irshād*), seven on Islamic law (*fiqh*), two on points of disagreement (*al-khilāf*), one on biography, and five on other fields of Islamic studies.

According to ʿUthmān, fourteen of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s works have been found, and eight have been edited and published by various scholars. However, new research on ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s works indicates that two books attributed to him were actually not his but were written by his disciples. These two books are (*Taʿlīq*) *sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa* by Mānkadīm Shashdīw<sup>130</sup> and *al-Majmūʿ fī al-muḥīṭ bi al-taklīf* by Ibn Mattawayh.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>127</sup> ʿUthmān, *Qāḍī al-Quḍāt*, 58-72.

<sup>128</sup> Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 10. However, there are several works that have been attributed to ʿAbd al-Jabbār which are not found in ʿUthmān’s list. Those works are *al-Mukhtaṣar fī uṣūl al-dīn* which might be identical to *Mukhtaṣar al-ḥusnā*, *al-Mūjibāt wa al-mu’aththirāt*, *Taʿlīq al-Bagdādiyyāt* and *al-’Uṣūl al-khamsa*. Cf. Heemskerck, *Suffering*, 86-7.

<sup>129</sup> See *Mughni*, xx (2), 258.

<sup>130</sup> This work was edited by ʿUthmān and published in Cairo in 1384/1965. Madelung includes this work in the category, “works based on works of ʿAbd al-Jabbār” and states that the book has been wrongly published as ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s work. See Madelung, “ʿAbd al-Jabbār,” *E. Ir.*, i, 117.

<sup>131</sup> For more detailed information on the issue, see Gimaret, *Les Uṣūl al-Hamsa*, 45-7; cf. Heemskerck, *Suffering*, 3-8.

ʿUthmān, Peters, and Hourani attribute both works to ʿAbd al-Jabbār and say they were written down by his disciples Mānkḏīm and Ibn Mattawayh, respectively. However, when studying the text, it is clear that Mānkḏīm’s contribution to *Sharḥ* and Ibn Mattawayh’s contribution to *al-Majmūʿ* must have been more than only writing the text down. Gimaret has come up with evidence arguing that the text of *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*<sup>132</sup> and *Majmūʿ fī al-muḥīṭ bi al-taklīf*<sup>133</sup> is not the work of ʿAbd al-Jabbār by himself but is a critical paraphrase of a work by him written by his disciples.<sup>134</sup>

Consequently, one might wonder whether the *Mughnī* is an original work of ʿAbd al-Jabbār or another paraphrase of his work. The answer is that the *Mughnī* has been confirmed as being one of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s original works and not a paraphrase. Gimaret, in his *Les uṣūl al-hamsa du Qāḏī ʿAbd al-Jabbār*, argued extensively to prove this fact. His arguments have been summarized by Heemskerk as follows.

The proof that the text was dictated by ʿAbd al-Jabbār is indicated by the sentence *imlāʾ al-Qāḏī* Abū al-Ḥassan ʿAbd al-Jabbār on the title page of each volume. Unlike the paraphrased works, no one apart from ʿAbd al-Jabbār himself is mentioned in the title pages as being involved in any way in the production of the work.<sup>135</sup> The person who wrote down the *Mughnī* from dictation is not even mentioned. Furthermore, ʿAbd al-Jabbār himself at the end of the *Mughnī* uses the word dictation (*imlāʾ*)

<sup>132</sup> Edited by ʿUthmān. I agree with Heemskerk when she suggests this book should be called: “*Taʿlīq sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*”. See Heemskerk, *Suffering*, 3-4. However, in this study I will use the abbreviation as *Sharḥ*.

<sup>133</sup> Edited by Fuʿad Sayyid and J.J. Houben. To differentiate, for Sayyid’s edition I use (1) and (2) for Houben’s edition.

<sup>134</sup> For Gimaret’s argumentation, see his “*Les usul al-hamsa*”, 47-57.

<sup>135</sup> See Heemskerk, *Suffering*, 8.

several times in reference to his work.<sup>136</sup> The other indication is that in the *Mughnī*, the voice of ʿAbd al-Jabbār is always given in the first person.<sup>137</sup> As far as these indications are concerned, it can be safely assumed that the text of the *Mughnī* as it was found in the Sanʿāʾ manuscript is not a paraphrase like *Taʿlīq sharḥ* and *al-Majmūʿ*.<sup>138</sup>

In addition to the *Mughnī*, another six titles of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s works have been published. The seven titles are as follows:<sup>139</sup>

1. *Mutashābih al-Qurʾān* (*The Ambiguous Qurʾanic* [verses]), an exegetical work on the ambiguous passages of the Qurʾān from the Muʿtazilite point of view, composed between 360/970 and 380/990.<sup>140</sup>
2. *Al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa al-ʿadl* (*Summa on Issues of Unity and Justice*), a comprehensive exposition of Muʿtazilite *kalām*. ʿAbd al-Jabbār began to dictate this magnum opus in Rāmḥurmuz, the important Muʿtazilite centre, in 360/970-71 and completed this work in 379-80/989 when he was the chief judge in Rayy.<sup>141</sup> Of its twenty parts, sixteen have been recovered and edited by various scholars. The sixteen volumes of the *Mughnī* were published between 1960 and 1969 under the supervision of Ṭaha Ḥusayn.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>136</sup> *Mughnī*, xx (2), 258.

<sup>137</sup> *Mughnī*, xx (2), 259.

<sup>138</sup> Heemkerk, *Suffering*, 8-9.

<sup>139</sup> In his article Madelung mentions that six works of ʿAbd al-Jabbār have been published. He was probably unaware of the publication of “*Kitāb al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa* edited by D. Gimaret several years earlier. Madelung did mention the title of this work in his article but believed that it is still in manuscript form at Vatican, 989. See Madelung, “ʿAbd al-Jabbār”, *E. Ir.*, i, 118.

<sup>140</sup> This two volumes work was edited by ʿAdnān Muḥammad Zarzūr, and published in Cairo, 1969. See also Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *Munya*, 95. cf. Madelung, “ʿAbd al-Jabbār”, in *E. Ir.*, i, 117.

<sup>141</sup> Al-Jushamī, *Sharḥ*, 366.

<sup>142</sup> For information on the editors of the *Mughnī*, see Heemkerk, *Suffering*, 205.

3. *Al-Mukhtaṣar fī uṣūl al-dīn* (*The Abridgement of the Fundamentals of Religion*). This was written after he completed the *Mughnī* in 385/995 at the suggestion of Ibn ʿAbbād.<sup>143</sup> This book is considered an abridgement of the encyclopaedic *Mughnī*. This work deals summarily with the same subjects as the *Mughnī* and is similarly arranged.<sup>144</sup> This work was edited by Muḥammad ʿImāra in *Rasā'il al-ʿAdl wa al-Tawḥīd*.<sup>145</sup>
4. *Tanzīh al-Qur'ān ʿan al-maṭā'in* (*Purifying the Qur'an from Contestation*), written after 380/990. It deals with all aspects of language, grammar, composition and meaning in the Qur'ān that is subject to misunderstanding and criticism. But though ʿAbd al-Jabbār in this work covers all the chapters (*suwar*) on the Qur'an, he deals with only a limited number of verses. Mostly, he answers questions and reacts to opponents who make objections against the text of the Qur'ān or against his theology on the basis of the text of the Qur'ān. This book may be the earliest work of ʿAbd al-Jabbār published in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>146</sup>
5. *Tathbīḥ dalā'il al-nubuwwa*, written in 385/995. The book deals with the miraculous proof of the prophethood of Muḥammad, especially the truth of his prophecy, and contains polemical refutations of the claims of other religions, philosophy, and Shi'ism. This work was edited by ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān and published in two volumes in Beirut in 1966.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>143</sup> The author clearly indicates this fact in the introduction of this book. See ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mukhtaṣar fī uṣūl al-dīn*, 197. This book however, is not included in ʿUthmān's list.

<sup>144</sup> This can be observed by comparing the sub-titles of both the *Mukhtaṣar* and the *Mughnī*.

<sup>145</sup> The second edition of this book has been published by Dar al-Shurūq, Cairo, 1988 under the series of "From the Heritage of Islamic Rationalism (*Min Turāth al-ʿAqlāniyya al-Islāmiyya*), 197-282.

<sup>146</sup> It was published in Cairo by al-Maṭbaʿa al-Jamāliyya in 1329/1911.

<sup>147</sup> The publication of this work has caused theological debate among Western scholars in Religious studies regarding ʿAbd al-Jabbār's section on the origin of Christianity. It was about a long historical account of a Judaeo-Christian sect alleged to be contained in it. S.M. Stern however, argues that the

6. *Faḍl al-ʿtizāl wa tabaqāt al-Muʿtazila*, edited by Fuʿad Sayyid and printed in Tunis in 1974. The first part is a short apology for Muʿtazilism and a refutation of its critics. The second part contains a history of the Muʿtazilite scholars in ten classes. This work then becomes a foundation for another two Muʿtazilite works, *Sharḥ al-uyūn* of Hākīm al-Jushamī and *al-Munyā wa al-amal* of Ibn Murtaḍā.<sup>148</sup>

7. *Kitāb al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, edited by Daniel Gimaret.<sup>149</sup>

ʿUthmān also listed the unpublished manuscripts of ʿAbd al-Jabbār that are kept in various libraries around the world.<sup>150</sup> They are as follows:

1. *Nuḏūm al-fawā'id wa taqrīb al-murād li al-rā'id*. This work is likely to be on *ḥadīth*.<sup>151</sup> Two copies of this are known to exist, one in the Vatican Library, Rome (MS 1177) and one in the British Museum (MS 577 {I}).
2. *Al-Ikhtilāf fī uṣūl al-fiqh*. This work on Islamic law is in the Vatican Library (MS 1100).
3. *Al-Ikhtilāf bayn al-shaykhayn*. This work explains the disputes between Abū ʿAlī (d. 303/915) and Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī (d. 321/933).<sup>152</sup> It is also kept in the Vatican Library (MS 1110).
4. *Kitāb fī al-qaḍā' wa al-qadr*. This work on Islamic theology is in the Najaf Library in Iraq.

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story of the Romanization of Christianity was invented by a Muslim, most likely an ex-Christian. For more information see his two articles, "Quotation from Apocryphal Gospels", 34-57 and "ʿAbd al-Jabbār's Account of How Christ's Religion was Falsified", 146-85. Cf. Reynolds G. S., *A Muslim Theologian in the Sectarian Milieu*, 25.

<sup>148</sup> Madelung, "ʿAbd al-Jabbār" in *E. Ir*, i, 117.

<sup>149</sup> It was published in *Annales Islamologiques*, 15, 1979, 79-96.

<sup>150</sup> ʿUthmān, *Qāḍī al-Quḍā'*, 61-62.

<sup>151</sup> Brockelmann, *GAL*, 343.

<sup>152</sup> Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *Munya*, 96.

5. *Mas'ala fī al-ghayba*. This work is a critique of Shi'ite theology regarding the occultation of the Imām and is in the Vatican Library (MS 1028).<sup>153</sup>
6. *Risāla fī 'ilm al-kimīyā'*. A work on chemistry, found in the Library of Khazanah in Rampur.<sup>154</sup>

°Abd al-Jabbār's achievement in academic activities is not only acknowledged within the Mu'tazilite or *kalām* circles but also beyond it. Muḥammad b. °Abdallāh al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392),<sup>155</sup> in this case, states that "°Abd al-Jabbār is one of the excellent scholars in Islamic jurisprudence after Imām al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820)."<sup>156</sup> Meanwhile, in Islamic theology, Ibn al-Murtaḍā (d. 840/1347) believes that °Abd al-Jabbār's achievement is very distinguished and incomparable with others.<sup>157</sup>

The ability of °Abd al-Jabbār is widely attested in his works, most of which have been accepted as major references in religious study. His *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wa al-°Adl* is considered the biggest encyclopaedia in Islamic theology that has been published. According to Ibn Khaldūn (d. 784/1382), *Kitāb al-°Umd* by °Abd al-Jabbār, is one of the best four books on Islamic jurisprudence and law.<sup>158</sup> In defending the sacredness of Islam and its prophet, °Abd al-Jabbār wrote *Tathbīṭ dalā'il al-nubuwwa* (*Confirmation of the Proofs of Prophecy*).<sup>159</sup>

<sup>153</sup> Brockelmann, *GAL*, 343.

<sup>154</sup> °Uthmān, *Qāḍī al-Quḍāt*, 26. Probably it is an epistle on chemistry. For more information on the study of chemistry during the Buyids emirates, see Kraemer, *Humanism*, 121.

<sup>155</sup> For biographical note, see Rippin, A., "al-Zarkashī" in *EF*<sup>2</sup>, xii, 842.

<sup>156</sup> Al-Zarkashī, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, i, 6.

<sup>157</sup> Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *Munya*, 95.

<sup>158</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, 113.

<sup>159</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-Miẓān*, iii, 386. cf. al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, xvii, 244

Based on previous discussions of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s works, one might observe that ʿAbd al-Jabbār is a prolific scholar and that his works are the longest extant among the Muʿtazilites. Therefore, one might ask that how it was possible for ʿAbd al-Jabbār to express his thoughts and write extensively in his own time; or why ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s works are relatively the most extant among the Muʿtazilites? To answer these questions, one needs to understand the socio-political background of his time.

### 1.2.5. Socio-political Background

ʿAbd al-Jabbār lived in the fourth/tenth century, a significant period of Islamic intellectual history, which some scholars consider the renaissance of Islam.<sup>160</sup> One of the indications of this period is the emergence of several prominent scholars who developed various schools of Islamic thought, scholars whose influence shaped the structure of later Islamic intellectuals.

In terms of philosophy, the two most prominent Muslim philosophers, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950)<sup>161</sup> and Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037),<sup>162</sup> developed their philosophy during this time. Also, the famous historian and philosopher Aḥmad b. Miskawayh (d. 421/1030) lived in Baghdād. In terms of Islamic theology, there was *al-Qāḍī* al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) and Abū al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037), the rejuvenators of the Sunnī school of Ashʿarites. Also in Baghdād, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022) developed the theory of the Imamate of the Twelver Shiʿites.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Kraemer, *Humanism*, 3-5.

<sup>161</sup> For his biographical note, see R. Walzer, “al-Fārābī, Abū Naṣr, *EP*<sup>2</sup>, ii, 778.

<sup>162</sup> For his biographical note, see A. M., Goichon, “Ibn Sīnā”, *EP*<sup>2</sup>, iii, 941.

<sup>163</sup> Kraemer, *Humanism*, 67-70.

One of the factors observed by Kraemer as contributing to the renaissance of Islamic intellectual life during the Buyid period is the decentralization of the cultural centres. Before the Buyids, cultural activities were focused at the court of the caliph, where scholars presented their works. However, during the Buyid period, this situation changed. The courts of *amirs* in every province became new centres for scholars; even the viziers also had their own court.<sup>164</sup> The subjects presented at court also changed. During the post *miḥna* era until the coming of the Buyids, poets acquired a prominent place in the court of the caliph. However, during the Buyid period, other subjects such as *kalām* and philosophy also become important aspects of the discussions.

We observe that Ibn Sīnā served as vizier to Shams al-Dawla (r. 387/997-412/1021) in Jibāl. Al-Bāqillānī worked under the patronage of °Aḍud al-Dawla in Baghdād. In Rayy, there was °Abd al-Jabbār himself as one of the most prominent Mu°tazilite scholars of his time, who worked under the patronage of al-Şāhib b. °Abbād (d. 385/995), the vizier for both Mu°ayyid al-Dawla (r. 366/977-373/983) and his brother Fakhr al-Dawla (r.373/983-387/997).<sup>165</sup>

Those scholars gained political and financial support from the *amirs* and the viziers. The salary of a chief judge during the fourth/tenth century, for instance, is around one hundred dinars.<sup>166</sup> With financial support from the *amirs* and their social status as an officer in their court, those scholars managed to secure enough support to

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<sup>164</sup> Ibn al-Amīd and Şāhib b. °Abbād are some examples, cf. Kraemer, *Humanism*, 52-60.

<sup>165</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'*, 416.

<sup>166</sup> Al-Qalqashandī, *Subḥ al-A°shā*, iii, 212. A sum of this money probably is reserved for the cost of publication.

publish and copy their works. The role of their students in writing, editing and preserving their teachers' works also contributes to the survival of the latter's work.

The decentralization of cultural centres, on the other hand, was possibly due to the political situation during this period. In the early ʿAbbāsīd era, the caliph reigned with total executive power, with advice from the vizier. Because of this power, they interfered directly in religious disputes with scholars. What happened during the reign of al-Ma'mūn and al-Mutawakkil are some examples of this political interference in religious disputes. However, during the Shi'ite Buyid period, this total executive power of the caliph was absent. The Sunnite ʿAbbāsīd caliphs during this time remained only as the living symbol of the unity of the Muslim empire but were deprived of real executive power. They had no army to command; therefore, they could not effectively impose any theological decree on people.

Presumably the last decree from the caliph before the change of the political structure in the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate was by al-Rāḍī in 323/935, when he promulgated an edict warning the Ḥanbalīs and condemning them for spreading anthropomorphic belief, molesting a good Muslim, and accusing the Shi'ites of unbelief. This decree was spread due to the riot by followers of al-Barbahārī (d. 329/941), a Ḥanbalī traditionalist-jurisprudent preacher. They broke into homes, poured out the wine, smashed musical instruments, and even interrogated couples on the street to ensure that they were conducting themselves properly.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, i, 322-23; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, viii, 229-231; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, xi, 181-2. See Kraemer, *Humanism*, 61-2.

However, a year later, a significant event occurred in the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate when the caliph's total executive power was lost. In 324/936, the Caliph al-Rāḍī had to accept the creation of a new post in the government, the *amīr al-umarā'* (commander of commanders), due to his failure to secure financial support for his soldiers and officers to implement executive power.<sup>168</sup> The holder of the newly created post, Muḥammad b. al-Rā'iq (d. 326/937), took over the executive power of the caliph and was in charge of both civil and military administration. He was the first *amīr al-umarā'* and became the most powerful person in the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate.<sup>169</sup> Since then, the ʿAbbāsīd caliph had no troops to command and no land to call his own beyond the gates of his palace.<sup>170</sup>

The establishment of the post of *amīr al-umarā'* created open rivalry among the leaders. Ibn al-Rā'iq remained in power for only two years, and then he was displaced by Abū al-Ḥusayn Bajkam (r. 326-9/938-41), followed by Ḥasan Naṣīr al-Dawla (r. 330-1/942-3) from the Hamdanids, and Tūzūn (r. 331-4/943-5). Both Bajkam and Tūzūn were Ibn al-Rā'iq's generals of Turkish origin brought to Baghdād by Ibn al-Rā'iq to become his military power.<sup>171</sup>

The constant changes in the holders of the post of *amīr al-umarā'* reveal both the incompetence and the insignificance of the caliph during this period. After al-Rāḍī's death in 329/940, his brother Ibrahīm al-Muttaqī (r. 329/940-333/944) was appointed

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<sup>168</sup> The tax revenue in Baghdād was inadequate to pay the salary of the soldiers. This economic problem was due to the loss of Baghdād's control over al-Jazīra, a rich grain growing area to the Hamdanids. Later, this problem was exacerbated when al-Sawād, another agricultural area located in the south of Baghdād was destroyed during the continuous military conflicts between Ibn al-Rā'iq and Bajkam in their struggle for power. Cf. Kennedy, *Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 199.

<sup>169</sup> Kennedy, *Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 205.

<sup>170</sup> Kennedy, *Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 243.

<sup>171</sup> Kennedy, *Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 230.

caliph by Bajkam. Al-Muttaqī attempted to restore the power of caliph by restoring the vizierate in the old way and abolishing the office of *amīr al-umarā'* entirely, but the attempt failed. In 333/944, he was removed from power and blinded by the Turkish *amīr al-umarā'* Tūzūn.<sup>172</sup>

During this chaotic political period, the Buyids gained control over the caliph's office in Baghdād. Aḥmad b. Buya (d. 356/967), the third of Buya's sons from the region of Daylam,<sup>173</sup> occupied the city of Baghdād with his soldiers and was accepted by the caliph at the time al-Mustakfī (r. 333-334/944-946) as a new *amīr al-umarā'* in 334/945.<sup>174</sup> Starting from this date, the Buyid emirates controlled the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate for more than a century. The monopoly of the Buyid family became apparent when Aḥmad b. Buya discharged al-Mustakfī from the office of caliph and appointed his nephew al-Muṭīʿ (r. 334-363/946-974), instead.<sup>175</sup>

The Buyids are said to have come from a Zaydīte Shiʿites background. However, it is unclear whether they continued to adhere to Zaydism. There is evidence that some may have adopted Imamism. The famous Buyid ruler ʿAḍud al-Dawla (d. 372/983), who reigned in Shirāz and later in Baghdād, was buried near the graves of Imāmī

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<sup>172</sup> Kennedy, *Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 198.

<sup>173</sup> Daylam is the area covering the north-western part of Iran. It is a mountainous region and largely inaccessible. The Zaydites and Twelver Shiʿites, who were persecuted from time to time by the rulers of the day, had often taken refuge in the easily defendable region. They also seized the opportunity to spread the Shiʿite version of Islam among the local population. Cf. Marcinkowski, M., "Rapprochement and Fealty", 273-6.

<sup>174</sup> After Aḥmad b. Buya's victory in Baghdād, all three Buyid brothers had bestowed on them simultaneously by the Caliph honorific titles (*laqab*). Aḥmad b. Buya (r.334/945-356/967) used the title Muʿizz al-Dawla (Glorifier of the State). His brothers ʿAlī b. Buya (r. 332/934-338/949), used the title ʿImād al-Dawla (Support of the State) and Ḥasan b. Buya (r. 335/947-373/983), used the title Rukn al-Dawla (Pillar of the State). All of their names and titles were printed on the official currency (*sukūk*) of the time. Cf. Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vii, 450.

<sup>175</sup> See Kraemer, *Humanism*, 35.

imāms in Najaf. He appears to have been devoted to the twelve imams, as is attested by an inscription of his in Persepolis, dated 363/974, which lists their names along with a blessing.<sup>176</sup>

Despite the clashes between the leaders to control the post until it caused a breakdown in the social life of the people, one might observe that the post of *amīr al-umarā'* created a balance of power in the government. The caliph no longer had total executive power in the government and, therefore, could not produce any effective theological decree that could be imposed over the people. Meanwhile, the Buyids' *amīr al-umarā'*, although they were Shi'ites, neither made attempts to replace the Sunnite caliph with a Shi'ite one nor imposed Shi'ism on the people. These decisions were undoubtedly influenced by the fact that the majority of the people, as well as the Turkish troops on whom they relied, were Sunnites.<sup>177</sup> Busse observed that this policy gave their rule a more legitimate appearance in the eyes of the majority of their subjects, who were Sunnite, and also increased the respect in which the Buyids were held by foreign powers.<sup>178</sup> This political environment becomes a suitable ground for the theological schools to emerge and flourish. For scholars can express their views and be involved in theological debates without fear of persecution. In relation to the survival of 'Abd al-Jabbār's works, I will briefly examine the theological development during this era to see the relationship between certain sects at that time.

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<sup>176</sup> Busse, H., "Iran Under the Buyids", 252; Kramer, *Humanism*, 43; Daou, T., *Shaykh Mufīd*, 19.

<sup>177</sup> Kennedy, *Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 218.

<sup>178</sup> Busse, "Iran Under the Buyids", 251.

After struggling to justify their religious legitimacy following the post-*miḥna* policies of the ʿAbbāsīd caliphs, the Muʿtazilites managed to liberate themselves from political pressure and became the dominant *kalām* school during the Buyid emirates.<sup>179</sup> The Muʿtazilites had transferred their base of operations from Baṣra to Baghdād. Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Baṣrī was the leader of the Muʿtazilites in Baghdād. This school maintained close ties with the Zaydites. Many Zaydites, including *Imām* al-Muʿayyad bi-llāh (d. 424/1020) and Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Dāʿī, studied with him. With the appointment of ʿAbd al-Jabbār as a chief judge in Rayy by Ibn ʿAbbād, the Muʿtazilite Baṣra-Baghdād school opens a further branch in Rayy. This city in western Persia became the flourishing centre of Muʿtazilites scholarship. ʿAbd al-Jabbār also had the Zaydites among his pupils; one of them was Mānkḏīm Shashḏīw (d. 425/1034). Mānkḏīm was also a student of the Zaidite *Imām* al-Muʿayyad bi-llāh, who had studied with Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Baṣrī. Toward the end of the fourth/tenth century, the Muʿtazilites influence on the Zaydites reached a high point.<sup>180</sup>

On the other hand, Muʿtazilites influence on Jewish theologians also reached a peak during this century. Both Rabbanites and Karaites adopted the Muʿtazilite rational approach at various levels.<sup>181</sup> According to Madelung, with the rise of the Bahshamiyya school to public prominence in Baghdād in the fourth/tenth century, some Jewish scholars in Iraq were closely associated with its teaching. The Rabbanite Saʿīd b. Yūsuf al-Fayyūmī (Saʿadya Gaon) (d. 330/942) and the Karaites

<sup>179</sup> On the post-*miḥna* policies of the ʿAbbāsīd caliphs, see C. Melchert, “*Religious Policies*”, 316-42.

<sup>180</sup> The intellectual freedom was not only for Muslims; non-Muslim from religious minorities also fared reasonably well under the relatively tolerant rule of the Buyids. Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī reports the polite and restrained debate between Jews in the one side and Christians or Muslims on the other appeared to have been conducted on a civil basis. Al-Tawḥīdī, *Akhlāq al-Wazīrayn*, 299-301; cf. Kraemer, *Humanism*, 71 & 82.

<sup>181</sup> The reason is most likely due to the inclination of both schools towards the rational approach in their theology.

Abū Yūsuf al-Qirqisānī and Yapheth b. ʿAlī were profoundly influenced by Muʿtazilism.<sup>182</sup> An obvious example of the influence of the Muʿtazilites on Jewish scholars is *Kitab al-Muḥṭawī*, the work of Karaite Yūsuf al-Baṣīr (d. ca. 431/1040).<sup>183</sup>

Also, it was in Buyid Baghdād that the Imāmī Shīʿites developed both as a system of belief and as a religious community. The most important development was the idea of the Hidden Imam. They believed that the eleventh Imām al-ʿAskarī (d. 260/873) had left a son who had remained hidden and never died but would come again to establish the rule of true Islam. This theory of the imamate was developed in Baghdād by such scholars as al-Kulaynī (d. 329/940-1) and Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), who produced the view of imamate generally held by Twelvers down to the present day.<sup>184</sup>

The last decade of Buyid rule in Baghdād, despite the political chaos, witnessed a religious development that was to affect the whole subsequent history of Islam; the Sunni revival. While Shiʿism was patronized by the Buyids in Baghdād, the lead in the elaboration of Sunnism was taken by the ʿAbbāsīd caliph. Prominent Ashʿarites scholars such as al-Baqillānī (d.403/1013) and al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) developed the school of Ashʿarites. They were supported by the caliph in their effort to spread Sunnī Islam.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Kraemer, *Humanism*, 80.

<sup>183</sup> Madelung, *Rational Theology*, 3.

<sup>184</sup> For the idea of the hidden Imām, see S. A. Arjomand, "Imam Absconditus", 1-12.

<sup>185</sup> For the development of the Ashʿarites, see G. Maqdisi, "Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites", 37-80.

Near to the end of Buyid control, in 409/1018, the Caliph al-Qādir took a major step, issuing a decree that condemned Muᶜtazilism and Shiʿism and asserted that the Companions of the Prophet and all the first caliphs should be respected by true Muslims, which meant rejecting the claims of the Twelvers that ʿAlī had been unjustly deprived of the caliphate. These creeds, the so-called *Risāla al-Qādiriyya* that support the Ḥanbalite doctrines, were repeated and elaborated in 420/1029 when the doctrine of the createdness of the Qurʾān was explicitly condemned.<sup>186</sup>

Al-Qādir was able to adopt this position because he had more political independence. The Buyid *amirs* of Baghdād had become so weak that they could no longer afford to take action against the caliph. The main reason was the increasing conflict inside the family resulting from questions regarding the distribution of power and land among their members.<sup>187</sup> He could also count on a large body of support in Baghdād itself; the people might not fight to restore the political power of the ʿAbbāsīd caliph, but many would support the Sunnī cause against the pretensions of the Shiʿites.

In addition, al-Qādir was also encouraged in this by the rising power of Maḥmūd of Ghaznā (d. 421/1030) in Iran, who linked himself firmly with Sunnism. He was a fierce opponent of the Buyids at the political level, but he also added a religious dimension to the conflict by accusing them of being heretics and claiming that he

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<sup>186</sup> Kennedy, *Prophet and the Age of Caliphates*, 241-2.

<sup>187</sup> Busse, "Iran under the Buyids", 260. For instance the clash between Sulṭān al-Dawla (r.403/1012-412/1021) and his younger brother, Musharrif al-Dawla (r.412/1021-416/1025), after the death of their father, Bahā' al-Dawla (r. 379/989-403/1012).

was the champion of Sunnī Islam. This moral support from Maḥmūd of Ghazna enabled al-Qādir to distance himself from the Buyids.<sup>188</sup>

In 420/1020, the army of Maḥmūd, led by his son Masʿūd (d. 432/1040), entered Rayy, managed to crush the resurrection against Majd al-Dawla, and took over the city. According to Ibn al-Athīr, Masʿūd crucified the Ismaʿīliyya along the streets of the city, removed the leader of the Muʿtazilites and Imāmiyya, and burned all the books of these groups to purify people from their disorder.<sup>189</sup> Thus, within five years after the death of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, the city of Rayy, where he had written, taught, and served as the chief judge (*Qāḍī al-Quḍāt*), was changed irrevocably.

However, the works of ʿAbd al-Jabbār and some of his students survived this persecution. The survival of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s and his students’ works is more likely through two non-Muʿtazilite groups. The first group is the Zaydites, who had a good relationship with ʿAbd al-Jabbār and the rulers of the Buyids. They brought those works to Yemen. Later, it was Imam Aḥmad b. Sulaimān al-Mutawakkil ʿalā Allāh (d. 566/1170) who initiated the transfer of many Muʿtazilite works of the area of the Caspian Sea to Yemen. These efforts continued and were intensified by his successor al-Manṣūr Bi-llāh ʿAbdallāh b. Hamza (d. 613/1217).<sup>190</sup>

The second group is the Karaite Jews who followed the teaching of the Bahshamiyya Muʿtazilites. Among the Rabbanites, Samuel b. Ḥofnī Gaon (d. 404/1013), head of the Yeshivah of Sura in Baghdad, was perhaps the first to openly adopt Bahshamī

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<sup>188</sup> Kennedy, *Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 242-3.

<sup>189</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, viii, 170; Reynolds, *A Muslim Theologian*, 20.

<sup>190</sup> Schwarb, G. “Un Projet international”, 1.

*kalām* in his writings.”<sup>191</sup> Then the Karaite Yūsuf al-Baṣīr (d. 431/1040) perhaps also acquired his knowledge of Muṣṭazilite *kalām* in Iraq and brought that knowledge with him to Jerusalem. Al-Baṣīr was well-known as a vigorous supporter of the theological teaching of ʿAbd al-Jabbār against the latter’s own student Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī.<sup>192</sup>

In the modern world, the existence of these works was discovered by several academic expeditions held by groups of scholars from various countries. The most significant was in 1951, when a group of Egyptian scholars went to Ṣanʿā, Yemen, to look for Islamic manuscripts. This expedition led by Sayyed ʿUmar al-Nāmī and sponsored by the Ministry of Endowment of Egypt. They collected and copied more than one hundred titles of manuscripts. The copies were taken to Cairo, where they are kept in the National Library of Egypt (*Dār al-kutub al-Miṣriyya*).<sup>193</sup>

Yemen has been an important source of Muṣṭazilite manuscripts due to the Zaydite branch of Shiʿism, which established itself politically in Yemen. The Zaydites adopted Muṣṭazilism as the basis of their theology. These manuscripts contained mostly works of various representatives of the Muṣṭazilite school of Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī, the Bahshamiyya. These included fourteen out of the original twenty volumes of the encyclopaedic *al-Mughnī* of ʿAbd al-Jabbār. Some works of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s students were also found in the library of the Great Mosque. Among them are *Taʿlīq sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, a paraphrase of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s *Sharḥ uṣūl al-*

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<sup>191</sup> Madelung, *Rational Theology*, 2.

<sup>192</sup> Madelung, *Rational Theology*, 5.

<sup>193</sup> Another expedition was made in 1952, where they copied a number of manuscripts from the Library of the Great Mosque of Ṣanʿā, Yemen. On the expedition and its results, see K. Nāmī, *Biṭha al-Miṣriyya*. See also, Geoffrey Roper, *World Survey*, 645.

*khamṣa* by one of his followers, Mānkḏīm, (d. 425/1034), and *al-Majmūʿ fi al-muḥiṭ bi al-taklīf*, a paraphrase of *al-Muḥiṭ bi al-taklīf* of ʿAbd al-Jabbār by another follower of his, namely Ibn Mattawayh.<sup>194</sup>

Another significant effort that contributed to the survival of Muʿtazilite works is the “Muʿtazilite Manuscripts Project Group” founded by Sabine Schmidtke and David Sklare in 2003. The purpose of this project is to collect all the unpublished Muʿtazilite manuscripts up till now, identify these materials, and prepare critical editions in order to set the scientific research of the Muʿtazilite movement on a broader basis. In addition to the public and private manuscript collection in Yemen, project members also found a number of manuscripts in the Firkovitch Collection housed in the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg.<sup>195</sup>

The manuscripts in the Firkovitch Collection were collected by the Polish Karaite Abraham Firkovitch (d. 1290/1874) during his travels in the Crimea and Caucasus and then later in the Middle East. Firkovitch also purchased manuscripts in Aleppo, Damascus, and Jerusalem. His major source, however, was the manuscript storeroom (*genizah*) of the Karaite synagogue in Cairo.<sup>196</sup> One of the most relevant findings from the Firkovitch Collection is the manuscript of *Tasaffuḥ al-adilla*, the work of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Heemkerk, *Suffering*, 72.

<sup>195</sup> Adang C., *A Common Rationality*, 16.

<sup>196</sup> For an overview on Firkovitch collections, see Tapani Harvianen, "The Cairo Genizot", 25-36; David Sklare, "A Guide to Collections", 893-924.

<sup>197</sup> Adang C., *A Common Rationality*, 16-7.

From these explanations, one might observe that the survival of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's and the late Muʿtazilites' works is linked with the efforts of two non-Muʿtazilite groups, namely the Zaydites and the Karaites. The socio-political background that encouraged the inter-sect and inter-religion dialogues provided a suitable ground for the development of Islamic thought during this period. This background also contributed to the survival of the works of some of the persecuted or even vanished groups through the efforts of the surviving ones, such as the case of the Muʿtazilites with the Zaydites and the Karaites. Most likely, through their efforts, those manuscripts survived the persecution of the Muʿtazilites during the occupation of Rayy by the army of Mahmūd of Ghazna in 420/1030, several years after the death of ʿAbd al-Jabbār. For that reason, some of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's works remain available to us today.

### **Conclusion**

From previous explanations we observe that, in the early works of Islamic theology, the discussion of epistemology is limited, but, after the expansion of Islam and the translation of Greek philosophy into Arabic, debates on the theory of knowledge became widespread among the *mutakallimūn*.

Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf was probably the first *mutakallim* involved in the discussion of the theory of knowledge. He sometimes worked at the court of al-Ma'mūn during the *Miḥna*, and the translation project, therefore, was influenced by Greek philosophy. However, his successors distanced themselves from philosophy and

wrote several works that rejected Aristotle's view of the atom and logic. Nevertheless, none of his works have survived.

The earliest extant *kalām* work that deals with the theory of knowledge is *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* by al-Māturīdī. Al-Ash'arī wrote an epistle on the vindication of *kalām*, the *Istiḥsān*. This work became the foundation for the later Ash'arites to develop their theological doctrines. Among the Mu'tazilites, interest in the theory of knowledge developed after Abū al-Hudhayl, and the peak of this development can be observed in the work of 'Abd al-Jabbār, the *Mughnī*. Most likely because of the socio-political background of his time, 'Abd al-Jabbār's works are the most extant among the Mu'tazilites today.

'Abd al-Jabbār lived in the renaissance period of Islamic intellectuals and was the contemporary of several prominent scholars, such as Ibn Sīnā, al-Bāqillānī, and al-Mufīd. The socio-political background of his time encouraged the development of the theological debate due to the balance of power in the 'Abbāsīd caliphate. The caliph was no longer a total ruler and only a symbol of the caliphate, without any executive power. The *amīr al-umarā'* held executive power but was limited in terms of religious right, and therefore had no authority to make a theological decree. This socio-political background provides suitable ground for inter-sect and inter-religious debate.

After the persecution of the non-Sunni influence in Rayy at the hands of Mahmūd of Ghazna, the works of 'Abd al-Jabbār and his students survived due to the efforts of two non-Mu'tazilite groups, the Zaydite Shi'ites and the Karaite Jews. In the

modern world, the Mu'tazilite manuscript collection of the Zaydites was found in Yemen, while the collection of the Karaites was found in the Firkovitch Collection housed in the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg.

## CHAPTER TWO THE DEFINITION OF KNOWLEDGE

### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s definition of knowledge and its relation to his other theological doctrines. To achieve this aim, firstly I will investigate the theological background that shapes the epistemological discussion among the Muʿtazilites. That will include the examination of the views of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s predecessors on the definition of knowledge. Secondly, I will scrutinize ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s definitions of knowledge in his diverse works. Finally, I will examine critical responses of the late Muʿtazilite scholars on ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s definitions of knowledge.

### 2.1. The Theological Foundation

In classical Islam, the discussion of the definition of knowledge is one of the main concerns of Muslim theologians (*mutakallimūn*). The definition of knowledge is important for them as it is a foundation for their theological doctrines. They try to explain what knowledge really meant and attempt to find an acceptable definition for it that would apply to God and man, to revelation and to reason.<sup>1</sup>

As this study will indicate, there is significant disagreement between the Muʿtazilites and the Ashʿarites in defining knowledge. This contention is closely related to their differences in interpreting theological doctrines. The root of it can be traced in the second/eighth century when Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (d. 176/786), the founder of the

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<sup>1</sup> Rosenthal, F. M., *Knowledge Triumphant*, 46-7.

Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites discusses the attributes of God. On this, he says that “one who confirms the qualities (*mā<sup>c</sup>āni*) or attributes that are eternal to God’s essence (*dhāt*), has already believed in two gods, the first is God’s essence and the second is His attributes”.<sup>2</sup>

According to H. Wolfson, Wāṣil’s rejection of qualities and attributes goes back to the Christian terminology of the Trinity. Yaḥyā b. <sup>c</sup>Adī describes the three members of the Trinity by the Arabic word *aqānīm* (hypostases), *ashyā’* and *mā<sup>c</sup>āni*, that is “things”. Meanwhile, Ibn Ḥazm refers to all three members as three things (*ashyā’*). According to al-Ash<sup>c</sup>arī, Ibn Kullāb called the *mā<sup>c</sup>āni* that exist in our bodies accidents, things (*ashyā’*) and attributes (*ṣifāt*). In fact, it would seem that the words *mā<sup>c</sup>nā*, *shay’* and *ṣifa* all became interchangeable terms, used as a description of anything existing in a subject.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, Wāṣil believes that the belief in the divine attributes indirectly guides one to the belief in the Christian Trinity. He argues in this regard that God’s eternity is the most specific description of His essence. Hence, if the attributes share with God in eternity, they also have a share in divinity (*al-ilāhiyya*). So, in order to safeguard that unity (*tawḥīd*), the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites denied all God’s attributes, including knowledge (<sup>c</sup>*ilm*).<sup>4</sup> For them the existence of the eternal attributes will imply polytheism (*shirk*) since the only eternal being is God’s essence. Thus, they believe that God has no

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<sup>2</sup> Al-Shahrastānī, *Milal*, i, 46; al-Ash<sup>c</sup>arī, *Maqālāt*, i, 224. On early Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites’ discussion of the theory of knowledge, see Bernard, “La Notion de ‘Ilm’”, 23-45.

<sup>3</sup> Wolfson, Harry. A., *Philosophy of the Kalām*, 117.

<sup>4</sup> Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Kalām*, 133.

power, life and knowledge.<sup>5</sup> Due to this theological background, their discussion on the definition of knowledge will exclude God's knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.2. The Definition of Knowledge

Al-Tahānawī has divided the views of Muslim theologians regarding the definition of knowledge into three major divisions. (i) The nature of knowledge is known immediately (*ḍarūrī*), therefore there is no need for it to be defined or it is impossible to define it. This view was introduced by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210);<sup>7</sup> (ii) the definition of knowledge is discursive (*naẓarī*) but difficult to define. This view was supported by al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) and al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), and (iii) the definition of knowledge is discursive and not difficult to define. The majority of Muslim theologians, including the Muṣṭazilites and the Ashʿarites, incline towards this view.<sup>8</sup>

Our concern here is the third view, since it is the view of the majority of the *mutakallimūn*. Every school of thought offers different definitions regarding

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<sup>5</sup> The Muṣṭazilites in general agree to deny the existence of any additional attributes to God. However, they are divided on the interpretation of the relation between God's essence and His attributes, falling into three main views: (i) the theory of unity (*al-wiḥda*) of Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf; (ii) the theory of representation (*al-niyāba*), of Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʿī; and (iii) the theory of states (*al-aḥwāl*) of Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʿī. However, after the discovery of the late Muṣṭazilite works, the fourth theory, the rules (*al-aḥkām*), developed by the late Muṣṭazilite, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, was introduced. Cf. Mānkadīm, *Sharḥ*, 18; Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalām*, 134. For our discussion on these theories, see below, 242-62.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *Munya*, 13; al-Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, ii, 329.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Rāzī argues in two ways; (i) "one knows his own existence by immediate knowledge (*ʿilm ḍarūrī*), which does not need proof or reflection (*naẓar*). Since one's knowledge of oneself is immediate, and it is specific knowledge (*ʿilm al-khāṣṣ*), hence knowledge in general terms (*maʿnā al-ʿāmm*) must have been also immediately known. So, if a general meaning of knowledge is *ḍarūrī*, it does not need a proof or a definition; (ii) if knowledge is acquired and needs definition; either it is defined by itself or by others." Al-Rāzī argues that, in both cases, they are false. For other than knowledge is defined/known (*yurraf*) by knowledge and if knowledge is defined by another it will imply a circle (*dawr*), since each of them depends on one another. This implication is implausible. Cf. al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, ii, 186-187.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, ii, 1056.

knowledge. More interestingly, disputes on the definition of knowledge also occurred between scholars within the same school, as we will indicate, particularly in the case of the Muʿtazilites. Before proceeding, it is important to discuss their concept of definition.

Explaining the nature of the differences in definition, ʿAbd al-Jabbār reports the view of Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʿī (d. 321/933). On this, the latter states:

There are a lot of things that we would like to define, yet, we are unable to find a suitable and concise terminology for that meaning. Therefore, we need to mention the rules or guidelines (*aḥkām*) that are related to it and the states that refer to it...for the aim of a definition is to clarify its aims (*aghrāḍ*). As it is permissible for an interpreter (*mufassir*) to deal conclusively with his interpretation based on what he thinks suitable either to add or to reduce, to prolong or to summarize, similarly it is also permissible in the context of definition.<sup>9</sup>

From this passage, one might observe that the concept of definition by Abū Hāshim is less sophisticated. He only outlines general rules about it. The rule is that the definition interprets the meaning of the thing defined and will not lead one to become ignorant (*jahl*) of it. The definition must also omit anything that is outside the thing defined. The other significant rule is the freedom for a definer to interpret what he thinks suitable in his definition. When these rules are fulfilled, the definition of a thing is acceptable.<sup>10</sup>

This phenomenon is also observed by Ibn al-Malāḥimī (d. 536/1141), when he reports that the majority of the Muʿtazilites consider that ‘definition’ is the

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<sup>9</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 14-15.

<sup>10</sup> For more information regarding ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s arguments on the differences of the definition of knowledge among the Muʿtazilites see *Mughnī*, xii, 14-6.

interpretation (*tafsīr*) of the word defined (*al-lafẓ al-maḥdūd*). What is important in their definition is that the words used in the definition must be clearer from the word defined. Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, however, disagrees with this method of definition. He believes that the definition must explain the reality of the thing defined. Therefore, definition for him is a revealer (*kāshif*) of the meaning and the reality of the thing defined. Preferring the view of Abū al-Ḥusayn over the majority of the Muʿtazilites, Ibn al-Malāḥimī argues that if there is no definition of knowledge and we were asked about its reality, it is appropriate for us to use some words that reveal its reality and become a definition of knowledge.<sup>11</sup>

There is also a debate among them regarding defining something by changing (*ibdāl*) it with another word. ʿAbd al-Jabbār clearly accepts this form of definition when he defines reflection (*naẓar*) with thinking (*fīkr*).<sup>12</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, however, disagrees with ʿAbd al-Jabbār. He argues that changing the word will not explain the attribute that distinguishes the thing defined from others. For instance, if you define knowledge as clarification (*tabayyun*), then one will ask you what clarification is.<sup>13</sup> He argues further that the aim of defining something is to explain the characteristic and judgments (*aḥkām*) that reveal its reality and distinguish it from others. Therefore, defining something by changing it for another word will not suffice, since it does not reveal the reality of the thing defined. Therefore, it is an inappropriate method of definition. Ibn al-Malāḥimī also reports a similar view from Abū al-

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<sup>11</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 12.

<sup>12</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 4.

<sup>13</sup> According to Ibn al-Malāḥimī, Abū al-Ḥusayn accepts this form of definition in his *Tasaffuḥ* and *Ghurār* but rejects it in *Sharḥ al-ʿumad*. Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 17-8.

Ḥusayn in the latter's *Sharḥ al-ʿumad*; therefore, both of them reject ʿAbd al-Jabbār's definition of reflection as thinking.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.3. Early Muʿtazilites' Definitions

The Muʿtazilites prior to ʿAbd al-Jabbār mostly agreed that knowledge is from the genus of belief or conviction (*ʿitiqād*).<sup>15</sup> Therefore, they use the word *ʿitiqād* to define knowledge. Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī (d. 317/931), a Baghdādī Muʿtazilite, for instance, defines knowledge as “believing the thing (to be) as it is”.<sup>16</sup> His definition, however, has been criticized by many theologians from the Ashʿarites, Ḥanbalites and Muʿtazilites.<sup>17</sup>

ʿAbd al-Jabbār rejects this definition with the argument that defining knowledge as “believing the thing (to be) as it is”, implies a similarity between knowledge and belief. This similarity is implausible since it will include belief by uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*) and mere chance (*ṣudfah*) in knowledge, for a merely lucky person (*mubkhit*) and uncritical imitator (*muqallid*) could believe the thing as it is, without knowing it. Also, it will include one who has presumption (*ẓann*) and doubt (*shakk*). This implication clearly contradicts what has been agreed among grammarians (*ahl al-lughā*) that a knowing person (*ʿālim*) is certain of what he knows without any doubt or disbelief.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 16 & 60.

<sup>16</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 5. Marie Bernand, based on Vajda's report, mistakenly attributes this definition to ʿAbd al-Jabbār cf. Bernand, *Le Problème*, 265.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 5; Abū Yaʿlā, *Muʿtamad*, 32; *Mughnī*, xii, 17. This definition was also rejected by Plato, see his *Theaetetus*, 338; Conford, F., *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 142.

<sup>18</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 17-18; cf. ʿUthmān, *Nazariyya al-taklīf*, 46.

Consequently, Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʿī (d. 303/915), a Baṣrian Muʿtazilite, comes up with another definition of knowledge. He bases it on a similar foundation with al-Balkhī's definition but with some adjustments. Abū ʿAlī defines knowledge as “believing a thing (to be) as it is, when it happens immediately or by proof”.<sup>19</sup> With this definition, he was able to avoid some of the criticism of Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī's definition of knowledge, especially regarding the inclusion of uncritical imitation and mere chance in the definition; for the second part of his definition will exclude both uncritical imitation and mere chance from knowledge.

One might observe that Abū ʿAlī's definition has a considerable similarity with the definition of knowledge attributed to Plato as “justified true belief”.<sup>20</sup> For justified true belief is based on proof. While the relation between Abū al-Hudhayl with Greek philosophy is proven, Abū ʿAlī's direct connection with philosophy is unclear. However, there are various reports that indicate that philosophy is not unfamiliar during his time. J. van Ess reports that Abū ʿAlī's son, Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʿī, wrote a book rejecting the logic of Aristotle, called *Kitāb al-taṣaffuh*.<sup>21</sup> The translations of the *Sophist* of Plato and the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle were completed during Abū ʿAlī's lifetime.<sup>22</sup> Also during his lifetime, the small remnants of the school of Alexandria emigrated to Baghdād from Ḥarrān.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, based on these reports, it is probable that Abū ʿAlī was also familiar with philosophical debates of his time,

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<sup>19</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 5; Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 64. Interestingly, al-Tahānawī reports that al-Rāzī defines knowledge with a definition that almost identical with that of Abū ʿAlī's. Cf. al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, ii, 1058

<sup>20</sup> Plato seems to be considering some such definition in Theaetetus 201, and perhaps accepting one in Meno 98. cf. Gettier, E. “Is Justified true belief knowledge?”, 121.

<sup>21</sup> Van Ess, J. “Logical Structure, 21.

<sup>22</sup> Wolfson, “Muʿammar's Theory of *Maʿnā*”, 673-4.

<sup>23</sup> According to Hourani, those philosophers emigrated from Alexandria to Antioch in the reign of ʿUmar II (r. 717-20), from Antioch to Harran under al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-61), and finally to Baghdad under al-Muʿtadid (r. 892-902), see, Hourani, “Islamic and Non-Islamic Origin”, 81.

although whether he adopts Plato's definition of knowledge is uncertain; for unlike the *Sophist* and *Metaphysics*, the specific date of the translation of the *Theaetetus* and *Meno* into Arabic is lost.<sup>24</sup>

Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī (d. 321/933) in this regard modifies his father's definition of knowledge by relating it to man's psychological reaction. He defines knowledge as "believing a thing (to be) as it is to one's own satisfaction (*ma'ā sukūn al-naḥs ilayh*)".<sup>25</sup> It is likely that Abū Hāshim is the first Mu'tazilite to define knowledge based on the tranquillity of the soul. This definition, later, becomes a foundation for 'Abd al-Jabbār's definition of knowledge.<sup>26</sup>

From these last two definitions, one might observe that they manage to exclude *taqlīd* and mere chance from knowledge, yet they do not satisfy all of the critics. The problem arises from the first part of their definitions, "believing a thing" (*ī'tiqād al-shay'*). This part of the definition is problematic because of the words *ī'tiqād* and *shay'*. Criticizing these definitions, Abū al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037), an Ash'arite theologian, writes:

These three definitions invalidate the knowledge of impossibilities (*al-muḥālāt*). Indeed the knowledge of them is not the knowledge of something (*shay'*) because impossibility is not something. However, it is agreeable that the knowledge of impossibility as impossible is acceptable although they are not something (*lā shay'*); and tell them [the Mu'tazilites] if knowledge is belief, the consequence is that every knower (*'ālim*) is a believer (*mu'taqid*). Indeed, God is a knower but He is not a believer. Therefore, defining knowledge with belief (*ī'tiqād*) is implausible.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 230-45.

<sup>25</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 14; Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 63.

<sup>26</sup> According to Bernard, Abū Hāshim's formulation of the definition of knowledge was adopted not only by his followers but also by some Ash'arites, See, Bernard, *Le Problème*, 291-300.

<sup>27</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 5-6.

Al-Baghdādī's criticism of the definitions of knowledge by three of °Abd al-Jabbār's predecessors are based on their use of the words (a) *ītiqād*; and (b) *shay'*. The consequence of defining knowledge with the word *ītiqād*, he argues, is that God will become a believer (*mu'taqid*). For, when knowledge is belief, then a knower (°*ālim*) will be a believer. The employment of such a term for God is inappropriate, since there is no evidence supporting that view. Neither the Qur'ān nor the Sunna indicates that "*mu'taqid*" is one of God's names.<sup>28</sup>

In defending his predecessors' method of defining knowledge with belief (*ītiqād*), °Abd al-Jabbār argues that there is no problem with using the word *ītiqād* in defining knowledge. He explains that one is called a believer (*mu'taqid*) when the knowledge one obtains becomes a belief. So, whenever one accepts the validity of certain knowledge, it becomes his belief and he will become a believer. However, °Abd al-Jabbār explains that the nature of knowing is different in the case of God, because God knows with His essence (*bi dhātihī*) rather than with his knowledge (*al-°ilm*). Therefore, God cannot be called a believer (*mu'taqid*). In addition, °Abd al-Jabbār says that the believer ties his belief in his heart, but God is not similar to human nature because He has neither bodily existence nor a heart like human beings.<sup>29</sup>

This argument is also mentioned by Abū al-Ḥusayn.<sup>30</sup> He presents a similar argument to °Abd al-Jabbār in defending the use of *ītiqād* in defining knowledge at the

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<sup>28</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 6.

<sup>29</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 27-8.

<sup>30</sup> Abū al-Ḥusayn as reported by Ibn al-Malāḥimī, inclines toward Abū Hāshim's definition of knowledge. Therefore, he agrees with °Abd al-Jabbār in defending the use of belief to define knowledge. cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 14.

beginning of his work.<sup>31</sup> Abū al-Ḥusayn argues that “*muʿtaqid* is the one who has *iʿtiqād*. God has no *iʿtiqād* because He has no knowledge, so, it is inconceivable to call Him *al-muʿtaqid*”. The word *muʿtaqid*, he argues, “if it is applied to a knower, indicates that he ties his heart to something [belief] (*ʿaqada qalbah ʿalā shayʾ*); this indication cannot be applied to God. Therefore, the use of *iʿtiqād* will not imply that God should become a *muʿtaqid*.” However, later, Ibn al-Malāḥimī rejects this argument and comes up with another definition of knowledge.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, when the Muʿtazilites use the word belief (*iʿtiqād*) in defining knowledge, God’s knowledge is not included in their consideration. Therefore, it should not be a problem to say that knowledge is belief and a knower (*ʿālim*) is a believer (*muʿtaqid*), since that only applies to human beings or other creations but not to God.<sup>33</sup> However, Ibn al-Malāḥimī considers that this argument is implausible since it is inconsistent with the common usage in the Arabic language. I will leave the discussion of the Muʿtazilites’ solution to the problem of the attributes of God until later, in Chapter Five.

The Ashʿarites, by contrast, believe in a different view regarding the relationship between God’s attributes and His essence. They maintain that God has an additional attribute. Therefore, when we say “God knows”, that means that God has the

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 15.

<sup>32</sup> For our discussion on Ibn al-Malāḥimī’s definition of knowledge, see below, 82-3.

<sup>33</sup> One might observe that in this argument they are not using a single standard in applying the theory of knowledge in God and human beings.

attribute of knowledge. This attribute of knowledge is something additional to His essence (*zā'id<sup>c</sup> alā al-dhāt*).<sup>34</sup>

They base their arguments on the Qur'anic verses that confirm the existence of God's attributes such as: "He has sent from His (own) knowledge (*bi<sup>c</sup> ilmihī*)".<sup>35</sup> Al-Ash'arī argues that the meaning of the verse clearly indicates that God has knowledge. The Ash'arites in turn apply analogical reasoning that is based on this Qur'anic verse. This type of reasoning in *kalām* is known as the proof of the seen [world] on the unobservable [world] (*istidlāl bi al-shāhid alā al-ghā'ib*).<sup>36</sup> Al-Bāqillānī argues that, in the seen world (*al-shāhid*), a knower (*al-<sup>c</sup>ālim*) is referred to as someone who has knowledge. Then he applies this principle to the unseen world (*al-ghā'ib*). Therefore, when we say "God knows", that means that God has knowledge. Al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) even goes further to say that the attributes of *<sup>c</sup>ilm* is the cause for God to know, which, without it, God will not know. Hence, the attributes of God according to him are eternal as well as His essence (*dhāt*).<sup>37</sup>

Based on this theological background, the Ash'arites, in their discussion on the definition of knowledge, will always consider that their definitions need to include God's knowledge. Thus, it is no surprise when al-Baghdādī reveals two definitions of knowledge offered by his fellow school-members (*aṣḥābunā*) based on the word attribute (*ṣifa*): The first definition is "knowledge is an attribute through which he

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<sup>34</sup> Al-Ash'arī, *Lumā'*, 26; al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 90; al-Shahrastānī, *Milal*, i, 92.

<sup>35</sup> Qur. 4: 166. Qur. 35: 11; Qur. 54: 58.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 152; Van Ess, "Logical Structure", 34. For our discussion on this type of argument see below, 226.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 152.

who is alive becomes knowing”, and the second is “knowledge is an attribute through which one who is alive and capable can produce an act and good at it”.<sup>38</sup>

ʿAbd al-Jabbār also criticizes the definition of knowledge as “the perception of the object known”.<sup>39</sup> The use of the word “*idrāk*” in the definition of knowledge is ascribed to Abū al-Ḥaṣan al-Ashʿarī.<sup>40</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that the use of the word *idrāk* in relation to knowledge is possible only in certain circumstances, such as *adraktu maʿnā kalāmika* (I know the meaning of your speech), but it could not be used in defining knowledge in general, for both words cover different aspects which are not covered by the other.<sup>41</sup>

There are certain cases where *idrāk* can be used but not the word *ʿilm* and vice versa. The examples of the first situation are that we know God but we do not perceive (*adraka*) Him, or we know non-existences (*maʿdūmāt*) but we cannot perceive them. Meanwhile, for the second situation, the example is that a sleeping person perceives or feels the bite of a bug or flea but he does not know it.<sup>42</sup>

From these definitions, we can observe that the Ashʿarites’ definitions of knowledge establish no relationship between belief and knowledge. Instead, they introduce the word *ṣifa* rather than *ʿtiqād*. Thus, the use of the word attribute (*ṣifa*) to define

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<sup>38</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 5; cf. Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 53.

<sup>39</sup> *Idrāk al-Maʿlūm*, *Mughnī*, 18. According to Rosenthal this definition is primarily credited to al-Ashʿarī. Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 56.

<sup>40</sup> See al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, 74.

<sup>41</sup> To see more on ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s arguments against other definitions of knowledge see, *Mughnī*, xii, 16-22.

<sup>42</sup> Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 169.

knowledge according to the Ash'arites will comply with both humans and God's knowledge.

Meanwhile, the use of the word *shay'* in defining knowledge, according to the Ash'arites, is problematic since it will exclude the non-existent (*ma'dūm*) from the object of knowledge.<sup>43</sup> Al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) argues that "if we use the word *shay'* in the definition of knowledge, the object which is not a thing (*laysa bi shay'*) will be excluded from known objects (*ma'lūmāt*)".<sup>44</sup> Therefore, he maintains that the use of the word "known" (*ma'lūm*) is more plausible in defining knowledge than the word "thing" (*shay'*), since the former will not exclude the non-existent (*al-ma'dūm*). As a result, al-Bāqillānī defines knowledge as "cognition (*ma'rifa*) of the object known as it is".<sup>45</sup>

Abd al-Jabbār however, disagrees with al-Bāqillānī's definition of knowledge. He argues that the use of the word *ma'rifa* in defining knowledge will not clarify anything. Instead, it will only add to the confusion, for Abd al-Jabbār believes that there is no difference between knowledge (*ilm*) and cognition (*ma'rifa*).<sup>46</sup> On this,

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<sup>43</sup> For Abd al-Jabbār's arguments on *Shay'iyya al-Ma'dūm*, see Bernard, *Le Problème*, 266-71.

<sup>44</sup> Al-Bāqillānī considers non-existent (*ma'dūm*) is nothing (*lā shay'*). Cf. al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 35.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Tamhīd al-Awā'il*, 25. cf. Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 53. Abū Ya'lā al-Ḥanbalī (d. 458/1066) offers similar definition with al-Bāqillānī. See Abū Ya'lā, *al-Mu'tamad*, 32.

<sup>46</sup> The discussion on "whether knowledge is similar with cognition or not", is not an issue among major theologians in the fourth/tenth century. Al-Baghdādī for instance in his *Uṣūl al-dīn* did not differentiate between knowledge and cognition. Similar expressions can be seen in the writing of Abū Ya'lā al-Ḥanbalī. In addition, al-Ash'arī himself and his early followers considered and used *ilm* and *ma'rifa* as synonyms.

he argues that “to define something one must mention the clear rules to the addressee (*mukhāṭab*)”.<sup>47</sup>

The idea of *shay’iyya al-ma<sup>c</sup>dūm* in Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilite can be traced back to <sup>c</sup>Abbād b. Sulaymān (d. 250/864) a Baṣrian Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilite.<sup>48</sup> On this, he argues that “the known objects (*ma<sup>c</sup>lumāt*) are known to God before they exist, the produced things (*maqḍūrāt*) are under the power of God before they exist, thing (*shay’/ashyā’*) is [called] a thing before its existence, an atom (*jawhar*) is [called] atom before its existence, similarly an accident (*‘araḍ*) is [called] accident before its existence”.<sup>49</sup>

His main argument is that the non-existence is considered a thing *shay’iyya* because it is similar to other objects, such as known [object] (*ma<sup>c</sup>lumāt*), substance (*jawhar*), and accidents (*‘araḍ*) in the case that they were described with their respective names even before their existence. For instance, a person tells his friend that he wants to draw a picture tomorrow. Although the picture does not exist yet, one already calls it a “picture”. Therefore, based on this formula, the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites conclude that non-existence (*ma<sup>c</sup>dūm*) is something (*shay’*), since there is no difference in naming something that either potentially exists (*wujūd bi al-quwwa*) or actually exists (*wujūd*

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<sup>47</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 19. Al-Bāqillānī’s definition also has been rejected by his fellow Ash<sup>c</sup>arite, al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233). Al-Āmidī’s argument is based on two reasons: Firstly, it was a consensus among the Ash<sup>c</sup>arites that God has knowledge and His knowledge cannot be called *ma<sup>c</sup>rifa*. Therefore, the use of *ma<sup>c</sup>rifa* in defining knowledge will exclude God’s knowledge in this definition. Secondly, al-Bāqillānī defines *‘ilm* with the word *ma<sup>c</sup>lūm* which is taken from the root *‘ilm*, al-Āmidī argues that the word taken from a root must have been less obvious from the root itself. To define something more clearer (*aẓhar*) with something that is less obvious (*akhfā*) is forbidden (*mumtani<sup>c</sup>*). Therefore, the definition of knowledge by al-Bāqillānī is invalid since it is inappropriate to define knowledge with the words *ma<sup>c</sup>rifa* and *ma<sup>c</sup>lūm*. Cf. al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-Afkār*, 74-5.

<sup>48</sup> For biographical note on him see Watt, “<sup>c</sup>Abbād b. Sulaymān al-Saymarī (or al-Daymarī)” in *EF*<sup>2</sup>, i, 4.

<sup>49</sup> Al-Ash<sup>c</sup>arī, *Maqālāt*, i, 159.

*bi al-fi'l*). Therefore, they believe that it will not be a problem to use the word *shay'* in defining knowledge.<sup>50</sup>

Yet, Abū al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī was able to detect the vagueness of this formula. He observes that the Muṭazilites probably can apply this method for a possible thing (*mumkināt*), which has a potential and an actual existence, but this formula could not be applied to an impossible thing (*mustaḥīlāt*), which does not have an actual existence, such as the associate (*sharīk*) of God.<sup>51</sup>

The associate of God, he argues, does not exist now and will not exist in the future. Therefore, based on ʿAbbād b. Sulayman's formula, which required both the actual and potential existence, God's associate could not be considered *shay'* since it is lacking the potential existence, and is, thus, incompatible with the formula. Furthermore, al-Baghdādī argues that to deny any relationship between the impossible things (*mustaḥīlāt*) and knowledge is inconceivable, since we know that the *mustaḥīlāt* is something that is not presently existing and will not also in the future. This proposition, according to al-Baghdādī, is enough to include the *mustaḥīlāt* as an object of knowledge, and, hence, proved that the Muṭazilites' view of the *shay'yya al-maʿdūm* is false.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, the Ashʿarites argue that the implication of saying that *maʿdūm* is something will imply that there are beings that are eternal alongside and independently of God. This is problematic since it implies the existence of more than one God.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Frank, "al-Maʿdūm wa al-Mawjūd", 198.

<sup>51</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 5.

<sup>52</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 5.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Frank "al-Maʿdūm wa al-Mawjūd", 186.

Responsive to the contention between his predecessors and the Ash‘arites, ‘Abd al-Jabbār develops his definition of knowledge. Throughout his diverse works, I observe that ‘Abd al-Jabbār develops and changes his definition of knowledge. The reports from his students also provide a significant contribution towards developing ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s definition of knowledge.

#### 2.4. ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Definition<sup>54</sup>

‘Abd al-Jabbār defines knowledge in at least four of his works, the *Mughnī*, *al-‘Umad*, *Sharḥ*, and *al-Muḥīṭ*.<sup>55</sup> In the early stage<sup>56</sup> of his prolific academic life, ‘Abd al-Jabbār preserves the traditional Mu‘taziltes’ method of defining knowledge by using the word belief (*‘itiqād*).<sup>57</sup> In *al-‘Umad*, he defines knowledge as: “the belief that satisfies the soul that its object (*mu‘taqad*) is as one believes it to be”.<sup>58</sup> At this stage, ‘Abd al-Jabbār is still strongly connected with the definition of the founder of Bahshamiyya, Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāī.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, he defends the method of defining knowledge with belief. ‘Abd al-Jabbār maintains that the Ash‘arites’ argument, that if knowledge (*‘ilm*) is belief (*‘itiqād*), therefore, a knower (*‘ālim*) is a believer

<sup>54</sup> F. Rosenthal mentions the significance of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s analysis on the definition of knowledge in the *Mughnī*, but he does not elaborate it since he only receives the *Mughnī* twelfth after the completion of his *knowledge triumphant*. He considers that ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *Mughnī* is one of the most complete references by classical Muslim theologians in dealing with the definition of knowledge. See *Knowledge Triumphant*, 51 & 63.

<sup>55</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 13; Cf. Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 46; Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu‘tamad*, 14. M. Bernand has analyzed two definitions of knowledge mentions by ‘Abd al-Jabbār in the *Mughnī*. She concludes that both definitions facing a difficulty regarding the use of the word *al-shay’*, see her *Le Probleme*, 265.

<sup>56</sup> The chronological order of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s works is based on his own report. He writes that *al-‘Umad* was written before he dictates the *Mughnī*. While *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa* was dictated before the completion of the *Mughnī*. Cf. *Mughnī*, xx (2), 258. I suggest that *al-Muḥīṭ* was dictated (maybe before or after *Sharḥ* but) after *al-‘Umad* and before the *Mughnī*. For his definition of knowledge in it is similar with that in the *Sharḥ*, which I believe indicates the same way of thinking.

<sup>57</sup> For more on this see Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 63. Also see above, 55-7.

<sup>58</sup> See Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 45; cf. Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 211.

<sup>59</sup> See above, 67.

(*mu<sup>c</sup>taqid*), will not imply that God has become a believer since the nature of knowing is different between humans and God. While the former knows with knowledge, the latter knows with His essence (*bi dhātih*) and not with knowledge (*al-ilm*). Therefore, God could not be called a believer (*mu<sup>c</sup>taqid*).<sup>60</sup>

Hence, due to the intellectual development among the *mutakallimūn* or most likely due to the critics from the Ash<sup>c</sup>arites on his predecessors' definitions of knowledge, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār comes up with another definition of knowledge as a foundation of his theology. He needs a precise as well as concise definition that will cover all aspects of knowledge, and exclude everything that was not included in it, and of course escape some criticism from the opponent.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, one might observe that, in the *Muḥīṭ* and *Sharḥ*, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār omits all of the controversial words that he used in the *al-Umad* definition, such as *ʿitiqād*, *shayʿ*. He minimizes the words and focuses only on the tranquillity of the soul (*sukūn al-nafs*). Hence he defines knowledge as “what necessitates tranquillity of the soul”.<sup>62</sup>

However, this definition is again not secure from critics. This time he does not quarrel against the Ash<sup>c</sup>arites but his own student, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. The latter disagrees with <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's newly created definition of knowledge. He argues that <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's definition lacks what he calls the correspondence with the known (*al-muṭābiq li al-ma<sup>c</sup>lūm*).<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 27-8.

<sup>61</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 13.

<sup>62</sup> “*Al-Muqtaḍā li sukūn al-nafs*” or “*mā yaqtaḍī sukūn al-nafs*” Cf. al-Malāḥimī, *Mu<sup>c</sup>tamad*, 14; Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 46

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu<sup>c</sup>tamad*, 14.

Hence, we find in the later stage of his academic life, that ʿAbd al-Jabbār defines knowledge in the *Mughniʿ* with a different definition from that in his previous works. Here, he defines knowledge as “the *maʿnā* which produces tranquillity of the knower soul with respect to what he obtained”.<sup>64</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār believes that true knowledge can be known when the soul of the knower becomes tranquil (*sukūn*) towards what he knows without any doubt (*shakk*), assumption (*ẓann*) and mere chance (*ṣudfa*). However, he states that the *maʿnā* must only come from the genus of belief in order to be considered knowledge.<sup>65</sup>

In the *Mughniʿ*, ʿAbd al-Jabbār omits two words that have been targeted by the critics, which are *ʿitiqād* and *shayʿ*. As a replacement, he uses the word “*maʿnā*”, one of the most ambiguous words in *kalām* terminology. Defining knowledge with the term *maʿnā* is not a popular trend among the Muʿtazilites; instead they prefer to define knowledge as belief, as we mentioned earlier. Thus, in order to understand ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s methodology for defining knowledge, it is both necessary and worthwhile to dwell on the meaning of the terms used.

First of all, when ʿAbd al-Jabbār defined knowledge as the *maʿnā* which preserves the tranquillity of the learner’s soul for what he obtained, what kind of *maʿnā* was he referring to, and how did he relate this *maʿnā* to knowledge? Secondly, how is the tranquillity of one’s soul capable of determining true knowledge? Does this imply

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<sup>64</sup> “*Al-ʿilm huwa al-maʿnā al-ladhi yaqtaḍī sukūn al-naḥs al-ʿālim ilā mā tanāwalahu*”, *Mughniʿ*, xii, 13. According to Peters, Vajda Georges in his “La Connaissance chez Saadia”, is the first Western scholar to translate the word *sukūn al-naḥs* with the meaning of the tranquillity of the soul. This was followed by Marrie Bernand in her “*Le ʿilm chez les premiers Muʿtazilites*. She translates it as “*tranquillite de lame*”. Cf. Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 49.

<sup>65</sup> For more information on the meaning of *maʿnā* see below, 78.

subjectivism? To answer these questions, we must first take account of the meaning of *ma<sup>c</sup>nā* in his usage.

## 2.5. The Concept of *Ma<sup>c</sup>nā*

The Baṣrian Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites believe that every being is composed of atoms (*jawhar*) and accidents (*‘araḍ*). *Ma<sup>c</sup>nā* is one of the terms used to describe an accident. Others are cause (*‘illa*), attribute (*ṣifa*) and assessment (*ḥukm*). A particular accident is named differently depending on the perspective from which it is described.<sup>66</sup>

K. Reinhart brilliantly describes the position of these four terms in the example of an apple. He explains that *Ma<sup>c</sup>nā* is used to describe the ontological nature of a quality, insofar as it can be imagined to be apart from the thing in which it resides. Thus, “redness” is the “redness” of the apple’s being red, and is said to be, as “redness,” its *ma<sup>c</sup>nā*; but, when the redness is considered causative (of the apple’s being red), it is called *‘illa*. The quality that it causes, namely the apple’s redness, is called *ṣifa*; the *ṣifa* is the attribute, or adjective, in the phrase “the red apple”. Declaring the apple to be red, or assessing it to be red, or predicating the redness of the apple, is an “assessment” (*ḥukm*). In the phrase “this apple is red”, “red” is the *ḥukm* of the apple.<sup>67</sup>

According to Wolfson, the word *ma<sup>c</sup>nā* is an Arabic translation of the Greek word *pragma* (thing), which is also translated as *shay’*.<sup>68</sup> He states that, in Christianity, the word *ma<sup>c</sup>ānī* (plural *ma<sup>c</sup>nā*) is used by Yaḥyā b. ‘Adī to describe the three members

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<sup>66</sup> Reinhart, Kevin, *Before Revelation*, 147.

<sup>67</sup> Reinhart, *Before Revelation*, 147. cf. Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 155-8.

<sup>68</sup> Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Kalām*, 11.

of the Trinity beside other terms, such as *aqānīm* (hypostases) and *ashyā'* (things). Because of this understanding of *mā'nā*, the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites, since Wāṣil b. 'Atā', reject the Ṣifātiyya's view that God's attributes are the eternal *mā'āni*.<sup>69</sup>

In classical Islamic theology, the theory of *mā'nā* was introduced by Mu<sup>c</sup>ammar (d. 215/830). Al-Khayyāṭ explains Mu<sup>c</sup>ammar's theory of *mā'nā* as follows: having observed that of two contiguous bodies at rest one began to move, while the other did not, Mu<sup>c</sup>ammar inferred that a *mā'nā* must inevitably abide in the one and not in the other, and it is on account of that *mā'nā* that the former is moved, for, were it not so, then the one would not be more capable of motion than the other.<sup>70</sup> Hence, *mā'nā* in Mu<sup>c</sup>ammar's theology is something that is distinct from something else.

In contemporary Islamic studies, the concept of *mā'nā* in the theology of Mu<sup>c</sup>ammar received considerable attention from certain western scholars.<sup>71</sup> Frank considers that the *mā'nā* in Mu<sup>c</sup>ammar's theology means an accident. After examining Mu<sup>c</sup>ammar's views from several sources,<sup>72</sup> Frank suggests that Mu<sup>c</sup>ammar was troubled by the question of why things differ from each other. The answer given by him is that things and accidents both differ and are the same because of what he calls *mā'nā*. This *mā'nā* is described by him as abiding in bodies, from within which it acts as the cause of motion (*ḥaraka*) and rest (*sukūn*) and all the other accidents of the bodies in

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<sup>69</sup> Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Kalām*, 117.

<sup>70</sup> Al-Khayyāṭ, *Intiṣār*, 46. Cf. Wolfson, "Mu<sup>c</sup>ammar's Theory of *Mā'nā*", 675.

<sup>71</sup> The contention of western scholars on the concept of *mā'nā* has been summarized by H. Wolfson in his article, "Mu<sup>c</sup>ammar's Theory of *Mā'nā*", 673-88.

<sup>72</sup> Al-Khayyāṭ, *Intiṣār*, 46; al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, 372; al-Shahrastānī, *Milal*, 46; Ibn Ḥazm, *Fīṣal*, v, 56; Wolfson, "Mu<sup>c</sup>ammar's Theory of *Mā'nā*", 674-9.

which it abides.<sup>73</sup> In the *Muḥaṣṣal* of al-Rāzī, Mu‘ammar is reported to have said that the *ma‘ānī* are also called *ashyā’* (things),<sup>74</sup> and, evidently, because they exist in bodies as their subject, they are also called “accidents”.<sup>75</sup>

Later, R. Frank studied the term *ma‘nā* as it is used by several *mutakallimūn* in order to clarify its technical meaning in *kalām* in general.<sup>76</sup> He concludes that *ma‘nā* in its technical sense refers to an entity that determines something or, in his more technical term, “an immediate, intrinsic causal determinant”. Explaining his understanding of the theory of *ma‘nā*, he states that the actuality of the accident of motion (*ḥaraka*) in the subject, for instance, is the immediate causal determinant of its being in motion, and so also the other accidents are the immediate intrinsic causes of its being (perceiver) *mudrik*, desirous (*mushtahī*), omniscient (*‘ālim*) and so on. In this sense, the term is an equivalent of the term “cause” (*‘illa*).<sup>77</sup> In other words, Frank explains that *ma‘nā* is used to describe the ontological nature of a quality, to the extent that it cannot be imagined to be apart from the thing in which it resides.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Frank, “*Al-Ma‘nā: Some Reflection*,” 248-9.

<sup>74</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, 104.

<sup>75</sup> Wolfson, “Mu‘ammar’s Theory of *Ma‘nā*,” 679.

<sup>76</sup> He reports that the use of the word *ma‘nā* in Islamic theology represents accident (*‘araḍ*), perception (*idrāk*), motion (*ḥaraka*), the modes of being in space (*akwān*), desire (*shahwa*), pain (*alam*), power (*qudra*), knowing (*‘ilm*) and cause (*‘illa*). Cf. Frank, “*Al-Ma‘nā: Some Reflection*,” 249.

<sup>77</sup> Frank explains that the differences between *sabab* and *‘illa* is that the first is used to denote the element in a chain of causes or factors in a causal sequence leading from some initial end or event to a resulting event in another subject. The relation between *sabab* and its result (*musabbab*) need not be necessary. Meanwhile, *‘illa* on the other hand, is used in a strict sense, most commonly as the direct or primary determinant cause that produces its effect (*ma‘lūl*) immediately and necessarily. In short, *‘illa* is a direct and primary cause and *sabab* is a chain of causes which is not direct. See Frank, *Al-Ma‘nā: Some Reflection*,” 250.

<sup>78</sup> Reinhart, *Before Revelation*, 147. See Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 157.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār accepts the theory of *māʿnā* in his theology and uses it on several occasions in his works, such as for pain (*alam*),<sup>79</sup> desire (*shahwa*),<sup>80</sup> capacity (*qudra*)<sup>81</sup> and speech (*kalām*).<sup>82</sup> He is one of the Muʿammar’s successors who developed his theory of *māʿnā* further in a technical meaning. Muʿammar’s theory of *māʿnā*, however, is not widely accepted among other ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s predecessors. Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī, for instance, as reported by ʿAbd al-Jabbār considers that *māʿnā* has a non-technical “meaning”.<sup>83</sup> Meanwhile, Abū Ishāq b. ʿAyyāsh denied that pain is a *māʿnā*. Instead, he maintains that we suffer a pain because of the absence of soundness (*siḥḥa*) as a result of injury.<sup>84</sup>

In the modern works most of the writers translate *māʿnā* in ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theology based on the context of their discussion. Hourani, in his work on ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s ethics, translates *māʿnā* as “ground”. When explaining ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s statement, “Know that, although a single definition embrace evils as we have explained, the respects (*wujūh*) in which they are evil differ”,<sup>85</sup> Hourani maintains that respect (*wajh*) is similar to ground which is “*māʿnā*” or *ʿilla*. He posits that these terms are familiar in Islamic jurisprudence in the sense of ‘ground for a prohibition or command of the *sharʿa*’.<sup>86</sup> Peters in this regard accepts Wolfson’s translation of *māʿnā* as accident, yet he also translates it as “qualifier”. He explains that *māʿnā* is a

<sup>79</sup> *Mughnī*, xiii, 3-9. cf. Heemskerk, *Suffering*, 81.

<sup>80</sup> *Mughnī*, iv, 19; cf. Heemskerk, *Suffering*, 78.

<sup>81</sup> *Mughnī*, v, 49.

<sup>82</sup> *Mughnī*, vii, 82; cf. Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 158.

<sup>83</sup> Therefore, he maintains that we cannot call God as *māʿnā*, since its meaning is the intention of heart (*qaṣd al-qalb*) to speaking of what he means. However, he considered that it was permissible to say that God is *māʿniyy* in the sense that God is meant, when God is spoken of in speech (*kalām*) and tradition (*akhbār*) ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, v, 253.

<sup>84</sup> *Mughnī*, ix, 59. cf. Heemskerk, *Suffering*, 79-80.

<sup>85</sup> *Mughnī*, vi (i), 61.

<sup>86</sup> Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 63.

“qualifier” or accident which causes something to be entitled to a quality. Therefore, he argues that a living being is qualified as “speaking” (*mutakallim*) because of a qualifier (*maʿnā*; here *kalām*) which inheres in another substrate.<sup>87</sup>

The translation of *maʿnā* as a “qualifier” has been accepted by Bernand<sup>88</sup> and Heemskerk.<sup>89</sup> However, in the context of knowledge, Bernand translates it as a ‘specific accident’. That can be observed through her translation of ʿAbd al-Jabbār statement<sup>90</sup> as follows:

La science est l'accident spécifique (*maʿnā*) qui implique, chez le sachant, la tranquillité de l'âme à l'égard de l'objet auquel la science s'applique. En cela, la science se distingue de tout autre genre de connaissance. Et ce *maʿnā* n'a en propre une telle qualification (*ḥukm*) que lorsqu'il consiste en une conviction (*iʿtiqād*) qui concerne l'objet tel qu'il est ; cette conviction est alors une croyance (*iʿtiqād*) produite selon un mode particulier (*waqāʿa ʿalā waghī mahṣūṣī*).<sup>91</sup>

However, for the meaning of *maʿnā* in this context, I prefer K. Ghaneabassiri's translation as “entitative ground”. He states that “according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, the *maʿnā* of our knowledge of a thing, though not equivalent to the reality of the thing [body], corresponds to it as it really is”.<sup>92</sup> He also explains that ʿAbd al-Jabbār's definition of knowledge, through the notion of *maʿnā*, ontologically relates the world

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<sup>87</sup> He considers that Hourani's translation of *maʿnā* as “ground” is vague, therefore need to be defined, cf. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 157-8.

<sup>88</sup> Bernand also gives other translation of *maʿnā* such as synonym of ground (*ʿilla*), which is based on Hourani's translation; causal entity; incorporeal reality; and direction. For her usage on these meanings see her *Le Problème*, 77-8, 138, & 321.

<sup>89</sup> For her interpretation in *maʿnā* as “pain” see, Heemskerk, *Suffering*, 78-9.

<sup>90</sup> cf. *Mughnī*, xii, 13.

<sup>91</sup> Bernand, *Le Problème*, 273.

<sup>92</sup> Ghaneabassiri, Kambiz., “Epistemological Foundation”, 81. Ghaneabassiri bases his understanding of *maʿnā* on Hourani's translation when he states, “In short as suggested by George Hourani, *maʿnā* could be rendered into English as a ‘ground’ or, as I prefer, an ‘entitative ground’ for the attributes and characteristics of a thing”.

outside of humans to the internal experiences of ‘conviction’ and the ‘tranquillity of the self’.<sup>93</sup>

This sense of *maʿnā* will serve our purpose to indicate its significance in ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theological epistemology, for our concern here is the ontological aspect of the *maʿnā*. Thus, Ghaneabassiri’s interpretation of *maʿnā* prepared a considerable ground for us to demonstrate the relation between ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theology and his definition of knowledge. ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s text that concerned my study is in the *Mughnī* fifth, when he discusses whether it is permissible to describe God as being a *maʿnā*. He says that:

the *mutakallimūn* use the term *maʿnā* in reference to cause (*ʿilla*) of qualification, as they say: “a moving being (*mutaharrik*) is moving by virtue of a *maʿnā*, and compares this with saying: “it is moving by virtue of a cause (*ʿilla*). *Maʿnā* in this sense is not used with reference to God [i.e. He does not move or moving thing with *maʿna*].<sup>94</sup>

However, he mentions that *maʿnā* was sometimes also used with something whose existence has been established (*thābit*). He gives an example of “combination” (*taʿlīf*) as a *maʿnā*. In this sense, it cannot be denied that God is a *maʿnā*.<sup>95</sup> I suggest that *Maʿnā* in this sense is similar to *shayʿ*. ʿAbd al-Jabbār consider that it is permissible to used *shayʿ* for God.<sup>96</sup> He argues with two verses of the Qur’an; first, “Say (O Muḥammad): what thing (*shayʿ*) is of most weight in testimony? Say: Allāh

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<sup>93</sup> Ghaneabassiri, “Epistemological Foundation”, 81.

<sup>94</sup> *Mughnī*, v, 253.

<sup>95</sup> *Mughnī*, v, 253; cf. Heemskerk, *Suffering*, 76.

<sup>96</sup> *Mughnī*, v, 239.

is witness between you and me”;<sup>97</sup> and second, “Everything (*kullu shay*) will perish except His own Face”.<sup>98</sup>

From the previous explanation, we can see that ʿAbd al-Jabbār acknowledges that *maʿnā* can have the sense of i) “cause of a qualification”; and ii) it can also mean “something whose existence has been established”. *Maʿnā* in the context of his definition of knowledge, I suggest, is from both senses. ʿAbd al-Jabbār believes that *maʿnā* is a cause for us to know and also it is a real existence.

Therefore, one might observe that, by choosing the word *maʿnā* in his definition of knowledge, ʿAbd al-Jabbār excludes the application of this definition to God. For, if this definition is applied to God, that implies that He knows with an “entitative being” (*maʿnā*; here knowledge), which is a real existence. If so, he needs to answer another question that, if this *maʿnā* is real existence, it is pre-eternal or temporal? This question is considered as problematic for most of the Muʿtazilites.<sup>99</sup>

Therefore, based on a theological background that was established earlier by Wāṣil b. ʿAtāʾ who denies the existence of God’s attributes, ʿAbd al-Jabbār and other Muʿtazilites developed their definition of knowledge that concerns only human knowledge. From here, one might observe the influence of theological doctrine in the development of his theory of knowledge.

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<sup>97</sup> Qur. 6: 19

<sup>98</sup> Qur. 28: 88.

<sup>99</sup> A similar use of the word *maʿnā* is observed when he describes that an agent who has body is omnipotent (*qādir*) with *maʿnā*. Without this *maʿnā* he will not be considered as able. The point here is that there is distinction between God, who is *qādir* by the virtue of his essence (*bi dhātih*) and other able agents who become capable with a *maʿnā*, which is capacity, cf. *Mughnī*, v, 49.

The word *ma<sup>c</sup>nā* used in ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s definition of knowledge refers to the actuality of knowing in one self which becomes the cause for his state of knowing. The existence of this *ma<sup>c</sup>nā* can be identified through the existence of the tranquillity in the knower’s soul (*fī nafs al-ʿālim*). The entitative ground can be identified through certain states (*ḥāl*) of the human soul. The existence of this state in the human soul, in turn, will indicate the existence of knowledge. This can be observed through ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s elucidation of the genus of belief. He considers that the state that exists in the knower’s soul is the reason that differentiates knowledge from other meanings in the genus of belief, such as ignorance (*jahl*) and assumption (*zann*). On this, ʿAbd al-Jabbār reports:

It is unacceptable that what distinguishes knowledge from others in the genus of belief is its existence and temporality (*li wujūdihi wa ḥudūthihi*), since that also occurs in the genus other than knowledge. Also it is inconceivable that it (what distinguishes knowledge from others) is because of a *ma<sup>c</sup>nā* that is separated from it, nor because of the way of its existence (*kaiḥiyya wujūdihi*). Therefore, it must be due to certain state (*ḥāl*) that exists in one’s self.<sup>100</sup>

ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that the first three reasons are unacceptable because they might also occur in other realities (*ma<sup>c</sup>ānī*). Therefore, he believes that the only reason for differentiating knowledge from other realities in the genus of belief is through a certain state (*ḥāl*) that exists within the knower. Therefore, we can conclude that the word *ma<sup>c</sup>nā* in ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s definition is an entitative ground that relates to the state (*ḥāl*) of the knower. This state is the tranquillity of the soul (*sukūn al-nafs*) of the knower towards what he knows.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, xii, 30.

<sup>101</sup> See also Frank, “Abū Hāshim Theory of states,” 85-8.

## 2.6. The Tranquillity of the Soul

°Abd al-Jabbār bases his definition of knowledge on the tranquillity of the knower's soul. The concept of the tranquillity of the soul (*sukūn al-nafs*) plays an important role in °Abd al-Jabbār's views on knowledge and in the distinction he makes between real knowledge and belief based upon uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*) or traditionalism. He maintains that the tranquillity of the soul is self-evident and every subject immediately finds in himself this state (of the tranquillity of the soul). In describing this state, °Abd al-Jabbār reports:

The distinction one of us finds in him, when observing himself, between his was convinced that Zayd is in the house because he sees him, and his being convinced that he [Zayd] is there because an unknown person informed him; he finds in one of the two situations an additional state he does not find in another situation. It is this additional state we point to by saying 'tranquillity of the soul'.<sup>102</sup>

According to M. Bernard, the discussion on the tranquillity of the soul among the Mutazilites, is started by Abū °Uthmān al-Jāhīz (d. 254/868)<sup>103</sup> as a response to the first Arab Philosopher al-Kindī,<sup>104</sup> who defines certainty (*yaqīn*) as the tranquillity of understanding with the correctness of a proposition (*qaḍīyya*) with evidence (*burhān*).<sup>105</sup> However, the first Mu'tazilite who employs *sukūn al-nafs* in the definition of knowledge is Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī.

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<sup>102</sup> Mānkadīm, *Sharḥ*, 46-7; cf. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 48.

<sup>103</sup> Bernard, "La Notion de ilm", 23-4.

<sup>104</sup> Al-Kindī inclines towards the Mu'tazilite theology. He was a friend of al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'taṣim. His association with these two sovereigns, plus the fact that he fell into disfavour during the reign of al-Mutawakkil (and was even deprived temporarily of his extensive library), lead one to suspect at least a tendency towards Mu'tazilism on his part. However, the Mu'tazilite scholars after him do not consider him one of them. Perhaps his inclination toward philosophy is obvious therefore; he was included in the rank of philosophers. For more on this, see, P. Adamson, "al-Kindī and the Mu'tazila", 45-77.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Husnī Zayneh, *al-°Aql °Ind al-Mu'tazila*, 36.

°Abd al-Jabbār and his predecessors have been criticized for using the word *sukūn*, which literally means ‘unmoved’ in his definition of knowledge. The critic says that neither knowledge nor any rules resulting from it are from the genus of *sukūn*. Also, the word *sukūn* is normally used as the opposite of movement (*ḥaraka*). Thus, defining knowledge with the word *sukūn* is inconceivable.<sup>106</sup>

In reply to this critic, °Abd al-Jabbār responds by saying that the word *sukūn* in his definition of knowledge is metaphorical (*majāz*). He argues that it is permissible to use metaphorical words in the definition as long as they illuminate the reality of the defined thing. °Abd al-Jabbār agrees that the literal meaning of *sukūn* is opposed to (movement) *ḥaraka*, but, when combined with *nafs*, it means ‘tranquillity of the soul’.<sup>107</sup>

Explaining this issue further, °Abd al-Jabbār writes:

It is certain that the knower (°*ālim*) realizes the difference between what he knows and what he assumes and believes... We describe this as tranquillity of the soul (*sukūn al-nafs*). For human will not find any confusion (*iḥtirāb al-nafs*) in his belief that is based on knowledge compared to belief based on assumption (*ẓann*). Therefore, it is plausible to use this word (*sukūn*) in defining knowledge... for that reason we refer the tranquillity of the soul to the knower (°*ālim*) and not to knowledge (°*ilm*).<sup>108</sup>

This passage indicates that °Abd al-Jabbār, in his definition, emphasizes the role of the knower (°*ālim*). The knower decides whether what he believes is knowledge or something else. Thus, the existence of knowledge here becomes personal, because it is no longer determined by the outsider but by one’s own psychological state. Here,

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<sup>106</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 47.

<sup>107</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 48.

<sup>108</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 20.

one might observe the role given by ʿAbd al-Jabbār to the human self. I suggest that this inclination at a certain level indicates the influence of the doctrine of human free will in ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s definition of knowledge.<sup>109</sup>

However, although he considers that the existence of knowledge is determined by one’s personal psychological state i.e. through the tranquillity of the soul, yet ʿAbd al-Jabbār rejects the definition of knowledge that is based on the production of a precise act by the knower.<sup>110</sup> In this regard, he argues against those who accept this definition:

Say to him, when it is possible to define something with the rules that refer to it [the thing defined], it is necessary to do so and it is inconceivable to define it with the rules referring to something else, although it is related to it. We know that what we have mentioned about the tranquillity of the soul is referring to knowledge; whereas the occurrence (*wuqūf*) of action orderly is referring to the knower. These actions probably will occur or will not, because the knower sometimes knows something that is never occurring, let alone in an orderly fashion.<sup>111</sup>

ʿAbd al-Jabbār also argues that the existence of tranquillity of the soul is known immediately by every man, but that was not the case for the production of precise acts; for the latter needs proof (*dilāla*) to be confirmed. Therefore, he insists that his definition that is based on the tranquillity of the soul is preferable.<sup>112</sup> However, since every human has a different soul, that implies the existence of many kinds of

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<sup>109</sup>Maha Freimuth considers that the *sukūn al-nafs* in ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s definition of knowledge is a divine assistance (*al-luṭf*) which assures them of the correctness of their conviction. See Freimuth, *God and Human*, 59.

<sup>110</sup>A similar definition was ascribed Abū Bakr Ibn Furāk (d. 406/1016). Cf. al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-Afkār*, 74. However, when I refer to Ibn Furak’s *Kitāb al-Ḥudūd* he apparently defines knowledge with a different definition. Therefore, I suggest that perhaps Ibn Furāk mentions this definition in his other work; this seem to be possible for he lives during the period where the *mutakallimūn* are more loose in their concept of definition. We may observe this pattern among other *mutakallimūn* such as al-Ashʿarī and ʿAbd al-Jabbār who define knowledge with more than one definition.

<sup>111</sup>*Mughnī*, xii, 21.

<sup>112</sup>*Mughnī*, xii, 21

knowledge based on everyone's own justification. Therefore, one might ask whether °Abd al-Jabbār believes in the subjectivism of knowledge.<sup>113</sup>

Based on °Abd al-Jabbār's statement, the answer is 'no'. In the *Mughnī*, °Abd al-Jabbār indicates that those who believe that the truth is based on one's view are mistaken (*akhṭa'a*). His main argument is that the subjectivists reject the immediate knowledge (*°ilm ḍarūrī*) of human beings such as sensory (*mushāhadāt*) and direct (*badīhiyyāt*) knowledge. Hence, he argues, based on this view, it is possible for one to believe that a black thing is white or vice versa; the universe is eternal (*qadīm*) and temporal (*ḥādith*) at the same time. Since the falsity of these examples is immediately recognized by every *compos mentis* person; hence, the fallacy of this view is obvious.<sup>114</sup>

In contrast, °Abd al-Jabbār emphasizes the objectivity of knowledge. He clearly indicates in the *Mughnī* that knowledge must correspond to reality. °Abd al-Jabbār supports his view based on the legacy of his predecessors. In this regard, he writes:

What our *shuyūkh* [Abū °Alī, Abū Hāshim and Abū al-Hudhayl]<sup>115</sup> (may Allah have mercy on them) say about knowledge is that it is of the genus of belief. When the belief is related to the object as it is, and occurs in a way that necessitates tranquillity of the soul (*sukūn al-nafs*), it is knowledge (*°ilm*). When it is related to the object as it is not, it is ignorance (*jahl*). When it is related to it in a way that confirms it (*yuqawwihī*) but does not necessitate tranquillity of the mind, it is neither knowledge nor ignorance.<sup>116</sup>

This passage indicates that, in order to become knowledge, certain belief must relate to the object as it is, and occurs in a way that necessitates the tranquillity of the soul.

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<sup>113</sup> For Peters' brief comment on this question, see his *God's Created Speech*, 48.

<sup>114</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 47-9.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. *Mughnī*, xii, 25.

<sup>116</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 25.

Otherwise, it is ignorance or something else. Thus, I agree with G. Hourani that knowledge, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, has both objective and subjective specific differences: (a) an intellectual content corresponding to reality in the manner of truth, and (b) an emotional state of satisfaction and tranquillity. Both characteristics are necessary to constitute knowledge.<sup>117</sup> However, one might ask why it is necessary to add (b); for (a) seems sufficient?

The answer to this question can be observed from ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s refutation of Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī’s definition of knowledge.<sup>118</sup> He argues that (b) is necessary, since without tranquillity of the soul in the definition of knowledge, a blind imitator (*muqallid*) or a merely fortunate person who knows by chance (*mabkhūṭ*) will also be included since they may believe something (to be) as it is, and they assume that they feel the tranquillity of the soul yet they are not a knower (*ʿālim*).<sup>119</sup>

Ibn al-Malāḥimī explains that the meaning of the tranquillity of the soul is that the confidence (*tama'nīna*) of the soul lies in the way that, if a doubt is raised about his belief, as one might say “you cannot guarantee that your belief is not false; he will not in doubt (*lam yatashakkak*)”. He explains that a *muqallid* may assume that he has the tranquillity of the soul but, in reality, he is not. If one says to the *muqallid* that “you take your belief (*madhhabuka*) from someone with the possibility that he is wrong. Therefore, you cannot guarantee that your belief is true since it was based on the

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<sup>117</sup> Hourani, G., *Islamic Rationalism*, 17.

<sup>118</sup> See above, 55.

<sup>119</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 20.

foundation (*aṣl*) that is not secure that it was not wrong". In this situation, the *muqallid* must be confused (*iḍḡirāb*) about his belief after that.<sup>120</sup>

Another question that one might ask on this issue is that, if the tranquillity of the soul is the only measurement of knowledge, is it plausible for an ignorant person to claim that he has knowledge based on the tranquillity of his soul? This question was asked earlier by Abū ʿUthmān al-Jāḥiẓ a Baṣrian Muʿtazilite (d. 254/868) regarding the tranquillity of an ignorant soul.<sup>121</sup>

In responding to this question, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that an ignorant person only assumes that he has tranquillity of the soul. He was like somebody who saw the mirage (*sarāb*) and thought that it was water. Then, after the investigation, he will realize that he was wrong. Although he imagines that he has the tranquillity of the soul, because his belief does not correspond with the reality, it is not knowledge.<sup>122</sup> This situation is similar to those who are ignorant in religious belief. When they find out that their belief is untrue, then they will leave it and embrace the new one which they consider to be the truth.<sup>123</sup>

The abovementioned explanations indicate that ʿAbd al-Jabbār's understanding of the reality of knowledge consists of two parts, subjective and objective. The subjective part, which is the state of tranquillity in the soul, is clearly mentioned in his *Mughnī* definition. Yet, he did not mention the objective part of it, which corresponds with the

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<sup>120</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 15-6.

<sup>121</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 37.

<sup>122</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 13-25; Freimuth, *God and Human*, 55-59; Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 17

<sup>123</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 37.

reality of the outside world (*al-muṭābiq li al-wāqi*). Therefore, a new question that arises is why ʿAbd al-Jabbār does not include this objective part in his definition of knowledge in the *Mughnī*.

After a careful examination, I posit that ʿAbd al-Jabbār does not include this fact in his *Mughnī* definition of knowledge, because he believes that the correspondence with reality is well known and well accepted among the Muʿtazilites. Therefore, he considers it as a preliminary element (*muqaddimāt*) of the definition of knowledge. What he seems to indicate here is that, either you mention it in your definition or not, and it has been well known among the Muʿtazilites that knowledge must correspond with the reality. On this matter, he writes:

It is not far (*lā yubʿad*) from what has been mentioned by our teachers, Abū ʿAlī and Abū Hāshim (May Allah have mercy on them) that “knowledge is believing the thing (to be) as it is”, when it is derived from certain aspects, although they are differed regarding the terms used....The definition must cover something that differentiates the defined thing (*maḥdūd*) from others. However, since they know that the aim of definition is unveiling (*kashf*) the objective, it is possible for them in many of their definitions (*ḥudūd*) to mention some premises for it (*muqaddimāt lahu*). Also, it is possible sometimes to include in the definition something which is possible without it, if it was deleted. [For instance] we saw that they define a living being (*al-ḥayy*) as he whom actualizes (*yaṣiḥḥu*) knowing (ʿ*ālim*) and powerful (*qādir*). If they only confine themselves to one of them [either knowing or powerful], it is correct, but they mention both of them; for it [meaning] will be clearer (*akshaf*).<sup>124</sup>

ʿAbd al-Jabbār, in fact, realizes the importance of the first part of his teachers’ definition of knowledge as “believing the thing (to be) as it is”. This can be observed when he clearly indicates that only the *maʿnā* from the genus of belief [which brings

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<sup>124</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 13-4.

the tranquillity of the soul] is considered knowledge; otherwise it was not knowledge.<sup>125</sup> Additionally, we can also detect this fact in his *al-ʿUmad* definition.<sup>126</sup>

However, in the *Mughnī*,<sup>127</sup> he omits this element in his definition of knowledge. Instead, he focuses on the second (subjective) part of the definition [the tranquillity of the soul]. His argument is that the first part of his teachers' definition is only a premise; so it is possible not to mention this fact in his definition of knowledge.<sup>127</sup> By this, ʿAbd al-Jabbār wants to establish that correspondence with the reality (*muṭābiq lil-wāqīʿ*) is a consensus among the Muʿtazilites albeit their differences on the use of words in defining knowledge, or, even if he does not mention it in his definition, that fact remains.<sup>128</sup>

However, we arguably believe that there is another factor that leads ʿAbd al-Jabbār to exclude the first part of the definition of knowledge by his predecessors that indicates the correspondence with reality (*muṭābiq lil-wāqīʿ*) in the *Mughnī*. This, we believe, was closely related to the intellectual background of his time.<sup>129</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār lived in the period considered by some scholars as the renaissance of Islam.<sup>130</sup> Intellectual freedom was at its peak in the Islamic world during the fourth/tenth to sixth/twelfth centuries.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 13.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Mānkadīm, *Sharḥ*, 45; cf. Ibn al-Malāhimī, *Muʿtamad*, 14.

<sup>127</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 14.

<sup>128</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 15.

<sup>129</sup> For socio-political background of his time, see above, 45.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Kraemer, *Humanism*, 1-3.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Gibb, H., "An Interpretation of Islamic History," 17-18; cf. Kraemer, *Humanism*, 4.

One of the main features of this era is the revitalization of the Ash‘arite theology by two of their prominent theologians, Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) and Abū Manṣūr al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037). Both al-Bāqillānī and al-Baghdādī have rigorously criticized the use of the words belief (*‘itiqād*) and thing (*shay’*) in the definition of knowledge by the Mu‘tazilites.<sup>132</sup> They argue that (i) the use of the word *‘itiqād* will imply that God is a believer (*mu‘taqid*) and (ii) the use of word *shay’* implies that some non-object known (*ma‘lūm*) such as an associate (*sharīk*) to God will be excluded from knowledge.<sup>133</sup>

Without undermining other factors, I suggest that this is one of the reasons that encourage ‘Abd al-Jabbār to neglect his definition of knowledge in *al-‘Umad*, which included both words, *‘itiqād* and *shay’*. Even according to Ibn al-Malāḥimī, ‘Abd al-Jabbār defines knowledge in his other work, *al-Muḥīṭ*, only as “what necessitate tranquillity of the soul”.<sup>134</sup> However, in the *Mughnī*, his latest work of the three, ‘Abd al-Jabbār develops a new definition of knowledge that excludes both words, ‘*‘itiqād* and *shay’*, but replaces it with the word *ma‘nā*, which is not popular among his predecessors.

## 2.7. Some Responses from the Late Mu‘tazilites

‘Abd al-Jabbār’s definition of knowledge in the *Mughnī*, however, has been rejected by later Mu‘tazilite scholars, including his immediate student, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. In this regard Abū al-Ḥusayn prefers the definition of knowledge by Abū

<sup>132</sup> Al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 25; al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 5-6.

<sup>133</sup> For more on this, see above, 57-60.

<sup>134</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu‘tamad*, 14. This definition also preferred by Mānkdim from *al-‘Umad* definition. Cf. Mānkdim, *Sharḥ*, 46.

Hāshim that preserves the correspondence to reality as the first part of the definition. He notices that ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s definition of knowledge lacks this meaning, which is vital in order to differentiate knowledge from other genus of belief. On this, he argues that, if we suppose that certain beliefs are not as it is (*lā ʿalā mā huwa bihi*) and we assume that it will necessitate the tranquillity of the soul, it is not knowledge. However, if knowledge is only “what necessitates tranquillity of the soul”, as claimed by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, inevitably, we must accept the previous assumption as knowledge.<sup>135</sup>

Nevertheless, ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s method in defining knowledge differently from his predecessors has been pursued by Ibn al-Malāḥimī (d. 536/1141), a follower of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. In his work, *al-Muʿtamad fi uṣūl al-dīn*, al-Malāḥimī rigorously criticizes the definitions of knowledge by his predecessors. Firstly, he agrees with Abū al-Ḥusayn in rejecting ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s definition of knowledge;<sup>136</sup> and, secondly, he argues against Abū Hāshim’s definition, which was accepted by Abū al-Ḥusayn. As a result, Ibn al-Malāḥimī suggests a new definition of knowledge as “the appearance of a thing for the living being that abstains with it in his self the possibility of its opposite”.<sup>137</sup>

Ibn al-Malāḥimī commences his contention by arguing that the proposition that knowledge is from the genus of belief is not a consensus among the Muʿtazilites. Although Abū ʿĀlī, Abū Hāshim and ʿAbd al-Jabbār consider that knowledge is from

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<sup>135</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 14.

<sup>136</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s definition in *Muḥiṭ, Sharḥ* and *Mughnī* but not in *ʿUmad*. Cf. *Mughnī*, xii, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 14; Māndkīm, *Sharḥ*, 53.

<sup>137</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 18.

the genus of belief,<sup>138</sup> there are other scholars who disagree with them. Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī (d. 317/931), for instance, reports the view that knowledge is not from the genus of belief but knowledge itself is a separate genus. Meanwhile, Abū al-Hudhayl al-<sup>c</sup>Allāf (d. 235/849), as reported by <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār, believes in two different views. The first one is that knowledge and belief are from the same genus but his second view however is similar to that reported by Abū al-Qasim.<sup>139</sup>

Ibn al-Malāḥimī's main argument against Abū Hāshim's<sup>140</sup> definition is that the use of the words *ʿitiqād* and *sukūn al-naḥs* is problematic since it will exclude God's knowledge. He argues that God's knowledge is neither belief nor necessitates the tranquillity of the soul. Albeit he realizes <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's argument in defending Abū Hāshim's definition by claiming that God has no knowledge because God knows via His essence, yet Ibn al-Malāḥimī is not convinced by that argument. Instead, he believes that <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's argument is inappropriate in terms of its linguistic regulation.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's position on this issue is that, as we discussed earlier, he believes that God is a knowing being (<sup>c</sup>*Ālim*), yet God does not know through knowledge. Instead, God knows through His essence (*bi dhātih*). Therefore, since God has no knowledge, it is inconceivable to include God in the discussion of the definition of knowledge. Nevertheless, the other question one might ask is, how does <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār prove that God is a knowing being if he maintains that God has no knowledge?

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<sup>138</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 25.

<sup>139</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 25; Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 18.

<sup>140</sup> This definition is also accepted by <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār in *al-ʿUmad* and Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī.

<sup>141</sup> For his arguments in detail see Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 18.

To answer this question, we need to clarify ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s concept on how to confirm the existence of knowledge (*ithbāt al-ʿilm*). According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, there are two ways to establish the existence of knowledge in a subject. The first is based on introspection, and the result is the existence of the tranquillity in one’s soul, as we mentioned earlier.<sup>142</sup> The second is based on the external perception that is based on the precise act (*fiʿl al-muḥkam*). In this way, we can confirm the presence of knowledge in someone else.<sup>143</sup>

He argues that the precise act is an indication that the subject for whom it is possible differs from the subject for whom it is not possible, and the (first) subject is characterized by it in a way which supposes that this quality is due to him by a cause (*ʿilla*).<sup>144</sup> This cause, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, is the state of knowing. Hence, this precise act requires more than the pure ability (*qudra*) to act; it requires knowledge in order to produce mostly a certain composition or order in this act.<sup>145</sup>

Therefore, based on this concept of confirming knowledge, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that God produces precise acts; the existence of this precise act is a proof that God is a knowing subject. As examples, he mentions the creation of living beings (*hayawānāt*), God’s administration of the orbits (*falak*) and their composition, His subjugation (*taskhīr*) of the wind, and His control (*taqdīr*) of winter and summer. All of these acts

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<sup>142</sup> See above, 86.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, xii, 23.

<sup>144</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 156; cf. Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 51.

<sup>145</sup> As examples ʿAbd al-Jabbār mentioned speaking and writing. A subject who can do these acts in a way which is really precise must be characterized by the corresponding knowledge. See, Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 157; cf. Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 51-2.

provide clearer proof and are more precise than human writing. It is also a great explanation (*bayān al-ʿaẓīm*) that God is a knowing subject.

Thus, he explains that the way to know God as a knowing subject is through a precise act. Therefore, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, it was not a problem if the definition of knowledge does not include God’s knowledge in it, since God has no knowledge and does not even need any.<sup>146</sup>

### **Conclusion**

From the abovementioned discussion, we can see that, in defining knowledge, ʿAbd al-Jabbār considers his theological doctrines as a foundation. His belief that God has no knowledge has resulted in defining knowledge based on human beings. This method can also be observed among other Muʿtazilite theologians. On the contrary, the Ashʿarites reject this method. Therefore, they develop the definition of knowledge that is applicable to both man and God.

However, this general tendency among the Muʿtazilites does not prevent ʿAbd al-Jabbār from criticizing his predecessors’ definition of knowledge. He does not hesitate to state his ideas that sometimes contradict His predecessors’ opinions. His method in dealing with definition of knowledge has been well adopted by the Muslim theologians after him. We can observe this analytical approach among the theologians from both schools of thought, the Ashʿarites and the Muʿtazilites. According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, the tranquillity of the soul is the foundation for one to

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<sup>146</sup> For our discussion on knowing God, see below, 217.

know the existence of knowledge in oneself. However, to know the existence of knowledge in others, one knows it through the production of the precise actions of the doer.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār develops at least four definitions of knowledge throughout his works. The first is in *al-ʿUmad* and the last in the *Mughnī*.<sup>7</sup> The reason for this development is probably due to his intellectual maturity in response to his contemporary’s criticism. However, his last definition has been rejected by the late Muʿtazilites. Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, for instance prefers the definition of knowledge presented by Abū Hāshim. Al-Baṣrī rejects ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s definition on the grounds that it lacks the essential part of the definition, which is ‘the correspondence to reality’ (*muṭābiq li al-wāqīʿ*). Ibn al-Malāḥimī, in turn, disagrees with all of the definitions of knowledge by his predecessors, and, therefore, develops a new definition.

## CHAPTER THREE

### TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE

#### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I discussed how ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s definition of knowledge was influenced by his theological doctrine; in this chapter, I will examine how his theory of knowledge became the foundation of his theological doctrines. I will study ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s view of the type of knowledge and its role in the development of his theology. Discussion of the type of knowledge is important in order to identify ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s epistemological foundation in his argument on knowing God. The differences in interpreting the type of knowledge will result in different sets of theological doctrines or theological arguments.

This chapter is divided into two major divisions; the first is on immediate knowledge, and the second is on acquired knowledge. I will start the discussion by outlining the historical background of the discussion of the types of knowledge among the *mutakallimūn* and follow with a brief survey on the sources of my discussion of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s type of knowledge. Then I will examine the reality of immediate knowledge followed by acquired knowledge according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār and its relationship to his theological doctrines. I will also compare his view with other *mutakallimūn*, especially the school of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. This comparison aims at identifying the effect of their differences on the type of knowledge in their theological doctrines or arguments.

### 3.1. The Background

From the fourth/tenth century, the type of knowledge appeared to be one of the main topics discussed in *kalām* epistemology. Views of the type of knowledge in *kalām* have been divided based on the theological line. The *Ṣifā'iyya*,<sup>1</sup> who believed in the existence of God's attributes including knowledge (*ʿilm*), accept that knowledge is divided into divine and human knowledge.<sup>2</sup> However, the Muʿtazilites, who deny the attributes of God, reject the type of knowledge by the *Ṣifā'iyya*.<sup>3</sup> Instead, the Muʿtazilites exclude divine knowledge from the type of knowledge, and their discussion starts only with human knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

Apart from the disagreement on divine knowledge, the *mutakallimūn* in general agree that human knowledge is temporal and divided into two divisions; the first is *darūrī* (immediate), and the second is *iktisābī* (acquired or discursive knowledge). The main difference between immediate and acquired knowledge refers to the ability of the knower (*al-ʿālim*) toward his knowledge. Immediate knowledge occurs without proof and without the knower's ability to prove it." Meanwhile, acquired knowledge must be supported by proof, and the knower has the ability to prove it. Thus, one has the ability to control one's acquired knowledge, but in immediate knowledge, one loses that ability since it occurs without proof (*min ghayr istidlāl*).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> According to al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), there are three main groups considered *al-Ṣifā'iyya*; the Ashʿarites, the Ḥanbalites and the Mujassima. This group is an opposite of the Muʿtazilites or *Muʿattila* who deny the existence of God's attributes, cf. al-Shahrastānī, *Milal*, i, 92. Cf. al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 90; al-Ghazālī, *Iqtisād*, 121.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 8-9; al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 26-7.

<sup>3</sup> They believe that any relation between God's essence and His attribute as a separate entity will imply polytheism (*shirk*). Instead, they believe that God knows via His essence (*dhā'ihi*) and not through knowledge. For more, see below, 241.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Mānkadīm, *Sharḥ*, 95-128.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 8.

The *mutakallimūn* also agree that it is a duty for every Muslim to obtain acquired knowledge. Meanwhile, immediate knowledge is beyond their control. Therefore, it is excluded from the obligation (*taklīf*). However, the *mutakallimūn* disagree on the limit or the scope of both immediate and acquired knowledge. This dispute becomes part of the significant factors that shaped the background of different theological schools in Islamic intellectual history. For we see that scholars from different schools of theology have divided knowledge into different divisions based on their theological backgrounds.

The extant works of ʿAbd al-Jabbār do not provide us with a specific discussion of the types of knowledge.<sup>6</sup> However, we can trace his view of the types of knowledge in his discussions on other topics. For, instance in the twelfth *Mughnī*, he discusses the type of knowledge in the discussion of the ways of knowledge (*turuq al-ʿilm*). Here, he elaborates the ways of knowledge for both immediate and acquired knowledge.<sup>7</sup> In *al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa*, ʿAbd al-Jabbār talks about immediate (*ḍarūrī*) knowledge in the discussion of the ways to know God (*ṭarīq maʿrifat Allāh*).<sup>8</sup> He considers that knowledge of God cannot be obtained via immediate knowledge (*ʿilm ḍarūrī*); for *ʿilm ḍarūrī* is created directly by God to the human soul. Therefore, *ʿilm daruri* was not considered to come from human effort.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> This probably the reason why G. Hourani states that ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s presentation on the type of knowledge is unsystematic, see *Islamic Rationalism*, 20. However, based on the arrangement of his other work *Mukhtaṣar* and Peters’ reconstruction of the composition of the *Mughnī*, I suggest that the discussion on the types of knowledge is in the part one of the *Mughnī*. Cf. *Mukhtaṣar*, 194-9; Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 30-5

<sup>7</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 42. The discussions therefore, focus on the perception (*idrāk*), the way for immediate knowledge and the reflection (*nazar*), the way of acquired knowledge. Meanwhile on knowledge that occurs from the beginning (*mubtadi*) without the ways he does not discuss it here.

<sup>8</sup> *Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 78-81; see also Mānkdim, *Sharḥ*, 43-74.

<sup>9</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār also rejects the view that knowing God could be obtained by sense perception (*mushāhada*).

A clearer structure of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s types of knowledge, however, can be observed through the reports of his student Mānkḏīm (d.425/1034) in *Taʿlīq sharḥ*, a paraphrase of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s idea in *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*. In this work, Mānkḏīm divides knowledge into immediate and acquired. However, although his explanation of the type of immediate knowledge is systematic, there is a slight disagreement among modern scholars. An example is the types of immediate knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

Another important work on ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s types of knowledge is *Majmūʿ al-muḥīṭ bi al-taklīf* by Ibn Mattawayh, where he elaborates ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s view of the concept of obligation (*taklīf*). Ibn Mattawayh differentiates between knowledge that is known immediately by human beings and knowledge that one needs to acquire through proof. Whereas every *mukallaf* is obligated to acquire the latter, the former is not considered part of human obligation. The publication of Ibn al-Malāḥimī’s *al-Muʿtamad fī uṣūl al-dīn* from the school of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī in 1991 has also contributed to improving our understanding of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s types of knowledge. This work provides us with more precise and critical information on the reality of immediate and acquired knowledge according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 50-2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 20-1.

### 3.2. The Immediate Knowledge

The discussion of immediate knowledge is important in Islamic theology and is considered the foundation of the theological doctrines.<sup>12</sup> In °Abd al-Jabbār's extant works, he does not discuss the definition of immediate knowledge by his Mu°tazilite predecessors. °Abd al-Jabbār considers that immediate knowledge is the foundation for human obligation (*taklīf*). It is something that precedes human obligation, without which the obligation will not be complete. On this, he reports:

The one that God has created (in us) is called [*ilm*] *ḍarūrī*. It must precede the obligation of other knowledge and actions. It resembles to enabling (*tamkīn*), empower (*iqdār*) and divine assistance (*lutf*); for the obligation will not complete except with those things, likewise it will not complete except preceded by this [immediate] knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

°Abd al-Jabbār's definition of immediate knowledge (*ilm ḍarūrī*) is closely related to the literal meaning of the word *ḍarūrī*, which is 'to force' (*alja'a*). In conventional usage, the word '*ḍarūrī*' indicates something that occurs in us but not from us (*mā yaḥṣulu fīmā lā min qibalinā*). Therefore, he defines immediate knowledge in *al-Sharḥ*<sup>14</sup> as "knowledge which occurs in us not from ourselves and we cannot banish it from our souls."<sup>15</sup>

Mānkḍīm, however, considers that there is unnecessary repetition in this definition. He argues that knowledge that occurs in us not from ourselves is also knowledge

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<sup>12</sup> For the views of other *mutakallimūn* on immediate knowledge see, B. Abrahamov, "Necessary knowledge", 20-32.

<sup>13</sup> Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmū'*, (2), 6.

<sup>14</sup> Based on Mānkḍīm's report in his *Ta'liq sharḥ*, 48.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. °Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, xii, 42; Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 48; cf. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 54.

whose existence we cannot deny. Therefore, it is enough to define immediate knowledge with one part of it, either the first or the second.<sup>16</sup>

Ibn al-Malāḥimī, on the other hand, disagrees with Mānkḏīm. He maintains that ʿAbd al-Jabbār was right when he mentions both parts of the definition. Ibn al-Malāḥimī argues that defining immediate knowledge as “knowledge which occurs in us not from ourselves” indicates that it occurs by necessity (*muḏtarr*); hence, knowledge was called *darūrī*. However, if it is possible for one to deny the existence of knowledge from one’s soul, it cannot be considered immediate knowledge. Therefore, in this regard, both parts of the definition are necessary to reveal the reality of immediate knowledge. Hence, defining it with only one of the two as Mānkḏīm suggests is unsound.<sup>17</sup>

Another definition of immediate knowledge was reported by Ibn al-Malāḥimī from ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s book *al-ʿUmad*.<sup>18</sup> In this book, ʿAbd al-Jabbār defines immediate knowledge as “knowledge that is not possible for the knower to deny from his soul with doubt (*shakk*) or vagueness (*shubha*), if it is isolated (*idhā infarada*).”<sup>19</sup> The inclusion of the sentence “*idhā infarada*” excludes acquired knowledge that is joined by immediate knowledge. For instance, one knows that Zayd is in the house from the report of a prophet, and then one sees Zayd in the house. The first is acquired, and the second is immediate knowledge. The knowledge from the first cannot be denied

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<sup>16</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 49. Peters in this regard is unable to differentiate between the view of ʿAbd al-Jabbār and that of Mānkḏīm. Therefore, he mistakenly considers that it is ʿAbd al-Jabbār who says that “for a correct definition one has to restrict oneself to one of the two”. In fact that was a statement from Mānkḏīm. Cf. *God’s Created Speech*, 54.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 21.

<sup>18</sup> Mānkḏīm also mentions this definition. Cf. *Sharḥ*, 48.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 48; Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 20. A similar definition adopted by al-Mutawallī but without the inclusion of “*idhā infarada*”, cf. al-Mutawallī, *al-Mughnī*, 2.

since it was joined by the second. However, if the first is isolated (*in farada*) it can be denied, but that was not the case for immediate knowledge.<sup>20</sup>

Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī was reported to define immediate knowledge as “knowledge that is not possible for a knower to remove himself from the situation of knowing of a known object on certain aspect (*‘alā wajh*).”<sup>21</sup> This definition is also accepted by Mānkḏīm, but with a slight alteration when he reports that it is “knowledge that is not possible for a knower to deny from the soul in any aspect (*bi wajh min al-wujūh*).”<sup>22</sup>

Ibn al-Malāḥimī, however, rejects these definitions. His argument is that they all become unsound when they are examined with the proposition that God knows by His essence (*‘ālim li dhātih*). Ibn al-Malāḥimī argues that ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s definitions of immediate knowledge may include the nature of God as a knowing subject. Therefore, this definition is implausible.<sup>23</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī’s argument can be developed as follows: the definitions of immediate knowledge by ‘Abd al-Jabbār imply that (i) a knower knows it by his own and (ii) he knows it without any effort to acquire it. This type of knowledge, he believes, is similar to the nature of God as a knowing subject since God knows through His essence (*li dhātih*) and He does not acquire knowledge. Ibn al-Malāḥimī argues that if we define immediate knowledge

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu‘tamad*, 20. Abrahamov translates this definition without the inclusion of the words “*idhā in farada*”. This I believe does not precisely describe the meaning of *‘ilm ḍarūrī* according to ‘Abd al-Jabbār since it will include acquired knowledge that joined by immediate knowledge. Cf. Abrahamov, “Necessary knowledge”, 21.

<sup>21</sup> The inclusion of “on certain aspect” in the definition is similar with “if it is isolated” in the previous definition. Abū al-Ḥusayn probably reports this definition from ‘Abd al-Jabbār in one of the latter’s lecture. Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu‘tamad*, 20-21.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 49

<sup>23</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu‘tamad*, 20-1.

as ʿAbd al-Jabbār did, it implies that God’s knowledge will be included. However, since we do not consider the state of knowing in God as immediate knowledge, ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s definitions of immediate knowledge, therefore, are invalid.<sup>24</sup>

Alternatively, Ibn al-Malāḥimī defines immediate knowledge as “knowledge that does not depend on the inference (*istidlāl*) by the knower whenever it is applicable to use the proof.”<sup>25</sup> He maintains that his definition is the most appropriate for immediate knowledge since the sentence ‘whenever it is applicable to use the proof’ excludes God’s knowledge of the things; for God does not use the proof since He does not need it. Ibn al-Malāḥimī also believes that his definition is consistent with the different views of the *mutakallimūn* on immediate knowledge.<sup>26</sup>

One might observe that Ibn al-Malāḥimī considers God’s knowledge in developing his definition of immediate knowledge.<sup>27</sup> So, one might ask why Ibn al-Malāḥimī takes this position in his definition of immediate knowledge; does he omit the view of the Muʿtazilites that God has no knowledge and adopt the Ṣifāṭiyya’s view that God has knowledge, instead?

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<sup>24</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 20-1.

<sup>25</sup> “*Ilm lā yaqif ʿalā istidlāl al-ʿālim bih idhā kāna yaṣiḥḥ fīh al-istidlāl.*” Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 22.

<sup>26</sup> On this he writes “this definition consistent with the view of one who says that: immediate knowledge is created (*mafʿūl*) in a *compos mentis* person (*al-ʿāqil*), or it is obligated (*mūjiba*) in him. This definition is also consistent with those who say that it [immediate knowledge] is initially created in him, and others who say that it is compulsory from the senses or similar to it. [It is also consistence] with the view that some immediate knowledge can be denied with doubt (*shubha*), it is knowledge that is excluded from its immediate nature.” Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 22.

<sup>27</sup> This method is similar with his system in the definition of knowledge, as we discussed in previous chapter, see above, 94.

I suggest that Ibn al-Malāḥimī's method of definition is related to the development of the concept of definition that was initiated by Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. When the latter, as reported by Ibn al-Malāḥimī, considers that a definition must reveal the reality of the thing defined,<sup>28</sup> he actually changes the concept of the definition from interpreting the meaning of the word to revealing the reality of the thing defined. In contrast to his predecessors, who give freedom to the definer to interpret the thing defined based on his thinking,<sup>29</sup> Abū al-Ḥusayn limits that freedom; instead, he emphasizes the reality of the thing defined. Hence, any definition that does not reveal the reality of the thing defined is considered invalid.<sup>30</sup>

This concept of definition is accepted by Ibn al-Malāḥimī when he considers that Abū al-Ḥusayn's concept of definition is more appropriate than that of his other teachers.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, it is conceivable for him to apply that concept to his predecessors' definitions. Hence, any definition will be scrutinized, and if it does not reveal the reality of the thing defined, the definition can be rejected.

Therefore, God's knowledge is included in Ibn al-Malāḥimī's discussion of immediate knowledge not because he abandons the doctrine of the Muṭazilites and adopts the Ṣifātiyya's view of the attribute of God. Instead, it is because of the application of new concept of definition that was revolutionized by Abū al-Ḥusayn.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, since ʿAbd al-Jabbār's definitions of immediate knowledge include God's

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muṭamad*, 12.

<sup>29</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 14-5.

<sup>30</sup> See above, 94.

<sup>31</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muṭamad*, 12.

<sup>32</sup> The concept of definition among the *mutakallimūn* however achieves its peak in the hand of al-Ghazālī when he manages to assimilate Greek logic into Islamic *kalām*. Cf. Abū Sway, al-Ghazālī, 70-80; Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī", 141-8.

knowledge (and God's knowledge is not immediate knowledge), therefore, it must be rejected.

This suggestion is also supported by the terms used by Ibn al-Malāḥimī in describing this contention. He carefully chooses words to avoid the use of “*ilm Allāh* (God's knowledge)”; instead, he uses “*Allāh ʿālim* (God as a knowing subject).”<sup>33</sup> This statement indicates that Ibn al-Malāḥimī is maintaining his Muʿtazilite identity but remains critical toward his predecessors' definition of immediate knowledge. Also, in his definition Ibn al-Malāḥimī appears to be more precise than his predecessors when he specifically mentions the word “*istidlāl*” (inference). His predecessors only verified immediate knowledge based on one's ability to confirm and to deny it. However, Ibn al-Malāḥimī goes further to specify that the ability is for doing the inference.<sup>34</sup>

There is disagreement among modern scholars regarding the correct translation of “*ilm ʿarūḥī*.” A. Tritton translates *ʿarūḥī* as ‘necessary’ but indicates that this term as applied to knowledge has no equivalent in Western thought.<sup>35</sup> “It is wider than a priori or intuitive and came to include knowledge of facts of history and geography.” Tritton thought that Jaʿd b. Dirham (d. 125/742) was the first to use this term.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> He writes, “*wa hādihā al-ḥadd yatanāqqaq bi kaunihī ʿāliman li dhāih*” and “*wa hādihā al-khabar ayḍan yatanāqqq bimā qaddamnā min kaunih taʿāla ʿāliman li dhāih*”. Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 20-1.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 22.

<sup>35</sup> On the theory of knowledge from western perspective see D. W. Hamlyn, *Theory of Knowledge*, 12.

<sup>36</sup> Tritton, A., “Theory of Knowledge”, 253.

Presumably, one of the reasons for this dispute is that classical *kalām* epistemology was not influenced by Aristotelian logic as it is in the late *kalam*. Therefore, the terms used are independent from Aristotelian justification. Instead, the *mutakallimūn* based their epistemology mostly on Qur’anic teaching. The *mutakallimūn* used logical methods, of course, but they did not like *manṭiq* (Aristotelian logic). On this matter, Van Ess reports that the Christian philosopher and logician Yahyā b. ʿAdī (d. 364/974) refused to enter into discussion with the followers of Abū Hāshim (d. 321/933) because the way they treated their problems and the terminology they used turned out to be too different from those Aristotelian notions to which he was accustomed.<sup>37</sup>

In the context of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theory of knowledge, Hourani considers that ‘necessary knowledge’ can be accepted as the non-technical meaning for *ʿilm ḍarūrī*, but as a philosophical term, the word ‘immediate knowledge’ is more appropriate. He argues that in philosophical English “necessary” means logically implied, and this is characteristic only of knowledge resulting from discursive reasoning, which is classified by Muslim theologians as *muktasab*.<sup>38</sup> Hourani supports his arguments with the nature that defines *ḍarūrī* knowledge according to Muslim theologians such as al-Baghdādī and al-Bāqillānī: that we have no choice but to accept it when it is presented to our minds.<sup>39</sup> This is, according to Hourani, best translated as ‘immediate knowledge.’<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Van Ess, “Logical Structure”, 21-2.

<sup>38</sup> Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 20.

<sup>39</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 8; al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 26.

<sup>40</sup> Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 20.

However, Peters disagrees with Hourani. Peters considers that the correct translation for *‘ilm ḍarūrī* is ‘necessary knowledge.’<sup>41</sup> He argues that ‘Abd al-Jabbār distinguishes inside the category of *ḍarūrī* knowledge between direct<sup>42</sup> and indirect knowledge. He considers that direct knowledge is also immediate knowledge; therefore, it is plausible to use the words ‘necessary knowledge’ here rather than immediate knowledge.<sup>43</sup> From the disagreement between Hourani and Peters, one may observe the validity of what was mentioned by Tritton earlier, that there is no concept in Western thought that is similar to *‘ilm ḍarūrī*.<sup>44</sup> This fact was supported by the other reality that there is no entry for ‘necessary knowledge’ or ‘immediate knowledge’ in the Encyclopedia of Philosophy<sup>45</sup> and the Encyclopedia of Theology.<sup>46</sup>

Based on this disagreement, I believe that it is beneficial to examine their dispute from a Western epistemological perspective. Hourani argues that necessary knowledge is not a proper translation of *‘ilm ḍarūrī* since it means logically implied. In the West, what is logically necessary is what follows the laws of logic. Thus, a statement such as ‘Either it will or it will not rain’ indicates logically necessary truth. Also, another example, “if men are mortal and Socrates is a man, then Socrates is mortal,” expresses a logically necessary truth. Both examples are considered necessary since they follow the laws of logic.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, this type of reasoning is not

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<sup>41</sup> This translation also has been used by Abrahamov in “Necessary Knowledge”, 20.

<sup>42</sup> Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 54.

<sup>43</sup> Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 53-5.

<sup>44</sup> Bernard uses both translations ‘immédiat’ and ‘nécessaire’ knowledge, however, she does not present any argument on that, see her *Le Problème*, 85;137-41.

<sup>45</sup> See for instance *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (An), 8 vols., New York, 1972.

<sup>46</sup> See for instance *Encyclopaedia of Theology*, 2 vols. Edinburgh, 1884-1885.

<sup>47</sup> Lowe, E. J. “Necessity, Logical”, 609.

considered from *‘ilm ḍarūrī* in Islamic theology. Instead, this type of reasoning is part of acquired knowledge (*‘ilm iktisābi*).

Meanwhile, Peters’ argument is based on the fact that ‘Abd al-Jabbār divides immediate knowledge into direct and indirect knowledge. Peters suggests that ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s direct knowledge is immediate. Therefore, Peters rejects Hourani’s translation of *‘ilm ḍarūrī* as immediate knowledge. For that translation will be redundant with direct knowledge. Hence, Peters prefers translating *‘ilm ḍarūrī* as necessary knowledge. However, in this disagreement, I prefer Hourani’s view since Peters’ translation of *‘ilm ḍarūrī* as necessary knowledge, as I indicated earlier, is far from the meaning intended by ‘Abd al-Jabbār.

Similar to the majority of the *mutakallimūn*, ‘Abd al-Jabbār maintains that immediate knowledge does not need any proof to stand. Otherwise, it will be *ad infinitum*, every proof will need another proof without ending. Therefore, ‘Abd al-Jabbār argues that when one disputes something that is immediately known such as perceptible knowledge, one’s deception is exposed. Therefore, it is useless to argue with a Sophist by presenting rational proof; but it is better to hit him and see whether he feels the pain or not.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> There are four groups of people who reject the immediate knowledge:

- a) The Sophist, who believes that we do not know the existence of reality (*al-la adriyya*).
- b) A group who believes that the only reality is rational intuition. They consider that sensual knowledge is non-existent because it never stays on one state and always changing.
- c) The Relativist, who believe that the reality is different and based on one’s own perspective (*al-umud/al-indiyya*).
- d) A group who only believe on sensual knowledge and reject the unobservable knowledge such as knowledge of unseen country (*al-Sumniyya*). On the refutation of these views see, *Mughnī*, xii, 42; Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 48; Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu‘tamad*, 28-29; Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 54.

### 3.2.2 The Type of Immediate Knowledge

There are several types of immediate knowledge classified by the *mutakallimūn*. They agree that human beings have a limited role in this type of knowledge; for God is considered the creator of this knowledge in them. However, the *mutakallimūn* disagree on the scope of this knowledge. This difference, as I will indicate, plays an important role in determining the epistemological background of Muslim theology.

°Abd al-Jabbār mentions in the twelfth part of the *Mughnī* that one knows one's existence, state of believing and perceiving immediately from the beginning (*mubtadi<sup>an</sup>*).<sup>49</sup> However, °Abd al-Jabbār does not elaborate this type here, probably because he already did so in an earlier part of the *Mughnī*.<sup>50</sup> Fortunately, we manage to comprehend his type of immediate knowledge based on a systematic discussion from the *Ta'liq al-sharḥ* of Mānkḏīm. He reports the type of immediate knowledge according to °Abd al-Jabbār as follows:

The immediate knowledge is divided into; (i) what exist in us at the beginning (*mubtadi<sup>an</sup>*), such as our knowledge of our state of willing (*murīd*), hating (*kāriḥ*), yearning (*mushtahī*), fleeing (*nāfir*) presuming (*ẓann*), believing (*mu<sup>c</sup>taqid*) and so forth; (ii) what available in us through a means (*ṭarīq*) or what resembles a means (*ma yajrī majrā al-ṭarīq*).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 66.

<sup>50</sup> I arguably believe that he already discussed this type of immediate knowledge in the first part of the *Mughnī*.

<sup>51</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 50. There is a disagreement among modern scholars on °Abd al-Jabbār's type of immediate knowledge. The confusion is possibly due to one's interpretation on the text in the *sharḥ*. Hourani in this issue divides °Abd al-Jabbār's type of immediate knowledge into two types, meanwhile °Uthmān, divides it into three types. Cf. Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 20-2; °Uthmān, *Nazariyya al-taklīf*, 60.

According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, there are two types of immediate knowledge, direct and indirect knowledge. First, I will examine his view of the direct knowledge, and then follow it by a discussion of indirect knowledge.

### 3.2.2.1. Direct Knowledge

Direct knowledge (*mubtadiʿ*) according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār is knowledge that exists in us from the beginning. It is similar to *a priori* knowledge in Western epistemological system. Yet, the scope of this knowledge is wider than *a priori*. Similar to *a priori* knowledge, immediate knowledge, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, is a set of knowledge that is known by every *compos mentis* person (*ʿāqil*).<sup>52</sup> The objective of this set of knowledge is to achieve the maturity of the intellect (*kamāl al-ʿaql*). However, although this knowledge is available in all men of reason, it is conceivable that they disagree on it.

Therefore, we observe that ʿAbd al-Jabbār divides direct knowledge into two types: (i) what is considered (to belong) to the maturity of the intellect and (ii) what is not considered to belong to the maturity. The first type of direct knowledge is undisputable and indubitable; for if one obtained this knowledge, one is considered a *compos mentis* person. Meanwhile, the second type is a kind of knowledge some persons have and others have not without this having any influence on the maturity of their intellect and their being *compos mentis* (*ʿāqil*). By way of example, he mentions recognizing Zayd. Although this knowledge is from the beginning

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<sup>52</sup> For more on this set of knowledge, see our discussion on the maturity of intellect below, 131.

(*mubtadi*) from God, yet it did not contribute to the maturity of the intellect; therefore, people disagree about it.<sup>53</sup>

Knowledge concerning the maturity of the intellect again is composed of two kinds: (a) what is based upon experience and (b) what is not. The latter concerns the knowledge of general rules of argumentation and its basic axiomatic. As an example, he mentions the axiom of non-contradiction (*‘adam al-tanāquḍ*); either of the two alternatives is possible such as an essence (*dhāt*) whether it exists (*maujūd*) or is nonexistent (*ma‘dūm*).<sup>54</sup> The other comprises general rules concerning act and basic ethical rules.<sup>55</sup>

Some of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s statements in his works on the types of knowledge cause confusion among contemporary scholars. For instance, in the *Mughnī*, he writes that “if they mean with this saying that, without the knowledge perceived by the senses it is inconceivable that one can know everything; this is valid but it is unconceivable to indicate that sensual knowledge evaluates the rational knowledge.”<sup>56</sup> In this passage, ‘Abd al-Jabbār indicates that it is acceptable to say that all sources of knowledge must be from the senses but to say that the senses can evaluate rational knowledge is unacceptable.

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<sup>53</sup> Mānkīdīm, *Sharḥ*, 51. cf. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 55.

<sup>54</sup> Mānkīdīm, *Sharḥ*, 51.

<sup>55</sup> Mānkīdīm, *Sharḥ*, 51; cf. Bernand, *Le Problème*, 140-1.

<sup>56</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 58.

Uthmān considers that this passage indicates destruction of the foundation of rationalism since the passage says that all knowledge is based on the senses.<sup>57</sup> The same result was obtained by Hourani when he considers that based on Abd al-Jabbār's view of the knowledge of the basic ethical rules, all rational intuition in his epistemology is preceded by experience.<sup>58</sup> On this, Hourani quotes Abd al-Jabbār's statement as follows: "And we only say about these two [lying and wrongdoing are evil] and similar pieces of knowledge that they are things that occur originally (*ibtidā'an*) in rational persons: not that they exist originally before knowledge of the perceptible, but because preceding knowledge is not a means to them, as we have shown with respect to perception and other things...this knowledge [e.g. that harmful pain is evil] is not dependent on perception, even though perception must precede it in a special sense."<sup>59</sup>

Because of this confusion, I believe it is important to analyze Abd al-Jabbār's immediate knowledge in order to reveal his view of this matter. I will endeavor to do so base on E. Kant's categorization of knowledge as *a priori* and *a posteriori*.<sup>60</sup> Kant indicates that the distinction between *a posteriori* and *a priori* comes to be a distinction between what is derived from experience and what is not.<sup>61</sup> *A priori*

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<sup>57</sup> Uthmān, *Nazariyya al-taklīf*, 53.

<sup>58</sup> Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 21-2.

<sup>59</sup> *Mughni*, xii, 66.

<sup>60</sup> Literal meaning of *a priori* is "from what is prior" and *a posteriori* is "from what is posterior". Aristotle explains that *A* is prior to *B* in nature if and only if *B* could not exist without *A*; *A* is prior to *B* in knowledge if and only if we cannot know *B* without knowing *A*. Hamlyn D. W., "A Priori and A Posteriori", i, 140.

<sup>61</sup> For Kant's distinction between a priori and a posteriori, see his *Critique*, 25-7; cf. Hamlyn, D. W., *Theory of Knowledge*, 249-80.

knowledge is derived from the mind and is not based on experience (*al-khibr*). Meanwhile, *a posteriori* is based on experience.<sup>62</sup>

In general, ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s immediate knowledge consists of the following:

- i) One’s knowledge of oneself and its state that is not based on any external factor, such as willing, hating etc.;<sup>63</sup>
- ii) Knowledge of logical axiomatic principles, such as the principle of non-contradiction (*ʿadam al-tanāquḍ*);
- iii) Knowledge of basic ethical rules, such as injustice (*ẓulm*) is evil;
- iv) Perceptible knowledge that is based on sense perception;
- v) Recognizing someone.<sup>64</sup>

Hence, we can observe that in ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s type of immediate knowledge there is *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge. One’s knowledge of oneself is *a priori* since it does not need any experience. This knowledge occurs in us before the occurring of any other knowledge and without a means (*bi lā wāsiṭa*). As examples, ʿAbd al-Jabbār identifies some principles that are known immediately to human beings, such as knowledge that one will believe what one perceives. Similarly, one’s knowledge of the tranquillity of one’s soul is also immediately known. But one’s knowledge to prove the existence of knowledge (*ithbāt al-ʿilm*) and its situation differs from what is not knowledge; the way to it is via proof.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Hamlyn, “A Priori and A Posteriori”, 140; cf. Gotshalk, D. W., “The A Priori”, 253.

<sup>63</sup> In later Islamic philosophy this knowledge is called knowledge by presence (*ʿilm ḥuḍūrī*), which was formulated by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 1191). See Mehdī H. Yazdī, *The Principle of Epistemology*, 15.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Māndkīm, *Sharh*, 51.

<sup>65</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 42.

Meanwhile, knowledge of the perceptibles (*mudrakat*) is *a posteriori* knowledge since they are based on the senses and perception. Also, knowledge of the basic ethical rules as Hourani rightly observes are *a posteriori* since it is based on perception (*idrāk*).<sup>66</sup> °Abd al-Jabbār explains that although basic ethical knowledge is preceded by perception, but sense cannot perceive knowledge directly like a perceptible thing. Therefore, he does not consider basic ethical principles as perceptible knowledge. It is not perceptible knowledge, and perception is not a means to it.<sup>67</sup> The knowledge of it is drawn out from particular experiences in which it is learned by a direct apprehension.<sup>68</sup> On this, °Abd al-Jabbār writes:

After a knower knows the reality of lying and what differentiate it from others; he will know that if lying occurs not for rejecting harm (*maḍarra*), it must be necessarily bad (*qabḥ bi iḍtirār*). [Similarly] he also knows immediately after his knowledge of pain and sorrow that wrongdoing (*zulm*) is bad.<sup>69</sup>

However, there is uncertainty regarding the knowledge of basic logical axiomatic such as the principle of non-contradiction (°*adam al-tanāquḍ*): is it *a priori* or *a posteriori*? According to Mānkḍīm's report, it is *a priori* since it is not based on experience (*khibr*), but °Abd al-Jabbār reports in the *Mughnī* that although logical axiomatic is immediately known, it must be preceded by other knowledge. On this, °Abd al-Jabbār writes:

As one knows through his knowledge of the existence of bodies and others, that it is impossible for a body to be existence and non existence [at the same time], or eternal and temporal [at the same time]. For one knows that a thing is on certain attribute and

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<sup>66</sup> Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 22.

<sup>67</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 61.

<sup>68</sup> Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 22.

<sup>69</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 66.

not on it [at the same time] is impossible...Therefore, one immediately knows of its impossibility (*istiḥālātih*) although it must be preceded by the knowledge of body and existence, also this knowledge comes to his mind. Hence, it is inconceivable for him to doubt on that.<sup>70</sup>

Therefore, based on Kant's distinction, I posit that knowledge of logical axiomatic is also *a priori*, since there is no experience involved. This judgment is true if one derives logical axiomatic from one's knowledge of oneself. Yet, if it was derived from the knowledge of something other than oneself, it is *a posteriori* knowledge since senses are involved.<sup>71</sup>

### 3.2.2.2. Indirect Knowledge

Having studied ʿAbd al-Jabbār's view of direct knowledge, now I will examine his view of indirect knowledge. Indirect knowledge, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, is knowledge that occurs through a means (*ṭarīq*). This indirect knowledge again has two sub-categories: (i) what takes place by the means (*ṭarīq*) and (ii) what resembles the means (*mā yuḥṣalu ʿamma yajrī majrā al-ṭarīq*). I will start my investigation into knowledge that occurs by a means, and then follow by what resembles a means.

#### 1. Knowledge by a means

What ʿAbd al-Jabbār suggests by means (*ṭarīq*) in immediate knowledge is the perception (*idrāk*) through the five senses. Therefore, all perceptible knowledge is included in this first subsection of immediate knowledge, because one knows perceptible knowledge only through the means of perception. ʿAbd al-Jabbār explains that whenever the perceiving subject is rational (*ʿāqil*) and there is no

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<sup>70</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 61

<sup>71</sup> One knows the existence of others through senses.

ambiguity in the perceived object, the perception certainly will occur. The knowledge gained from the perception must be initially (*ibtidā'a*) from the act of God, but occurs only when the perceiver is doing the perception. Thus, perception is an act of human beings, whereas knowledge is an act of God. This implies that if the perceiving subject is closing his eye he will not be able to perceive a thing from his sight and God will not create perceptible knowledge in him.<sup>72</sup>

As far as perception is concerned, one might ask that, how does the process of human beings obtain immediate knowledge? To answer this question, first, I will discuss the process of how human beings obtain immediate knowledge. On this, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār reports:

Indeed the knower knows from his observation of the body and his examination of its states that it is inconceivable for the body to exist in two places [at the same time]. Likewise he realizes that when he knows the existence of body, it is impossible for it to be existence and nonexistence, eternal and temporal; for he knows that it is inconceivable for a thing to be in one state and the opposite state at one time. This is because that will lead to the combination of two contradictions. Hence, he immediately will know its impossibility.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār elucidates that the perceiver will perceive a thing in detail (*tafṣīl*). He will perceive the most specific attributes (*akhaṣṣ awṣāfih*) of the thing exist,<sup>74</sup> for instance, its color or other accidents that differentiate the thing from others. In other words, perception will obtain only what could be perceived by the senses and not beyond it. Senses could not perceive the ethical value of a thing; for the value of a

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<sup>72</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 59. Cf. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 54. These approach however, suitable for a perceptive knowledge (*mudrakāt*).

<sup>73</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 65-6.

<sup>74</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 61. See also, Dhanani, *Physical Theory*, 22-5.

thing (good or evil) is an additional attribute (*awṣāf zā'ida*).<sup>75</sup> Perceptive knowledge is free from any judgment or value. Senses are unable to perceive the value of what they perceive. Therefore, rational evaluation is needed to understand the value of a thing.<sup>76</sup>

Thus, ʿAbd al-Jabbār concludes that the role of the senses is to perceive the existence of a thing. However, one cannot know the truth or falsehood of a thing through the senses. Instead, the truth or falsehood must be known via the intellect. Therefore, the intellect is the evaluator (*qāḍī*) of the validity of perceptive knowledge or what has been perceived by the senses.<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, ʿAbd al-Jabbār believes that through perception one not only knows perceptible things but also other thing such as the intention of the speaker (*qaṣd al-mukhāṭib*). Although one could not perceive the intention directly or naturally (*bi al-ṭabʿ*), one knows it through the speaker's speech or sign.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, ʿAbd al-Jabbār also includes knowledge of the intention of a speaker in immediate knowledge. However, for the knowledge of God's intention, one could not know immediately but only via proof. For knowledge of God's intention is based on knowledge of His essence. Since knowledge of His essence is based on proof, knowledge of God's intention must also be through proof.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 66.

<sup>76</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 66.

<sup>77</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 58.

<sup>78</sup> Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī believes that knowledge of the intention is immediate and perceptible. Cf. *Mughnī*, xii, 63.

<sup>79</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 64.

Based on the previous explanation, one might observe that ʿAbd al-Jabbār considers that perception is a vital means of knowledge. A human’s connection with the outside world is established through perception. However, what if someone argues that the senses are not reliable since they sometimes make wrong judgments, such as one perceives a distant object as small, and, therefore, consider it so, yet, in reality that object is big?

Responding to this question, ʿAbd al-Jabbār clarifies that the senses cannot be blamed if there is any mistake in judgment related to the senses. He believes that it is necessary to differentiate between knowledge perceived by the senses and what the perceiver believes, which is his interpretation of the data given by the senses. The mistakes always occur when the perceiver interprets the data wrongly. Besides, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that the role of the senses is to perceive a thing as what it is (*ʿalā mā huwa ʿalayhi li dhātihī*). Whereas to know whether a thing is valid or invalid is the duty of the perceiver (*mudrik*). Therefore, ʿAbd al-Jabbār concludes that the mistakes in the judgment of the perceiver have nothing to do with the reliability of the senses. Rather, the mistake occurs because of obscurity (*shubha*) that appears with it.<sup>80</sup>

ʿAbd al-Jabbār even goes further to state that “without knowledge of what is perceived by the senses it will be unfounded for human beings to know all knowledge.”<sup>81</sup> Thus, it is correct to say that sensory knowledge is the precedent (*aṣl*) for rational knowledge.<sup>82</sup> However, he disagreed that sensory knowledge is the evaluator (*qāḍiya*) over rational knowledge whether it is valid or not; because the

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<sup>80</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 60.

<sup>81</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 58.

<sup>82</sup> This view is equivalent with that of al-Ashʿarī, cf. al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 10.

way to know the validity of all knowledge is the tranquillity of the soul (*sukūn al-nafs*). When it is confirmed that the tranquillity of the soul has occurred in all knowledge, it must be said that the knowledge is valid, irrespective of whether it is sensory knowledge or rational knowledge.<sup>83</sup>

°Abd al-Jabbār responds to the question raised by some Atheists (*al-Dahriyya*) regarding whether the senses or the intellect is superior to the other, or which judges (*qāḍī*) the other, by commenting that:

As for the discussions on whether the senses judge the intellect or the intellect evaluates the senses, or neither evaluate the other, I believe that most of those who speak about it do not know the objective (*gharḍ*) of their discussion. This is because the senses have no role in this discussion.<sup>84</sup> Instead what matters (*muṭabar*) is knowledge of the perceptible (*mudrakāt*), and knowledge that is available from the intellect via reflection (*naẓar*).<sup>85</sup>

°Abd al-Jabbār argues that perception is not the condition for belief to become knowledge, but it is the tranquillity of the soul. If it occurs, then it is knowledge; otherwise, it is not knowledge. Explaining the relationship between the tranquillity of the soul and perception, °Abd al-Jabbār writes:

We have already explained that the tranquillity of the soul that follows a belief is knowledge irrespective of from where it comes. Indeed, what occurs via reflection (*naẓar*) is at the same level of what occurs through perception (*idrāk*). The only difference is that the knowledge one perceived could not be denied from one's self, and this is not the case of the knowledge from reflection.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 58.

<sup>84</sup> He means that what is important is the knowledge obtained through the senses (perceptible knowledge) and not the sense itself.

<sup>85</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 58.

<sup>86</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 56-7.

From this passage, one might observe that ʿAbd al-Jabbār is not concerned with the means one gets the knowledge from, as long as it caused the tranquillity of the soul. Therefore, knowledge from perception is at the same level as knowledge from reflection. There is no difference between immediate knowledge and acquired knowledge in terms of its reliability. The only difference according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār is that immediate knowledge cannot be denied from one’s soul, whereas acquired knowledge can be denied.

## 2. Knowledge Resembles a Means

The second sub-category of indirect knowledge is what takes place through knowledge that resembles the means (*tarīq*) of something. The meaning of this type of knowledge is that the validity of certain knowledge is based on the other. Before one knows (*b*), one must know (*a*). It is knowledge that needs other knowledge to exist or to be validated. An example is one only knows the state (*ḥāl*) of a thing after knowledge of its essence (*dhāt*). Without knowledge of the essence, one cannot know the state of that essence. Therefore, the knowledge of the essence resembles a means for one to know the state of a thing. The former is precedent (*asl*), and the latter is antecedent (*farʿ*).<sup>87</sup>

Explaining the differences between these types of indirect knowledge with the former, Māndkīm reports that:

The difference between what occurs in us through a means and what resembles a means is that, it is possible for the former to exist without a means; yet, this is not the case in the latter. Therefore, it is plausible for God to create in us a knowledge of

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<sup>87</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 61; Māndkīm, *Sharḥ*, 50; Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 54; Abrahamov, “Necessary knowledge”, 23.

perceptible things without perception, but it is implausible for Him to create a knowledge of the state (*ḥal*) without a knowledge of the essence (*dhāt*); for the essence is a precedent (*aṣl*) for the state and it resembles a means to the knowledge of the state.<sup>88</sup>

One might observe that, by stating this point ʿAbd al-Jabbār established the principle of hierarchy in his argument. What I mean is that this subsection of indirect knowledge will become the ground for his theological argument that needs to be observed when one is dealing with the issue of knowledge. This principle is the hierarchical order of knowledge that means that knowledge must be arranged systematically based on its logical consequence.

However, the establishment of this principle is not free from critics. A.K. Uthmān has questioned the significance of mentioning it as a separate sub-division. He argues that if that knowledge (what resembles a means) is related to our state, it could possibly be included in the first division of immediate knowledge, i.e., direct knowledge. And if it is related to the state of others, it is not immediate knowledge but is acquired.<sup>89</sup>

In this regard, I agree with ʿUthmān’s observation and prefer this knowledge be included in direct knowledge since it can be considered as part of the axiomatic principles. However, probably due to the complexity of this principle, it is implausible to include it in direct knowledge. However, I suggest that ʿAbd al-Jabbār has another reason for specifying a sub-division for this principle. Most likely, the

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<sup>88</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 50.

<sup>89</sup> ʿUthmān, *Nazarīyya al-taklīf*, 60.

significant role played by this principle in his theology has led ʿAbd al-Jabbār to consider it as a separate sub-division of indirect knowledge.

The importance of this principle can be observed in his discussion of the types of proof. On this, ʿAbd al-Jabbār writes:

Say to him: there are four [types of proof]: rational argument (*hujjat al-ʿaql*), the Book (*al-Kitāb*), the prophetic tradition (*al-Sunna*) and the consensus [of community] (*ijmāʿ*). Knowledge of God can only be obtained through rational argument; because if we do not know that He is truthful we will not know the authenticity of the Book, the *Sunna* and the consensus.<sup>90</sup>

ʿAbd al-Jabbār depends on this principle when arguing against the Ḥanbalites who depend merely on the Qurʾān and the Sunna in their theological arguments. Based on his second sub-division of indirect knowledge, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that one cannot use the Qurʾān to prove the existence of God, because the former is antecedent (*farʿ*) and the latter is precedent (*aṣl*). That he believes will not comply with the previous principle. Hence, ʿAbd al-Jabbār insists that the intellect (*ʿaql*) is the only way to prove the existence of God.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, he elucidates that in order to accept the validity of the Qurʾān, which is the word of God, one must prove His existence. The only way to prove God’s existence is via intellectual reasoning. Therefore, ʿAbd al-Jabbār maintains that those who are using the Qurʾān to prove the existence of God are not following the right way in their argumentation.

Elaborating on this matter, ʿAbd al-Jabbār states:

Probably some of them will be surprised at this arrangement. They assume that proofs are from the *kitāb*, *sunna* and

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<sup>90</sup> *Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 79-80.

<sup>91</sup> *Tabaqāt*, 139.

consensus (*ijmāʿ*) only, or, if indeed reason can be included it must be the last. But that is not the case. This is because God the highest is not communicating except with a *compos mentis* person (*ahl al-ʿaql*). Since with reason one can prove the validity of the *kitāb*, tradition and consensus, reason is considered the precedent (*aṣl*). Through reason, we distinguish between the rules of action and the rules of the actor. With it we shall be able to know who is responsible for what he omits or what he performs, who will be praised and who will be blamed. Because of that someone who has no reason (*lā ʿaql lahu*) is exempted from obligation (*taklīf*). And when we know via reason that there is only one God and we know that He is wise, hence His book is a proof. And when we know that He sends the prophet and distinguishes him from liars (*kadhḥāb*) through a miracle, we know that the word of the prophet is a proof. And when the prophet says that “My nation will not consent to an error” and “You have to be with the majority (*jamāʿa*)”, then we know that consensus is a proof.<sup>92</sup>

One might observe from previous arguments that ʿAbd al-Jabbār is concerned with orderly presentation in his theological epistemology. Therefore, he endeavors to rationalize every aspect of theology, including the way to use the Qurʾān and other sources of knowledge. The principle that the antecedent (*farʿ*) cannot prove the precedent (*aṣl*)<sup>9</sup> played a major role in developing his arguments. To establish this principle, ʿAbd al-Jabbār specified a sub-section in immediate knowledge for it. He does not include this principle in direct knowledge or perceptible knowledge, probably because of the significance of this principle in his theological argument.

The principle that the Qurʾān can be a valid proof only after its validity has been proved through reason, in fact, is a standard *kalām* position. The Ashʿarites also accept this principle in their theological arguments. Al-Baghdādī, for instance, indicates in his *Uṣūl al-dīn* the roles of the intellect that include proving the existence

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<sup>92</sup> *Ṭabaqāt*, 139.

of God, the validity of the prophet, and his message.<sup>93</sup> However, the point of difference between ʿAbd al-Jabbār and al-Baghdādī is that the latter does not mention specifically this principle in his type of knowledge while the former emphasizes this principle in his epistemology and relies on it in his theological argument.<sup>94</sup>

Another significant difference between the views of ʿAbd al-Jabbār and the Ashʿarites in this disagreement is on the content of immediate knowledge. ʿAbd al-Jabbār's considers that basic ethical rules knowledge is included in immediate knowledge. His inclusion of this knowledge in immediate knowledge implies man's ability to know good and evil with reason alone. However, this inclusion is rejected by the Ashʿarites. They exclude ethical rules from immediate knowledge. In this regard, al-Baghdādī writes:

*ʿIlm darūrī* is two divisions; first, is the direct knowledge (*ʿilm badhī*) and second is the sensory knowledge (*ʿilm ḥissī*). *ʿilm badhī* is divided into two sections; (i) confirmation (*ithbāt*) such as knowledge of one of us about his own existence and what he find in his self from pain, pleasure, hunger, thirst, hot, cold, sadness and happiness and what is similar to it; (ii) rejection (*naḥī*), such as our knowledge of the impossibility of the impossibilities, also knowledge that one thing cannot be eternal and temporal, that a person could not live and die in one state, also the knower of something could not be ignorant of it in the same respect of what he knows in one state. Meanwhile *ʿilm al-ḥissī* is perceptible knowledge that is obtained via five senses.<sup>95</sup>

From this passage, we observe that in general there is an agreement between ʿAbd al-Jabbār and al-Baghdādī on the division of immediate knowledge. However, al-Baghdādī does not mention any ethical principle to be included in immediate

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<sup>93</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 24-5.

<sup>94</sup> Another Ashʿarite theologian, al-Juwaynī, considers that the obligation of knowing God is based on the consensus of the muslims on it. See al-Juwaynī, *Shāmil*, 120.

<sup>95</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 8-9.

knowledge. Al-Baghdādī and the Ashʿarites in general do not include ethical judgment in immediate knowledge. Although they agree with ʿAbd al-Jabbār that ethical judgment is created by God but not the way ʿAbd al-Jabbār comprehends it, which is through direct creation in the human self; instead, the Ashʿarites believe that God reveals ethical judgment to human beings through the prophets. Therefore, ethical knowledge, according to the Ashʿarites, must be acquired through revelation and is not immediate knowledge.<sup>96</sup>

Thus, basic ethical rules become one of the main differences that distinguish ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s view of the type of immediate knowledge from the view of the Ashʿarites.<sup>97</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār considers that reason alone is capable of distinguishing between good (*ḥasan*) and evil (*qubḥ*) without depending on revelation (*waḥy*).<sup>98</sup> The Ashʿarites reject this view. They maintain that knowledge of good and evil could only be determined by God’s command (*amr*) and prohibition (*nahy*).<sup>99</sup> Had no command or prohibition come from God, human beings would have been liable to no obligation whatsoever.<sup>100</sup>

Therefore, the Ashʿarites consider that obligation will occur only after one knows revelation through the prophet. For only revelation can determine what is good and what is bad. Before revelation, there will be no such thing as lawful (*ḥalāl*) or

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 25.

<sup>97</sup> An important characteristic of this intuitive ethical knowledge as described by Fakhry, is that “it is autonomous and self-validating. It requires neither ‘acquired’ nor ‘deductive’ evidence to support it, not even the warrant of divine revelation (*samʿ*). Rather the contrary, for unless the grounds of religious or revealed truth, such as the wisdom of God and the truthfulness of the Prophet who bears His message to mankind, are rationally known, the truth of revelation, identified by ʿAbd al-Jabbār with the Qurʾān and Traditions, would remain forever questionable.” Cf. Fakhry, *Ethical Theories*, 33.

<sup>98</sup> Fakhry, *Ethical Theories*, 49.

<sup>99</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 26.

<sup>100</sup> For further discussion on the concept of *Taklīf* according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār see below, 167.

unlawful (*ḥarām*).<sup>101</sup> Before revelation, all the actions of a *compos mentis* person (*ʿāqil*) are neither rewarded nor punished. For the Ashʿarites, reward and punishment will occur only when there is obedience or disobedience toward the law or *al-sharʿ*, which comes with revelation.<sup>102</sup>

However, the disagreement on the content of immediate knowledge not only occurs between ʿAbd al-Jabbār and the Ashʿarites as we previously observed. The dispute also occurs between ʿAbd al-Jabbār and Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf. The latter considers that knowing God is included in immediate knowledge. ʿAbd al-Jabbār, however, disagrees with him.<sup>103</sup> The disagreement between ʿAbd al-Jabbār and Abū al-Hudhayl regarding the content of immediate knowledge leads them to adopt a different approach in their arguments about knowing God. However, Abū al-Hudhayl maintains that this knowledge exists in the human mind in a general sense. Therefore, one needs to reflect (*naẓar*) in order to understand detailed information about God. Negligence in knowing God will result in an eternal punishment in the hereafter. This knowledge is the foundation of *taklīf ʿaqlī*, according to Abū al-Hudhayl.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 24. For later Ashʿarites' arguments against Muʿtazilites ethics, see Hourani, "Juwayni's Criticism of Muʿtazilites Ethics", 161-173; Shihadeh, A., *Teleological Ethics*, 83-107; Jackson S., "The Alchemy of Domination?" 185-201.

<sup>102</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 25.

<sup>103</sup> See *Mughnī*, xii, 342; Van Ess, "Early Islamic Theologians", 73.

<sup>104</sup> I suggest that Abu al-Hudhayl's view on the foundation of knowing God is similar with that of R. Descartes. After cogitating on his own innate ideas, Descartes concludes that all those ideas come from him except one. He states that "Hence there only remains, therefore, the idea of God, concerning which we must consider whether it is something which cannot have proceeded from me myself. By the name God I understand a substance that is infinite, independent, all-knowing, all-powerful, and by which I myself and everything else, if anything else does exist, have been created. Now all of these characteristics are such that the more diligently I attend to them, the less do they appear capable of proceeding from me alone; hence, from what has been already said, we must conclude that God necessarily exist." R. Descartes, *Meditation*, 156. Cf. J. Van Ess, "Early Islamic Theologians", 67;

### 3.4 The Maturity of the Intellect

The main objective of immediate knowledge according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār is to prepare the ground for the person to be ready for his obligations. ʿAbd al-Jabbār calls this state *kamāl al-ʿaql* (the maturity of the intellect). When one arrives at this stage, one will be considered ready for rational obligation. ʿAbd al-Jabbār believes that man has an innate capacity to know the divine command that develops in him.”<sup>105</sup>

The maturity of the intellect according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār is the starting point for the obligation (*taklīf*). In Islam, arriving at the age of puberty (*bulūgh*) is considered one of the signs of the maturity of one’s intellect. When one reaches this age of puberty, one will be considered *bāligh* and ready for the obligation, with the exception of the insane (*majnūn*). Before that period, a person will not be considered an obligated person (*mukallaf*).

In the *Majmūʿ al-muḥiṭ*, Ibn Mattawayh reports that in order for one to become ready and capable of implementing the obligation (*taklīf*), it is incumbent upon God to establish a foundation for man to achieve this goal. This foundation according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār is based on two parts: (i) knowledge that develops the maturity of the intellect (*kamāl al-ʿaql*) and (ii) the foundation of proof (*uṣūl al-adilla*).<sup>106</sup>

The maturity of the intellect and the foundation of proof generally develop simultaneously, for example, the knowledge that man is the agent of his own act

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<sup>105</sup> Al-Fārūqī, Ismāʿīl, R., “The Self in Muʿtazilah Thought”, 366.

<sup>106</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār also considers that *uṣūl al-ʿadilla* is immediate knowledge. Cf. Ibn Mattawayh, , *Majmūʿ* (2), 6.

because that act occurs following his will (*irāda*), intention, (*qaṣd*) and action. This according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār is the maturity of the intellect and also the foundation of the proof. After all immediate knowledge occurs in a person, that person will be ready for the obligation (*taklīf*). The process of obtaining this knowledge needs no effort from human beings; it will be created by God. Therefore, the maturity of the intellect (*kamāl al-aql*) will definitely occur in every human being.

From the previous explanation, one might observe that the intellect according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār is something special. He considers that intellect (*ʿaql*) is a group of specific knowledge that, if present in the *mukallaf*, will be adequate for a *mukallaf* to reflect for acquiring proof and to perform the obligatory.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, in his definition of the intellect (*ʿaql*), ʿAbd al-Jabbār does not follow the method of Muslim philosophers (*faylasūf*) who define it as substance (*jawhar*).<sup>108</sup> He argues that it is inconceivable to consider the intellect as substance, for substance is included in the universe (*kawn*). It is possible for substance to exist without the existence of every genus that it related to.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, substance can exist with the universe and its opposite. If that is applied to the intellect and knowledge, the implication is that it is possible for the intellect to exist with knowledge and its opposite (which is ignorance). This implication, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, is inconceivable.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> *Mughnī*, xi, 375.

<sup>108</sup> *Mughnī*, xi, 375. For *faylasūf*'s discussions on the intellect, see Davidson H., *Al-Farabi, Avicenna and Averroes on Intellect*. This work discusses the link between Greek and Arabic understanding of intellect and the various transformations the concept of intellect underwent in Islamic philosophy.

<sup>109</sup> I suggest that what ʿAbd al-Jabbār means here is that the substance (*jawhar*) or essence is available even before the existence of the quiddity (*mā hiya*) of a thing.

<sup>110</sup> However, ʿAbd al-Jabbār accepts the use of substance for the intellect in the sense of the foundation of knowledge (*aṣl li al-ʿulūm*). *Mughnī*, xi, 376-7.

Therefore, when ʿAbd al-Jabbār speaks about the *kamāl al-ʿaql*, what he means is the completion of the creation of immediate knowledge by God in the *mukallaf*. Supporting his argument, ʿAbd al-Jabbār states that if this certain knowledge is available in man he will become a rational (*ʿāqil*) person even without others. And if he has other things but not this knowledge he will not become rational.<sup>111</sup> Hence, I posit that it is important to bring up this knowledge in order to understand what ʿAbd al-Jabbār means by the maturity of the intellect. This knowledge is:

First, one’s knowledge of one own situation (*ḥāl*), such as willing (*murīd*), dislike (*kāriḥ*), and believing (*muʿtaqid*). Someone who does not know his own situation must have been lacking (*muntaqis*) in knowledge. So, it is inconceivable for him to obtain any other knowledge without having knowledge of his own situation. This knowledge is considered the foundation (*aṣl*) for knowledge of the relationship between the action and the actor. For if one who does not know that a person is willing and believing, one will certainly not know that an action performed by him is based on his intention and will.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, this knowledge is considered the first foundation in immediate knowledge.<sup>113</sup>

Second, knowledge of the situation of perceptible objects (*mudrakāt*) is based on the principle of non-contradiction. It is impossible for a body to be in two different places at the same time. ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that if this knowledge is unknown to

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<sup>111</sup> *Mughnī*, xi, 376.

<sup>112</sup> *Mughnī*, xi, 382.

<sup>113</sup> This type of knowledge is similar with a foundation of knowledge meditate by Descartes, René in his philosophy *cogito ergo sum*, (I think therefore I exist). Cf. Descartes, R., *Meditation on First Philosophy*, 136.

the *mukallaf* it is implausible for him to confirm (*ithbāi*) the existence of accidents (*a'rād*) and their temporality. Similarly, without this knowledge the temporality of the bodies and the relationship between the action and the agent will not be possible. Knowledge of the situation of perceptible objects is considered the foundation (*aṣl*) for all knowledge. As a result, a rational person will know that it is impossible for a body to become eternal (*qadīm*) and temporal (*muḥdath*) at the same time; or a thing (*shay'*) exists and does not exist at the same time.<sup>114</sup>

Also, understanding of the reality of perceptible objects is important, primarily to reject the view of those who believe in the bodily existence of God (*mujassima*). On this, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that this knowledge is needed to prove that the body and the accident are created. Hence, we cannot say that God has a body since this implies that God is created (*muḥdath*). This implication is impossible since God is an eternal being.

Third is knowledge of ethical principles. Examples of this knowledge are the evilness of wrongdoing (*zulm*), ungratefulness (*kufr al-niʿma*) and lying that has no benefit in it and not to avoid danger, the goodness of charity (*iḥsān*), and courteousness (*tafaḍḍul*).<sup>115</sup> One also knows certain obligations such as thanking a benefactor (*shukr al-munʿim*), rejecting harm from oneself (*dafʿ al-ḍarār ʿan al-nafs*), returning trust (*wadʿa*) when asked, and to be just (*inṣāf*). Similarly, one also knows the goodness of censuring (*dhamm*) evil (*al-qabīḥ*) when there is no obstacle (*manʿ*) and

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<sup>114</sup> *Mughni*, ix, 384.

<sup>115</sup> Leaman, “ʿAbd al-Jabbār and the Concept of Uselessness”, 129.

the goodness of censuring failure to perform (*ikhhlāl*) the obligation when the obstacle is absent (*irtifāʿ*).<sup>116</sup>

This basic ethical knowledge according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār must be obtained by the *mukallaf*; otherwise, fear (*khawf*) of not doing reflection (*naẓar*) will not appear. For this fear is the basis that leads human beings to reflect. Hence, the beginning of obligation (*taklīf*) is based on fear. Also, knowledge of the justice (ʿ*adl*) of God is impossible without knowledge of ethical judgment. For when the difference between good and evil is unclear, there is no ground to purify (*yunazzah*) God from evilness (*muqabbahāt*) and to attach to Him something good (*muhsanāt*). Therefore, knowledge of basic ethical judgment is one of the essential foundations for all acquired knowledge either from the intellect or revelation.<sup>117</sup>

Fourth, the knowledge of some motives (*dawāʾi*). Knowledge of divine assistances (*alṭāf*) is invalid without it. When the basic principles of harm (*ḍarār*) and benefit (*naʿf*) such as pure harm (*ḍarar al-mahḍ*) must be avoided and pure benefit (*naʿf al-mahḍ*) must be performed, are unknown, it is inappropriate for a person to be obligated.<sup>118</sup> However, motive for ʿAbd al-Jabbār is not a necessary condition of the act. The acts of a sleeper and of an unaware person (*sāhi*), for instance, occur without a motive. Thus, ʿAbd al-Jabbār uses the notion of motive and intention (*qaṣd*) only to demonstrate that human beings are the agents of the acts they produce. On this, he

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<sup>116</sup> Hourani, "The Rationalist Ethics of ʿAbd al-Jabbār," 107-13.

<sup>117</sup> *Mughnī*, xi, 384.

<sup>118</sup> *Mughnī*, xi, 384-5.

argues that man's acts are his own since they occur in accordance with his own motives and intention.<sup>119</sup>

After one has already obtained all this knowledge, one achieves the maturity of intellect. At this level, one is ready and capable of receiving and implementing the obligation. For ʿAbd al-Jabbār, this maturity of the intellect is the starting point when a person becomes obligated. However, there is another important requirement for one to become an actual obligated person; this requirement is fear (*khawf*). This fear generally will appear in human beings during the process of obtaining the maturity of the intellect. But if this fear does not occur during that process, God would certainly create this fear at the time of maturity by sending a divine idea (*khāṭir*) to the human mind either directly or through the mediation of the angel. Hence, everyone who has obtained maturity of his intellect will immediately experience the fear of not doing reflection.<sup>120</sup>

Apparently, based on the previous explanation, ʿAbd al-Jabbār believes that there is no gap between the maturity of the intellect and the obligation (*taklīf*). Since the fear will appear at the latest during the maturity of the intellect, after one achieves the maturity of the intellect, one immediately becomes an obligated person (*mukallaf*). ʿAbd al-Jabbār believes that “the maturity of the intellect” is the sole factor that makes human beings become obligated.

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<sup>119</sup> Madelung, “The Late *Muʿtazila*”, 245-6. For our discussion on the concept of motive, see below, 146.

<sup>120</sup> Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmʿ* (i) 26-8. For our discussion on fear, see below, 156.

Immediate knowledge is an important foundation for one to become capable of acquiring knowledge. From immediate knowledge, one is able to obtain (i) the maturity of the intellect (by obtaining it, one has the intellectual ability to perform the task of acquiring knowledge), (ii) the foundation of proof (*uṣūl al-adilla*) (this foundation is a set of principles for one to base his argument on it in his effort to acquire knowledge), and (iii) the sense of fear (this fear will become a motivation for one to reflect in order to acquire knowledge). With all these in mind, °Abd al-Jabbār systematizes the process of acquiring knowledge. So, when one achieves one’s intellectual maturity, one must start to acquire certain knowledge that becomes obligatory upon him.

### 3.5. Acquired Knowledge

The main difference between acquired and immediate knowledge is that in the latter, one plays a minimum role toward it, while in the former one has more roles in the process of obtaining it. In acquired knowledge, tranquillity of the soul is no longer provided by God directly to human beings such as in the case of immediate knowledge. Instead, it is compulsory (*wājib*) for every obligated person (*mukallaf*) to acquire this knowledge. Therefore, avoiding or neglecting acquiring knowledge, according to °Abd al-Jabbār, is considered sinful and will be punished.<sup>121</sup>

°Abd al-Jabbār defines acquired knowledge as “knowledge that occurs after the maturity of the intellect through reflection (*naẓar*).”<sup>122</sup> Hence, every type of

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<sup>121</sup> Mānkdim, *Sharḥ*, 125.

<sup>122</sup> Based on Ibn Mattawayh’s report, see Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ* ii, 260. cf. Dughaym, S., *Mausūʿa Mustalahāt*, 445.

knowledge that needs thinking and reflection is acquired knowledge.<sup>123</sup> Unlike immediate knowledge, which is simple and created directly by God in the human soul, acquired knowledge is more complex and requires more effort and responsibilities from human beings. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, meanwhile, reports another definition of acquired knowledge from ʿAbd al-Jabbār. He maintains that it is the knowledge that is possible for a knower to deny from himself with doubt (*shubha*) on its way when it is isolated (*idhā infarada*). The inclusion of “*idhā infarada*” excludes acquired knowledge that is joined by immediate knowledge. It plays a similar role in the definition of immediate knowledge as we discussed earlier.<sup>124</sup>

However, one might ask regarding this definition that if the means (*tarīq*) to acquired knowledge is immediate (*ʿilm ḍarūrī*), how is it possible for a knower to deny it from himself with doubt (*shubha*), since immediate knowledge is indubitable.<sup>125</sup> Responding to this question, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī answers that it is possible to include doubt about the means of acquired knowledge that is based on immediate knowledge. He explains that doubt about that knowledge is possible when the one who asks for proof (*mustadill*) assumes (*yaẓunnu*) that the arrangement of knowledge (*tartīb al-ʿulūm*) is invalid. When that is the case, he denies the acquired knowledge from himself or avoids doing it.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>123</sup> ʿUthmān, *Naẓariyya al-taklīf*, 62.

<sup>124</sup> Acquired knowledge according to Ibn al-Malāḥimī also defined as “knowledge that is possible for a knower to take himself out from the state of knowing of his known (*maʿlūmih*) on certain aspects; or “knowledge from our action”. Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 21.

<sup>125</sup> In one of his works ʿAbd al-Jabbār defines immediate knowledge as “knowledge that is not possible for the knower to deny it from his soul with doubt (*shakk*) or vagueness (*shubha*), if it is isolated (*idhā infarada*).” Cf. Mānkdim, *Sharḥ*, 48; Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 20. See above 104.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 21-2.

Without invalidating his predecessors' definitions of acquired knowledge, Ibn al-Malāḥimī defines it as “knowledge that based on the inference of its knower.” He explains that his definition includes knowledge from reflection (*naẓar*) and remembering reflection (*tadhakkur al-naẓar*). For without one's previous reflection and his memory of it, he will not obtain this knowledge.<sup>127</sup>

In the *Mughnī* chapter 12, ʿAbd al-Jabbār discussed the means (*turuq*) of knowledge. He maintains that perception (*idrāk*) is the means for immediate knowledge and (*naẓar*) reflection that for acquired knowledge. From the discussion, he considers that all knowledge obtained through reflection is acquired knowledge.<sup>128</sup> Ibn Mattawayh explains ʿAbd al-Jabbār's acquired knowledge in a systematic way, stating that:

Whenever the *mukallaf* (obligated person) obtains the maturity of intellect and knows the foundations of proof (*uṣūl al-adilla*), it is obligatory on him to acquire knowledge. There are three types of acquired knowledge: firstly, knowledge of the actions that were obligated (*kullifa*), their attributes (*ṣifātihā*) and the ways (*wujūh*) in which actions are supposed to occur; secondly, knowledge of the legislator [God] (*mukallif*), His attributes and His wisdom (*ḥikmatihī*); and thirdly, knowledge of what the *mukallaf* deserves from benefit (*manāfiʿ*) and harm (*muḍār*).<sup>129</sup>

From this passage, one can observe the importance of acquired knowledge in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's theology, since most of the theological doctrines are included there in. Yet, due to the limitations of this study, I will focus on what is relevant to the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the next section and the rest of this chapter, I will

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<sup>127</sup> “*Fa huwa ʿilm yaqif ʿalā istidlāl al-ʿālim bih*”. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 22.

<sup>128</sup> *Mughnī*, vii, 67-8.

<sup>129</sup> Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ*, (i), 18; (ii) 7.

examine the knowledge of action as the first acquired knowledge.<sup>130</sup> The aim is to demonstrate the importance of this knowledge as a foundation for ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s argument on knowing God. For when one examines ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theological argument on knowing God, one will realize that knowledge of action is the foundation for most of his arguments. Thus, this knowledge is considered a key principle in confirming the existence of God, His attributes, and His justice. Hence, without a similar understanding of the knowledge of action, one will not be able to apply the main proof in the *kalām* argument, which is the analogy between the seen world (*al-shāhid*) and the unobservable (*al-ghāʾib*).

When ʿAbd al-Jabbār classifies his acquired knowledge starting from the rules of action (*aḥkām al-afʿāl*), followed by knowing God and knowing the reward and punishment, he does it systematically. ʿAbd al-Jabbār believes that one needs to acquire the knowledge of action before proving the existence of God. One also needs to know God, the legislator (*mukallif*), before knowing what one deserves from his action from reward and punishment. For the knowledge of reward and punishment will be meaningless without knowledge of the giver and the punisher.<sup>131</sup>

Explaining this matter, Ibn Mattawayh considers that after one knows the rules of action one needs to know the reward for the obedience of the command and the punishment for breaking the rules. However, before that one needs to know the legislator (*mukallif*) who produces the rules, and who also provides reward and

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<sup>130</sup> Then in the next chapter I will examine his argument on the obligation of knowing God and finally, in the last chapter, I will investigate the application of his proof about knowing God.

<sup>131</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār also argues that the knowledge of the news giver (*mukhbir*) is a foundation for *al-sharʿiyyāt*, which means one must know God before accepting His revelation. Cf. Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ*, 7.

punishment based on one's obedience toward His laws. Without knowledge of this legislator, reward and punishment will be baseless.<sup>132</sup>

Based on the previous explanation, one might observe that ʿAbd al-Jabbār's epistemology presented here is focusing on human salvation. His main objective is to know what human beings need to know in order to live a good life in this world and the hereafter. ʿAbd al-Jabbār considers that knowledge of the reward and punishment is a divine favor (*luḥf*) for humans to perform good acts and to avoid evil ones. However, this knowledge will not be practically reliable without the knowledge of the one who obligates the obligation; for He is also the one who will provide the reward and punishment. Hence, here ʿAbd al-Jabbār's main concern is how one can obtain salvation in this world and the hereafter. Knowing God in this sense is not the main objective of knowledge by itself, but it is a way (*ṭarīq*) for human salvation.

### 3.5.1. Knowledge of Action

Next, I will indicate that knowledge of action (*aḥḥāl*) is the key in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's theological argument that leads to many differences between his view and other theologians' views. While the differences in immediate knowledge lead to a different concept of obligation, the differences in acquired knowledge will lead to differences in the concept of knowing God.

In the *Mukhtaṣar*, ʿAbd al-Jabbār defines action (*fiʿl*) as “what produced (*yuhḍath*) from an able (*qādir*) agent.” When we know that bodies (*aḥsām*) are produced by

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<sup>132</sup> Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ*, (2), 7.

God, we say that it is His action. Therefore, this world is God's acts since it was created by Him. Also, we say that the writing is produced by a writer, so, writing is his action. Then one might ask, how can we differentiate between our action and God's action, or how can we differentiate between the actions among people? On this, °Abd al-Jabbār writes:

Say to him that what occurred is based on men's intention, will and desire. They are based on their ability and knowledge, also on their ignorance and forgetfulness. Actions such as writing, shaping (*ṣiyāgha*), walking and standing are all their actions. What is beyond that or what occurs not based on their states (*aḥwālihim*) then it is from the acts of God.<sup>133</sup>

This passage indicates that the foundation of °Abd al-Jabbār's arguments is based on one's knowledge of the real agent of the acts. By knowing this, one can differentiate God's acts from human acts. Knowledge of action, as I will indicate, plays a major role in developing °Abd al-Jabbār's concept of knowing God. Without this knowledge, most of his arguments in proving the existence of God will be baseless. °Abd al-Jabbār's proof of the existence of God, for instance, is based on the comparison between God's acts and humans' acts. And this comparison could not take place if the real agent of the act is unclear.<sup>134</sup>

According to °Abd al-Jabbār, action in general is divided into three main divisions: (i) creation (*ikhtirāʿ*), such as creating a body (*jism*) from nothing; (ii) direct action (*mubāshir*), the act that is directly affected by human act; and (iii) indirect action

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<sup>133</sup> *Mukhtaṣar*, 233.

<sup>134</sup> On the application of this proof, see chapter five below, 218.

(*ghair mubāshir*), which occurs through a secondary effect from human act. The indirect act is also called the generated act (*af'āl al-mutawallidāt*).<sup>135</sup>

Both creation and direct acts are included in the category that called *mubtada'*, literally “begun,” because the acting subject begins with doing it without having to do something else. The difference between both is based on the place (*maḥall*) where the act is produced and its relationship with the substrate in which the capacity (*qudra*) inheres. Creation according to °Abd al-Jabbār is an act that is produced not in a place (*maḥall*); meanwhile, man’s direct act is an act that is performed by an agent in its place, which is a body (*jism*).<sup>136</sup> Hence, the difference between God’s acts and human’s acts is in the ‘place.’ God needs no place to act while human beings need a place to do so.

°Abd al-Jabbār defines a generated act as an accident that is not directly brought into existence by the able subject but by the means of another act, another accident, which functions as a secondary cause (*sabab*).<sup>137</sup> Pain is one of the examples. We cannot produce pain in ourselves or in others without first inflicting an injury. We have to apply pressure (*ʿitimād*) to a part of the body in such a way that an injury results. This in turn “generates” the pain. Generated acts must always be accidents. Bodies cannot be produced by generating (*tawlīd*), only by creation (*ikhtirāʿ*), as we mentioned earlier. In this case, he explains that the able subject produces an accident,

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<sup>135</sup> Another type of distinction between human actions is into i) voluntarily (*ikhtiyārī*) and ii) involuntarily (*iḍtirārī*). Voluntary act is an action that intended by human with knowledge and will (*irāda*). It is the foundation of obligation, such as prayer and fasting. Meanwhile the involuntary action occurred by itself without the will of the person on it, such as the movement of blood in our body. Cf. Frank, *Metaphysics of Created Being*, 29.

<sup>136</sup> *Mughnī*, ix, 124; Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 206.

<sup>137</sup> Bishr al-Muʿtamir (d. 210/753) the founder of Baghdad school of the Muʿtazilites is considered the first from the *mutakallimūn* who spoke about generation and its particularity. Then it was followed by the majority the Muʿtazilites.

which again generates (*wallad*) another accident; this later accident is called *mutawallid*.<sup>138</sup>

Based on the abovementioned explanations, creation is exclusively for God because only a subject who is able by His essence (*qādir bi dhātih*) is capable of creating bodies. Hence, it is beyond the ability of human beings, because human beings and other living beings in this world have to use always the substrate of their ability in acting. Therefore, human beings and other able subjects with capacity (*qādir bi al-qudra*) cannot create bodies.<sup>139</sup>

However, °Abd al-Jabbār, in agreement with the majority of Mu°tazilites,<sup>140</sup> maintains that human beings are the real agent of their direct and generated acts.<sup>141</sup> He argues that our action occurs based on our intention (*qaṣd*) and motives (*dawa°i*); also, our action is denied based on our dislike (*karāhtunā*).<sup>142</sup> Therefore, we must be the agent of our actions.<sup>143</sup> Explaining human actions, °Abd al-Jabbār states that there are four genera of acts that we can do only directly (*°alā ṭarīq al-mubāshara*), and the use of secondary causes is not possible. They are will (*irāda*), dislike (*karāha*), assumption (*ẓann*), and reflection (*naẓar*). As for the generated acts, there are three

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<sup>138</sup> *Mughnī*, ix, 11-4; Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 206. °Abd al-Jabbār's definitions of direct and indirect acts were accepted by Ibn al-Malāḥimī. He states that direct acts according to the *mutakallimūn* are what originate by man from the beginning in the place of capacity (*maḥall al-qudra*), while generated acts are what generate from direct acts'. cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Fā'iq*, 141

<sup>139</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 223.

<sup>140</sup> Mu°ammar in this regard considers that man has no act except 'will' (*irāda*). See, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Fā'iq*, 141.

<sup>141</sup> *Mughnī*, xi, 370; cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Fā'iq*, 141.

<sup>142</sup> In this regard he disagrees with the Ash°arites who state that God is the only real agent (*khāliq*) of all actions including humans' actions. They believe that God creates the action while man acquires (*kasab*) it. For the Ash°arites' arguments on this issue, see al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 286; al-Rāzī, *Arba°in*, 122-54; D. Gimaret, *Theories de l'acte humain*, 92; Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 15-44.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 223.

genera of acts that can be done only indirectly, by making use of secondary causes; these are sounds (*aṣwāf*), pain (*alam*), and composition (*ta'līf*).<sup>144</sup>

The other acts from the genera of knowledge (*ʿulūm*), pressure (*ʿitimād*), and modes of being (*akwān*) can be produced either directly or by using secondary causes. Therefore, in relation to knowledge, ʿAbd al-Jabbār maintains that it is a generated act from reflection. A *mukallaf* produces only the first action; he reflects; knowledge is no more than a result from his direct action, which is reflection. But he is equally responsible for this result. He is responsible if this knowledge is wrong; God may punish, for instance, somebody who thinks that God consists of three persons.<sup>145</sup>

He explains that we can know the relationship between the generated act and the acting subject because of its similarity with a direct act that occurs based on our states (*aḥwāl*), motives (*dawāʾi*) intention (*qaṣd*), and will (*irāda*). Therefore, the subject who produces the cause is also the producer of the effect. When either a direct or generated act occurs in this way, we can deduce that it is the act of the subject concerned. Hence, in terms of responsibility there is no difference between a direct act and a generated act.<sup>146</sup>

Based on the previous explanations, one might observe that ʿAbd al-Jabbār, following Abū ʿAlī and Abū Hāshim, considers that our knowledge that we are the agent of our acts is acquired. This knowledge is acquired after we prove that the act occurs based on our intention and motive. However, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī

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<sup>144</sup> *Mughnī*, ix, 124; Peter, *God's Created Speech*, 206.

<sup>145</sup> Van Ess, "The Existence of God", 68.

<sup>146</sup> *Mughnī*, iv, 37-63; Peter, *God's Created Speech*, 207.

disagrees with them on this issue. He maintains that this knowledge is immediately known. Ibn al-Malāḥimī in this regard prefers Abū al-Ḥusayn's view. Ibn al-Malāḥimī argues that man's knowledge that he is the real agent of his act is immediate knowledge because he knows the ethical value of the act immediately. He explains that knowledge of the goodness or the evilness of the act is antecedent (*farʿ*) to knowledge that man is the agent of the act, which is precedent (*asl*). Therefore, it is inconceivable that one needs to acquire the knowledge of precedent while one knows the antecedent immediately.<sup>147</sup>

Another issue that becomes a polemic between ʿAbd al-Jabbār and the Ḥusayniyya is the problem of motive (*daʿi*). Despite their agreement that motive is important in the application of the act, they disagree on a detailed explanation of motive. Their disagreement on the concept of motive has a significant effect on their argument of knowing God. Therefore, it is beneficial to discuss the background of this concept in the Muʿtazilites before we examine the disagreement between ʿAbd al-Jabbār and Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī on this issue.

### 3.5.2. Motives

According to Wolfson, the theory of motives was introduced in the Muʿtazilites by Ibrāhīm b. Sayyār al-Nazzām (d. 231/845).<sup>148</sup> He uses it in reference to the existence of two motivational forces (*khāṭirāni*) within man himself. In this regard, he reports

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<sup>147</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Fāʾiq*, 131. I suggest that, in his argument Ibn al-Malāḥimī applies a similar principle to ʿAbd al-Jabbār's sub-section of indirect knowledge.

<sup>148</sup> Wolfson, *Philosophy of kalām*, 628. Gimaret considers that the first Muʿtazilite to apply this theory was al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868). However, I believe that Wolfson is correct since al-Nazzām died almost 20 years earlier than al-Jāḥiẓ. Cf. *Théorie de l'acte*, 34; Madelung, "Late Mutazila", 245.

“there must be *khāṭirāni* of which one bids advancing (*al-iqdām*) and the other bids desisting (*al-kaff*), so that one’s choice between them maybe a genuine choice.”<sup>149</sup>

This theory, however, was rejected by the Ash‘arites in general. Abū al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) in his *Uṣūl al-Dīn* considers that the theory of *khāṭir* has a foreign origin and was borrowed by al-Nazzām from the Barāhima.<sup>150</sup> Al-Baghdādī clarifies that the Barāhima acknowledge the unity of the Creator but reject the messengers (*rusul*) sent by Him. They maintain that the heart of no human is devoid of *khāṭirāni*. One of the *khāṭirāni* is from God, and the other is from *shayṭān* (devil). Then he argues that al-Nazzām has introduced certain changes in this theory of *khāṭirāni*, among them is the view that both the *khāṭir* of obedience and disobedience were created by God in the heart of man.<sup>151</sup>

Among the Mu‘tazilites, the theory of *khāṭirāni* met with various reactions. Abū al-Hudhayl and some other Mu‘tazilites adopted it, but they made the *khāṭir* of disobedience come from *shayṭān*. Others, like Bishr b. al-Mu‘tamir, however, rejected them altogether. Bishr argues that he is free to choose his action, and as he chooses it, is in no need of the *khāṭirāni*. In addition, he argues that there is no tradition (*ḥadīth*) mentions that *shayṭān* had a *khāṭir*.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Wolfson, *Philosophy of kalām*, 629. Al-Nazzām also maintained that man has no power of free choice over that for which he has no *khāṭirāni* in his heart. Cf. al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, 239 & 427.

<sup>150</sup> The doctrine most persistently attributed to the Barāhima is a denial of Prophecy. For a brief information on this group see, Raḥmān, F., “Barāhima” in *EL*<sup>2</sup>, i, 1031.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 26-7.

<sup>152</sup> Al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, 428-429. Cf. Wolfson, *Philosophy of kalām*, 634.

°Abd al-Jabbār accepts the theory of *khāṭir* in general, yet the application of *khāṭir* in his theology is different from that of al-Nazzām.<sup>153</sup> The *khāṭir* according to al-Nazzām is a motive that encourages a person to make a decision regarding his act and is compulsory for every human act.<sup>154</sup> However, °Abd al-Jabbār uses the notion of motives in order to demonstrate that man’s acts are produced by himself. Man’s acts are his own since they can be seen to occur in accordance with his own motive (*dāʿi*) and intention (*qaṣd*). However, neither is a necessary condition of the act. °Abd al-Jabbār in this regard disagrees with al-Nazzām. He does not consider that a motive is a requirement for action; for he argues that there are acts that do not have a motive, such as the act of the unaware (*sāhi*) and the sleeper (*nāʿim*) who performs some acts like moving his limbs and breathing without a motive.<sup>155</sup>

Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, however, opposes °Abd al-Jabbār’s view when he considers that a motive is necessary for the act to occur. Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī argument for this, as presented by Ibn al-Malāḥimī, was that the capable agent (*qādir*) is equally capable of contraries of the act. Since he cannot produce them together, something additional is necessary for one of them to occur. This additional something is the motive for one of them or its preponderance (*tarajjuh*) over the motive for the other.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>153</sup> For further discussion on Nazzām’s theory of *al-khāṭir* see Wolfson, *Philosophy of kalām*, 628-44. Frank defines *al-khāṭir* as “the occurrences to the mind the potentiality of the situation as desirable or repugnant in terms of specific acts initiated from without, either by God or by Satan. See Frank, *Metaphysics of Created Being*, 31.

<sup>154</sup> Among the later Muʿtazilites, al-Nazzām’s theory has been adopted by Ibn al-Malāḥimī (d.536/1141), when he considers that motive is a necessity in every act. Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*; cf. al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 427; Wolfson, *Philosophy of kalām*, 628

<sup>155</sup> *Mughnī*, vi (i), 196; cf. Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 23-9; Madelung, *Late Muʿtazila*, 245-8.

<sup>156</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 510. Abū al-Ḥusayn’s arguments are also summarised by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in *al-Maṭālib al-ʿĀliya*, 255-256, cf. Madelung, “Late Muʿtazila”, 249-50.

He also rejects ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s examples of the act of a sleeping person (*nāʿim*) or an unconscious (*sāhi*) to prove that motive is unnecessary. He argues that the act of a sleeper is not without motive even though he may forget it afterwards. This is indicated by the fact that the sleeper speaks an appropriate response to his dream experience. His presumption that his dream is real is the motive for his response. Therefore, when he wakes up and someone tells him, “You said something [in your sleep], he will say, “That is because I saw something in my dream.” Likewise, the sleeper turns from one side to the other because of the pain resulting from prolonged resting on the same side, and he breathes because otherwise he would die. If he is overcome by heavy sleep, he may indeed not recognize his pain, so that it remains until his awakening. All this proves that whatever he does in his sleep, he does because of his knowledge of his need for it rather than accidentally and without motive.<sup>157</sup>

Based on Abū al-Ḥusayn’s view of motives, al-Rāzī proclaimed that he has proved the definitive victory of Ashʿarite determinism over the Muʿtazilite doctrine of human free will.<sup>158</sup> Al-Rāzī’s argument, as Madelung points out, is most likely based on Avicenna’s anti-Muʿtazilite assertion that the human-choosing agent, in contrast to God, is choosing in the sense of being compelled (*al-mukhtār minnā mukhtār fī ḥukm muḍtarr*), since every choice of man requires an internal or external motive to move it from potentiality to actuality. Therefore, al-Rāzī argues that Abū al-Ḥusayn’s

<sup>157</sup> For more arguments on this issue, see Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 510-14.

<sup>158</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, iii, 55-60; Madelung, “Late Muʿtazila”, 245; Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 26-7.

adoption of the position of the philosophers that act necessarily depend on their motives, which according to al-Rāzī, inevitably leads to determinism.<sup>159</sup>

Gimaret, in his work *Theories de l'acte humain*, endorses al-Rāzī's claim of victory.<sup>160</sup> However, a thorough investigation by Madelung indicates that al-Rāzī's argument on this issue made him fall into the philosopher's trap, when he ended up describing God as the ultimate necessitating cause under the guise of a creator. This view confirmed the philosophers' position that God is the ultimate, uncaused cause of all causes and effects.<sup>161</sup> Abū al-Ḥusayn, however, manages to escape this trap when he maintains that the creator of this world is a freely choosing agent (*fā'il mukhtar*).<sup>162</sup> °Abd al-Jabbār's theory of action, however, is not included in al-Rāzī's determinism since he does not consider that a motive is a condition of an act. So °Abd al-Jabbār's theory is intact with al-Rāzī's criticism of Abū al-Ḥusayn's view. However, °Abd al-Jabbār's theory of action has been rejected by al-Juwaynī.<sup>163</sup>

One might observe that the aim of the discussion of knowledge of action at this level is to identify the real agent of the acts. By knowing the real agent of certain acts, one is able to differentiate human's acts from God's acts. This knowledge is vital for application of the analogical argument to prove the existence of God, His unity, and His attributes. However, knowledge of the real agent is not enough to prove the divine justice since knowledge also needs additional attributes (*ṣifat al-zā'ida*) of the

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<sup>159</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, iii, 55-60.

<sup>160</sup> Gimaret, *Theories de l'acte humain*, 34.

<sup>161</sup> Madelung, "Late Mu'tazila", 257

<sup>162</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 170.

<sup>163</sup> For al-Juwaynī's arguments, see his *Shāmil*, 120; Hourani, "Juwaynī's Criticism", 161-73; Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 83-107.

acts. This additional attribute according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār is the ethical value of the act. Therefore, to prove the justice of God, ʿAbd al-Jabbār needs to develop his knowledge of action to the next level by adding the ethics of actions.

### 3.5.3 The Ethics of Action

ʿAbd al-Jabbār divides the ethical value of action into three main groups: (i) a good act, (ii) an evil act, and (iii) a permissible act. The main objective of knowing the ethic of actions according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, is to enable the *mukallaf* to identify which action he needs to perform or to avoid.<sup>164</sup> Hence, he considers that the obligation (*taklīf*) includes both action (*fʿl*) and the omission of action (*lā yafʿal*). On this issue, Ibn Mattawayh explains:

All actions are similar in deserving praise and reward when they are performed for certain reasons. Nevertheless, they differ with respect to omission. Someone who omits certain actions [for the performance of which one deserves a reward by performing it], will be punished. Yet, there are certain actions for the omission of which no punishment is deserved. The first type of action is obligatory (*wājib*) and the second is recommended (*nadb*). As for the obligation through the omission of action, they are equal in deserving reward if they were omitted for certain reasons. Yet, the significant difference arises when one deserves punishment for performing one action but not another. Hence, the former action is bad (*qabīḥ*),<sup>165</sup> while the latter is better (*awlā*) avoided.<sup>166</sup>

ʿAbd al-Jabbār maintains that one can know the ethical value of the act through the intellect alone. The main criterion that determines which action is obligatory and which is not is based on praise (*madḥ*) and censure (*dhamm*). Therefore, when one

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<sup>164</sup> *Mughnī*, xi, 502.

<sup>165</sup> Abū al-Ḥusayn reports that, according to Abū Abdallāh al-Baṣrī, the people of Iraq (*ahl al-ʿIrāq*) divide *qabīḥ* into forbidden (*muḥarram*) and detested (*makrūh*). In all probability, what he means by *ahl al-Iraq* are the followers of Abū Ḥanīfa. Cf. Abū al-Ḥusayn, *Muʿtamad*, 364.

<sup>166</sup> Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ* (1), 13.

performs an act that deserves praise, it is good, and if it deserves censure, it is bad. As for the former, one is obligated to perform it and for the latter to leave it.<sup>167</sup>

However, not all action according to °Abd al-Jabbār is included in that judgment. There are two types of action that are excluded from the obligation. The first type is based on the condition of the actor, and the second is based on the nature of the action. As for the first type, it is the action that is performed by someone who is absent-minded (*sāhī*) or he has been forced to do so.<sup>168</sup> Although a person performs a blameworthy act, since he was absent-minded or has been forced to do it, he cannot be blamed for that action. Whereas the second type is the permitted act (*mubāh*) where one deserves neither praise nor blame by performing it. Both of these actions are excluded from obligation.<sup>169</sup>

#### 3.5.4. God's Acts and Ethics

°Abd al-Jabbār is in agreement with his Mu°tazilite predecessors, and applies the ethics of action to human beings and to God. °Abd al-Jabbār argues that the agent in the seen world (*shāhid*) is responsible when doing his act with intention (*qaṣd*) and motive (*dawā'ī*) and he has not been forced by anyone. Therefore, °Abd al-Jabbār argues that since God does His act based on His will and He does not sleep, His act is also included in the judgment of ethical value. °Abd al-Jabbār believes that the rules of action are the same irrespective of whether the agent is seen or unseen (*ghā'ib*).

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<sup>167</sup> Fakhry, *Ethical Theories*, 33-4.

<sup>168</sup> Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī considers that there are four types of people that exempted from *taklif*, they are: an absent minded (*sāhī*), a sleeper, an insane and a child, cf. Abū al-Ḥusayn, *al-Mu°tamad*, 36<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>169</sup> Ibn Mattawayah, *Majmū°* (i), 13.

Hence, the knowledge of the ethics of action will become the foundation to determine the value of both humans' and God's acts.<sup>170</sup>

The Ash'arites, however, disagree with 'Abd al-Jabbār's inclusion of God's acts in ethical judgment. They believe that all God's acts are good irrespective of what the reason considers. If God punishes the believer and rewards the unbeliever, His acts are still good. Their main argument is that God is the owner of the universe; therefore, He is free to do anything He wants. Also, all of us are His creation, so how can a creation possibly be capable of evaluating its creator?<sup>171</sup> The Ash'arites also argue that if the acts of God are included under the rules of action, this will imply the restriction of His acts by human beings. This implication is unacceptable since it indicates the limitation of the power of God.<sup>172</sup>

However, in defending his view, 'Abd al-Jabbār argues that to include the acts of God under the rules of action does not mean to impose the restriction on the acts of God. Instead, this rule is obtained from God's other attributes such as wise (*ḥakīm*), just (*ʿādil*), and perfect (*kāmil*). Therefore, when we say God will not do wrongdoing (*ẓulm*) such as put a righteous person in hell, that was not because we say so but because that was not compatible with His attributes of just and perfect.

Also, 'Abd al-Jabbar maintains that this does not imply the limitation of the power of God. 'Abd al-Jabbār argues that God is able to put the righteous person in hell, but He will not do so because that is unjust and incompatible with His attributes of

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<sup>170</sup> Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 96-107.

<sup>171</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 25.

<sup>172</sup> See al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, iii, 289; Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 96.

perfection (*kamāl*) and merciful (*rahīm*). The analogy of this matter is a father who gave a present to his son who behaves properly. This father is capable of hitting his son, but the father does not do so because that action is unjust as well as unwise.

From previous discussions, we can observe the importance of knowledge of action in °Abd al-Jabbār's argument on knowing God. Hence, no wonder why °Abd al-Jabbār considers it the first knowledge that needs to be acquired by every obligated person (*mukallaf*). Without knowledge of action, the other types of acquired knowledge will be baseless. I will indicate the application of the knowledge of action in °Abd al-Jabbār's argument in chapter five. But first, in the next chapter, I will examine the role of immediate knowledge in developing °Abd al-Jabbār's ground for knowing God.

Accordingly, in the process of acquiring knowledge one needs proof. °Abd al-Jabbār divides the proof for the action into (i) that based on revelation (*shar<sup>c</sup>*) and (ii) that based on reason (*°aql*). He maintains that one can only know God's existence through reason and not via revelation. For revelation is the speech (*kalām*) of God and is considered antecedent from His essence (*dhātih*). The only way to know God according to °Abd al-Jabbār is through reason (*°aql*).<sup>173</sup> However, to know what one deserves from reward and punishment in the hereafter, one needs revelation. In another example, °Abd al-Jabbār mentions that one can know the obligation of certain acts such as thanking the benefactor (*shukr al-mun<sup>c</sup>im*) through reason. Yet, to know a correct way of how to thank God, the benefactor, one needs a guide from

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<sup>173</sup> Here we could observe the role of the second subdivision of immediate knowledge, which is what resemble a way to it, in his theology. See above, 124.

revelation. It must be based on certain types of worship that are revealed through the prophets.<sup>174</sup>

## Conclusion

The *mutakallimun* in general agree that there are two types of human knowledge, immediate (*ḍarūrī*) and acquired (*iktisābī*) knowledge. They agree that immediate knowledge is created by God in a human's soul while acquired knowledge must be obtained. However, when explaining this knowledge in detail, disagreements appear. The main difference between acquired knowledge and immediate knowledge is that the former is obligatory to obtain it and needs some effort from the obligated person (*mukallaf*), whereas the latter occurs directly in humans with little or no effort from the *mukallaf*. Therefore, immediate knowledge is not considered part of the obligation. Perception (*idrāk*) according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār is the means (*tarīq*) for immediate knowledge, and reflection is the means for acquired knowledge.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār's definition of immediate knowledge has been criticized by his student, Mānkḍīm. However, Ibn al-Malāḥimī defends ʿAbd al-Jabbār's definition. The disagreement among his successors has led to some confusion amid modern scholars. Therefore, there are diverse views of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's type of immediate knowledge. The goal of immediate knowledge according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār is to achieve the maturity of the intellect (*kamāl al-ʿaql*), which is the first step for one to become an obligated person (*mukallaf*).

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<sup>174</sup> See Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 70.

When one becomes an obligated person, one must acquire certain types of knowledge. °Abd al-Jabbār maintains that the only way of acquiring knowledge is through reflection. He maintains that every obligated person must know God. However, since the proof of knowing God is based on the concept of actions, °Abd al-Jabbār considers that one must acquire knowledge of the action before the existence of God can be proved. The key argument in proving the existence of God and His attributes is based on the concept of action.

°Abd al-Jabbār's view of immediate knowledge differs from that of the Ash°arites on several points. One is the basic ethical principles. °Abd al-Jabbār considers that they are included in immediate knowledge, but the Ash°arites disagree with him; instead, they consider the basic ethical principles are acquired knowledge. This disagreement leads to a significant result in the theology of both the Ash°arites and the Mu°tazilites.

In the discussion of the concept of action in acquired knowledge, there is a disagreement between °Abd al-Jabbār and his student Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. The latter considers that motive is necessary in every act, but the former disagrees with this view. Due to this disagreement, both need to follow different arguments in their proof of knowing God. I will investigate this problem further in the last chapter of this thesis when discussing the proof of knowing God according to °Abd al-Jabbār.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE OBLIGATION OF KNOWING GOD

#### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to investigate how ʿAbd al-Jabbār established the grounds for the obligation of knowing God. To achieve this objective, I will examine, firstly, ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s argument on the reason that leads human beings to know God, secondly, his view on the concept of obligation, which includes rational obligation and man’s first obligation. Then, the study will discuss reflection (*al-naẓar*), which is considered the means to acquire knowledge.

I will also study ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s view on ethical realism and its implication for his concept of *taklīf*, which leads to rational obligation (*taklīf aqlī*). At this point, I will indicate that although the rational obligation is consistent with ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theory of knowledge, it is inconsistent with the principle of divine justice that is defended by the Muʿtazilites.

During my discussion in this chapter, I will also compare ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s view with those of the late Muʿtazilites and the Ashʿarites. I use the former to see their responses to his view, and the latter to analyze the differences and the root of their disagreement. I will also indicate how ʿAbd al-Jabbār applies his immediate and acquired knowledge to establish the grounds for the obligation of knowing God. First, however, I will examine ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s view on the first thing that occurs in an obligated person (*mukallaf*) after he achieves intellectual maturity (*kamāl al-ʿaql*).

#### 4.1 Fear (*al-Khawf*)

Based on our discussion of the maturity of the intellect in the previous chapter, the most significant characteristic of a person who achieves maturity of intellect is his ability to use the intellect in a proper way. In his mind, there is a sum of immediate knowledge that is created by God. Based on this knowledge, he is able to respond to the outside world and his own psychological situation in a reasonable way.

According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, fear (*khawf*) is one of the earliest psychological experiences for a person who has obtained maturity of intellect. This fear creates disturbance (*iḍtirāb*) and confusion in a person’s soul. Therefore, the individual needs to reflect (*naẓar*) in order to resolve his confusion and achieve tranquillity of the soul. This fear, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, will become a motivation for human beings to look for truth in their religion. He maintains that the elimination of this fear is compulsory, since it is a type of physiological harm (*darār al-naḥsānī*). Explaining the nature of fear, ʿAbd al-Jabbār writes:

Know that there is no significant difference between scholars regarding the obligation to reflect (*naẓar*) on religious and worldly matters. The [only] reason is that an obligated person experiences a terror of not reflecting. Therefore, in order to eliminate this fear one needs to reflect.<sup>1</sup>

In explaining the cause of this fear, ʿAbd al-Jabbār writes:

That fear must be based on harm related to religious punishments or condemnation by others [*compos mentis* persons]. Since this fear is not developed in a *compos mentis* person as a result of an individual habit (*ʿāda*) that he grows up with, thus, there must be signs that create fear in the person. This fear, therefore, develops in him a sense of obligation to reflect. These signs are the

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<sup>1</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 353.

warning by a preacher (*tanbīh al-dā'i*) and the divine motive (*khāṭir*).<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, fear is not something habitual, and neither can it be trained, but it appears because of certain signs. There are several signs (*imārāt*) or causes that generate the sense of fear in the human soul.<sup>3</sup> The first cause of fear, according to °Abd al-Jabbār, is an individual's introspection. This can be developed as follows: (i) based on direct knowledge (*°ilm badīhī*), a person can know his existence and his state of self, such as thinking and believing; (ii) by using the perceptible knowledge gained from the five senses, the individual will be able to know that he has been bestowed with grace (*nī°ma*) from a benefactor (*mun°im*). The first of these graces, according to °Abd al-Jabbār, is his existence (*wujūdihī*).<sup>4</sup> On this, he writes:

Then if it is asked: What is the first grace bestowed upon you by God? Say to him: It is something that I cannot account for. In general, however, He created me as a living being, and provided me with power and physical means (*āla*). He perfected my creation and provided me with desire and enables me with various kinds of pleasures. Then He issued commands and prohibitions in order for me to reach the level of reward and enter paradise. Therefore, it is obligatory for me to prove His existence and to know Him so that I can worship Him, thank Him and follow His pleasure and avoid disobedience towards Him.<sup>5</sup>

After receiving grace, a *compos mentis* person (*°āqil*) will realize that he needs to thank the benefactor<sup>6</sup> who provides that grace for him. Without knowledge of the benefactor, he will be unable to thank Him. Therefore, he needs to know Him. Since a person does not know God immediately (*darūrī*), he needs to reflect in order to

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<sup>2</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 386-7.

<sup>3</sup> In order to investigate the cause of fear, °Abd al-Jabbār uses, firstly, the introspection into one's self, based on direct knowledge; and, secondly, the indirect knowledge perceived through the senses.

<sup>4</sup> *Mughnī*, xi, 73; Mānkdim, *Sharḥ*, 83.

<sup>5</sup> *Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 79.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the idea of thanking the benefactor, see Reinhart, *Before Revelation*, 107-23.

know who this benefactor is.<sup>7</sup> Only by knowing the benefactor can one thank Him, follow His commands and avoid His prohibitions. However, without knowing God, this will not be possible. Even worse, the individual may unintentionally do something that causes His anger. Therefore, the person's introspection can create the fear in the human soul and the necessity of knowing God.<sup>8</sup>

The second cause of fear is that of external factors. °Abd al-Jabbār explains that if a person hears a theological discussion and encounters warnings of punishment in the afterlife for unbelievers and wrongdoers, he will experience fear (*khawf*).<sup>9</sup>

Explaining this, °Abd al-Jabbār writes:

If he [a virtual opponent] asks: What is the proof that it is obligatory upon a *compos mentis* (°*āqil*) to reflect in order to know God? Say to him: Because when one hears disputes among people on the sectarian (*madhāhib*) [issues], their accusation of infidelity upon one another and their threats to one another, one might ponder that it is inconceivable that all of these sects are true, since they are contradicting each other. For instance one says that the world is eternal and the other say it is temporal, also some say that God can be seen (*yura*) and other denies it. It is also inconceivable that all these sects false since the truth cannot be outside of it. For it is impossible to believe that the world is neither eternal nor temporal. Hence, the truth must be within these disputes. When a person was threatened as someone says to him: If you are not thinking to know the truth, you cannot guarantee that you are excluded from those liars (*mubṭil*) and that will lead you with your current belief to the hellfire permanently and great harm (*al-madār al-aẓīma*). Thus he must be terrified (*yakhāf*) and know with his intellect (*ya°raf bi° aqlih*) that he needs to safeguard from what he fears. For that reason, he needs to think and reflect.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ*, 18.

<sup>8</sup> See *Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 79.

<sup>9</sup> Shihadeh, "The Existence of God", 199.

<sup>10</sup> *Mukhtaṣar*, 201. In *Sharḥ*, Mānkḏīm also reports a similar cause "Possibly because of his social relation with people (*ikhṭilāfih bi al-nās*), when he hears their disagreements on religious matters and their accusations of one another with heresy (*taḏlīl*), or with infidelity (*takfīr*). One of them will say to each other that "the truth is in my side and you are in the wrong side that will lead to destruction (*halāk*)." At this stage a rational person will be afraid that if he does not reflect [on these matters] he will end up in the predicament (*warṭa*) and destruction. Cf. Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 68

Therefore, °Abd al-Jabbār explains that the existence of a call from a preacher (*dāʿī*) alone will not necessitate the sense of fear. Instead a person must think about it and relate it with good (*muḥsanāt*) and evil things (*muqbiḥāt*) he already knows in his mind; he will also relate this as how blame occurs for the evil and the distress suffered by the heart because of the blame. When that occurs, a person will experience the fear of not reflecting. The sense of fear will increase if an individual hears a call from the preacher, then thinks about it and does so constantly (*ishtadda fikruh fīhā*).<sup>11</sup>

Ibn al-Malāḥimī mentions a similar argument in his book and considers that the majority of people experience fear due to this factor. However, he explains that fear sometimes occurs in other ways, such as when one reads a book that mentions the harm of omitting reflection (*tark al-naẓar*). He explains that establishing the fear in one's soul (*mukhawwif*) is a real duty of the prophets, and their duties are continued by the scholars (°*ulamāʾ*) through advice (*tadhkir*) books or sermons (*tadrīs*).<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, fear is either caused by one's introspection that leads to the need of thanking the benefactor or by external factors that lead to the fear of external punishment. Both will lead the *mukallaf* to the conclusion that it is harmful (*darār*) for him not to reflect on these matters. The realization of this harm eventually creates the fear in the *mukallaf*. This is a type of psychological harm that must be rejected. Since the obligation of rejecting the harm is immediate knowledge, an obligated

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<sup>11</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 388.

<sup>12</sup> Different from °Abd al-Jabbār, Ibn al-Malāḥimī considers that all the causes of fear are the fearful thought (*khāṭir al-mukhawwif*), cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 80.

person (*mukallaf*) needs to reject the harm from his self. Furthermore, since reflecting to know God is the only way to avoid harm and destruction, it is incumbent upon the individual to do so.<sup>13</sup>

However, one might ask what happens if neither introspection nor external factors are present; or, what if they do but do not cause fear? Does this imply that one does not have to reflect in order to know God? Responding to this question, °Abd al-Jabbār says that if neither factors appear to generate the fear in the *mukallaf*, God will, by necessity producing a divine thought (*khāṭir*) to establish the eschatological fear in the *mukallaf*. This *khāṭir*, according to °Abd al-Jabbār, will occur in one's mind before or at the time one attains the maturity of the intellect.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, the third cause of fear is divine inspiration (*khāṭir*), created by God in the human mind. This *khāṭir* is a hidden speech, like that of the soul, but this speech is not the act of the human subject in whose soul it exists; rather, it is the act of God Himself.<sup>15</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī explains that this factor is especially important for those who live on a high mountain or far from other people. Whenever one achieves maturity of the intellect and the condition of *taklīf* is fulfilled, God will create the sense of fear in one's mind, which creates a fear of omitting reflection and knowledge (*tark al-naẓar wa al-ma'rifā*), until one realizes the obligation (*wujūb al-naẓar*). Ibn al-Malāḥimī explains that the *compos mentis* person (°*āqil*) eliminates his fear through reflection, for he knows that only with reflection and observation can he

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<sup>13</sup> Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 67; cf. Shihadeh, "The Existence of God", 199.

<sup>15</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 353.

know something that was unknown to him before. Therefore, in order to know God, he must reflect.<sup>16</sup>

Based on these explanations, one might observe that no one is exempted from the obligation to reflect in order to know God. The fear will certainly occur in one's soul, caused by one's own introspection, external factors or *khāṭir*. Since the theory of *khāṭir* becomes the ground for establishing the rational obligation in his theology, °Abd al-Jabbār pays special attention to this in the *Mughnī* chapter 12. Hence, in the next section, I will examine his theory of *khāṭir*.

#### 4.2. Divine Notion (*al-Khāṭir*)

The theory of *khāṭir* is another common Arabic word that plays a significant role in °Abd al-Jabbār's theological epistemology as a technical term. In a non-technical sense, *khāṭir* is a thought that occurs in the mind in relation to something. Some scholars translate *khāṭir*, based on °Abd al-Jabbār's use of the term in his theology as a "warning"<sup>17</sup> or "warner"<sup>18</sup>. However, as K. Ghaneabassiri rightly observes, by doing so, they obscure its significance for the way in which °Abd al-Jabbār develops his theology of internal human experience.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 80.

<sup>17</sup> Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 63-5.

<sup>18</sup> Reinhart, *Before Revelation*, 35.

<sup>19</sup> Ghaneabassiri, "Epistemological Foundation", 83. However, Ghaneabassiri fails to elaborate on what he really means by that.

I suggest that translating *khāṭir* as warning, warner or threat; will also obscure the theory of *khāṭir* in Muʿtazilite theology. Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām, the first Muʿtazilite<sup>20</sup> to speak about the theory of *khāṭir*, reportedly said: “there must be *khāṭirāni* of which one bids proceed (*al-iqdām*) and the other bids cease (*al-kaff*), so that one’s choice between them may be a genuine choice.”<sup>21</sup> *Khāṭir*, based on al-Nazzām’s interpretation, is nearer to a motive. Therefore, based on this explanation, translating *khāṭir* as a warning does not fit with its origin in the theology of the Muʿtazilites.<sup>22</sup>

ʿAbd al-Jabbār considers that *khāṭir*, similar to immediate knowledge, occurs in humans as an act of God; therefore, he differentiates it from other internal experiences such as ‘talk within self’ (*ḥadīth al-naḥs*),<sup>23</sup> which is the act of the humans themselves, and ‘diabolical whispering’ (*waswās*), which is the act of genies or devils.<sup>24</sup> By distinguishing between *khāṭir* and *waswas*, ʿAbd al-Jabbār makes it clear that the former only comes from God and not from the devil (*shayṭān*). Therefore, I prefer translating *khāṭir* as ‘divine notion’.

Like immediate knowledge, there is no doubt of the existence of *khāṭir*. Yet, unlike immediate knowledge, we need to reflect on it in order to distinguish it from other internal experiences. The purpose of the *khāṭir* is to warn us mainly for the sake of avoiding the harm from one’s self (*dafʿ al-ḍarār ʿan naḥs*). The *khāṭir* points to the

<sup>20</sup> Al-Nazzām uses it by referring to the existence of two motives forces (*khāṭirāni*) created by God within man himself, cf. al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islamiyyīn*, 427. Based on this report I suggest that Gimaret was mistaken when he considers that the notion of motive was first introduced in Muʿtazilites by al-Jāhīz, cf. Gimaret, *Théories de l’acte humain*, 34; Madelung, “The Late Mutazila”, 245.

<sup>21</sup> He also maintained that man has no power of free choice over that for which he has no *khāṭirani* in his heart. Cf. al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islamiyyīn* 239; Wolfson, *Philosophy of kalām*, 628.

<sup>22</sup> In this case, Ibn al-Malāḥimī is right when he specifies the *khāṭir* in the case of creating the fear in one’s soul as fearful thought (*khāṭir al-mukhawwif*). Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *al-Muʿtamad*, 80.

<sup>23</sup> For further discussion on *ḥadīth al-naḥs*, see van Ess, *Die Erkenntnistheorie*, 240-1.

<sup>24</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, xii, 412.

harm that may come to us from something. In religious terms, the *khāṭir* warns us of the divine blame and punishment that our wrongdoing will earn us both in this world and the hereafter. By itself, the *khāṭir* motivates (*dā'i*) us to look for God and to act ethically and fulfil our religious duty.<sup>25</sup> In this way, the *khāṭir* secures man's knowledge that reflection is his duty; hence, he will reflect in order to know his creator, who will also be the punisher in the hereafter.<sup>26</sup>

The role of *khāṭir* in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's theology is considered as a proof (*ḥujja*) from God against human beings. By using this *khāṭir*, he will be able to establish that all human beings who achieve maturity of the intellect will know the obligation of reflecting. There is no exception on this matter, even if one lives far away from other people on a high mountain or a remote island, where the teaching of Prophet is unreachable. Based on this theory, ʿAbd al-Jabbār manages to develop his concept of rational obligation.

However, what if someone says that not everyone experiences this fear as is claimed, and the *mutakallimūn* disagree on its reality?<sup>27</sup> In this case, the claim that one can experience the fear immediately is invalid. Responding to the first part of this criticism, ʿAbd al-Jabbār maintains that every rational person experiences the fear. He argues that when fear exists in a person, he will be aware of that feeling. His knowledge of his psychological situation is immediate (*ḍarūrī*) knowledge, created by God in human's selves. A person's knowledge of this is similar to his knowledge of his other psychological situations such as believing (*mu'taqid*), willing (*murīd*)

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Ghaneabassiri, "Epistemological Foundation", 83-4.

<sup>26</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 387; cf. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 64.

<sup>27</sup> For the Ash'arites' arguments against the theory of *Khāṭir*, see al-Juwaynī, *Shāmīl*, 116-9.

and displeasing (*karīh*).<sup>28</sup> Therefore, Ibn al-Malāḥimī explains that this knowledge needs no proof.<sup>29</sup>

Responding to the second part of the criticism, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that the disagreement about the characteristics (*ṣifa*) of fear cannot deny the fact that one’s experience of it is obvious. For instance the denials of accidents (*ʿrāḍ*), although they disagree on the perceptible accidents (*ʿrāḍ*) themselves, the knowledge of them (perceptible accidents) is obvious. Also people’s disagreement on volition (*irāda*) cannot deny a person’s knowledge that he is willing (*murīd*).<sup>30</sup>

For that reason, ʿAbd al-Jabbār maintains that a person immediately (*bi iḍtirār*) knows that he is afraid. Those who deny the fear will not affect his ability to distinguish between his state of fear and no fear.<sup>31</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār maintains that every rational person will experience the fear and know its existence without exception. Therefore, it is obligatory for every person to get rid of that fear. This obligation is what ʿAbd al-Jabbār called the rational obligation (*taḳlīf ʿaqlī*). However, before I discuss his rational obligation further, it is worthwhile to briefly examine his concept of obligation in general.

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<sup>28</sup> Even, ʿAbd al-Jabbār maintains that knowledge of oneself about his fear is sometimes more obvious since it occurs due to clear causes (*asbāb wāḍiḥa*), such as one’s fear caused by a meeting with a lion [in the forest]. Cf. Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 73.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 80.

<sup>30</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 374.

<sup>31</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 375.

### 4.3. The Concept of Obligation

The founder of the Bahshamiyya, Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī, reportedly defined *taklīf* in his work, *ʿAskariyyāt*<sup>32</sup> as “command (*amr*) and obligation (*ilzām*) for something that will imply discomfort (*kulfa*) and hardship (*mashaqqa*) for the one who was commanded to do so (*ma'mūr bih*). In his other work *Naqḍ al-badal*, Abū Hāshim defines it as “volition (*irāda*) of certain acts towards *mukallaf* in which there is discomfort and hardship.”<sup>33</sup> The terms used by Abū Hāshim in his definitions of *taklīf*, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, require the existence of two sides of *taklīf*: the first is God, as the producer of a command; and the second is human beings, as the addressees. This means that without one of them there will be no obligation.

However, ʿAbd al-Jabbār considers that the definitions presented by Abū Hāshim are not comprehensive enough to cover his interpretation of the concept of *taklīf*.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, he defines *taklīf* as “notifying (*ʿlām*) other of doing or not doing something for the benefit (*naʿa*) or eliminate the harm (*ḍarār*), which come up with hardship (*mashaqqa*)<sup>35</sup> [but] not in the level of compulsion (*iljāʿ*).”<sup>36</sup> He considers that notification (*ʿlām*) is the foundation of *taklīf*. One who is able to know that certain acts are obligatory or prohibited will be considered an obligated person

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<sup>32</sup> Possibly some answers to the question posted from ʿAskar-Mukarram.

<sup>33</sup> *Mughnī*, xi, 293; Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ* (1), 11.

<sup>34</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār discuss the concept of *taklīf* at length in the part eleventh of the *Mughnī*.

<sup>35</sup> According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, although *mashaqqa* is part of pain and suffering, in *taklīf* it is good. He argues that involving in temporal and minor hardship in order to gain an enormous benefit is acceptable. Therefore, he maintains that although there are difficulty and hardship in *taklīf*, it is still good because human can achieve a great reward that can not be achieved without *taklīf*. Cf. *Mughnī*, xi, 134.

<sup>36</sup> Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ* (1), 11; Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 510.

(*mukallaf*). This notification occurs either through the creation of knowledge within humans by God, that is, immediate knowledge, or through proof.<sup>37</sup>

One might observe that the difference between ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s definition of *taklīf* and that of Abū Hāshim is that the former does not consider the production of the command to be necessary. ʿAbd al-Jabbār maintains that notification (*ʿlām*) is enough for one to be an obligated person (*mukallaf*). Therefore, even if one does not receive any command from God, but knows that certain acts are good and others are bad, one is considered a *mukallaf*; therefore, one must perform the good acts and avoid the bad ones. Meanwhile, Abū Hāshim’s definition, which includes the words command (*amr*) and volition (*irāda*), implies the existence of God as a producer of the command. This means that the obligation occurs only after the production of a command or volition from God. This view does not parallel ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s opinion on *taklīf*. Instead, it supports the view of the Ashʿarites, who claim that the *taklīf* only starts after the advent of a revelation.

In this case, the Ashʿarites believe that good and evil can only be known through revelation; therefore, they believe that *taklīf* only occurs after the coming of revelation. Before this, there is no obligation since there is no good and evil. Therefore, we observe that al-Baghdādī defines *taklīf* as “addressing (*tawajjuh*) the speech with command and prohibition to the addressee.”<sup>38</sup> The foundation of *taklīf*, according to the Ashʿarites, is command (*amr*) and prohibition (*nahy*). They claim

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<sup>37</sup> What known through immediate knowledge will be the foundation for rational obligation (*taklīf ʿaqlī*) and what known through proofs will be the foundation for religious obligation (*taklīf sharʿī*). Cf. Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ* (1), 11.

<sup>38</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 207.

that the obligation will only start after the arrival of the revelation. Hence, one might observe that the Ash<sup>c</sup>arites' foundation of *taklīf* is based on the existence of two sides; the first side produces the command and the other receives it. The first side is God and the second is human beings.

°Abd al-Jabbār's definition of *taklīf* was also not well accepted among the late Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, for instance, defines *taklīf* as "issuing (*ba<sup>c</sup>th*) some hardship from action or omission (*tark*)". He explains that God issues what He creates in the intellect through obligations, recommendations and omitting evils, as well as in the revelation from action or omission.<sup>39</sup> His foundation of *taklīf* is similar to Abū Hāshim's and the Ash<sup>c</sup>arites' views that it requires two parties, God and man. God is the one who issues the hardship (*mashaqqa*) and produces a command or will, and man is the one who receives that hardship, command or will. However, as we observe from his definition of *taklīf* above, °Abd al-Jabbār maintains that notification (*i<sup>c</sup>lām*) is enough for one to be an obligated person (*mukallaf*). He considers that if one knows the basic ethical principles through immediate knowledge but not receiving any command from God, one is still considered a *mukallaf*.<sup>40</sup>

From this contention, one might observe that °Abd al-Jabbār's concept of *taklīf* is closely related with his theory of knowledge. In his discussion of the type of knowledge °Abd al-Jabbār considers that one can know the basic ethical principles through immediate knowledge. Based on these principles, one can know the ethical

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<sup>39</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Fā'iqa*, 201.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Mughnī*, xi, 293-5.

value of almost every act through rational reflection (*naẓar*).<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, knowledge of ethical principles is a foundation for *taklīf*. Therefore, since one already knows this knowledge through reflection prior to the revelation, this implies the possibility of obligation before or without revelation. In this regard <sup>°</sup>Abd al-Jabbār divides obligation into two types: (i) rational obligation (*taklīf<sup>°</sup>aqlī*)<sup>42</sup>; and (ii) revealed obligation (*taklīf<sup>°</sup>shar<sup>°</sup>ī*). *Taklīf<sup>°</sup>aqlī* is the obligation that can be known through the intellect, such as thanking the benefactor (*shukr al-mun<sup>°</sup>im*), knowing God (*ma<sup>°</sup>rifa Allāh*). Meanwhile, *taklīf<sup>°</sup>shar<sup>°</sup>ī* is the obligation that is known through the revelation, such as five times daily prayer, fasting in the month of Ramaḍān and pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>43</sup>

From here, one might observe that knowing God is included in the rational obligation, which does not depend on revelation, but only reason. Therefore, according to <sup>°</sup>Abd al-Jabbār, knowing God is obligatory for every *compos mentis* person (*°āqil*). Hence, based on this division, he believes that every human being will be considered an obligated person even if he does not receive any revealed teaching. <sup>°</sup>Abd al-Jabbār maintains that since some might not receive the revelation, they will be excused from *taklīf<sup>°</sup>shar<sup>°</sup>ī*, but nobody is exempted from rational obligation (*taklīf<sup>°</sup>aqlī*).

Among the early Mu<sup>°</sup>tazilites, Abū al-Hudhayl is one of the proponents of *taklīf<sup>°</sup>aqlī*. However, his grounds for *taklīf<sup>°</sup>* are different from that of <sup>°</sup>Abd al-Jabbār. Like

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<sup>41</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 66. There are several exceptions where the goodness of the acts is unknown to reason such as slaughtering animal for food.

<sup>42</sup> Frank names it as “natural *taklīf*”, see his “Fundamental Assumptions”, 14.

<sup>43</sup> Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmū<sup>°</sup>* (2), 14.

°Abd al-Jabbār, Abū al-Hudhayl bases his *taklīf* °*aqlī* on immediate knowledge; unlike °Abd al-Jabbār, who bases his *taklīf* on the immediacy of ethical principle, Abū al-Hudhayl bases it on the immediacy of knowing God (*maʿrifa Allāh*). He maintains that the existence of God is known immediately in the sense that everybody has it and can by no means get rid of it.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, if one dies as an unbeliever, the innate knowledge of God serves at the same time as a justification for God to punish everybody who does not take His revelation seriously. Consequently, he concludes that one is obliged to reflect on God's nature and to ask for His commandments because one knows about His existence from the beginning.<sup>45</sup>

°Abd al-Jabbār, however, maintains that the foundation of *taklīf* °*aqlī* is the immediate nature of the ethical principles. He believes that one can know the basic ethical principles immediately (*darūrī*), such as that wrongdoing (*ẓulm*) is bad and justice is good. When one knows this, one will perform good acts and avoid bad ones. Based on this immediate knowledge, one establishes a value system that is compulsory (*wājib*), prohibited (*ḥaram*), displease (*makrūh*), permissible (*jāʿiz*) and recommended (*sunna*). This system of values can be obtained through the process of reflection (*naẓar*).

From this contention, we can conclude that both °Abd al-Jabbār and Abū al-Hudhayl accept rational obligation. For °Abd al-Jabbār, the foundation of this is the immediacy of ethical principles, while for Abū al-Hudhayl the foundation is the immediacy of knowing God. Knowing God and ethical principles are the two

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<sup>44</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 32; cf. Van Ess, "Early Islamic Theologians", 66.

<sup>45</sup> Van Ess, "Early Islamic Theologians", 67.

foundations of the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites in establishing rational obligation. Both are absent in the list of immediate knowledge among the Ash<sup>c</sup>arites. Therefore, they vehemently reject the idea of rational obligation.

#### 4.4. Rational Obligation

In his effort to develop the concept of rational obligation, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār defines theological terms based on reason alone. In this section, I will examine his views on the reality of the terms used in rational obligation. This study is closely related with the first type of acquired knowledge, the ethics of actions (*aḥkām al-a<sup>c</sup>āl*). Therefore, I will study <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's definition of some of the theological terms such as compulsory, prohibited, good, evil and permissible. I will start this discussion, following <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's method in the *Mughnī*, with evil (*qabīḥ*).<sup>46</sup> This method is significant in <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's ethical theory, since blame (*dhamm*) is the main criterion that is mentioned in all the definitions of good and evil.

Accordingly, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār defines an evil act as “an act which an able subject when he does it, in some aspects deserves blame.”<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, good (*ḥasan*) is what happens in a certain way so that an individual, by doing it, if he knows it, does not deserve blame for it in certain aspects.<sup>48</sup> <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār applies the restriction “in some aspects” (*alā wajh*) because there are two exceptions to the rule, where the agent of an evil act does not deserve blame. First, this occurs when the individual does not know and cannot know that the act is evil; this is the case with young

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<sup>46</sup> A similar method was also followed by Hourani in his study of <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's Ethics. For his reason on this see his, *Islamic Rationalism*, 48-9.

<sup>47</sup> *Mughnī*, vi (1), 26; Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 41. Cf. Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 50; Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 86.

<sup>48</sup> *Mughnī*, vi (1), 31; <sup>c</sup>Uthmān, *Nazariyya al-taklīf*, 447-8; cf. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 85.

children, animals and lunatics. Second, this occurs when, besides a smaller evil, a larger good is performed, and consequently the praise dominates the blame. Yet, in both cases, °Abd al-Jabbār emphasizes that the acts remain evil but the agent does not deserve blame.<sup>49</sup>

The examples of evil are: wrongdoing (*ẓulm*), uselessness (*°abath*),<sup>50</sup> lying (*kidhb*), ingratitude for a favour (*kufṛ al-ni°ma*), ignorance (*jahl*), willing evil (*irādāt al-qabīḥ*), commanding evil (*amr bi-al-qabīḥ*), and imposing unattainable duties (*taḵlīf mā lā yuṭāq*).<sup>51</sup>

Abū al-Ḥusayn, however, defines good and evil differently from °Abd al-Jabbār when he defines evil as, “what is not for the one whom is capable of doing it and knowing its evilness to do.” In this regard, he rejects the definition of evil as “what deserves blame from doing it.” He argues that if evilness occurs in a person who already deserves praise (*madḥ*) more than blame, this praise will prevent him from deserving the blame for that evilness.<sup>52</sup>

His argument, however, does not repudiate °Abd al-Jabbār’s definition of evil, since the latter includes the exception of “in certain aspects” in his definition. Abū al-Husayn’s example is mentioned by °Abd al-Jabbār when he says that if a smaller evil was performed beside a larger good, it is not blameworthy because praise dominates the blame. Abū al-Ḥusayn also defines good as “what for the one who is capable of

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<sup>49</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 41; Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 87.

<sup>50</sup> For °Abd al-Jabbār’s view on the uselessness see O. Leaman, “Concept of Uselessness”, 129-131.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *Mughnī*, vi (i) 61-9; Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 69-70; Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 88.

<sup>52</sup> Abū al-Ḥusayn, *Mu°tamad*, 368.

doing it and possible to know its situation to do it". Similar to °Abd al-Jabbār, he also considers that the acts of an absent minded person (*sāhī*), a sleeper, an insane person and a child are exempted from religious obligation (*taklīf*).<sup>53</sup>

A permissible (*mubaḥ*) act, according to °Abd al-Jabbār, is an act where the doer deserves neither praise nor blame. It is also similar for those who omit it.<sup>54</sup> He also defines *nadb* (recommended) as an act where the doer deserves praise, but one who omits it does not deserve blame.<sup>55</sup>

An obligatory (*wājib*) act, according to °Abd al-Jabbār, is such that the agent of this act deserves praise, and the one who omits it deserves blame. This kind of act occurs in three forms:<sup>56</sup> (i) *wājib muḍayyaq*: the concrete act concerned has to be performed. The example is giving back a deposit and the reflection generating knowledge about God;<sup>57</sup> (ii) *wājib mukhayyar fīh (muwassīʿ)*: the subject can make a choice between several acts and perform another act instead of the act concerned. For example, if one has to pay back a debt, one can choose the pieces of money with which one pays it back; (iii) *furūd al-kifāya*: another person can perform the act in the place of the subject concerned. For example, the duty of Muslim community to defend their land can be delegated to the army.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Abū al-Ḥusayn, *Muʿtamad*, 366.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *Mughnī*, vi (i), 31-2; cf. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 86.

<sup>55</sup> See *Mughnī*, vi (i), 37-42. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 86.

<sup>56</sup> *Mughnī*, vi (i), 43.

<sup>57</sup> See Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ* (1), 231; cf. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 87.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. *Mughnī*, vi (i), 43, *Sharḥ* 42; Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 86.

°Abd al-Jabbār defines uselessness (*°abath*) as every act that the acting subject performs without a proportional recompense. In this case, he insists that uselessness is evil just as wrongdoing is evil.<sup>59</sup> He then defines benefit (*naḥ*) as pleasure (*ladhdha*), happiness or what leads to one or both of these things. He believes that pleasure is based on perception; it is a sensual feeling of well being. On the other hand, happiness (*surūr*) is mental and based on the imagination of these pleasant things. Repulsion of harm (*daḥ al-ḍarār*) is also a benefit because it leads to happiness.<sup>60</sup>

By defining all these terms based on praise and blame, happiness and suffering, °Abd al-Jabbār does not depend on the revelation to know them. Hence, he believes that all this knowledge can be known even before the coming of revelation. Based on this idea, °Abd al-Jabbār considers that rational obligation is possible. Therefore, according to °Abd al-Jabbār, *ahl al-fatra*, who live between the times of prophets, and do not receive any revealed teaching, are still not considered free from obligation. He believes that they must at least fulfill the rational obligation, such as reflection to know God, His oneness (*tawḥīd*) and justice (*°adl*).<sup>61</sup>

#### 4.5. The Exemption of Obligation

Based on the previous discussion, we observed that °Abd al-Jabbār insists that every *compos mentis* person (*°āqil*) is an obligated person since he knows the basic ethical

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<sup>59</sup> See *Mughnī*, xi, 64; vi (i) 61; *Sharḥ*, 514, Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 75-6. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 88-90.

<sup>60</sup> *Mughnī*, xiv, 34; *Sharḥ*, 80. cf. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 90.

<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, the revealed obligation (*taklīf shar°ī*) is exempted from them since they do not receive any of the teaching of the prophets.

principles immediately. However, Ibn al-Malāḥimī reports that in his work, *Taʿlīq*,<sup>62</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār exempts some people from *taklīf*, such as old men (*shuyūkh*) who live in the mountains, for whom the obligation of reflection (*wujūb al-naẓar*) does not come to their mind. Some of them are even less mature than children. Therefore, he argues that if children are not obligated because of the immaturity of their intellect, the same applies to an adult who has not achieved maturity of the intellect. In this case, he advises that it is recommended for us to tell them about the testimony (*shahāda*) of faith and declare the truth if we know its validity.<sup>63</sup>

The example previously mentioned is for the case of the *ahl al-fatra*<sup>64</sup> who does not achieve the maturity of the intellect. However, one might ask about *ahl al-fatra* who does achieve the maturity of the intellect. If they know the obligation of the reflection (*naẓar*) in order to know God, but are unable to know a true God because of various reasons, as a result, they worship other gods such as idols, trees or animals. Can these people go to paradise on the pretext that they have already fulfilled the rational obligation by reflecting, or not?

The problem of *Ahl al-fatra* can be analyzed into several situations:

- 1- *Ahl al-fatra* who does not reflect;
- 2- *Ahl al-fatra* who reflects but is unable to know the existence of God and His attributes;

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<sup>62</sup> Most likely this is *Taʿlīq al-Baghdādiyyāt* since it is the only ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s book that uses the word *taʿlīq* in the title.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 63.

<sup>64</sup> *Ahl al-fatra* are those who live between the periods of the prophets. Or those who do not received the teaching of the prophet.

- 3- *Ahl al-fatra* who reflects and believes in the existence of God but does not perform prayer, fasting or any type of worship due to the absence of knowledge of these actions;
- 4- *Ahl al-fatra* who reflects and believes in the existence of God but undertakes false mediation (*wasīla*) in order to worship Him.

Based on ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s concept of *taklīf*, I posit that the first *Ahl al-fatra* will be punished if he has already achieved the maturity of the intellect; otherwise he will not, because without the maturity of the intellect one cannot be considered an obligated person.<sup>65</sup> As for the second *Ahl al-fatra*, who has already fulfilled the first obligation by reflection but fails in his effort to know God, ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s view on this is absurd. He considers that based on reason alone, those who do good acts and avoid evil ones but do not know God can obtain salvation and go to paradise even without knowing God. However, based on the revelation, they are considered guilty; therefore they will be punished.<sup>66</sup> Thus, ʿAbd al-Jabbār considers that those who deny the existence of God or characterize Him in ways He does not deserve are considered infidels (*kāfir*).<sup>67</sup>

For the third *Ahl al-fatra* will probably not be punished but if God rewards him with paradise, this will undermine the pillars of religion such as obligatory prayer, which is consider a sign that differentiates between the believer and the infidel. As for the fourth *Ahl al-fatra*, he fulfills the rational obligation by reflecting and knows the existence of God. However, his decision to take an intermediate occurs out of

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<sup>65</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 63.

<sup>66</sup> Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ*, (2), 15.

<sup>67</sup> See Mānkāīm, *Sharḥ*, 125.

ignorance. If he knows from the teaching of the Prophet that what he did is wrong, he surely will abandon it. However, he does not know that this is wrong since he has not received the revelation.

In these cases, if <sup>o</sup>Abd al-Jabbār maintains that the *Ahl al-fatra* who believes in the existence of God after reflecting but takes a wrong intermediate (*waṣīla*) such as an idol, or someone who does not properly worship Him, will be punished, this claim will be contradicted by the principle of divine justice, as God has not sent any revelation to him directly or through messengers to inform him that what he did is wrong. However, to say that he will obtain salvation and go to paradise implies that polytheism (*shirk*), the biggest sin in Islam, can bring one to paradise.

Therefore, as far as divine justice is concerned, his division of obligation into reason and revelation implies that <sup>o</sup>Abd al-Jabbār accepts that those who do not receive any revealed teaching (*Ahl al-fatra*) will not be punished. For one cannot perform true worship such as prayer, fasting and hajj without the revelation from God, whether directly or through a messenger. Also, those who worship idols after their reflection cannot be blamed for that if they did not receive any revealed knowledge.

In his epistemology, <sup>o</sup>Abd al-Jabbār considers that, through reason, the individual is capable of knowing the existence of God, good and evil, and the obligation of thanking the benefactor; however, the knowledge of how to thank the benefactor, that is, the details of worship, is not included within the scope of intellectual capacity. Reason alone will not be able to determine exact methods of worship such

as how to pray, the amount of *raka'at* in prayer and its timing. This knowledge can only be obtained after revelation.<sup>68</sup>

Therefore, I suggest that the Ash'arites' view on this issue is more plausible when they say that rewards and punishments will only occur after the coming of revelation. Through revelation, one will know a complete obligation. The obligation that is based on reason alone is incomplete because it only deals with the theoretical aspect. Since Islam is not a religion that deals only with belief (*'aqida*) and theoretical aspects, but also engages in a practical aspect that is related with laws (*shari'at*) and ethics (*akhlāq*), rational obligation alone is problematic.

The Ash'arites argue that the command of God (*'amr*) from the revelation plays a vital role in determining rewards and punishments. Without the command, there will be no measurement to evaluate the acts of human beings. On this subject, al-Baghdādī writes:

Reward is based on obedience. Obedience is in agreement with the command (*amr*). Meanwhile the punishment (*'iqāb*) is based on disobedience. Disobedience is in agreement with prohibition (*nahy*) and objection of the command (*amr*).<sup>69</sup>

On top of this, the idea of rational obligation seems to contradict the teaching of the Qur'ān. In the Qur'ān, God says: "We never punish until We have sent a messenger."<sup>70</sup> This verse clearly indicates that God will not punish human beings until after He has sent them a prophet who brings the revelation from God. Hence,

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<sup>68</sup> The story of Ḥayy b. Yaqzān is a good example to see the limit of human intellect. Although Ḥayy manages to know God and His attributes through his reflection but he unable to know the prayer, alms, fasting and pilgrimage. He only knew that knowledge through Asāl who know it from the teaching of the prophet. Cf. Ibn Ṭufayl, *Ḥayy b. Yaqzān*, 145.

<sup>69</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 25.

<sup>70</sup> Qur. 17: 15.

punishments as well as the obligation only occur after the revelation and not before it.<sup>71</sup> Also, the reports of al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153) and al-Khayyāt (d. 311/816) indicate that the idea of rational obligation was introduced only in the second/eighth century by Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128/745).<sup>72</sup> Hence, this idea is considered late, and isolated from the general teaching of Islām, due to the absence of Qur’anic support.

However, ʿAbd al-Jabbār insists that, since human beings are capable of knowing the basic ethical principle immediately, they must be obligated to perform certain acts that are consistent with this ethical theory. So, even if the teaching of the Prophet is unknown to some people for various reasons, they still need to perform certain obligations based on their immediate knowledge of the basic ethical principle. Therefore, in the next section, I will examine ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s view on what is man’s first obligation.

#### 4.6. Man’s First Obligation

The question of what is man’s first obligation has become one of the disputes among classical theologians. Dealing with this question, ʿAbd al-Jabbār divides the obligation into two levels, first at a general level where he answers the question by saying that every obligated person needs to know religious principles (*uṣūl al-dīn*). These principles are: i) the unity of God (*al-tawḥīd*), ii) divine justice (*al-ʿadl*), iii) promise and threat (*al-waʿd wa al-waʿid*), iv) the intermediate position between two positions (*manzila bayn manzilatayn*), and v) commanding the good and prohibiting the evil (*al-amr bi al-maʿrūf wa al-nahy ʿan al-munkar*). In this hierarchy,

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<sup>71</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār however, tries to interpret this verse according to his theological perspective when he writes that the meaning of “*rasul*” in this verse is reason (*ʿaql*).

<sup>72</sup> Cf. al-Shahrastānī, *Milal*, i, 115; al-Khayyāt, *Intiṣār*, 232.

knowledge of the unity of God is the first knowledge that every obligated person must know.

However, at the second level, where a specific action needs to be identified, °Abd al-Jabbār considers that the first duty of every obligated person is the reflection that leads to the knowledge of God (*al-nazar al-mu'addī ilā ma'rifa Allāh*)<sup>73</sup> or “reflection on the way to knowing God” (*al-nazar fī tariq ma'rifa Allāh ta'ālā*).<sup>74</sup> °Abd al-Jabbār mentions “the way to knowing God,” because the first thing one needs to do is to confirm (*ithbāt*) the existence and the temporality of accidents. Then, it follows by reason that bodies need an originator (*muḥdith*). Both bodies and accidents are ways of knowing God.<sup>75</sup>

His argument is that all of the religious laws (*sā'ir al-sharā'ī'*) from speeches and actions are not good (*la tuḥsin*) except after knowing God. Since the knowledge of God cannot be obtained except via reflection, it follows that reflection is the first obligation.<sup>76</sup> °Abd al-Jabbār also considers that no one is exempted from this obligation. Explaining this argument, Mānkḏīm writes that:

The proof is that all the obligations either come after knowing God or they can be exempted from obligated person on certain aspects...The explanation of that is the obligations are divided into two types: rational (*°aqlī*) and religious (*shar°ī*). Rational obligations such as returning the deposit (*radd al-wad'fa*), paying the debt, thanking the grace, can be exempted from some obligated persons on certain condition. As for religious

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<sup>73</sup> *Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 79. This difference however, does not affect its meaning but both terms used need an explanation to make it clearer, cf. Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 69.

<sup>74</sup> *Mukhtaṣar*, 199.

<sup>75</sup> Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmū'*, (2)i, 17. For more on this see our discussion on the proof of the existence of God, below, 231.

<sup>76</sup> *Uṣūl al-Khamsa*, 79; Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 69. In this regard al-Baghdādī presents similar view with °Abd al-Jabbār, cf. al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 210.

obligations, it must be performed based on nearness and worship to God. This obligation is not good except after knowing God.<sup>77</sup>

The view that reflection is the first obligation is also shared by the majority of the *mutakallimūn*, such as the Baṣran Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites,<sup>78</sup> the Ash<sup>c</sup>arites<sup>79</sup> and some Hanbalites.<sup>80</sup> The difference between the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites and the Ash<sup>c</sup>arites on this issue is the way to know the obligation of *nazar*. The former says that reason alone can identify the obligation of *nazar*; meanwhile, the latter says that revelation (*al-sharā'i<sup>c</sup>*) is the cause of obligation.<sup>81</sup> Al-Ash<sup>c</sup>ari, in this regard, believes that reason is capable of knowing God but it is only a means (*āla*) for it. Meanwhile, the cause of the obligation of reflection to know God is revelation.<sup>82</sup>

Agreeing with the Ash<sup>c</sup>arites, Abū Ya<sup>c</sup>lā, a Ḥanbalite theologian, argues that one can only know the obligation of *nazar* through revelation. Without revelation, there is no obligation for human beings. He mentions a verse from the Qur'an that indicates the obligation of reflection, as: "Messengers who gave good news as well as warning, that mankind, after (the coming) of the Messengers, should have no plea against God: For God is exalted in Power, Wise."<sup>83</sup> Based on this, he concludes that the

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<sup>77</sup> Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 70.

<sup>78</sup> Abū Hāshim was reportedly held a view that doubt (*shakk*) is the first obligation, meanwhile his father Abū <sup>c</sup>Alī says that it is thanking the benefactor (*shukr al-Mun<sup>c</sup>im*). Cf. <sup>c</sup>Uthmān, *Nazariyya al-taklīf*, 84.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 210; Cf. <sup>c</sup>Uthmān, *Nazariyya al-taklīf*, 82. In his article, D. Boer observes that *nazar* in traditional school is rejected at first by the traditionalists, but with the efforts of al-Ash<sup>c</sup>ari it gradually tolerated and used as an instrument against heretics and sophists and recognised as a religious obligation. Boer, Tj. de, "Nazar", in *El<sup>2</sup>*, vii, 1050.

<sup>80</sup> Abū Ya<sup>c</sup>lā, *Mu<sup>c</sup>tamad*, 21.

<sup>81</sup> <sup>c</sup>Uthmān, *Nazariyya al-Taklīf*, 82.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Boer, Tj. de, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, 102. For more on this see our discussion on Ethical Realism, below, 204.

<sup>83</sup> Qur. 4: 165.

reflection is the first obligation but the way to know it is from revelation and not from reason.<sup>84</sup>

However, the Baghdād school of Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilite disagrees with this view. They maintain that knowing God (*ma<sup>c</sup>rifa Allāh*) is the first duty, since it is the aim of reflection. Their argument is based on the general level of obligation, as mentioned earlier; therefore, knowing God is the first obligation. Disagreeing with the Baghdād school, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār argues that even though knowing God is the aim of reflection, it comes after reflection and cannot be known except with it. Therefore, reflection is the first obligation for human beings.<sup>85</sup>

Based on a similar argument, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār also rejects Abū <sup>c</sup>Alī's view that the first obligation is thanking the benefactor (*shukr al-Mun<sup>c</sup>im*). He argues that before one thanks the benefactor, one needs to know (i) the benefit (*n<sup>c</sup>ma*) and (ii) the benefactor, i.e. His existence, attributes and wisdom. All this knowledge is possible only after one knows God, His attributes, His justice and wisdom. Therefore, thanking the benefactor cannot be considered the first obligation.

However, one might observe that the implication of <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's argument is that the intention to do reflection (*qa<sup>s</sup>d ilā al-nazar*) or the will to reflect (*irāda al-nazar*) can be considered the first obligation, since both of them occur before

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<sup>84</sup> Abū Ya<sup>c</sup>lā, *Mu<sup>c</sup>tamad*, 21. He also argues to prove the validity of reflection based on the Qur'anic verse, Qur. 88: 17.

<sup>85</sup> Mānkāim, *Sharḥ*, 72.

reflection. The first view was accepted by al-Mutawallī al-Nīsābūrī (d. 478/1085)<sup>86</sup> and the second was reportedly held by al-Bāqillānī.<sup>87</sup>

Responding to this critic, °Abd al-Jabbār explains that reflection is a pure action (*mujarrad al-fi'l*). A pure action does not need an intention or will. It occurs simultaneously with the intention (*ma'ah*); therefore, he believes that the intention follows it (*tab'an lah*). He compares this with the relation between the will to eat (*irāda al-akl*) and eating. He explains that someone who is eating does not need a 'will to eat' in order to eat. Instead a 'will to eat' occurs simultaneously with eating. Therefore, he argues that the former follows the latter. It is the same case with the intention to reflect. Therefore, he insists that *nazar* needs neither intention nor will.<sup>88</sup>

To make this clearer, °Abd al-Jabbār argues that if one of us becomes obligated to reflect but is prohibited from intention (*qasd*) and will (*irāda*), that obligation is still good. However, if reflection needs intention and will in order to occur, the obligation of reflection [in the previous case] becomes unbearable (*taklīf mā lā yuṭāq*). This situation is dissimilar to knowledge (*ma'rifa*), because knowledge needs reflection. If one is prohibited from reflection, it is not good to obligate him with knowledge, for it becoming obligating something that is unbearable.<sup>89</sup>

Based on a similar argument, °Abd al-Jabbār rejects Abū Hāshim's view that the doubt (*shakk*) is the first obligation. He argues that although doubt probably

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<sup>86</sup> Cf. al-Mutawallī, *Mughnī*, 5.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. °Uthmān, *Nazariyya al-taklīf*, 82; al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 2.

<sup>88</sup> Māndkīm, *Sharḥ*, 72.

<sup>89</sup> Māndkīm, *Sharḥ*, 72.

motivates one to reflect, yet, it is not the aim by itself. Therefore, it cannot be considered the first obligation. Similarly, °Abd al-Jabbār refutes views that fear (*khawf*) is the first obligation. He considers that this view is unacceptable (*khulf min al-kalām*), since fear is part of the condition of obligation (*min sharā'it al-taklīf*). It cannot be considered an obligation, let alone the first obligation. Furthermore, he argues that if, for the sake of argument, we accept that this is true, it would be possible for one to say that the maturity of the intellect (*kamāl al-°aql*) is the first obligation. However, this is not the case because the maturity of intellect is only part of the condition of *taklīf*, and not the *taklīf* itself. The maturity of the intellect is gained via immediate knowledge created by God in the human mind; therefore, it is not part of our obligation, because immediate knowledge is beyond our control.<sup>90</sup>

Based on these arguments, one might observe that °Abd al-Jabbār is inconsistent in his argument. When arguing against the Baghdād school of Mu°azilite, his argument is that knowing God cannot be considered the first obligation since reflection occurs before it. Therefore, reflection is the first obligation. However, in his argument against Abū Hāshim, al-Bāqillānī and al-Mutawallī, °Abd al-Jabbār maintains that the doubt, the intention and the will to reflect cannot be considered the first obligation since they are not the aim by themselves, but the reflection is. Therefore, reflection is the first obligation.

Ibn al-Malāḥimī, in this regard, explains that although his teachers [the Baṣran Mu°tazilites] say that reflection is the first obligation, this does not mean that it is

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<sup>90</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 73-4.

compulsory for every obligated person to know that it is the first obligation. It is enough for him to know that reflection is a narrow obligation (*wājib muḍayyaq*) which cannot be delayed, let alone neglected (*taḍyīh*). However, he maintains that although there are many other narrow obligations, reflection is prior to all other obligations.<sup>91</sup>

As far as the first obligation is concerned, ʿAbd al-Jabbār also rejects the traditionalist (*Ahl al-ḥadīth*) view, which reportedly says that the first obligation on every obligated person is to declare the two testimonials (*shahādātyn*). This view argues that when a person accepts these testimonials, he needs to follow all the teachings of the Prophet, including the knowledge of the essence and the attributes of God.<sup>92</sup> In this regard, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that declaring the two testimonials is included in the religious obligation (*wājibāt al-sharʿiyya*). Religious obligation is not good except after one knows who obligates the obligation (*al-musharriʿ*). Therefore, declaring the two testimonials cannot be considered the first obligation.<sup>93</sup>

Agreeing with ʿAbd al-Jabbār, Ibn al-Malāḥimī argues against a similar but more radical view, which says that the first obligation is to accept and declare the two testimonials without knowledge (*dūm al-ʿulūm*).<sup>94</sup> Here, he argues by asking questions:

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<sup>91</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 79.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology*, 13.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 75.

<sup>94</sup> According to Ibn al-Malāḥimī, this view was introduced by a man contemporary to him, known as al-Masāḥī. However, the biographical information of this man is unavailable. After his death, his view was adopted by some Atheists and they claim that it is *īmān*. This view leads to the invalidation of reflection and seeking knowledge. Also it leads to mere imitation (*taqlīd al-muḥd*) among people. Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 67.

Is your obligation to testify the two testimonials (*shahadatayn*) based on knowledge or not? If they say ‘yes’, they accept the obligation to find knowledge. Thus, our discussion with them is on the ways of knowledge. But if they say: ‘no’, say to them: Do you need to know the obligation of testifying to [the testimonials] with knowledge? If they say ‘yes’, that implies that they have accepted that they were obligated with some knowledge. Thus, say to them: why are you obligated with that knowledge but not the other one?.. If they say ‘no’, say to them: if they are not obligated to know that, how can they prove [the validity of] their view (*madhhab*)? The implication [of their inability to prove it] is that they cannot blame others who reject their view. Say to them that, if that is the case, it is possible for one to be obligated with a certain action without being obligated with the knowledge of that action. If they say ‘no’ because it is inconceivable to perform the action except with knowledge of it; say to them: In the same way, if an obligated person does not know the obligation of the acts incumbent on him, he will not know whether it is obligatory or not; also he does not know whether he has already fulfilled his obligation or not.<sup>95</sup>

Furthermore, he argues that if one is only obligated with the declaration of the two testimonials without knowledge, the hypocrites must have been performing the obligation. They must be true believers and deserve the reward because of this. However, God says in the Qur’an that: “Of the people there are some who say: ‘We believe in God and the Last Day’; but they do not (really) believe. Fain would they deceive God and those who believe, but they only deceive themselves, and realise (it) not.”<sup>96</sup> In another verse, God says: “When the hypocrites come to you, they say, ‘we bear witness that you are indeed the Messenger of God.’ Yea, God knows that you are indeed His messenger, and God bears witness that the hypocrites are indeed liars.”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muṭamad*, 76-77.

<sup>96</sup> Qur. 2:8-9.

<sup>97</sup> Qur. 63:1.

These verses indicate that God denies their declaration because it must be based on knowledge. If declaring the two testimonials is enough without knowledge, as they claimed, God will not blame the hypocrites for what they are doing. This argument clearly indicates that the declaration of the two testimonials without knowledge is not the first obligation.

However, <sup>°</sup>Abd al-Jabbār does not totally reject the view that there is something else before reflection to know God as the first obligation. He maintains that reflection on the obligation of reflection (*al-naẓar fī wujūb al-naẓar*) can probably be considered the first obligation. <sup>°</sup>Abd al-Jabbār explains that when a *mukallaf* has already arrived at the maturity of the intellect (*kamāl al-<sup>°</sup>aql*), he must be afraid to abandon the reflection for various reasons. This knowledge is immediately known by him without any reflection or argumentation. However, he then adds that “when we say that the first obligation is reflection on the way of knowing God, we make it a general statement. Thus, if reflection to the obligation of reflection (*al-naẓar fī wujūb al-naẓar*) is part of the way towards knowing God, it is possible to consider it the first obligation.”<sup>98</sup>

From the previous discussion, we observe that <sup>°</sup>Abd al-Jabbār considers that reflection on the way to knowing God is the first obligation for every obligated person. Only through reflection will one be able to eliminate the fear, a psychological harm (*ḍarār al-nafs*) from his self that has various causes.<sup>99</sup> Having examined <sup>°</sup>Abd al-Jabbār’s arguments on the first obligation, let us now analyse this obligation by

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<sup>98</sup> Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 72.

<sup>99</sup> On the causes of fear, see our discussion above, 158.

examining (i) the reality of reflection; and in the next section (ii) the bases of *taklīf* according to the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites.

#### 4.7. Reflection (*al-Nazar*)

°Abd al-Jabbār considers that the only way to acquire knowledge is through reflection (*nazar*). On this, he writes that “there is nothing in the acquired knowledge the basis of which is not attributable to reflection.”<sup>100</sup> Hence, it is important to understand the concept of *nazar* according to °Abd al-Jabbār.

In the *Mughnī* chapter 12, °Abd al-Jabbār elaborates the meaning of *nazar*, first by explaining its meaning in Arabic. On this, he writes:

Know indeed [the word] *nazar* in general is described in several meanings: (i) turning the iris (*ḥadqa*) towards the sight in order to see it;<sup>101</sup> (ii) mercy and kindness/benevolence (*al-raḥmān wa al-iḥsān*); (iii) the view of the heart (*nazar al-qalb*); and (iv) waiting (*intizār*).<sup>102</sup>

From these four meanings, °Abd al-Jabbār considers that the third, which is the view of the heart, is the meaning of *nazar* from a theological perspective. He defines *nazar* as thinking (*fikr*).<sup>103</sup> He argues that nobody is reflecting without also thinking, and nobody is thinking without reflecting, too.<sup>104</sup> As for the *fikr*, °Abd al-Jabbār defines it as: “contemplating (*ta’ammul*) the situation (*ḥāl*) of a thing, and

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<sup>100</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 67-8.

<sup>101</sup> *Taqīb al-ḥadqa al-ṣaḥīḥa naḥwu al-mar’ī*.

<sup>102</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 4. Māndkīm reports that °Abd al-Jabbār also mentions the fifth meaning of *nazar*, meeting (*muqābala*). Māndkīm, *Sharḥ*, 44.

<sup>103</sup> A similar definition of reflection was reported by Abū Hāshim, cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu’tamad*, 26.

<sup>104</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 4; Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 58; cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu’tamad*, 13.

comparison (*tamthīl*) between it and other (things), or comparison between occurrences (*ḥāditha*) with other (occurrences) that come into existence.”<sup>105</sup>

His definition of ‘*naẓar*’ as ‘thinking’, however, has been criticised by many theologians,<sup>106</sup> including ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s students Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and Ibn al-Malāḥimī. Their argument is that this type of definition is inappropriate since it only exchanges one word with another and does not reveal the reality of the thing defined. Ibn al-Malāḥimī argues that defining *naẓar* as *fikr* does not reveal the reality of *naẓar*, because someone who does not know the meaning of *fikr* will again ask what *fikr* is. Disagreeing with ‘Abd al-Jabbār, Abū al-Ḥusayn defines reflection as the “arrangement of beliefs (*ʿitiqādā*) or assumptions (*ẓunūn*) to arrive with it on something with belief or assumption.” Ibn al-Malāḥimī considers that this definition is better than the previous one, yet he adds the word contemplation (*taʿammul*) at the beginning of the definition to make it clearer (*akshaf*). Therefore, he defines *naẓar* as contemplation that contains (*yataḍamman*), the arrangement of beliefs or assumptions.<sup>107</sup>

However, Abū al-Ḥusayn’s definition of reflection, as previously mentioned, is general, where invalid reflection can also be included in it. Therefore, in order to

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<sup>105</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 4. On this he follows Abū Hāshim who defines *naẓar* with a similar definition, cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 26.

<sup>106</sup> A Ḥanbalite scholar, Abū Yaʿlā considers that *naẓar* is different from *fikr*. He argues that at the beginning one thinks about the body whether it is temporal or eternal, while he is thinking he is in doubt. Then he reflects to look for the proof, cf. Abū Yaʿlā, *Muʿtamad*, 22.

<sup>107</sup> Ibn al-Mālāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 27. One might observe Ibn al-Malāḥimī’s role in specifying the definitions of his predecessors when he considers that the arrangement of beliefs and assumptions is based on contemplation. The same role is observed in his definition of acquired knowledge, when he specifies the act of inference (*istidlāl*) in it. When his predecessors distinguish between immediate and acquired knowledge based on one’s ability to control this knowledge, he specifies this ability as the inference. See our discussion above, 137.

distinguish a valid reflection (*al-naẓar al-ṣaḥīḥ*) from others, he defines it as “the arrangement of knowledge or assumptions based on the intellect to arrive at something with knowledge or assumptions.”<sup>108</sup> In this definition, one might observe that, in contrast to the first definition, Abū al-Ḥusayn applies the term ‘based on the intellect’ (*bi ḥasb al-ʿaql*) and the term ‘knowledge’ (*ʿulūm*).

Ibn al-Malāḥimī, in this regard, observes that the application of these terms is important in order to assure that (i) the premises used are valid; and (ii) the arrangement of the premises is sound. He maintains that only by observing these two conditions can the validity of reflection be assured.<sup>109</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī explains that valid reflection consists of the arrangement of immediate knowledge (*tartīb ulūm al-ḍarūriyya*) or acquired knowledge that is based on immediate knowledge. The arrangement of this knowledge will indicate something in which if it is unknown (*lam yuʿlam*) the immediate knowledge will be considered to have vanished (*zawāl*).

In this case, he gives an example of a *compos mentis* person (*ʿāqil*) who already knows that smoke is not created except by fire.<sup>110</sup> This person, when he sees smoke but not a fire, will necessarily know that there must be a fire, for he infers the existence of fire with smoke.<sup>111</sup> Scrutinizing this example, Ibn al-Malāḥimī elaborates that the argument is as follows: (a) all smoke must come from fire; (b) I just saw smoke; therefore (c) it must be a fire. He argues that if (c) is unknown,

<sup>108</sup> The different between the arrangement of knowledge (*ʿilm*) and assumption (*ẓann*) is that the former is based on indication (*dilāla*) such as the knowledge of the creator based on the indication that a temporal creature needs a creator; and the latter is based on sign (*imāra*) such as the sign of humid cloudy day for the rain. Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 28.

<sup>109</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 27.

<sup>110</sup> He probably knows it through his eye sight at the first time. This knowledge is immediately known since it is based on perception.

<sup>111</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 52.

either (a) or (b) must be eliminated. Since neither (a) nor (b) can be eliminated from one's self, therefore, knowledge of (c) will inevitably be acquired. Based on this explanation, Ibn al-Malāḥimī posits that most of the arguments related to acquired knowledge are similar to this. Therefore, the argument (*wajh istidlāl*) in this example indicates that reflection can lead to knowledge.<sup>112</sup>

According to °Abd al-Jabbār, the result of reflection (c) is generated (*mutawallid*) from *nazar*. He explains that when (i) reflection is engaged in by a *compos mentis* person (°*āqil*) on the indication, which is known (*ma'lūm*) to him,<sup>113</sup> and (ii) there is no obstacle, the reflection will certainly generate knowledge.<sup>114</sup> Also, knowledge that is generated from *nazar* must follow its premises. Hence, if one reflects on the proof of the temporality of bodies, he will not acquire knowledge on the truthfulness of the Prophet. °Abd al-Jabbār also explains that the generation of knowledge from reflection occurs in uniformity (*tarīqa wāḥida*), which is based on one's intention (*qaṣd*) and motive (*dā'i*). This reality indicates that one is a direct agent of reflection and an indirect agent of knowledge. Therefore, the rules of generated acts also apply to this act.<sup>115</sup> However, °Abd al-Jabbār maintains that reflection is not the aim in and of itself, but a means; therefore, he argues that it is not valid to reflect except by targeting knowledge, assumptions (*ẓann*), or other things.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 52.

<sup>113</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 11.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. *Mughnī*, xii, 77.

<sup>115</sup> For our discussion on generated act see above, 143.

<sup>116</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 9. I suggest that °Abd al-Jabbār's statement that *nazar* can also aim for something that is other than knowledge and assumption (*ghairihimā*) is significance; for Ibn al-Malāḥimī later proves that eliminating fear is also one of the aims of reflection. Without this statement °Abd al-Jabbār's view is very weak.

However, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, in this regard, takes a more analytical approach, when he maintains that the obligation of reflection is not only for acquiring other things, but also the aim by itself. In this case, he explains that the obligation of reflection exists in two aspects: first, the reflection is obligatory for itself, because through reflection, one will be able to eliminate the fear in his self. A *compos mentis* person (*‘āqil*) will know that only by reflection will he become nearer to knowing anything he does not know. Therefore, he reflects to eliminate the fear. Ibn al-Malāḥimī believes that this reason alone is enough for one to know the obligation of reflection. Fear, he argues, is a psychological harm (*ḍarār al-nafs*), and avoiding the harm is an immediate knowledge. Therefore, since avoiding this harm is only possible through reflection, reflection is obligatory.<sup>117</sup>

The second aspect of the obligatory nature of reflection has to do with certain knowledge such as the knowledge of God, His unity, wisdom and justice. This knowledge is compulsory for every obligated person, because by knowing it, an obligated person will be further from doing evil and nearer to performing the obligation. He argues that since the only way to know this is through reflection, therefore, reflection is obligatory.<sup>118</sup> Justifying his argument, Ibn al-Malāḥimī explains that an obligated person has a strong desire to perform an evil thing and dislikes performing the obligation. However, when he knows that there is a creator who will punish him for his disobedience (*ma‘ṣia*) and reward him for his obedience

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<sup>117</sup> cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu‘tamad*, 80.

<sup>118</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu‘tamad*, 81.

toward the obligation, he will be nearer to performing the obligation and further from disobedience.<sup>119</sup>

From this discussion, one might observe that Ibn al-Malāḥimī successfully argues that the obligation of reflection is not only for acquiring knowledge but also for eliminating the fear from one's self. Therefore, with this argument, it seems that he manages to reject °Abd al-Jabbār's opinion that reflection cannot be the aim by itself. However, when °Abd al-Jabbār mentions that things other than knowledge and assumption (*ghairihimā*) can also become the aim of reflection, I suggest that eliminating fear is also included; for, if this is not the case, his view must be abandoned.

As for the type of reflection, °Abd al-Jabbār divides it into two types; first, worldly affairs (*umūr al-dunyā*), such as trade (*tijāra*), medicine (*ḥibb*), crafts (*ṣināʿa*) and geometry (*handasa*); and second, religious affairs (*umūr al-dīn*). He divides reflection on religious affairs into two types: (i) to look for a true knowledge based on proof (*dalīl*); and (ii) to defend the religious doctrine from critics.<sup>120</sup> °Abd al-Jabbār's main concern here is reflection on the religious affairs, particularly to look for the true knowledge. This last type of reflection is obligatory for every obligated person. Through reflection, he maintains that one can know the truth in religion.

Then, he explains that it is possible for us to convey the result of a valid reflection to others by telling him the aspect (*wajh*) of how we find it. However, that person

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<sup>119</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 81.

<sup>120</sup> Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 45.

himself needs to reflect, for we cannot force him into ‘knowledge’. What we can do is explain to him how we arrange the indication (*dilāla*) and how to reflect on the basis that if he reflects he will know. If he follows the instruction, he will obtain the knowledge, because the generation of knowledge from reflection is not a privilege for only certain people. However, he argues that we need to make him refer to the immediate knowledge that exists in him. By doing so, he will be able to respond to the proof properly and identify the truth.<sup>121</sup>

However, one might argue that reflection is not reliable, since there are many mistakes that occur on the part of the reflector (*al-nāzir*). Defending his predecessor, Ibn al-Malāḥimī argues that when it is clear to us that reflection leads to knowledge in certain situations, and then we find that some reflectors are mistaken, we know that the mistake is not because of reflection, but due to their own shortcomings. Explaining his argument, he maintains that every product (*ṣanʿa*) has a defect from the manufacturer (*ṣāniʿ*), but this does not indicate the whole product is faulty. However, it does indicate that there have been some mistakes during the process (*tarīq*) of manufacturing. He claims that if this argument can be accepted to prove the invalidity of the reflection, then one can consider that a mistake from an accountant or engineer indicates the invalidity of accountancy and engineering. However, he points out that when we say that reflection can lead to knowledge, this does not mean all types of reflection, but rather a specific reflection that follows certain conditions. If these conditions are fulfilled, mistakes will not occur.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 73.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 53. For his argument against those who consider reflection is innovation (*bidʿa*) see, 75-6.

#### 4.8. The Basis of Obligation

Having discussed the reality of reflection, I will now examine a question regarding the basis of obligation. According to Ibn Mattawayh, this issue has become a polemic among the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites. They disagree on the minimum amount one needs to know about the unity of God (*aqall mā yulzam al-mukallaf<sup>c</sup> an ya<sup>c</sup>rifahu fī uṣūl al-tawḥīd*). This question was asked in order to set a limit on what every obligated person must know about God. The Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites agree that only the scholars (*ulamā<sup>ʿ</sup>*) need to know detailed theological arguments; for the general public, a brief argument is sufficient. However, they disagree on what this brief argument or the minimum level of knowledge should be.

Abū <sup>c</sup>Alī al-Jubbā<sup>ʿ</sup>ī, in this regard, maintains that the minimum level of obligation (*taḳlīf*) is that one must know the existence of God and His oneness (*tawḥīd*). Hence, he believes that knowledge of divine justice is not compulsory, since it is related with God's actions (*aḳ<sup>ʿ</sup>āl*) and not His essence (*dhātih*).<sup>123</sup> This view is based on man's obligation to thank the benefactor who gives him many gifts (*nī<sup>c</sup>ma*). Hence, one needs to know 'the benefactor' to thank Him. Based on this argument, Abū <sup>c</sup>Alī maintains that what is obligatory to a person is to know God and His oneness (*Allāh bi tawḥīdih*).<sup>124</sup>

However, Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā<sup>ʿ</sup>ī disagrees with him. He maintains that one is not only obligated to know the existence of God and His unity, but also His justice and His rewards and punishments. Abū Hāshim argues that if we consider that knowing

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<sup>123</sup> Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ* (2), 9.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 87.

God is a divine favour (*lutf*), as believed by the majority of the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites, then all this knowledge is necessary. He argues that the *lutf* is not sufficient if one only knows the existence of God, His attributes and His justice, without knowing what one deserves from rewards and punishments.<sup>125</sup>

Responding to Abū Ali<sup>̄</sup>'s argument, he argues that presumably we accept the claim that thanking the benefactor is the reason for knowing God; yet, he argues that one still needs to know the divine justice (<sup>c</sup>*ādil*). Without that knowledge, it is uncertain whether God's intention (*qaṣd*) in His action occurs out of beneficence (*iḥsān*) and therefore deserves gratitude (*shukr*), or it does not, and hence does not deserve gratitude. Abū Hāshim maintains that one can attain this knowledge only after one knows that God is just (<sup>c</sup>*ādil*) and wise (*ḥakīm*).<sup>126</sup>

Expressing his view on this contention, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār seems to accept Abū Hāshim's view; however, he adds several points to it in order to establish his own view. Therefore, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār maintains that, after one knows the existence of God, His attributes, His justice and His rewards and punishments, one must be obligated with compulsory acts (*fī<sup>c</sup>l al-wājib*) or disengaged from evil things (*amr qabīḥ*). One should also be given some time to complete that obligation, for it is implausible to obligate divine assistance (*lutf*) without obligating what has been assisted for (*malṭūf*), since *lutf* is not the aim by itself but what it was assisted for (*ma huwa luṭifa fīḥ*). Therefore, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār maintains that, only by obligating some actions on an obligated person, can he take advantage of his previous knowledge of

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<sup>125</sup>Cf. Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmū<sup>ʿ</sup>* (2), 9; Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 87.

<sup>126</sup>Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmū<sup>ʿ</sup>* (2), 9.

God. If he performs the obligations or avoids the prohibitions, indeed he has fulfilled what is required of him, and hence deserves the rewards; otherwise, he will be punished.<sup>127</sup>

Ibn al-Malāḥimī, in this regard, agrees with his predecessors that knowing God is obligatory since it is a divine favour (*luḥf*) for the *mukallaf* in fulfilling the obligations and avoiding the evils. He considers that this divine assistance is a motive for one to do good and avoid evil. Therefore, he maintains that what is obligatory for everyone to know is knowledge of the existence of God, His attributes, denying what is impermissible (*lā yajīz*) from Him and His oneness (*waḥdāniyah*). All this knowledge is a foundation for the *luḥf*. Only by knowing this knowledge will one be able to know the knowledge of *luḥf*.<sup>128</sup> Here, one might observe that Ibn al-Malāḥimī does not consider that certain acts are included at the minimum level of the obligation. Hence, by excluding any act from the minimum level of obligation, he is consistent with Abū ʿAlī and Abū Hāshim’s view, but disagrees with ʿAbd al-Jabbār on this matter.

From the abovementioned arguments on the minimum level of knowing God, one might observe that they are interrelated with each theologian’s view on the cause of fear. Abū ʿAlī, for instance, maintains that the reason for a person’s fear is his finding that thanking the benefactor is obligatory. Therefore, it is sufficient according

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<sup>127</sup> There is a confusion regarding the translation of the text in the *Majmūʿs*. In Azmī’s edition, he writes *yakhtarimah*, which means ‘cause him to die’, while in Houben’s edition, he writes it as “*yaḥtarimah*”, ‘respect him’, which is confusing. My translation is based on the context of the sentence (*faʿin faʿala fih wājib<sup>am</sup> aw ijtanaba qabil<sup>am</sup>, faqad faʿala mā ʿurīḍa lah wa istaḥaqqā bih al-thawāb wa illa jāza fī al-waqt al-thānī min Allāh jalla wa aza an yakhtarimah/ yaḥtarimah.*) Cf. Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ* (1), 19; (2), 9.

<sup>128</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 538-42.

to Abū ʿAlī for one to know God’s existence and His oneness in order to thank Him.<sup>129</sup> In contrast, Abū Hāshim, ʿAbd al-Jabbār and Ibn al-Malāḥimī emphasize the external reasons for knowing God such as disputes among people regarding religious truth and the warning (*al-khāṭir*) from God that establishes eschatological fear. Hence, this will imply that one needs to know in detail about one’s Creator, His laws, rewards and punishments. Yet, ʿAbd al-Jabbār goes further to include the practical aspect of *taklīf* by performing obligations and avoiding prohibitions. Thus, by doing this, he establishes a firm ground for his rational obligation.

However, one might observe that ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s view is absurd because he includes the obligation of certain acts in the minimum level of obligation. If this is the case, we say to him that the revelation is necessary, since without revelation it is impossible for one to know how to thank the benefactor. ʿAbd al-Jabbār may answer this question by saying that it is possible to use the revelation (Qur’ān) to know the act of thanking the benefactor, because after we have already proved by reason that God is just, His acts as well as His speech (*kalām*) is a proof. Therefore, we can use the Qur’ān and the *hadīth* in order to learn the details of obligation.

In this case, we say to him, the minimum level of obligation is no longer rational obligation, but also includes the revealed obligation (*taklīf sharʿī*). In addition, ʿAbd al-Jabbār also clearly indicates that the revealed obligation is only known through the revelation.<sup>130</sup> Therefore, he did not solve the problem of *Ahl al-fatra*. Since they did not receive any revealed teaching that explains how to thank the benefactor,

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<sup>129</sup> See Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 87.

<sup>130</sup> Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 75.

punishing them will imply injustice from God. Since injustice is impossible to God, they should not have been obligated in the first place.

#### 4.9. Knowledge of Good and Evil

The problem of good and evil in classical Islamic theology (*kalām*) is one of the key issues disputed between the Ashʿarites and the Muʿtazilites.<sup>131</sup> The main question is: What is good and evil? The answer to this question will also be related to the answers for other questions, such as: How can one know good and evil? Is it through revelation or reason? What is the role of the intellect and the revelation in religious ethics? How was religious obligation (*taḳlīf*) established? The answers to these questions will determine the ethical theories built by Muslim scholars. Therefore, despite their agreement that one must perform good acts and avoid bad ones, classical Muslim theologians disagree on how to know good and evil.

The Muʿtazilite are concerned to establish that the nature of right and wrong can be determined by reason alone. The grounds of their validity can be rationally justified and independent of the divine prescription as laid down in the Qurʾān.<sup>132</sup> This view is agreed to among the Muʿtazilites, except that they have divided into two schools which are the Baghdād and the Baṣra school. The Baghdād school holds that good and evil are intrinsic in the action. Abū al-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī (d. 317/929) affirms that the good and evil of certain acts is embedded in the act itself. Lying, for instance, is bad ontologically. To imagine a “good lie” is as impossible as imagining a five-legged horse. The Baghdād school believes that the moral value of an act is a real

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<sup>131</sup> See *Mūghnī*, vi(1), 25; al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*; 24.

<sup>132</sup> Fakhry, *Ethical Theories*, 32.

attribute in the essence of the act, and is unaffected by the agent's intention or circumstances.<sup>133</sup> For them, killing, stealing and lying are prohibited absolutely, whatever their situations.<sup>134</sup> However, the Baṣra school believe that the moral quality of the act is not embedded in the act itself, but depends on the intention and consciousness of the actor. Good and evil determined by the aspect (*wajh*) and the intention (*qaṣd*) of the doer.<sup>135</sup>

°Abd al-Jabbār considers that the knowledge of good and evil is known immediately by human being; for instance, justice (*°adl*) is good and wrongdoing (*ẓulm*) is bad. However, to determine which act is wrongdoing and which is not, human beings need to acquire that knowledge via reason. Sometimes, disagreement appears when one wants to determine which act is just and which is not, or what is good and what is evil. The Kharijites, for instance, although they have achieved the maturity of the intellect, are confused regarding the morality of killing their opponents. They believe that their opponents deserve to be killed; therefore, killing them is just, when in fact it is not. However, °Abd al-Jabbār explains that the confusion among the Kharijites is regarding the killing of their enemies but not the killing of their own men, since they firmly believe that the latter is unjust (*ẓulm*).<sup>136</sup>

In this case, he argues that the action should be defined by reference to the factors that exhibit the purpose underlying it as considered by a willing and capable agent.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Abū Rashīd, *Masā'il*, 357; cf. Reinhart, *Before Revelation*, 139; Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 47-8.

<sup>134</sup> Abū Rashīd, *Masā'il*, 357; Reinhart, *Before Revelation*, 141-3.

<sup>135</sup> Mānkadīm, *Sharḥ*, 325-7; cf. Reinhart, *Before Revelation*, 139.

<sup>136</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 356-7.

<sup>137</sup> See *Mughnī*, vi (1), 57.

°Abd al-Jabbār, in this regard, agrees with the Baṣran view. He believes that knowledge of good and evil can be obtained through reason alone; however, the moral quality of the act is not embedded in the act itself, as believed by the Baghdādīs, but depends on the intention and consciousness of the actor.<sup>138</sup>

He explains that the value of the acts is revealed by the faces (*wajh*) that arise (*waqa'a*) with the occurrence (*ḥudūth*) of the act. They are sometimes known immediately by the observer, and occasionally he needs an inquiry (*naẓar*) and contemplation (*ta'ammul*) in order to see the relevant *wajhs* of the act. When he perceives the *wajh* correctly, he has perceived the moral quality of the act he contemplates.<sup>139</sup> However, the *wajh* appears only when the act is complete. Therefore, before its production, the act cannot be assessed since its *wajh* of good or evil cannot yet have manifested itself.<sup>140</sup> In this case, he argues that the action should be defined by reference to the factors which exhibit the purpose underlying it as considered by a willing and capable agent.<sup>141</sup>

The Ash'arites, on the contrary, disagree with both schools of Mu'tazilites in this matter. They believe that the knowledge of good and evil can only be known through revelation. Good is what the law presents praise for when one does it. Obligation (*wājib*) is the act where the law presents a categorical command for performing it. Good is not an attribute additional to law, which becomes known through it; rather, it

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<sup>138</sup> *Mughnī*, vi (1), 57; Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmū'*, (1), 236:24; Reinhart, *Before Revelation*, 148.

<sup>139</sup> *Mughnī*, vi (1), 60; Reinhart, *Before Revelation*, 148.

<sup>140</sup> *Mughnī*, viii, 103; Abū Rashīd, *Masā'il*, 375:5-6; Reinhart, *Before Revelation*, 149.

<sup>141</sup> However, °Abd al-Jabbār considers that lying (*kidhb*) and wrong doing (*ẓulm*) are intrinsically bad. See *Mughnī*, vi (i), 103

is the same as the law's presentation of praise for one who does it."<sup>142</sup> Revelation, therefore, is the primary source for moral knowledge. Most instances of lying are bad, not intrinsically, but because God prohibits them. Some types of lying are not bad, since God permits them. If He decides that lying is good and obligatory, then so it will be.<sup>143</sup> Meanwhile, bad (*qabīḥ*) according to them is an act that is condemned by the revelation.<sup>144</sup>

°Abd al-Jabbār, in this regard, rejects the ethical voluntarism of the Ash°arites. He argues that the expression of a command or prohibition of God does not necessarily imply obligation. For instance, sometimes He is only recommending action, not making it obligatory, but uses the imperative verb just the same,<sup>145</sup> as when God says to the people of paradise: "Eat and drink merrily."<sup>146</sup> °Abd al-Jabbār also explains that there is always an intelligible reason for the things prohibited and commanded in revelation. He quotes the Qur'an to support his view: "Surely God bids us to be just, good and giving to kinsmen; and He forbids indecency, dishonour and insolence."<sup>147</sup> Thus, God refers to these things as real virtues and vices, with their own characters prior to command and prohibition.<sup>148</sup>

On this point, °Abd al-Jabbār writes:

If good and evil is based on the command of revelation, it implies that if God forbids justice and honesty they will become

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<sup>142</sup> Cf. al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 228; Ibn Furāk, *Hudūd*, 11; al-Mutawwalī, *Mughnī*, 43. Cf. Shihadeh, *Theological Ethics*, 53.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. al-Ash°arī, *Lumā'*, 170. Cf. Shihadeh, *Theological Ethics*, 53.

<sup>144</sup> Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāya*, 370.

<sup>145</sup> *Mughnī*, vi, (i), 108-109.

<sup>146</sup> Qur. 17: 115.

<sup>147</sup> Qur. 16: 92.

<sup>148</sup> *Mughnī*, vi, (i), 64 & 113. Cf. Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 57.

bad, and when He commands with injustice and lying they will become good because the cause (*ʿilla*) of both of them is one.<sup>149</sup>

ʿAbd al-Jabbār also argues that based on the Ashʿarites' view those who do not believe in God, such as the Atheists, will not know good and evil. However, this is not the case, since the Atheists also know that wrongdoing (*zulm*) is evil, although they reject divine commands and prohibitions.<sup>150</sup> Based on this argument, ʿAbd al-Jabbār explains that the intellect (*ʿaql*) is divine evidence (*ḥujja*) for human beings. With reason, man is capable of knowing God; his obligation (*taklīf*) is based on the knowledge of good and evil. Therefore, thanking the benefactor, for instance, is obligatory even prior to the coming of revelation.<sup>151</sup>

#### 4.10. Remarks on Ethical Realism

In this section, I will analyse the position of ethical realism in theological disputes between the Muʿtazilites and the Ashʿarites. I will compare the view of ʿAbd al-Jabbār and his contemporary Abū al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, a representative of the school of the Ashʿarites, on the ethical knowledge. Through this comparison, I will also indicate that the points of agreement between them are far more obvious than the points of contention.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār, in agreement with his predecessors, accepts ethical realism. His main argument is based on the answer to the question: How can human beings prove the validity of revelation? He believes that this can only be accomplished through the intellect alone. Therefore, the principle of ethical realism is essential in order to

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<sup>149</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 311.

<sup>150</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 311.

<sup>151</sup> Amīn A., *Dūhā al-Islām*, iii, 49.

prove the validity of revelation. Al-Baghdādī, in this respect, agrees with ʿAbd al-Jabbār that the soundness of revelation is confirmed by the intellect when the former mentions that the validity of the Prophet can be proved only through the intellect.<sup>152</sup> However, al-Baghdādī maintains that one cannot know good and evil by the intellect alone, but through revelation. Therefore, he rejects ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s ethical realism;<sup>153</sup> instead, he supports ethical voluntarism.<sup>154</sup>

However, one might observe that the rejection of ethical realism by al-Baghdādī is absurd, since he accepts that knowledge of the validity of the Prophet is found through the intellect when he writes:

Knowledge of the temporality of the world, the eternity of its creator, His oneness, His attributes, His justice and His wisdom; also the possibility of obligation (*taklīf*), the validity of the prophets through miracles; all these doctrines are based on rational arguments.<sup>155</sup>

This passage indicates that, in the hierarchy of proof, al-Baghdādī agrees with ʿAbd al-Jabbār that the intellect is the first proof, followed by the Qur’ān, *sunna* and *ijmāʿ* (consensus) and *qiyās* (analogy). The validity of revelation can be established only after the validity of the prophets is proven; moreover, since their validity is proved by the intellect, the intellect is the first in the hierarchy of proof.

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<sup>152</sup> Cf. al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 14.

<sup>153</sup> For the Ashʿarites’ arguments against the Muʿtazilites, see Hourani, “Juwaynī’s Criticism”, 161-73; Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 83-96.

<sup>154</sup> Hourani names this theory theistic subjectivism. It is subjective, he explains because it relates values to the view of a judge who decides them, denying anything objective in the character of the acts themselves that would make them right or wrong independently of anyone’s decision or opinion. And the view is theistic because the decider of values is taken to be God. Cf. Hourani, “Ethics in Medieval Islam”, 130.

<sup>155</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 14.

Furthermore, ʿAbd al-Jabbār maintains that the implication of denying ethical realism is that the foundation to prove the validity of revelation cannot be established. In this case, he argues that the proof of the validity of the Prophet is based on the miracle that is demonstrated to the intellect. However, this miracle must be based on another principle: “That God will not provide the impostor (*kadhhab*) with the miracle to deviate people from the right path, because that was bad and God will not do bad thing.” Without this principle, he argues that the soundness of revelation will not stand, because we cannot guarantee that He will not provide a miracle for the impostor. Therefore, the knowledge of the goodness of God’s acts can be established only through the intellect, based on ethical realism.

Scrutinizing this argument, ʿAbd al-Jabbār explains that the validity of the Prophet is based on the principle that “God will do good acts and He will not do bad acts.” God will support the true prophet with the miracle (*muʿjiza*) to prove that he was sent by Him. Human intellect will infer that God will not provide the miracle to the impostor, for that will mislead people from the right path. Therefore, the intellect concludes that God will provide the miracle only to the true prophet, because providing the miracle to an impostor is bad and God will never do a bad thing. It should have been clear that without this principle, the soundness of the revelation will not stand.<sup>156</sup>

Al-Baghdādī’s argument on the proof of the validity of the Prophet is also in agreement with ʿAbd al-Jabbār, when the former reports that: “It is conceivable that

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<sup>156</sup> *Tabaqāt*, 139. For more ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s arguments against the Ashʿarites ethical theory, see Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 55-62.

someone who has a true claim to prophecy will be supported by a miracle to indicate the truthfulness of his claim. And it is unthinkable that the miracle will appear in order to support an impostor.”<sup>157</sup>

This quotation indicates that one of the roles of reason is to prove the validity of the Prophet. The miracle, he argues, will occur only from the true prophet and not from the impostor. He explains that when the one who claims that he is a prophet manages to produce a miracle that is consistent with what he had claimed, this indicates his truthfulness. For God is confirming his claim and supporting it with supernatural power, the miracle. This indication is based on the previous knowledge that God will not provide the impostor with the miracle because it is bad, and God will never do a bad thing.<sup>158</sup>

From here, one might observe that al-Baghdādī, although he rejects the principle of ethical realism, applies it in his argument to prove the validity of the Prophet.<sup>159</sup> Hence, the disagreement between the Ash‘arites and the Mu‘tazilites, as indicated through ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s and al-Baghdādī’s arguments on ethical realism, seems to be less than generally expected. Both of them agreed that the validity of the Prophet is proved by the intellect. Therefore, it seems that they shared the ethical realism at this level. However, al-Baghdādī insists that stand alone reason may provide knowledge of metaphysical truth (e.g. that the world is created, that God exists, and

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<sup>157</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 173.

<sup>158</sup> *Mughnī*, vi (1), 127; Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Fā’iq*, 53; Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 57.

<sup>159</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 173.

that prophecy is conceivable),<sup>160</sup> but it will never perceive moral truth in acts and things.<sup>161</sup>

Their disagreement is more obvious in the debate on the obligation to act and prohibition against action (*wujūb al-af'āl wa taḥrīmuhu*), when al-Baghdādī maintains that the knowledge of this can be obtained only through revelation. On this issue, he writes:

One can only know the obligation of certain acts and its prohibition via revelation. If God obligates something towards His slave directly or through the messenger it becomes obligatory (*wājib*). Likewise, if He prohibits them from something directly or through the messenger, it will become prohibited (*ḥaram*) to them.<sup>162</sup>

Al-Baghdādī and the Ash'arites in general believe that good and evil are determined by the revelation; therefore, obligation and prohibition must also come from revelation.<sup>163</sup> At this level, one can observe the difference between 'Abd al-Jabbār and al-Baghdādī. The former offers a totally different view when he considers that that revelation is not essential in knowing good and evil. The revelation, according to him, is not the key to start the obligation. After one achieves the maturity of the intellect, one will be considered as an obligated person (*mukallaḥ*).<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> In this regard al-Juwaynī considers that a prophet's performance of miracles will habitually (*fī al-ʿāda*) provide sufficient motivation for people to consider his claims seriously and to reflect upon the theological matters he refers to, see *Shāmil*, 118-9. Therefore, according to the Ash'arites the truthfulness of prophecy does not depend on reflection but on miracles. Cf. Shihadeh, "Existence of God", 200.

<sup>161</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 202-5; al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vii, 146. For the Ash'arites' detail argument see Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 49-56.

<sup>162</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 24.

<sup>163</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 25; cf. al-Juwaynī, *Shāmil*, 115; Ibn Furāq, *Mujarrad*, 96; Shihadeh, *Teleological Ethics*, 49.

<sup>164</sup> *Mughnī*, xi, 385.

One might agree with °Abd al-Jabbār that reason alone is capable of knowing good and evil without revelation, but I posit that this does not necessarily implies the obligation. For instance, one knows that thanking the benefactor is good by reason. However, when it comes to the method of thanking the benefactor, i.e. worship (*°ibāda*), intellect alone is unable to know the accurate way of how to perform it. If the intellect alone tries to determine this, most probably that will lead one to go astray. Some idol worshipers were led to this type of worship by their reason.<sup>165</sup> Therefore, the intellect alone is not enough in order for one to know how to offer gratitude to God.<sup>166</sup>

From the abovementioned arguments, I suggest that there are several reasons that led °Abd al-Jabbār and al-Baghdādī to differ in their explanation of the ethical theories. Firstly, °Abd al-Jabbār considers that the principle of ethical realism (*taḥsīn wa taqbiḥ al-°aqlayān*) is vital for proving the validity of the Qur’ān. This will occur by proving that God is just (*°ādil*). After proving this, everything that is produced by Him is good, including His speech, the Qur’ān.

In order to prove that God is just, one needs to examine His acts. To do so, one needs to use the principle of ethical realism. The acts of God are based on His attributes of justice. Therefore, God will certainly not perform any type of evil because this would contradict his justice. When asked how to prove that God will not do an evil act, °Abd al-Jabbār answers by referring to the principle of ethical realism. In this regard, he writes:

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<sup>165</sup> See for instance Qur. 39: 3.

<sup>166</sup> For further discussion on this issue, see above, 175.

Our proof is that God (*jalla dhikruh*) knows the evilness of every evil; He also knows that He does not want evil neither does he need it. Therefore, (ʿAbd al-Jabbār asks) who, in this situation, will choose an evil action?<sup>167</sup>

Meanwhile al-Baghdādī concentrates his view on human acts alone. For him and the Ashʿarites in general, the acts of God are excluded from humans' ethical judgment. They believe that God's acts are beyond human evaluation, because all His acts are good and just. God, the Ashʿarites argue, is the absolute owner and creator of this world, so, He has an absolute freedom and power in how to run this world. No human law can evaluate or restrict God's acts.<sup>168</sup>

Secondly, we observe that al-Baghdādī develops his theological argument towards the Muslim society, which has already accepted the validity of the Qur'ān as the word of God. Therefore, the need for the principle of ethical realism in order to prove the validity of the Qur'ān is not essential. Meanwhile, ʿAbd al-Jabbār builds up his argumentations based on his predecessors' method, which focuses on a wider audience, including those who have not yet accepted the validity of the Qur'ān. Therefore, he needs to prove the validity of the Qur'ān via reason and based on ethical realism.

Thirdly, I also suggest that the position taken by al-Baghdādī to reject the ethical realism is partly due to historical factors related to the formation of the Ashʿarites' school of thought. The formation of the school by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d.

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<sup>167</sup> *Mukhtaṣar*, 235. For more detailed information on ʿAbd al-Jabbār's argument regarding God's acts and ethics, see above, 118 & 164.

<sup>168</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 35. cf. Shihadeh, "The Existence of God", 199.

324/935) occurred after the establishment of the Islamic school of laws.<sup>169</sup> During his lifetime, the jurists' methodology and their concept of knowledge was accepted by the majority of the Muslim scholars. Following his historic leaving of the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites, al-Ash<sup>c</sup>ari<sup>1</sup> abandons their ethical realism based on the early role of the intellect.<sup>170</sup> Instead he adopts a new methodology based on the jurists' view regarding the hierarchy of proofs that started with the Qur'<sup>'</sup>an, Sunna, *Ijmā'* and *Qiyās*.<sup>171</sup> We posit that al-Baghdādī follows the same methodology adopted by al-Ash<sup>c</sup>ari<sup>1</sup>, by rejecting the ethical realism.

Abd al-Jabbār, on the other hand, maintains the line of the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites who believe in the ethical realism. Therefore, he considers that the intellect determines the good and evil of acts. However, we might ask, since we observe that al-Baghdādī depends wholly on God to determine ethical knowledge, what is Abd al-Jabbār's opinion regarding the role of God on this point?

Based on his theory of knowledge, one might observe that similar to al-Baghdādī, Abd al-Jabbār also accepts that God is the one who determines good and evil. Hence, I posit that there is no difference between them regarding the source of ethical knowledge. What differs is only the way in which man knows that knowledge. Abd al-Jabbār considers that man knows basic ethical principles directly from God through immediate knowledge. He believes that all human beings have been provided with that knowledge, without exception. Meanwhile, al-

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<sup>169</sup> For more information about the development of legal thought, see J. Schacht, *The Origin*, 269-328.

<sup>170</sup> For more information about his conversion from a Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilite to Ahl al-Ḥadīth wa al-Sunna, see Watt, *Formative Period*, 304-7.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Watt, *Formative Period*, 173; Schacht, *The Origin*, 75.

Baghdādī maintains that the ethical knowledge is determined by God and can only be known through the prophets. This means that without the Prophet, there is no good and evil, hence, no obligation before revelation. Therefore, it is not only al-Baghdādī who considers that the ethical knowledge is from God; °Abd al-Jabbār also upholds the same view. The latter maintains that the ethical principles are immediately known and all immediate knowledge is created by God. Thus, God is also the creator of ethical knowledge.

Accordingly, I suggest that translating the term “*°aql*” in °Abd al-Jabbār’s theology as “unaided reason” is inappropriate, for this does not describe the true meaning of °Abd al-Jabbār’s view. Instead, this term gives a negative depiction, as if °Abd al-Jabbār gives the intellect an absolute power to determine good and evil independently from God. In his work, °Abd al-Jabbār never considers that the intellect is capable of knowing the ethical knowledge independently from God, since the intellect itself is created by God through immediate knowledge. One can observe this through his definition of *°aql* as a group of specific knowledge that, if present in the *mukallaf*, will allow him to reflect for acquiring proof and to perform the obligatory.<sup>172</sup> Therefore, good and evil in °Abd al-Jabbār’s theology is determined by God through the immediate knowledge created in the human mind. Meanwhile, the Ash°arites consider that good and evil is determined by God in acquired knowledge, which is the revelation through the prophets.

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<sup>172</sup> *Mughnī*, xi, 375. For our discussion on *°aql*, see above, 108.

Before ending my discussion on the obligation of knowing God, I will briefly discuss the role of revelation according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār. Unlike some Muslim philosophers who consider revelation to be superfluous, ʿAbd al-Jabbār declares that revelation is a vital part of *taklīf*. His division of *taklīf* into *ʿaqlī* and *sharʿī* clearly indicates the significance of revelation in *taklīf*. However, since the scope of this study is on the rational obligation I will suffice by mentioning briefly the role of revelation according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār based on the report by M. Fakhry.

According to Fakry, the roles of revelation according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār are: (i) to exhibit the principles already established by reason, but not to confirm or validate them; (ii) to reconcile between conflicting revelations or parts of revelation. Whenever error or disagreement arises, revelation is required in order to correct this error or abrogate (*nasakh*) an outdate revelation;<sup>173</sup> (iii) to specify those particular acts which are morally commendable and whose goodness is determined by reason, but only in general terms. The prophets are sent by God, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues, in order to instruct us concerning those actions that He had already instilled in our intellects, with a view to confirming (*taqrīr*) and specifying them in detail;<sup>174</sup> (iv) to define the kinds of sanctions attached to them in the life to come. In this respect, revelation does no more than restate the obligation in the general theological or eschatological context. Bad thus become equivalent to the prohibited (*maḥzūr*), unlawful (*muḥarram*) or sinful (*maʿṣiya*), all of which describe actions in terms of violating the principle laid down by God.

<sup>173</sup> *Mughnī*, xiv, 151 and vi (i), 64. cf. Fakhry, *Ethical Theories*, 34.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. *Māndkīm, Sharḥ*, 564; Fakry, *Ethical Theories*, 34.

However, °Abd al-Jabbār maintains that the role of revelation will never violate the principles already established by reason' neither will it confirm them. His arguments on this are based on three foundations: first: what established by reason is necessary; therefore, it is obviously not in need of confirmation of any kind. Second: the validity of revelation being dependant on reason cannot, without appealing to principle, depend on revelation.<sup>175</sup> Third: if revelation is needed to confirm those principles, it would require another revelation to confirm it and so on *ad infinitum*.<sup>176</sup>

### **Conclusion**

From the previous explanations, we can conclude that °Abd al-Jabbār's argument on the obligation of knowing God is based on the immediate knowledge. When he maintains that the basic ethical principles are known immediately by every *compos mentis* person, he manages to establish a ground for a rational obligation. Based on this immediate knowledge, one can reflect to establish the concept of ethical realism. However, his ethical realism does not necessarily mean that °Abd al-Jabbār rejects the role of God in determining good and evil. Instead, °Abd al-Jabbār maintains that God is the one who determines good and evil. Yet, this is not necessarily through the Prophet, as believed by the Ash°arites, but by creating it directly in the human mind.

According to °Abd al-Jabbār, the need of knowing God is caused by the fear that exists in one's soul. He explains that after one achieves the maturity of the intellect, one will realize the existence of fear in his soul. The causes of this fear are either through one's introspection or through others. God will create fear in every obligated

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<sup>175</sup> Fakhry, *Ethical Theories*, 35.

<sup>176</sup> *Mughnī*, xiv, 151.

person through the divine notion (*khāṭir*). Based on this fear, °Abd al-Jabbār establishes the rational obligation of knowing God.

°Abd al-Jabbār manages to establish the obligation of knowing God rationally due to his view on the concept of obligation (*taklīf*). He considers that *taklīf* is not based on the production of the command between two parties, but on notification (*ʿlām*). Therefore, the revelation is not necessary in order to establish the obligation, since the command from God is no longer the basis of obligation. In this regard, he differs with Abū Hāshim, the Ashʿarites and Ibn al-Malāḥimī. However, although the basis of obligation is only based on reason and no longer depends on the revelation, there are people who are exempted from it. For instance, people who live in remote mountains and do not experience the fear or the need to reflect are exempted from *taklīf*. The main reason for this is that they do not achieve the maturity of the intellect.

Based on the immediacy of the ethical principle, °Abd al-Jabbār goes further to establish the concept of rational obligation. However, his theory of rational obligation is not consistent with the concept of divine justice (*al-ʿadl*), especially when applied to the *ahl al-fatra*. The eternal punishment for *ahl al-fatra* because of their mistakes in belief and worship will imply the injustice of God. The intellect, as he explains, is capable of knowing God and knows the obligation to thank the benefactor; yet the exact way to thank Him, i.e. worship, is unknown through the intellect alone. Therefore, if we accept °Abd al-Jabbār's concept of rational obligation, this implies for the *Ahl al-fatra* who reflects but does not know God,

either he will be rewarded for not knowing God, which is bad; or he will be punished. The latter implies the denial of divine justice, since God will punish someone without giving him proper instruction on how to worship Him.

Therefore, in this case, the Ash<sup>ʿ</sup>arites' view is more plausible, since they consider that the obligation is only possible after the revelation. They base their argument on the epistemological foundation that the ethical principle is unknown immediately but acquired through revelation, to reject the ethical realism. Therefore, they consider that the obligation is only possible after the coming of revelation. The Ash<sup>ʿ</sup>arites reject the rational obligation; instead, the only obligation they believe in is the revealed one (*taklīf sharʿī*). Although the Ash<sup>ʿ</sup>arites seem to be inconsistent in their arguments on ethical realism, yet, their arguments on the concept of *taklīf* are more plausible compared to that of <sup>ʿ</sup>Abd al-Jabbār.

<sup>ʿ</sup>Abd al-Jabbār considers that reflection in order to know God is the first obligation one needs to undertake after achieving the maturity of the intellect. In this regard, he follows the Baṣran Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>tazilites and rejects the view of the Baghdād school, which considers that man's first duty is to know God. He also disagrees with other ideas such as the intention to know God, or the doubt, as the man's first duty. In his definition of reflection as thinking, <sup>ʿ</sup>Abd al-Jabbār was criticized by the late Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>tazilites. They consider that his definition did not reveal the reality of the word defined (i.e. reflection).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE PROOF OF KNOWING GOD

#### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine the foundation of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s proof of knowing God and its application. I will investigate how his theory of knowledge influences his arguments on knowing God, which includes his argument on the existence of God, the attributes of God, the Oneness of God and Divine justice. I will also examine the response from Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and other *mutakallimūn* to ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s arguments. In this discussion, I will first examine ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s arguments and then explain the critique from Abū al-Ḥusayn and other *mutakallimūn*. In this chapter, I will prove that a different epistemological background will result in a different set of theological arguments.

Like other *mutakallimūn*, knowing God is a central point in ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theology. He considers that knowing God is a divine favour (*lutf*).<sup>1</sup> Divine favour is something that, with it, one is closer to performing obligations (*wājibāt*) and staying away from evil acts. Without this divine favour, ʿAbd al-Jabbār believes that human beings are unable to obey the divine laws. This favour, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, is based on God’s wisdom and His knowledge of people’s inability to follow the divine law by their own capacity (*qudra*). He explains that when a person knows that he has a creator (*ṣāniʿ*) who created and directed him (*mudabbir dabbarahu*), and he knows that if he obeys Him he will be rewarded and if he disobeys Him he will be punished, this person will do good and avoid evil actions. Therefore, he believes that

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<sup>1</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār defines *lutf* as “what gives the motivation for obedience without omitting the choice. See *Mughnī*, xiv, 9; cf. Freimuth, *God and Humans*, 64.

God not only imposes laws, but has also taken upon Himself the duty of assisting people to obey them.<sup>2</sup>

Another important role of knowing God is to confirm the validity of revelation (*sharʿiyyāt*). By knowing God, who is perfect (*kāmil*), wise (*ḥakīm*) and just (*ʿādil*), one establishes a foundation for proving the validity of revelation (*waḥy*). The speech of God, who is perfect, wise and just, must be true and free from error. Therefore, it must be a valid argument.<sup>3</sup>

### 5.1. The Way of Knowing God

There is disagreement among Muslim scholars regarding the way to know God. The majority of early *mutakallimūn* maintained that rational reflection (*naẓar*) is the only method that provides knowledge of God. It follows that everyone, theologians and lay believers alike, ought to learn, not only the main creeds, but more primarily their key theological proofs. Most traditionalist theologians took the contrary view, holding that having a rationally unjustified belief in God, which accords with scriptural creeds, will suffice. For them, *kalām* proofs were at once reprehensible innovations and too obscure and unstable to serve as reliable bases for sound belief.<sup>4</sup>

The Muʿtazilites Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. 226/841) and Abū ʿUthmān al-Jāhiz (d. 255/869)<sup>5</sup> reportedly upheld the view that God is known immediately (*darūrī*) by

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<sup>2</sup> Mānkadīm, *Sharḥ*, 64.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Mattawayh, *Muḥīṭ*, 24.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Shihadeh, “The Existence of God”, 197-8.

<sup>5</sup> He believes that the rational proofs for the existence of God are simply too complicated to be imposed on us by the merciful God. See Van Ess, “Early Islamic Theologians”, 73. See also, *Mughnī*, xii, 342.

human beings.<sup>6</sup> Abū al-Hudhayl argues that the rational proofs for the existence of God are too complicated to be imposed on us by a merciful God.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, he maintains that the existence of God is known immediately in the sense that everybody has it and can by no means get rid of it. He believes that this immediate knowledge is the first stage before one needs to use his intellect to know God's attributes and commandments.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, if one dies as an unbeliever, the innate knowledge of God serves at the same time as a justification for God to punish everybody who does not take His revelation seriously. Consequently, he concludes that one is obliged to reflect on God's nature and to ask for His commandments because one knows about His existence from the beginning.<sup>9</sup>

Abū al-Hudhayl's consideration of knowing God as immediate knowledge is related to his view on the first stage of knowing God. On this, Ibn al-Malāḥimī reports that the first stage of knowing God according to Abū al-Hudhayl is that there is a creator for the world (*li al-ʿālam muḥdith*).<sup>10</sup> Therefore, when one knows this, one is considered by Abū al-Hudhayl as knowing God. He also considers that this knowledge is immediately known to human beings.

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<sup>6</sup> This view is also shared by Ibn Taimiyya, when he maintains that man knows God immediately and intuitively by virtue of his innate, primordial nature (*fitra*), instilled in him by God. Those with a sound *fitra* are able to bear witness to God's existence without reflection. For those with an unsound *fitra*, Ibn Taimiyya prescribes a different mode of theological knowledge, similar to an argument from design namely, the contemplation of God's signs in nature. See, Shihadeh, "The Existence of God", 198.

<sup>7</sup> Van Ess, "Early Islamic Theologians", 73; Cf. *Mughnī*, xii, 342.

<sup>8</sup> Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 32; cf. Van Ess, "Early Islamic Theologians", 66.

<sup>9</sup> Van Ess, "Early Islamic Theologians", 67.

<sup>10</sup> For our discussion on the basis of knowing God, see above, 196.

Like Abū al-Hudhayl, °Abd al-Jabbār considers that the first stage of knowing God is to know that the universe needs a creator;<sup>11</sup> however, unlike Abū al-Hudhayl, he does not consider that it is known immediately by human beings. Instead, it must be acquired (*iktisāb*) by them. Therefore, to negate Abū al-Hudhayl's view, °Abd al-Jabbār mentions two arguments. First, he argues that there are two indications that indicate that our knowledge of God is generated from our actions; therefore, it cannot be immediate knowledge. On this argument, °Abd al-Jabbār reportedly states:

Knowing God is not immediately known but acquired based on two reasons: (i) Knowing God occurs depending on our reflection (*naẓarinā*) in a constant way (*ṭarīqa wāḥida*). Therefore, it must be generated from our reflection. Since reflection is our action, knowing God is also from our action; for the agent of the cause is also the agent of the effect.<sup>12</sup> Since knowing God is from our actions; therefore, it is not immediate knowledge, because immediate knowledge occurs in us not from our actions.<sup>13</sup> (ii) Knowing God occurs based on our intentions (*quṣūdinā*) and our motives (*dawā' inā*), and it is denied based on our dislike (*karāhatunā*) and our aversion (*ṣawārifunā*).<sup>14</sup>

One might observe that °Abd al-Jabbār's arguments are based on his theory of action, which maintains that humans are the real agents (*fā'il*) of their actions, both direct and generated. Since we acquire the knowledge of God through our acts or generated acts, this means that we can control it. Our ability to control this knowledge (either to accept or to reject it), indicates that it is not an immediate knowledge since immediate knowledge is something beyond our control.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 175.

<sup>12</sup> For our discussion on generated acts, see above, 142.

<sup>13</sup> °Abd al-Jabbār considers that immediate knowledge is from God's actions, for our discussion on the immediate knowledge, see above, 104.

<sup>14</sup> Mānkdim, *Sharḥ*, 52-3.

In his second argument, °Abd al-Jabbār argues that if knowledge of God is immediately known, then it will become an excuse for the unbeliever. If knowing God is immediate knowledge, this implies it is created by God in human beings. Thus, it is not their responsibility to know God; rather it is God’s duty to create that knowledge in them. The consequence is that all the unbelievers will be excused for their ignorance or rejection of God since God does not create that knowledge in them. This consequence, according to °Abd al-Jabbār, is inconceivable; therefore, he maintains that knowing God is not an immediate knowledge, but must be acquired by us.<sup>15</sup>

°Abd al-Jabbār also rejects the view that one can know God through uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*). He defines *taqlīd* as “accepting the words of someone else without demanding from him a proof or evidence, so he uses it like a necklace (*qilāda*) around his neck.”<sup>16</sup> On this, he writes:

Know that *taqlīd* will lead one to deny immediate knowledge (*ḍarūra*); for imitating those who claimed the eternity (*qidam*) of the world is not more deserving (*laysa bi awlā*) than to blindly imitate those who claimed its temporality (*ḥudūthihā*). Consequently, one either believes in its eternity and temporality equally, or rejects both of them. Both consequences [according to °Abd al-Jabbār] are inconceivable.<sup>17</sup>

In this passage, °Abd al-Jabbār bases his argument on direct (*mubtadi*) knowledge, the first type of immediate knowledge. The application of *taqlīd*, he maintains, will negate the principle of non-contradiction (*°adam al-tanāquḍ*).<sup>18</sup> Since direct knowledge is neither refutable nor doubtable, *taqlīd* has no foundation in human

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 50.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 61. cf. Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 44.

<sup>17</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 123.

<sup>18</sup> For our discussion on this principle, see above, 131-3.

knowledge. °Abd al-Jabbār's argument can be developed as follows: a blind imitator (*muqallid*), either knows the truthworthiness of the one he imitates (*muqallad*) or not. If he does not know it, the implication is that the *muqallad* may be lying or ignorant; this implication is unacceptable. Therefore, the only possibility is that the *muqallid* knows the truthfulness of the *muqallad*.

Hence, a new question arises: how does the *muqallid* know the truthfulness of the *muqallad*? According to °Abd al-Jabbār, there are three possible answers to this question: (i) through immediate knowledge; (ii) through another *taqlīd*; and (iii) through something other than *taqlīd*. °Abd al-Jabbār rejects the first answer by arguing that, if the truthfulness of the *muqallad* was known immediately, everyone would agree about it. The rejection of this view is similar to that of those who claim that knowing God is immediate. °Abd al-Jabbār also rejects that one knows the truthfulness of the one imitated (*muqallad*) through another *taqlīd*, by mentioning two examples of *muqallad*: (a) the most pious (*azhad*) and (b) the majority (*akthar*).

Firstly, he rejects *taqlīd* as the most pious, for piety and asceticism are not signs of truth, because you can see that much Christian monasticism (*rahbaniyya*) achieves a high level of sanctity, although they are wrong according to the Muslims. On the other hand, °Abd al-Jabbār argues that the pious (*°ubbād*) are present in every group of people. Hence, a person must either make a *taqlīd* to every pious person in every group, or not to make a *taqlīd* to any of them. There is no reason to follow any of them if there is no justification for doing so. In addition, he argues that it is impossible for a person to make a *taqlīd* to every group, since there are

contradictions between the groups themselves. Therefore, he insists that one needs not follow any of them, but one must depend on reflection and proof.

To prove the invalidity of *taqlīd* to the majority, °Abd al-Jabbār argues that the majority is not a sign of truth and the minority is not the sign of falsehood (*bāḥil*). In the Qur'an, God criticises the majority with his words: "Most of them have no sense";<sup>19</sup> "But most of you are averse to the Truth."<sup>20</sup> He also praises the minority: "But a few were they who believed with him"<sup>21</sup> (*wa qalīlun min °ibādiya al-shakūr*).<sup>22</sup>

Having refuted both types of *taqlīd*, °Abd al-Jabbār concludes that *taqlīd* is not a way to know God. However, one might argue that *taqlīd* is valid based on the Qur'anic verse, "Ask the followers of the reminder (*ahl al-dhikr*) if you do not know".<sup>23</sup> Disagreeing with the claim, °Abd al-Jabbār argues that this verse is not a proof of the validity of *taqlīd*. However, it is permissible to refer to the views of a scholar in the branches (*furūʿ*) of religious laws that are based on interpretative judgment (*ijtihād*). Therefore, it is implausible to compare (*qiyās*) these verses within the principles of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*). Furthermore, he explains that what we agree on based on this verse is that people can act (*yaʿmal*) according to the scholar's interpretive judgment (*bi qawlihi*), but we do not allow people to believe that the truth is only what the scholar says and that those who disagree with him are false.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Qur. 5: 103.

<sup>20</sup> Qur. 43: 78.

<sup>21</sup> Qur. 11: 40.

<sup>22</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 123; cf. Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 62.

<sup>23</sup> Qur. 21: 7.

<sup>24</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 63.

Similarly, °Abd al-Jabbār refutes the view of those who claim that doing *taqlīd* to the Prophet is possible. He argues that following the Prophet is not a *taqlīd*, since we accept his teaching based on proof. For this reason, God provides the prophets with miracles to support them. God does not command human beings to follow the prophet blindly, but only after they accept the validity of his message through the miracles.<sup>25</sup>

Having proved that knowing God in this world is neither immediate nor through *taqlīd*,<sup>26</sup> °Abd al-Jabbār maintains that it must be acquired through proof (*adilla*). According to °Abd al-Jabbār, there are four types of proof: rational argument (*ḥujjat al-°aql*), scripture (*al-Kitāb*), the tradition of the Prophet (*Sunna*), and consensus (*ijmā°*). Knowing God, he believes, can occur only through rational argument.<sup>27</sup> He argues that proofs other than rational argument are antecedents (*far°*) of knowing God. Therefore, if one argues based on any of them (Qur'an, Sunna or *Ijmā°*) to prove the existence of God, it implies that one is arguing with the antecedent of something to prove the precedent (*asl*); this implication, he believes, is inconceivable.

Therefore, °Abd al-Jabbār criticizes those who apply proof from the Qur'an and Sunna to prove the existence of God and His attributes. The Qur'an is the speech of

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<sup>25</sup> *Mughnī*, 174.

<sup>26</sup> As for knowing God in the hereafter °Abd al-Jabbār believes it is immediate knowledge. His argument is that the hereafter is the day of reward and punishment, not the day of obligation (*taklīf*). Therefore, there is no obligation on that day including knowing God. In this regard he disagrees with °Abu al-Qāsim al-Balkhī who maintains that since God is known through reflection in this world, knowing God in the hereafter is also through reflection. For °Abd al-Jabbār's refutation of this view see *Mughnī*, xii, 58. Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 232-60.

<sup>27</sup> *Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 80.

God, Sunna is the word of the messenger of God, and the consensus must be based on the two earlier proofs. Therefore, all these proofs can be accepted only after the existence of God, His oneness and His justice have been proved. Accordingly, °Abd al-Jabbār explains that the Qur’ān can be considered a proof only when it is confirmed that it was produced by a just (°ādil) and wise (ḥakīm) God who does not lie. Likewise, the *sunna* will be accepted as proof when it is confirmed that it has come from the messenger of God who is just and wise. A similar system also applies to the consensus (*ijmā’*) since it is based on the validity of *Kitāb* and *Sunna*.<sup>28</sup>

From the previous discussion, one might observe the role played by °Abd al-Jabbār’s second sub-category of immediate knowledge, which resembles a means (*mā yajrī majrā al-ṭarīq*) in his argument.<sup>29</sup> The foundation for this sub-division is that one cannot argue with the antecedent (*far’*) of something to prove its precedent (*asl*). Therefore, as long as one is not proving the existence of a just and wise God, His speech cannot be considered as a valid proof.<sup>30</sup>

## 5.2. The Foundation of Proof

In this section, I will analyze the link between °Abd al-Jabbār’s proofs on knowing God with his theory of knowledge. Following the footsteps of the majority of the *mutakallimūn* before him,<sup>31</sup> °Abd al-Jabbār accepts the method of analogy from the seen world to the unobservable world, “*istidlāl bi al-shāhid °alā al-ghā’ib*.” Most of

<sup>28</sup> Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 88-89; cf. Tritton, *Muslim Theology*, 80.

<sup>29</sup> For more on this, see above, 94-97.

<sup>30</sup> However, there are some scholars who are unaware of the significance of this sub-section in °Abd al-Jabbār’s theological arguments, and, therefore, remain doubtful about his decision to specify a different sub-division for this principle in his epistemology. Cf. Uthmān, *Nazariyya al-taklīf*, 60; Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 53-4.

<sup>31</sup> Al-Māturīdī, *Tawḥīd*, 43; Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmū’*, (2), 165; al-Mutawallī, *Mughnī*, 18. For a modern studies on this see van Ess, “Logical Structure”, 34-42; Shihadeh, “From al-Ghazālī”, 165-9.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s argument on knowing God, as I will indicate, is based on this analogical method. The meaning of this proof is that one confirms certain attributes or judgments on God who is unseen (*ghā’ib*), based on the similarity with our seen world (*shāhid*).

At the first stage of his argument, ʿAbd al-Jabbār employs immediate knowledge to establish his existence and the seen world (*shāhid*). Knowledge of one’s self is included in the first type of immediate knowledge, which is created by God from the beginning (*mubtadi’*); knowledge of the seen world is included in perceptual knowledge (*mudrakāt*), which is also immediately known. In his epistemology, not only does ʿAbd al-Jabbār consider that our existence is real, but also that our senses and intellect are reliable. By using both means of knowledge, he confirms the existence of the external world. Based on these considerations, ʿAbd al-Jabbār maintains that what is reported by our senses is accepted as truth as long as it implies the tranquillity of the soul in our mind. Therefore, in his works, ʿAbd al-Jabbār does not argue to prove the existence of his self and the external seen world (*shāhid*), since he believes that they are immediate knowledge.<sup>32</sup>

According to Ibn Mattawayh, ʿAbd al-Jabbār maintains that there are two situations where *istidlāl bi al-shāhid ʿalā al-ghā’ib* can be applied to the unobservable world: firstly, when there is a similarity in the indication (*dilāla*) between the seen world and the unobservable, and secondly, when there is similarity in the ground (*ʿilla*) between both of them. Without one of these two similarities, it is not possible for one

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<sup>32</sup> *Mughnī*, xii, 73.

to use this proof.<sup>33</sup> The difference between indication and cause is that the similarity in the former is more obvious, since the foundation of proof is similar between the seen world and the unobservable; whereas, for similarity in the ground, one needs to reflect in order to know its ground in the seen world, and then apply it to the unobservable based on its similarity in the ground.<sup>34</sup>

ʿAbd al-Jabbār uses analogy based on indication when proving the existence of God (*wujūd Allāh*). The foundation of the indication is that “every effect must be from a cause.” Since, in the seen world, we observe that every effect must come from a cause, this rule also applies in the unobservable world. As for the analogy with a similar ground (*ʿilla*), ʿAbd al-Jabbār employs this type of argument to prove the justice of God (*ʿadl*). In this case, he compares the cause or causes for us not to do evil (*qabīḥ*) with the unobservable world. However, first we need to contemplate in order to know that cause.<sup>35</sup> When we know that the cause for us not to do evil is due to our knowledge of its evilness and that we do not need it, these causes can be applied to the unobservable world. Therefore, since God also knows the evilness of evil things and does not need it, He will not do evil. Hence, God must be just. In relation to this, ʿAbd al-Jabbār infers that the doer of an evil act deserves blame in the seen world; this is also the case in the unobservable world.

However, regarding the relationship between God’s essence and His attributes, ʿAbd al-Jabbār believes that there is no similarity between the seen world and the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ* (2), 165.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ* (2), 166.

<sup>35</sup> The judgment and cause can be affirmed in the original case through two standard *kalām* forms of argument: i) Investigation and disjunction” (*al-sabr wa al-taqṣīm*).

unobservable, either in the indication or the cause. Therefore, it is implausible to compare both worlds when explaining the relationship between God's essence and His attributes.<sup>36</sup>

From this explanation, one might infer that °Abd al-Jabbār's analogical method in *kalām* is similar to the analogy (*qiyās*) in Islamic laws. In this regard, Ibn al-Malāḥimī explains the *kalām* analogy as follows: The original case (*aṣl*) is "human action"; the secondary case (*far'*) is the "world"; the judgment (*ḥukm*) is "requiring an originator"; and the "ground" (*'illa*) is "being temporally originated." The process of analogy work as follows: One needs to identify the ground for a certain judgment in the original case, and then this same ground can be found in the secondary case; as a result, the same judgment can be applied to the latter case.<sup>37</sup>

As we discussed earlier, °Abd al-Jabbār establishes the existence of the seen world with the immediate knowledge. Meanwhile, to know the unobservable world one needs to make an analogy with the seen world. However, one might observe that the application of this analogical proof must be based on the knowledge of action, which is the first acquired knowledge according to °Abd al-Jabbār. The rules of action (*aḥkām al-af'āl*) play an important role in the application of the analogical argument of knowing God. Without this foundation, one cannot apply this method in one's theological argument.

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Mankdim, *Sharḥ*, 97.

<sup>37</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 172-4. cf. Shihadeh, 'The Existence of God', 207.

The most vital aspect of this analogy is to confirm that human beings are the real agents of their acts. Only by accepting this reality will one be able to compare our world with the unobservable world. Also, by knowing the concept of action, one can know that this world is the act of God. Without this epistemological background, one has no foundation to apply an analogical proof.

Therefore, we observe that al-Ash<sup>c</sup>ari<sup>ī</sup> does not employ the analogical proof in his argument on the existence of God, as the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites did. One of the main reasons for this is that he holds a different outlook regarding the concept of action. He maintains that there is no real agent except God; therefore, it is impossible to establish the original case (*asīl*) of the analogy.<sup>38</sup> <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's student, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, also rejects the analogical argument to prove the existence of God for several reasons. Although he agrees with <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār that human beings are the real agents of their acts, he disagrees with his teacher regarding the application of the analogical proof. In this case, both al-Ash<sup>c</sup>ari<sup>ī</sup> and Abū al-Ḥusayn employ a different type of argument to prove the existence of God; the former uses proof from design and the latter employs proof from particularisation. Neither type of proof, as I will indicate in the discussion on the existence of God, needs the epistemological foundation required by the analogical proof.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Al-Ash<sup>c</sup>ari<sup>ī</sup>, *Luma<sup>c</sup>*, 4.

<sup>39</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu<sup>c</sup>tamad*, 167.

### 5.3. The Existence of God<sup>40</sup>

Having proved that one needs to acquire the knowledge of God, and this can neither be known through uncritical imitation nor revelation, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār insists that the only way to know the existence of God is through rational argument. However, he disagrees with the view of the philosophers who say that God is the cause (<sup>c</sup>*illa*) of the universe. This view will lead to the eternity of the universe, since *ma<sup>c</sup>lūl* will follow the <sup>c</sup>*illa*.<sup>41</sup>

Explaining this contention, Ibn al-Malāḥimī states that the relation between an effect (*ta'thīr*) and its producer (*mu'aththirih*) is of two types: i) a production based on free choice (*ikhtiyār*), which is the action (*fī<sup>c</sup>l*), and ii) a production based on a cause, which occurs necessarily from the producer (*mu'aththir mūjib*). According to <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār and the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites in general, the only way to know God is through His action. For, if we say that God is the cause of the universe, this implies the universe is also eternal (*qadīm*), since *ma<sup>c</sup>lūl* cannot be separated from its cause (<sup>c</sup>*illa*). This implication is inconceivable since there is only one eternal being, who is God.<sup>42</sup>

Therefore, only by reflecting on the act will one know its agent (*fā<sup>c</sup>il*). However, since our aim is to indicate an eternal agent, who is different from other agents, we must reflect on His action, which is beyond the ability of other agents who are able with power. To do so, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār divides produced things (*maqdūr*) into two categories based on the capacity of the subject: (i) produced things that are beyond

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<sup>40</sup> For the detail discussion on the proof of the existence of God see Davidson, H. *Proof for Eternity*, 170; Shihadeh, "The Existence of God", 197-217.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Mānkāīm, *Sharḥ*, 89.

<sup>42</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu<sup>c</sup>tamad*, 83.

our power or someone who is able by power (*qādir bi al-qudra*); (ii) produced things that are within our ability.

He maintains that there are twelve kinds (*ajnās*) of produced things that do not come within human ability. Hence, they can be used to prove the existence of God. Of these twelve kinds of produced things, one of them is body and the others are accidents. The twelve *ajnās* are: substances (*jawāhir*), colours (*alwān*), tastes (*ṭū'ūm*), odours (*rawā'iḥ*), warmth (*ḥarāra*), coldness (*burūda*), wetness (*ruṭūba*), dryness (*yabūsa*), life (*ḥayā*), ability (*qudra*), desire (*shahwa*), and aversion (*nafra*). None of these *ajnās*, he argues, can be made by human beings and cannot be our acts. Therefore, they must be the acts of God.<sup>43</sup>

As for the produced things (*maqdūr*) that come within our ability, there are ten kinds of genus (*ajnās*). These are all accidents, and can be subdivided into two sub-categories: first, the acts of limbs (*af'āl al-jawāriḥ*) and second, the acts of hearts (*af'āl al-qulūb*). The five acts of limbs are: modes of being (*akwān*), pressures (*i'timādāt*), compositions (*ta'līfāt*), sounds (*aṣwāt*) and pains (*alam*). The five acts of the heart are: beliefs (*i'tiqādāt*), will (*irādāt*), dislike (*karāhāt*), assumptions (*ẓunūn*) and reflections (*anzār*).<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 90. °Abd al-Jabbār includes annihilation (*fanā*) in the category of actions that beyond human ability but rejects it as a way to prove the existence of God since annihilation can only be known by revelation (*sam'*). cf. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 127.

<sup>44</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 90; cf. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 127

According to ʿAbd al- Jabbār, the second type of *maqdūr*, which is within our ability, cannot be used for proving the existence of God.<sup>45</sup> When this *maqdūr* occurs, one will be confused as to whether its agent is God or one of us. However, there is an exception in this regard, when the *maqdūr* will clearly indicate that its agent is God. If so, it can be used to prove the existence of God, although the act is within our ability. For example, ʿAbd al- Jabbār mentions the intellect (*ʿaql*), which he defines as a sum of immediate knowledge that is created by God in humans.<sup>46</sup> He argues that although the intellect belongs to the genus of belief, which is under our ability, since we have no power over it, it must be created by God. Therefore, the intellect, according to ʿAbd al- Jabbār, can be employed to prove the existence of God.<sup>47</sup>

In another example, ʿAbd al- Jabbār mentions increasing pain (*alam al-zā'id*) from the sting of a hornet or a scorpion. Although it comes under the ability of able subjects with power (*qudra*), which are animals, it also indicates the existence of God. The strongest of able subjects will not be able to produce such a power that can generate (*yatawallad*) pain even after the animal is gone. According to ʿAbd al- Jabbār, an able agent with capacity (*qudra*) can only affect others through reliance (*ʿitimād*). Therefore, in our example, since the hornet has already gone but the pain is increasing, it indicates the existence of another agent who creates that pain. This agent, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, is God.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> What ʿAbd al-Jabbār means here is that the produced thing (*maqdūr*) which is under our capacity (*maqdūrīnā*) cannot become a secondary case (*farʿ*) in the analogy (*qiyās*). But for the original case (*aṣl*) it is possible, since in the original case we need to establish that we are the real agent of our act.

<sup>46</sup> For more on the knowledge of actions, see above, 141.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 91.

<sup>48</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 90. Peters, mentions this example without paying attention to the word increase (*zā'id*). He interprets it as “The pain cause by the sting of a hornet or a scorpion stands in no relation to its cause and therefore must be caused by God, although the genus ‘pain’ comes under the ability of able subjects (animal too) in this world.” See his *God’s Created Speech*, 128. This we believe is

°Abd al-Jabbār divides produced things (*maqdurāt*) into bodies (*ajsām*) and accidents (*ʿarāḍ*). Both can be used to prove the existence of God.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, °Abd al-Jabbār considers that using bodies to prove the existence of God is more plausible, since there are scholars who deny the existence of accident.<sup>50</sup> A body, according to °Abd al-Jabbār, is characterised by length, breadth, and depth, or what is long, broad and deep.<sup>51</sup> He also maintains that one can know the existence of bodies immediately without a need for proof. Therefore, the first stage of proving the existence of God through bodies, according to °Abd al-Jabbār, is not to prove the existence of bodies, but instead to prove that they are temporal (*ḥudūth*).

To prove the temporality of bodies, °Abd al-Jabbār argues based on the relation between bodies and accidents. He argues that bodies are temporal because they are related with accidents. The accidents are called *akwān* in this case. There are four *akwān*: combined (*ijtimāʿ*), separation (*iftirāq*), movement (*ḥaraka*) and immobile (*sukūn*). These *akwān* are not eternal but temporal because it is possible for them to be non-existent (°*adam*), whereas this is not possible for the eternal (*qadīm*) being. Therefore, since bodies cannot be separated from these temporal accidents (*akwān*), bodies themselves must be temporal.<sup>52</sup>

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debatable since °Abd al-Jabbār's main argument in this example is the increasing pain that occurred upon the sting. This increasing pain is something beyond the ability of able subjects with capacity (*qādir bi al-qudra*); therefore it must be created by God.

<sup>49</sup> Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 92-5.

<sup>50</sup> *Mughnī*, vi (2), 166, and (1), 54; Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 94; Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 233.

<sup>51</sup> See *Mughnī*, vii, 6; Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, cf. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 122.

<sup>52</sup> For °Abd al-Jabbār's argument on the temporality of the *akwān*, see *Mughnī*, xv, 171; Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ* (1), 45; Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 95-97; cf. Madelung, "al-Basrī's Proof", 276.

Having proved that bodies are temporal, the next stage is to establish that the temporal bodies need a creator. To do so, °Abd al- Jabbār applies the analogy (*qiyās*) of the seen world (*al-shāhid*) to the unobservable world (*al-ghā'ib*). To establish the link between the seen and the unobservable world, °Abd al-Jabbār refers to his concept of action.<sup>53</sup>

He argues that our actions need us (*muḥtāj ilaynā*) to exist. What comes into existence from our side needs us because our state (*ḥālunā*), the state in which we are, has influence (*ta'thīr*) upon that thing. We discover this because the action occurs based on our intention (*qaṣd*) and motive (*dā'ī*); also, it is rejected based on our dislikes (*karāhāt*) and dismissals (*ṣawārif*). Then he argues that our actions need us because of their temporality (*li ḥudūthihā*).<sup>54</sup> On this he states:

[There are three possible] reasons why the action needs us: (i) for the persistence of its existence; (ii) for the persistence of its non-existence; or (iii) for the origination (*tajaddud*) of its existence. It is implausible that the action needs us for the persistence of its non-existence since before its existence the action has been persistently non-existent. Similarly it must not need us for the persistence of its existence since its existence perseveres even after we have been out of our state of living or our state of being able. Hence, the only possible solution is that the action needs us to originate its existence, which is its coming into existence (*ḥudūthihā*).<sup>55</sup>

Having proved that our acts need us to originate their existence due to their temporality, °Abd al- Jabbār applies this outcome into the unobservable world. He

<sup>53</sup> For our discussion on the concept of action, see above, 140.

<sup>54</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 181. The term *ḥudūth* or *ḥādith* is the contrary of the term *qadīm* (eternal). The difference between what is eternal and what is temporal is that eternal is an existence of which has no beginning and the non-existence is not possible. Meanwhile temporal (*ḥudūth* or *ḥādith*) is described as the existence of which has a beginning and the non-existence is possible. The other meaning of the term *ḥudūth* is coming into existence. Here we combine the twofold meanings of the term as used by °Abd al-Jabbār in different contexts in his works “coming into existence” and “temporal”. Cf. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 111; cf. Frank, *Metaphysics*, 13

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 119.

argues that we know that everything that comes into existence from our side needs us to exist; it needs us as an originator (*muḥdith*), the subject who brings it into existence. By way of analogy (*qiyās*), we can deduce that everything that comes into existence needs a *muḥdith*. In this analogy, the “ground” (*‘illa*) is “temporality” (*ḥudūth*), and the “judgment” (*ḥukm*) is “a need for the originator” (*ḥāja ilā al-muḥdith*). Since everything that has the same cause must have the same judgment, everything that has the cause that is “temporality” must necessarily need an “originator” to exist. For that reason, °Abd al- Jabbār posits that since the bodies share the ground of need, which is “temporality” with our action, they must also share a need for an “originator” to bring them into existence.<sup>56</sup>

The final stage of his argument to prove the existence of God through bodies is to establish that the originator (*muḥdith*) of bodies is God. In this regard, °Abd al- Jabbār argues that the originator of body is either (i) the body itself, or (ii) something other than body. It is implausible that it was created by itself, since an able subject (*qādir*) must be ahead (*mutaqaddim*) of its act on something. If we said that the body is the originator of itself, this implies that the body is able while it is in the state of non-existence (*ma‘dūm*). This implication, according to °Abd al-Jabbār, is unlikely. Therefore, he maintains that the originator must be other than the body and separate from it. This separate originator is either similar to us, who have capacity (*qudra*), or different from us.

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<sup>56</sup> According to Abū al-Hudhayl al-°Allāf, this is the first knowledge in knowing God. Meanwhile Abū °Alī al-Jubbā’ī considers that knowing that the *muḥdith* of the bodies is different from us is the first knowledge of knowing God. Whereas Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā’ī claims that the first knowledge is that the creator is powerful by His essence (*qādir bi dhātihī*). °Abd al-Jabbār in this contention inclines towards the view of Abū al-Hudhayl al-°Allāf. See Mankdim, *Sharḥ*, 65; al-Malāhimī, *Mu‘tamad*, 175.

He argues that it is impossible that the originator is similar to us who are able with ability since, if that were so, the implication is that we also can create bodies such as wealth and children. However, reality does not supporting that,<sup>57</sup> for bodies can only be produced by invention (*ikhtirāʿ*). This type of action is beyond the power of the subjects who are able by ability. Therefore, bodies must have been produced by the one who is essentially able (*qādir bi dhātih*).<sup>58</sup> In addition, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that since bodies are temporal, we must draw the conclusion that bodies cannot be produced by a temporal subject. Rather, they must be produced by the one who is eternal (*qadīm*). Therefore, all bodies are produced by one producer and doer, whom we call God, who is eternal and essentially able. At this stage, ʿAbd al-Jabbār is able to prove the existence of God through bodies.<sup>59</sup>

As we indicated earlier, ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s cosmological argument to prove the existence of God is based on the *kalām* analogy between the “unobservable” (*ghāʾib*) and the “seen” (*shāhid*) worlds. This analogy, however, is applicable if only one accepts the concept of action that is defended by ʿAbd al-Jabbār in his first acquired knowledge. Without admitting that human beings are the real agents of their acts, the analogy will be baseless since its original case (*aṣl*), which is human action, is missing.

Consequently, since the Ashʿarites reject the Muʿtazilites’ concept of action in the acquired knowledge, they follow another method in dealing with the existence of

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<sup>57</sup> *Mukhtaṣar*, 178-9; Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 119.

<sup>58</sup> For related discussion on the theory of actions according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, see Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 223; cf. above, 118-9.

<sup>59</sup> *Mughnī*, iv, 81 & 277; vi, (1), 160-2; Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ* (2), 88.

God. The earliest form of argument used by the early Ash<sup>c</sup>arites is the argument from design or the so-called teleological argument. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash<sup>c</sup>arī first started this argument in his *al-Luma<sup>c</sup>*. He argues to prove that there is a creator for this world by saying that, indeed, it is confirmed that the world is created (*ṣunī<sup>c</sup> a/ṣan<sup>c</sup>*); therefore, it must be in need of a creator (*ṣānī<sup>c</sup>*).<sup>60</sup> However, the argument from design, as Shihadeh rightly observes, is rarely utilized or considered as secondary importance in *kalām* works, since they prove only the existence of a designer, but not the generation of matter and hence creation *ex nihilo*. This argument is also often seen to lack methodological rigour.<sup>61</sup>

Therefore, the Ash<sup>c</sup>arites employ another argument, the so-called argument from particularisation. Al-Bāqillānī, in this regard, argues that we observe identical things coming into being at different times. If the occurrence of one thing at a particular moment is due to an intrinsic quality thereof, all similar things should occur at the same time. It thus appears that nothing intrinsic to the thing itself could make it more likely to occur at a particular moment rather than at another moment, or more likely to occur at a given moment than another similar thing. Therefore, there must be an external effector (*muqaddim*) who causes particular things to occur based on His will.<sup>62</sup> By using the argument from particularization, al-Bāqillānī manages to establish another cosmological argument without depending on the analogy of the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites.

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<sup>60</sup> °Abd al-Jabbār criticized al-Ash<sup>c</sup>arī's argument in his book *naqd al-luma<sup>c</sup>*. He argues that knowledge of the world is created already included the knowledge that it has a creator; therefore, this argument is implausible, cf. Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 325.

<sup>61</sup> Shihadeh, "The Existence of God", 205.

<sup>62</sup> Al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 43; cf. Shihadeh, "The Existence of God", 209.

Nevertheless, ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s analogical argument is not only rejected by the Ashʿarites, but also by his immediate student, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, and the latter’s follower Ibn al-Malāḥimī. Their arguments against the analogical proof are focused on the unsound application of it. First, they criticized the ‘ground of need’ suggested by ʿAbd al-Jabbār in his analogy. On this point, they argue that ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s argument does not indicate that the cause of need (*ʿilla al-ḥāja*) is temporality (*ḥudūth*); instead, it indicates that a temporal thing needs us in order to exist (*yaḥtāj ilaynā fī al-ḥudūth*). Explaining this argument, Ibn al-Malāḥimī states that after its actual existence, a temporal thing does not need us anymore because the need, which is to exist, is fulfilled. A temporal thing, he argues, after its existence, maintains its temporality (*ḥudūth*), but it does not need us anymore. Therefore, he insists that to say that the cause of need is “temporality” is implausible, since it implies that a temporal thing is still in need of us even after its existence, which is not the case.<sup>63</sup>

The second criticism regards the establishment of the basis (*aṣl*) of analogy, which is human action. In ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s analogical proof, human beings are considered real agents of their acts, since they produce accidents (*ʿrāq*). The dispute, however, occurs in regard to the reality of accidents. In this debate, ʿAbd al-Jabbār, in agreement with the traditional Muʿtazilites’ view, maintains that although they are dependent on the body for existence, accidents possess a separate independent reality.<sup>64</sup> He maintains that some accidents, such as the *akwān*, i.e. motion (*ḥaraka*) and rest (*sukūn*), composition (*taʿlīf*) and separation (*iftirāq*), can be given existence

<sup>63</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 173.

<sup>64</sup> On proofs for the existence of accidents, see Davidson, H. *Proof for Eternity*, 180.

by human beings with their limited capacity (*qudra*). Based on the knowledge that those accidents that are produced by us, they are in need of us for their origination (*ḥudūth*); by analogy, we can infer that bodies and other accidents that we are unable to produce must be created by a Creator with unlimited power. Therefore, the basis of this analogy is our recognition that accidents and bodies are all different essences (*dhawāt mukhtalifa*).<sup>65</sup>

However, Abū al-Ḥusayn rejects the existence of accidents as real independent essences. Instead, he believes that these accidents are merely attributes (*ṣifāt*) and changeable characteristics (*aḥkām*) of bodies. Existence is inseparable from essence. Creation thus means producing essence themselves. Humans are able to affect existing bodies, but not to produce them. Since Abū al-Ḥusayn does not consider that accidents are real existence, therefore, there is little basis for an analogy between man's free choice of activity and God's creation of the world.<sup>66</sup> Subsequently, Abū al-Ḥusayn rejects traditional Mu'tazilite's arguments to prove that the temporal bodies need an originator (*muḥdith*) based on the analogical method.

One might think that, with that argument, Abū al-Ḥusayn was able to deny the original case (*aṣl*) in 'Abd al-Jabbār's analogy, which is "our action." However, I suggest that that was not the case. In his theory of actions, 'Abd al-Jabbār did not claim that human beings are capable of producing something from nothing. The production from nothing can only be possible through the act of creation (*ikhtirā'*),

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<sup>65</sup> Mānkadīm, *Sharḥ*, 223; Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 168; Madelung, *Rational Theology*, 5.

<sup>66</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 167-70; Madelung, *Rational Theology*, 6.

which can only be produced by God, who is able by His essence (*li dhātih*).<sup>67</sup> °Abd al-Jabbār's argument in developing his original case is based on humans' action in regard to the available bodies or atoms. Thus, the argument is not about the production (*ikhtirā'*) of a thing but the doer (*fā'il*) of a thing. Therefore, °Abd al-Jabbār's original case in his analogy is sustained even after the critique from Abū al-Ḥusayn.

Having rejected the analogical argument to prove the existence of God, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī presents a different rational argument.<sup>68</sup> He develops a detailed argument from particularization. He states that we find that bodies share in corporeality yet differ in various respects, such as their division into the four elements earth, water, air and fire. He argues that there must be some matter (*amr*) causing their difference, since otherwise none of them would be more likely (*awlā*) to belong to one element than another. In a lengthy investigation, he arrives at the conclusion that the cause must be a powerful, freely choosing (*qādir mukhtar*) eternal agent who can be neither a body nor an atom (*jawhar*).<sup>69</sup>

In this argument Abū al-Ḥusayn did not apply the analogical method of traditional Mu'tazilites preserved by °Abd al-Jabbār. Instead, he bases his proof on a principle of causality that is similar to that of the philosophers.<sup>70</sup> However, to avoid the

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<sup>67</sup> See our discussion above, 142.

<sup>68</sup> Abū al-Ḥusayn's proof of the existence of God has been the subject of thorough investigation by W. Madelung on which the following discussion will largely be based. See mainly his 'Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's Proof', 273-80. For the counter argument of Abū al-Ḥusayn's Proof, see Madelung & Schmidtke, *Rational Theology*, 3-8.

<sup>69</sup> For Abū al-Ḥusayn's argument in detail see, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 169-70.

<sup>70</sup> Madelung suggests that Abū al-Ḥusayn obtained his philosophical knowledge during his study of Aristotelian physics with the Christian logician Abū Alī b. al-Samḥ (d. 418/1027), cf. Madelung, 'Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's Proof', 278.

controversial implication among the philosophers, which is the eternity of the world, Abū al-Ḥusayn maintains that the Creator must be a freely choosing agent (*fāʿil mukhtār*) and not a necessitating cause (*mūjib*).<sup>71</sup>

#### 5.4. The Attributes of God

ʿAbd al-Jabbār follows the majority of the Muʿtazilites, such as Abū ʿAlī and Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʿī, by believing that God is omniscient (*ʿālim*) through His essence (*dhātihi*) and not through the attribute of knowledge (*ʿilm*).<sup>72</sup> His argument about this is based on his belief that God is a perfect being. The perfection of God is through His essence. Therefore, he believes that God has no attributes (*ṣifāt*) that are additional to His essence. The existence of attributes within God would undermine the perfection of His essence, because this implies that God needs the attributes. As a result, ʿAbd al-Jabbār insists that God is omniscient through His essence and not via the attributes of knowledge (*ʿilm*).<sup>73</sup>

However, before we go further into the problem of the attributes of God, it is important to clarify Muʿtazilite's position on the meaning of attributes (*ṣifāt*). On this, Ibn al-Malāḥimī states that:

Know that what we mean by attribute in this topic is everything that includes in the knowledge of the essence [of God], either it is denial (*naḥy*) or confirmation (*ithbat*); either it is state (*ḥāl*) or judgment (*ḥukm*) for the essence; either it is action or the denial

<sup>71</sup> For Abū al-Ḥusayn's argument on the existence of freely choosing agent, see Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 170.

<sup>72</sup> Mānkdim, *Sharḥ*, 210. However, the parts of the *mughnī* relevant to this discussion are not known to be extant and thus his view on this is based on his more concise works such as *Uṣūl al-khamsa* and *Mukhtaṣar*; and the works of his disciples and such as *Majmūʿ*, *Sharḥ* and *Tasaffuḥ al-Adilla*.

<sup>73</sup> Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ*, (1)172. Accordingly, ʿAbd al-Jabbār clarifies that what means by God knows through His essence is that His essence is the cause of His omniscience. Hence, God's essence solely is enough to make Him omniscience without any need to something that outside or additional to it. This is what ʿAbd al-Jabbār means by the perfect being. Cf. Mankdim, *Sharḥ*, 185.

of action. Therefore, we say that omnipotence, omniscience and living are God's attributes. For us that means judgment (*alḥkām*) that includes the knowledge of His essence, and according to our teachers, the followers of Abū Hāshim, that means the states (*alḥwāl*) of the essence.<sup>74</sup>

This passage indicates that the concept of attributes, in a wider sense, was accepted by the Muʿtazilites in general. Therefore, what ʿAbd al-Jabbār and the Muʿtazilites reject are attributes as entitative beings that are additional to the essence of God. Other than this, they accept this concept. Hence, we observe many discussions on the attributes of God in their works.

In proving the necessary attributes of God, ʿAbd al-Jabbār again employs the analogy between the seen world and the unobservable. On this, he writes:

Then if it is asked: What is the proof that He is omnipotent (*qādir*)? Say to him: because the acts in the seen world (*al-shāhid*) will not happen except from an able subject. Indeed it is confirmed that the action is from God; therefore, it must be said that He is *qādir*. Then if it is asked: What is the proof that God is omniscient (*ʿālim*)? Say to him: Because precise acts (*afʿāl al-muḥkamāt*), such as writing and crafts (*al-sināʿa*), can only be done by one who is omniscient. And already it is true for God, in creating human beings, has exceeded the wonders of crafts, therefore, He must be *ʿālim*. Then if it is asked: What is the proof that He is living (*ḥayy*)? Say to him: Indeed, everyone who is powerful and knowing must be living.

In the case of the attribute of knowledge, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that in our world (*al-shāhid*) we can differentiate between two persons: the one knows and the other is ignorant of the process of writing (*taʿlīf*). The one who writes is a knowing person; the one who cannot write is considered an ignorant. Hence, the production of a

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<sup>74</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 182.

precise act (*fi<sup>c</sup>l al-muḥkam*) is a ground by which someone is considered omniscient (*‘ālim*).<sup>75</sup>

Then, ‘Abd al-Jabbār infers this outcome to the unobservable world. On this, he argues that God’s creation of animals with all their magnificence, His control of the orbits and subjugation (*taskhīr*) of the wind and other things are proof that God is producing the precise act. Therefore, ‘Abd al-Jabbār concludes that God is omniscient based on the precise acts displayed by Him. In this analogy, the judgment is “omniscient”; the ground is “production of precise acts.” When our observation indicates that there is a precise act in the creation of this world, therefore, this indicates that its creator, who is God, is also omniscient, for He also shares the same ground, which is producing a precise action, thus implying the same judgment.<sup>76</sup>

The Ash‘arites, in this regard, reject the Mu‘tazilites’ view. They believe that God’s essential attributes are neither entailed by, nor identical with, His essence. Rather, they are entailed by eternal essence (*dhawāt*) or entitative determinants (*ma‘ānī*) which subsist in God’s essence (*qā’ima bi dhātih*). Thus, these are attributes that inhere in His essence, such as God being knowing and powerful, etc.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, the Ash‘arites maintain that God knows through the attribute of knowledge, which is eternal (*qadīm*) and additional to His essence (*zā’id ‘alā al-dhāt*).<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> A precise act according to ‘Abd al-Jabbār is every act which proceeds from an acting subject in a way that does not proceed from other subjects. Cf. *Mughnī*, vi (2), 115, xi, 375; Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 156; Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmū‘*, (1), 113. See Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 51.

<sup>76</sup> See for instance al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 46.

<sup>77</sup> Al-Ash‘arī, *Luma‘*, 18; al-Shahrastānī, *Milal*, I, 94. cf. Schmidtke, S., *Theology of al-Ḥillī*, 166.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. al-Ash‘arī, *Luma‘*, 26. For details arguments from the Ash‘arites see al-Shahrastānī, *Milal*, i, 92; al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 90; al-Ghazālī, *Iqtīṣād*, 121.

Their argument is based on verses in the Qur'ān, such as: "He has sent from His (own) knowledge;"<sup>79</sup> and "For God is He who gives (all) sustenance, Lord of Power, - Steadfast (forever)."<sup>80</sup> They argue that the literal (*zāhir*) meaning of the verses clearly indicates that God has attributes such as knowledge (*ilm*) and power (*qudra*). Therefore, the existence of God must be accepted by all.<sup>81</sup>

The Ash'arites also employ the analogical argument between the seen world and the unobservable to prove that God is omniscient (*ālim*). In this observable world, a person is considered knowing (*ālim*) when he has knowledge. There are two different realities: (i) a person and (ii) knowledge. Comparing this principle to the unobservable world will imply that the omniscient God also has knowledge. Hence, He knows with knowledge.<sup>82</sup>

For that reason, they reject the Mu'tazilites' view that God knows by His essence. On this, al-Ash'arī argues that believing that God knows with His essence implies that God or His essence is knowledge (*ilm*). He maintains, however, that God is not His knowledge, but a knower (*ālim*). God knows with knowledge, which is not His essence.<sup>83</sup> This rule also applies to other essential attributes such as power, will and living. These attributes, they believe, are those of an eternal entitative being (*ma'ānī qadīma*), and additional to the essence.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Qur. 4: 166.

<sup>80</sup> Qur. 51: 58.

<sup>81</sup> cf. al-Ash'arī, *Lumā'*, 31.

<sup>82</sup> See al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 90; al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 46.

<sup>83</sup> Al-Ash'arī, *Ibāna*, 114.

<sup>84</sup> Al-Shahrastānī, *Milal*, i, 95.

Similar to other Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār disagrees with this view. He maintains that accepting any type of attribute for God will affect the concept of the oneness of God (*al-tawḥīd*). He argues that if we assume that God knows through knowledge, either it exists or it does not exist. It is implausible for God to know through the non-existent knowledge; if so, it would be possible for us to know with non-existent knowledge as well. However, this is not the case. Therefore, knowledge must exist, whether it is eternal or temporal.<sup>85</sup>

He argues further that if we assume that the attribute is eternal (*qadīm*), this implies the existence of multiple eternal existences (*ta<sup>c</sup>addud al-qudamā*). This implication is unacceptable because it implies the existence of more than one God.<sup>86</sup> Likewise, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār argues that it is implausible for God to know through a temporal knowledge (*ilm muḥdath*), since this implies that God, who is omniscient (*Allāh al-<sup>c</sup>Ālim*), is a combination of an eternal essence and temporal knowledge. This implication, he believes, is inconsistent with the concept of *tawḥīd*. Therefore, it must be rejected.<sup>87</sup>

Abū al-Ḥusayn, in this regard, agrees with <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār. He reports another argument from Abū <sup>c</sup>Alī al-Jubbā<sup>ʿ</sup>ī against the Attributists. Abū <sup>c</sup>Alī states that:

If God knows by a *ma<sup>c</sup>nā*, He would either know that *ma<sup>c</sup>nā* or not knowing it. In the latter case, it would be possible for us humans to know many things God does not know from the existences (*mawjūdāt*). In the former case, He either knows it

<sup>85</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 185.

<sup>86</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 195-7. <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār maintains that accepting the existence of eternal attributes of God implies a belief similar to Dualism (*al-Thanawīyya*) or Trinity in Christianity, who believed in more than one eternal being. For more detailed arguments on this, see Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ* (2), 175-84.

<sup>87</sup> For more <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's arguments, see Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 186-8.

through His essence or through knowledge. If He knows by His essence, He would not be more likely (*awlā*) to know it by His essence than to know all other things by His essence. In this case He knows everything by His essence. If He knew it by knowledge, either He knows it by His essence or by knowledge. In the latter case, this could lead to *ad infinitum* of knowledge.<sup>88</sup>

The Attributists answer this argument (that the acceptance of additional attributes in God destroys his absolute unity) by giving a special definition of the attributes of God. They sought to escape this consequence by considering the divine attributes as “neither Him nor other than Him” (*lā huwa wa-lā ghayruh*).<sup>89</sup> However, one might observe that this argument is clearly opposed to the logical principle of non-contradiction (*‘adam al-tanāquḍ*). <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār considers that the knowledge of the principle of non-contradiction is immediate (*darūrī*). Therefore, the Attributists’ solution to the issue of God’s attributes is problematic, especially for those familiar with logical and philosophical discussion.

Regarding the use of analogical proof by the Ash‘arites, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār maintains that it cannot be applied to explain the relationship between God and His attributes. He argues that in this world, we realize that one knows through knowledge, because it is clear that knowledge distinguishes one’s state of knowing from ignorance. Without knowledge, one would be in a state of ignorance. He then states:

This way [of argument] cannot be applied to God, because God is essentially knowing (*‘ālim*), not in the sense of contingency (*jawāz*) [such as in the case of the seen world]. Therefore, it is impossible to compare the unobservable with the seen in this case.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Abū al-Ḥusayn, *Taṣaffuḥ*, 16.

<sup>89</sup> El-Bizri, “God: Essence and Attributes”, 127; al-Māturīdī, *Sharḥ*, 18-9.

<sup>90</sup> Mānkdim, *Sharḥ*, 204.

In this passage, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that, in the seen world, a person knows something because he obtains certain attributes, which compose knowledge. Without this knowledge, the person will not know anything. However, in the unobservable world, this is not so. Therefore, based on this argument, ʿAbd al-Jabbār asks his opponent: “Since when does God not know? Therefore, is He in need of knowledge (ʿilm) to become knowing (ʿālim)?” He explains that, as an eternal being, no change occurs in God. Thus, since God knows from the beginning and no change occurs in His essence, there is no ground (ʿilla) that is shared by humans and God in order for the proof to be applicable. Therefore, without the ground, the analogical reason is unsound.<sup>91</sup>

ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues further by using an *ad hominem* proof. He states that the argument that God has knowledge, since a knowing person in the seen world has knowledge, is unacceptable, since the ground is only based on the similarity with regard to existence (*mujarrad al-wujūd*). ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that “as you do not see in the seen world a knowing person (*al-ʿālim*) unless he has knowledge, you also do not see him except when he also has a body and heart. [If you dare] apply a similar rule to the unobservable world i.e. to God.”<sup>92</sup> Therefore, he maintains that the use of analogical argument (*istidlāl bi al-shāhid ʿalā al-ghāʾib*) regarding this issue is unfounded.

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<sup>91</sup> Mānkdim, *Sharḥ*, 210.

<sup>92</sup> Mānkdim, *Sharḥ*, 205.

Regarding the essential attributes, ʿAbd al-Jabbār follows his predecessors' views that there are four essential attributes of God.<sup>93</sup> They are: omnipotence (*qādir*), omniscience (*ʿālim*), existence (*mawjūd*) and living (*ḥayy*).<sup>94</sup> However, in his argumentation, to deny the existence of a second eternal being beside God, ʿAbd al-Jabbār mentions another essential attribute, which is eternity (*qadīm*).<sup>95</sup> Based on these attributes, he infers other attributes of God such as hearing (*samīʿ*), seeing (*baṣīr*), and perceiving (*mudrik*) perceptible things (*mudrakāt*). On this, he argues that God is a living being with no deficiency, and any deficiencies are impossible for Him; anyone who has these attributes must be hearing, seeing and perceiving perceptible things, similar with what we comprehend (*naʿqiluh*) in the seen world.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues further,

If it is asked: What is the proof that God exists (*mawjūd*)? Say to him: Because He is powerful, and it is impossible for non-existence (*maʿdūm*) to act, because it is implausible for it to be related to a possible entity (*maqḍūr*). Therefore, He must be existent. If not, it would open the way of much ignorance. Then if it asked: What is the proof that He is eternal (*qadīm*)? Say to him: Because if He was temporal (*muḥdath*) He will need someone to originate Him, and that would lead to infinity (*lā nihāya*). Therefore, He must be eternal.<sup>96</sup>

All these attributes, however, as an entitative being (*maʿānī*), must be denied from God. According to the Muʿtazilites, God is omniscient with His essence and not with the attribute of knowledge. A question has been raised by Watt regarding this problem. He asks why it was so important to deny that God had the attribute of knowledge. He suggests several possible answers for this.<sup>97</sup> I will not analyze his

<sup>93</sup> For the essential attributes according to Abū Hāshim, see Frank, *Beings*, 58-64.

<sup>94</sup> *Mughnī*, vii, 64; Ibn Mattawayh, *Majmūʿ*, (1), 170; cf. Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 182.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 278-9.

<sup>96</sup> *Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 82-83; Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 65-6.

<sup>97</sup> One of Watt's suggested plausible answer is that it is a fear of confusion with the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Cf. Watt, *Formative Period*, 246.

answer here, but rather pose another question related to the attributes of God. The question is: what is the cause of the difference between the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites and the Attributists on the attribute of God? I suggest that the difference on this issue is closely related with the epistemological approach.

The foundation of this problem relates to the question of which type of source of knowledge one deals with in order to understand the issue of the attributes of God. If one chooses reason as the prominent source of knowing God, one will inevitably achieve a similar result to that of the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites, which is to deny the existence of the attributes. This is because, if one accepts the existence of attributes in an eternal entitative being (*ma<sup>c</sup>ānī qadīma*) that has a real existence; one cannot escape the implication of multiple eternal beings (*ta<sup>c</sup>adud al-qudamā'*) or the need (*al-ḥāja*) of God. Therefore, since the Ash<sup>c</sup>arites' solution on this issue considers that the attribute is "neither Him nor other than Him" (*lā huwa wa-lā ghayruh*),<sup>98</sup> which lacks a logical principle; the only apparent way to deal with this is to deny the existence of God from the beginning.

Meanwhile, the Ash<sup>c</sup>arites who held a different understanding of the theory of knowledge do not follow this route. When they believe that the obligation of reflection in order to know God is engendered by revelation, the position of the Qur'an is slightly different from that of the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites. Although both of them agree that the existence of God is proved through reason,<sup>99</sup> their position on the obligation of reflection, I suggest, has a significant effect in their argument on the attributes of

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<sup>98</sup> Al-Māturīdī, *Sharḥ*, 18-9; El-Bizri, N., "God: Essence and Attributes", 127.

<sup>99</sup> See al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 25; al-Juwaynī, *Shāmil*, 119-20.

God. The Qur'anic proof is applicable from the beginning of their argument on knowing God. Thus, when they read the verses of the Qur'ān (such as Qur. 4:144 & 51:58) that indicate the existence of God's attributes such as knowledge, capacity and living, they adopted this as a principle in their theology. Therefore, the existence of God's attributes as an entitative being are not problematic for them, since it has been confirmed by the foremost source of knowledge in dealing with this issue, which is the Qur'ān.

However, this approach is slightly different among the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites, as one can observe in <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's theory of knowledge. In his discussion on direct knowledge, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār specifies a sub-section called what resembles a means (*mā yajrī majrā al-ṭarīq*). One of its significant principles is that "knowledge of the antecedent (*far<sup>c</sup>*) is not possible without the precedence (*aṣl*)".<sup>100</sup> Based on this principle, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār argues that before the existence of God, His unity and His divine justice is proven, the Qur'anic proof cannot be used for understanding the attributes of God; this knowledge is the precedent and the Qur'an is the antecedent, since it is a speech of God. Therefore, he maintains that knowledge of God's existence and His attributes is possible only through reason alone.<sup>101</sup>

For that reason, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār, following his Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilite predecessors, develops the argument on knowing God by reflection on the world. So, when reason is the only sound justification, it is conceivable that the creator of the world must be different from the world. In addition, this creator must be omnipotent in a way that differs from

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<sup>100</sup> For our discussion on direct knowledge, see above, 124.

<sup>101</sup> *Tabaqāt*, 139.

other able agents; if this creator is omnipotent by capacity (*qudra*), the problem is whether this capacity is a real existence. If so, is it eternal or temporal, and so on? They need to answer all the questions that arise from reason without going to the Qur'an except after the existence and the justice of God have been proved. In dealing with these questions, their only reference is to reason alone. Therefore, a plausible and logical solution for this problem is to deny the existence of God's attributes.

However, although the Mu'tazilites manage to avoid the problem of multiple eternal beings (*ta'addud al-qudamā'*) by rejecting the existence of God's attributes, they need to reconcile their views with some verses in the Qur'an that clearly indicate the existence of God's attributes.<sup>102</sup> Rejecting the existence of God's attributes is similar to rejecting some of the Qur'anic verses, which is the word of God. From here, we observe that Wāsil's predecessors came up with several views to answer this question.

The first view is from Abū al-Hudhayl al-<sup>c</sup>Allāf, who is considered the founder of the classical Mu'tazilite tradition.<sup>103</sup> He believes that God knows with the attribute of knowledge and his knowledge is His essence. On this, al-Ash<sup>c</sup>arī reports

Abū al-Hudhayl said: "He is knowing in an act of knowing that is He and is *qādir* in a power of efficient causality that is He and is living in a life that is He" and he spoke in a similar fashion concerning His hearing, seeing, eternity, might, majesty, glory, grandeur, and concerning His other essential attributes. Further he used to say: "When I say 'God is knowing', I affirm that He has an act of knowing that is God and deny that there is ignorance in God and indicate that there is something known [by

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<sup>102</sup> Such as Qur. 4: 166 and 51: 58.

<sup>103</sup> Frank considers that the system developed by Abū al-Hudhayl is the earliest comprehensive view and become a foundation of the theology of later Mu'tazilites. Cf. Frank, "The Divine Attributes", 452.

Him] that has come to be or will come to be; when I say *qādir*, I deny that there is any incapability of efficient causation in God and indicate that there is something subject to [His] power of efficient causality.”<sup>104</sup>

Abū al-Hudhayl affirms that God knows by virtue of knowledge, which is He (*huwa*), and He is powerful in virtue of power, which is Himself, and He is living by virtue of life, which is Himself. Abū al-Hudhayl also makes this argument with regard to God’s hearing, His seeing, His eternity, His glory and His other attributes, which are by virtue of His essence (*li dhātih*).<sup>105</sup>

Frank considers that despite a number of difficulties, Abū al-Hudhayl’s system presents itself as one that is highly articulated and strikingly original.<sup>106</sup> Regarding the origin of Abū al-Hudhayl’s theory, Frank reports a claim by al-Ash<sup>c</sup>arī that Abū al-Hudhayl took this doctrine from Aristotle. However, he doubts this claim when Ibn al-Rawandī was cited by al-Khayyāṭ in commenting on Abū al-Hudhayl’s view, saying that “not one person of all mankind was so brash as to say this before him.”<sup>107</sup> Despite the uncertainty of the origin of his doctrine, what is certain is that Abū al-Hudhayl is familiar with Greek philosophical works. During his lifetime, some Greek works were translated into Arabic. According to Ibn al-Murtaḍā, Abū al-Hudhayl investigated some of the works of Aristotle.<sup>108</sup>

Based on this report, I suggest that what Abū al-Hudhayl took from the Greeks is not Aristotle’s doctrine on the attribute of God, but Plato’s concept of ontology. The

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<sup>104</sup> Al-Ash<sup>c</sup>arī, *Maqālāt*, 165; cf. Frank, “The Divine Attributes”, 453.

<sup>105</sup> Al-Ash<sup>c</sup>arī, *Maqālāt*, 165. cf. Wolfson, “Problem of Divine Attributes”, 77.

<sup>106</sup> Frank, “The Divine Attributes”, 453.

<sup>107</sup> al-Khayyāṭ, *Intiṣār*, 59; cf. Frank, “The Divine Attributes”, 455.

<sup>108</sup> Ibn al-Murtaḍā, *Tabaqāt*, 44; Frank, “The Divine Attributes”, 455.

latter is a dualist who posits the existence of two irreducible kinds of things: the mental (or intelligible) and the physical (or visible).<sup>109</sup> The translation of Plato's work, such as *Timaeus* and *Laws*, was completed during his lifetime. Although the translation of the *Republic* was only completed after his death, the familiarity with oral sources of this work cannot be denied. The Allegory of the Cave, with its objects and ideas, according to Lawless, gives us a dualist vision.<sup>110</sup> The discussion on the types of existence (*wujūd*) to external and mental existence was well known during Abū al-Hudhayl's time. Although, his extant works are not available for our reference, a clear example comes from Abū al-Hudhayl's contemporary, al-Kindī. The latter divides existence into external existence, which is based on particularity (*juz'ī*), and mental or internal existence, which is based on general (*kullī*) meaning.<sup>111</sup>

One might observe that in his view on the attributes of God, Abū al-Hudhayl distinguishes between mental existence (*wujūd al-dhihnī*) and external existence (*wujūd al-khārijī*). When he says that "God knows with knowledge and knowledge is He and is *qādir* in a power of efficient causality that is He," he considers that the existence of God's essence is external and the existence of the attribute is mental. This means that the mental existence of God's essence and His attributes are different, for the definition of each of them is different. However, the external existence of all these different realities is one, the essence of God who is perfect.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Lawless, A. *Plato's Sun*, 34.

<sup>110</sup> First is the shadow on the wall of the cave and second is the real object. Lawless, *Plato's Sun*, 34.

<sup>111</sup> See Hourani, "Islamic & Non-Islamic Origin"; cf. al-Kindī, *Falsafa al-ūlā*, 72.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Tritton, *Muslim Theology*, .89; Watt, *Formative Period*, 246.

Therefore, with an ample philosophical background, Abū al-Hudhayl was able to develop a system that reconciled the Muʿtazilites' predicament of multiple eternal beings (*taʿaddud al-qudamāʾ*) and verses of the Qurʾān that confirm the existence of the attributes of God. Verse 4: 146, for instance, indicates that God has the attribute of knowledge. However, to claim that God's knowledge is additional (*zāʾid*) to His essence in comparison with the seen world entails problematic implications, such as the existence of more than one eternal being; it also cannot deny from God a composition (*tarkīb*) and need (*hāja*). Therefore, Abū al-Hudhayl concludes that God's knowledge is His essence (*ʿilm Allāh huwa dhātuh*).<sup>113</sup>

However, Abū al-Hudhayl's solution on the attributes of God is not well received among his predecessors. ʿAbd al-Jabbār is among many Muʿtazilites who reject Abū al-Hudhayl's theory of attributes. However, he refutes this view with a simple argument. He argues that it is unacceptable to say that God's knowledge is His essence, since both of them are different realities. It even seems as if ʿAbd al-Jabbār does not consider Abū al-Hudhayl's view to be serious enough when he concludes that Abū al-Hudhayl's intention is to state a similar view to that of Abū Alī, but he has mistakenly chosen the wrong words.<sup>114</sup>

One might observe that ʿAbd al-Jabbār's argument against Abū al-Hudhayl is too simplistic compared to his previous argument against the Ashʿarites. This contention of imbalance is probably because Abū al-Hudhayl's argument is too philosophical for ʿAbd al-Jabbār and other Muʿtazilites. This interpretation is supported by the

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<sup>113</sup> Mānkdim, *Sharḥ*, 182; al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, i, 179.

<sup>114</sup> Mānkdim, *Sharḥ*, 183. Abū al-Ḥusayn also reports a similar view from Abū Hashim, see Abū al-Ḥusayn, *Tasaffuḥ*, 58.

previously mentioned fact that Abū al-Hudhayl reportedly studied some Greek philosophy.<sup>115</sup>

However, what surprises me is that despite his philosophical background, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī also cannot appreciate Abū al-Hudhayl's concept of attributes. On this issue, he agrees with Abū Hāshim and ʿAbd al-Jabbār that Abū al-Hudhayl was mistaken in the terms used (*mukhālif fī ʿibāra*). Commenting on Abū al-Hudhayl's view that God's knowledge is He but he does not say that God is His knowledge, Abū al-Ḥusayn states that:

If he confirms that the essence is knowledge and God is not His knowledge that implies God is essence and His knowledge is [another] essence. Each of them is differed from the other. This view is inconceivable from any *compos mentis* person (ʿ*aqil*) let alone from the leader (*shaykh*) of the *mutakallimūn*. Therefore, it must be that what he means by knowledge of God is the state of knowing (*kaunuhu ʿālim<sup>an</sup>*).<sup>116</sup>

Therefore, since most of Abū al-Hudhayl's successors cannot accept his philosophical solution on the concept of the attributes of God, they develop several other solutions. One of them is by Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/915). He considers that God knows through His essence and not by knowledge. Therefore, God needs neither the attribute of knowledge nor the state of knowledge. The attributes mentioned in the Qur'an do not comprise a real existence, but only a mental consideration (*ʿitibārāt al-ʿaqliyya*). However, he explains that, although God does not have an attribute, He has the effect or the quality of the attribute. He argues that although the attribute of knowledge, for instance, was denied from God, the precise act (*itqān al-ʿamal*), which is the effect of knowledge, is in Him. With this

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<sup>115</sup> Ibn Murtaḍā, *Ṭabaqāt*, 44; Frank, "The Divine Attributes", 455; Hourani, "Islamic and non-Islamic Origin", 81.

<sup>116</sup> Abū al-Ḥusayn, *Taṣaffuḥ*, 58.

explanation, Abū ʿAlī considers that he manages to avoid confirming other additional existences beside God, while maintaining the perfection of His essence.<sup>117</sup> Al-Nazzām is one of his predecessors, who maintain a similar view when he states that the meaning of saying “knowing” is the affirmation of His essence (*dhāt*) and the denial of ignorance of Him. He also considers that the attributes belonging to the essence differ only in what is denied of God.<sup>118</sup>

Because of this, ʿAbd al-Jabbār prefers the view of Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī. The latter reformulated Abū ʿAlī’s concept of attributes and introduced the theory of states (*aḥwāl*). Abū Hāshim maintains that God knows through the state of knowing (*kaunuhu ʿāliman*). This state was caused by God by His essence, while in human beings it was based on accidents of knowledge (*ʿulūm*).<sup>119</sup>

However, ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s and the Bahshamiyya’s method in dealing with the attributes of God has been criticized by Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī. He disapproves of the complicated method developed by the Bahshāmiyya of assigning the ground for the theory of states (*aḥwāl*).<sup>120</sup> Agreeing with Abū al-Ḥusayn, Ibn al-Malāḥimī also

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 182. However, one might observe that Abū Alī’s theological approach is based on rational argument alone and unable to reconcile it with the Qur’anic verses that deal with the attributes of God such as Qur 4: 146 & 51:58. Abū Alī’s solution is less convincing compared to that of Abū al-Hudhayl’s when the latter manages to reconcile these Qur’anic verses with the Muʿtazilites’ rational approach. Explaining the difference between the view of Abū al-Hudhayl and that of Abū ʿAlī, al-Shahrastānī states that “The difference between saying ‘knowing per se, not by an act of knowing’ and saying ‘knowing by an act of knowing that is His essence’ is that the former is a denial of the attribute while the latter is the affirmation of the attribute that is itself an essence”. *Milal*, 72; cf. Frank, “The Divine Attributes”, 469.

<sup>118</sup> Al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, i, 227; cf. Watt, *Formative Period*, 246. Frank considers that al-Jubbāʾī’s theory is a basic attitude and tendency already at work in the teaching of his predecessors in the Baṣrian Muʿtazilites in the drift of their difference from the *Ṣifāiyya*, the followers of Ibn Kullāb and Ibn Ḥanbal, cf. Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes*, 14.

<sup>119</sup> Mānkḏīm, *Sharḥ*, 82. For detail analysis on Abū Hāshim’s theory of *aḥwāl*, see Frank, “Abū Hāshim’s Theory of State”, 85-100.

<sup>120</sup> Abū al-Ḥusayn, *Taṣaffuh*, 7.

criticizes the Bahshamiyya's theory of states. He argues that according to Abū Hāshim, God has an attribute because of a certain state. For instance, God is omnipotent (*qadir*) because he is in the state that without this attribute the act will not occur from it. Ibn al-Malāḥimī posits that this view gives a similar implication to the Şifātiyya's view. The only difference between the Şifātiyya and the Bahshamiyya is in the term *ibāra*. Similar to the view of the Şifātiyya on the attributes, the latter also consider that the states are not the essence and not other than essence (*lā hiya dhātih wa lā ghairahā*). The only difference explained by Ibn al-Malāḥimī is that the Şifātiyya confirm the entitative beings (*ma'nā*) while the Bahshamiyya confirm the states.<sup>121</sup>

Clarifying his view on the attributes of God, Ibn al-Malāḥimī states that he maintains that God is omnipotent, omniscient and living but that is a judgment (*ḥukm*) that is included in the knowledge of the essence of God.<sup>122</sup> However, similar to Şifātiyya and Bahshamiyya, he also considers that this judgment is additional to the essence. Hence, to avoid the implication of the Şifātiyya, he argues that

If what they mean by capacity (*qudra*), knowledge and life is His essence (*dhātih*)<sup>123</sup> and what is included in the judgment (*ḥukm*) that we mentioned, then they are in agreement with us; but if they consider it similar to our teachers' (Bahshamiyya) views, they are agreeing with them; but if they consider that the entitative being is an independent existence, they differ from us and from our teachers.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Fā'iqa*, 69 & 81.

<sup>122</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu'tamad*, 182.

<sup>123</sup> I am not entirely sure whether to whom '*dhatih*' if referring to? If it is to God therefore, Ibn al-Malāḥimī's view is near to Abū al-Hudhayl al-Allaf's.

<sup>124</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Fā'iqa*, 69.

This passage indicates that although Ibn al-Malāḥimī considers that his judgment is additional to the essence, it does not have real existence. This view, I suggest, is similar to the view of Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʿī, who maintains that the attributes are only mental considerations (*ʿtibārāt al-ʿaqliyya*).<sup>125</sup>

Based on the epistemological background that considers reason as the prominent way to prove the existence of God and His attributes, ʿAbd al-Jabbār goes on to argue that we need to deny from God what is inappropriate to Him. He argues that when we realize that God is eternal, He certainly has neither body (*jism*) nor accident (*ʿaraḍ*). If God has a body, the implications are: (i) He needed to be originated (*muḥdath*), similar to other bodies; or (ii) bodies must also be eternal, similar to God. Both of these implications are false, since there is only one eternal existence.<sup>126</sup> Hence, God has no quality of bodies or accidents such as nearness (*mujāwira*), incarnation (*ḥulūl*), and other attributes that indicate change of states such as ascending (*ṣuʿūd*), descending (*nuzūl*) and moving from place to place (*intiqāl*). Also, it is wrong to say that there is addition (*ziyāda*) and deficiency (*nuqṣān*) in God.<sup>127</sup> Therefore, since God has no bodily attributes, He cannot be seen with eyesight (*lā yurā bi al-abṣār*).

However, in the case of seeing God, ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s main argument is not based on reason but on revelation. The shift of proof from reason to revelation is possible in his epistemology if the justice of God and His wisdom have been proved through reason. Therefore, he argues that God is unseen (*lā yurā*) because God has said

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<sup>125</sup> See above, 255.

<sup>126</sup> For our discussion on the oneness of God, see below 259.

<sup>127</sup> For ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s arguments in details, see Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 216-23.

“vision (*abṣār*) does not perceive Him,”<sup>128</sup> and the perception involved in vision is seeing (*ru'ya*). Hence, He is necessarily unseen, for being able to be seen is one of the signs of temporality (*ḥudūth*). Therefore, He must be unseen by vision, but only seen by the heart, cognition (*maʿrifa*) and knowledge.<sup>129</sup>

However, this view has been rejected by the Ashʿarites. They argue that this interpretation is inconsistent with another verse: “On that day there will be radiant faces, looking towards their Lord.”<sup>130</sup> Therefore, they conclude that based on this verse, God can be seen in the Hereafter. The denial of seeing God in the first verse (Qur. 6:103) refers to this world, not the Hereafter.<sup>131</sup>

As a reply to the Ashʿarites, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that the right interpretation of verse 75: 22-23 is “those faces are waiting for God’s reward, or waiting for His mercy.” He maintains that only this interpretation is suitable with the proofs from reason and revelation.<sup>132</sup> On this, he argues that:

It is proved that perception when joining with vision will not mean anything except seeing; also it is proved that God denies Himself from perceptive vision (*idrāk al-baṣar*). [Therefore] we consider it as a glory (*tamadduḥ*) that refers to His essence. Hence, [if] a thing is such that its denial [from His essence] is a glory of His essence, confirmation of it is a deficiency (*nuqṣ*). And deficiency is impossible for God in any situation.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Qur. 6:103.

<sup>129</sup> *Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 83.

<sup>130</sup> Qur. 75: 22-3.

<sup>131</sup> For the Ashʿarites’ arguments in details, see al-Ashʿarī, *Ibāna*, 59; al-Shahrastānī, *Milal*, i, 100; al-Baḡhdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 97.

<sup>132</sup> *Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 84.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. *Mughni*, iv, 70; Mānkdim, *Sharḥ*, 233.

Based on these arguments, °Abd al-Jabbār maintains that God cannot be seen in this world or in the hereafter, because the denial from *al-ru'ya* is a glory towards the essence of God. Hence, establishing the possibility of *al-ru'ya* either in this world or the hereafter is considered a denial of this glory. As a result, °Abd al-Jabbār concludes that this glory will remain forever in this world and in the hereafter. Otherwise, it would imply a change and a deficiency in the essence of God. These implications, according to °Abd al-Jabbār, are impossible.<sup>134</sup>

From this argument, we observe that °Abd al-Jabbār also uses the Qur'anic proof in his theological disputes on knowing God. However, the Qur'anic proof is applicable only at the last stage of his argument on the attributes of God, i.e. after the divine justice has been proved. Thus, we observe that unlike his argument to prove the existence of God that is based on purely rational argument, in his dispute on the attributes of God, he employs arguments from both reason and revelation.

### 5.5. The Oneness of God

°Abd al-Jabbār maintains that to prove the oneness of God, one must prove that there is no other eternal being (*qadīm*) except God.<sup>135</sup> God is eternal by His essence (*li nafsih*). Therefore, if other being share with Him the attribute of eternity, he will also share all His other essential attributes such as omnipotence (*qādir*), omniscience (*°ālim*) and living (*ḥayy*).<sup>136</sup> He explains that eternal being has no need for other

<sup>134</sup> For °Abd al-Jabbār's arguments on the denial of *al-ru'ya*, see *Mughnī*, iv, 51, 116; v, 223; *Mukhtaṣar*, 191; *Mānkādm*, *Sharḥ*, 232-277.

<sup>135</sup> °Abd al-Jabbār defines *qadīm* as 'the one who has neither beginning of his existence nor starting'. Cf. *Mughnī*, iv, 250.

<sup>136</sup> *Mughnī*, iv, 252.

existence to make it exist. Its existence is without cause (*illa*). If this is so, it will lead to the many aspects of impossibilities (*muḥālāt*).

°Abd al-Jabbār elaborates on these aspects of impossibility in his *taʿlīq al-muḥīṭ*, when he reportedly states that accepting that both are possible (*qādirayn*) implies the occurrence of mutual hindrance (*tamānuʿ*); furthermore, assuming that both are possible by their essence (*qādiryn li anfusihimā*) will imply the invalidity of the mutual hindrance, which is impossible.<sup>137</sup> His argument on the mutual hindrance that occurs between two eternal beings is based on the ability of both to act in two opposite ways (*ḍiddayn*) in the same genus (*jins*). For instance, if one of them wanted to move something while the other wanted to keep it still, the object cannot be moving and still at the same time. If the *tamānuʿ* occurs, °Abd al-Jabbār suggests that there are three possibilities: (a) the wills of both of them will be implemented; (b) neither of their wills will be implemented; and (c) only the will of one of them will occur, implying that the other is weak.

°Abd al-Jabbār argues that (a) and (b) are impossible; therefore, the only option is (c). He argues that (a) is impossible because one produced thing (*maqḍūr wāḥid*) cannot be produced by two able agents (*qādirayn*); since both are capable of the opposites (*ḍiddayn*), the occurrence of their wills implies a combination of contradiction (*ijtimāʿ al-ḍiddayn*). °Abd al-Jabbār maintains that (b) is also impossible, since this implies that both of them are weak. He argues that an eternal being who is able with His essence has unlimited ability to produce a thing

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<sup>137</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 508.

(*maqḍūr*); therefore, His will cannot be hindered. If His will is hindered, this implies his weakness, which is not possible. Both implications, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, will deny the status of the first eternal being that has been proved as essentially able (*qādir bi dhātih*).<sup>138</sup>

Therefore, he maintains that what will happen is (c): the will of one of them will occur while the other is obstructed. Hence, the one whose will happens is essentially able and God, whereas the other is not because of its weakness. This is because, if it is possible for his will to be hindered, it will also be possible that he can be hindered from rewarding those who worship him or punishing those who disobey him. In this case, it is not good for him to obligate others, or for him to be worshiped. Hence, he is neither eternal nor able with his essence, but able with power (*qudra*) and has a body.<sup>139</sup>

However, this argument has been criticized by Abū al-Ḥusayn. He considers that the mutual hindrance will not occur between two eternal beings who know with their essence (*li dhātih*), because both of them know every aspect of wisdom and goodness; therefore, they will have the same motive.<sup>140</sup> Explaining this argument, Ibn al-Malāḥimī states that ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s arguments based on the ground that mutual hindrance is possible because of the two are able (*qādirayn*), are unsound. He argues that the ability of the two able agents on the two opposites (*ʿalā al-ḍiddayn*) is not enough for an act to occur. There must be an additional thing that makes it occur,

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<sup>138</sup> *Mughnī*, iv, 275-6; Mānkḍīm, *Sharḥ*, 278; Peters, *God’s Created Speech*, 264-5.

<sup>139</sup> ʿAbd al-Jabbār considers that an able agent with power is a body because power needs a place (*maḥall*) to occur, cf. *Mughnī*, iv, 281; Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 517. See also our discussion on the categories of acts, above 140.

<sup>140</sup> Abū al-Ḥusayn, *Taṣaffuḥ*, 7.

and this thing is a motive (*dāʿi*). Without motive, there will be no act; therefore, motive is a condition (*sharṭ*) of action. In this case, he compares a motive to a tool (*āla*). Without a tool, an able agent cannot perform the act.<sup>141</sup>

Therefore, in the case of proving the oneness of God, Ibn al-Malāḥimī argues that the mutual hindrance between two able beings is only possible when they disagree on the motives. For instance, the first being, due to certain motives, intends to perform a certain act, and the other, due to another motive, intends to do the opposite. However, if both of them are motivated by the same motive, then mutual hindrance will not occur.<sup>142</sup> He explains that mutual hindrance is possible between two able agents who are able with power and know with knowledge. However, when the two able agents are powerful and knowing with their essence without limit, mutual hindrance will not occur between them. Both of them are wise (*ḥākimayn*) and they will only choose what wisdom (*ḥikma*) is. The second has a similar knowledge to that of the first. The implication is that both of them will have the same motive and will therefore choose the same thing; hence, mutual hindrance will not occur.<sup>143</sup>

Responding to this critique, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that it is implausible since, in the states of action (*aḥwāl al-afʿāl*), there are things that are possible for one to do without the action, such as a good thing (*ḥasan*) that is permissible (*mubāḥ*). He argues that in this situation, it is possible for one of them with his knowledge to

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<sup>141</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 513-4.

<sup>142</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 515.

<sup>143</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 515.

perform a certain act without the other, such as punishment (*ʿiqāb*). Therefore, he insists that his argument is plausible.<sup>144</sup>

However, one might ask, what if the mutual hindrance does not occur at all? ʿAbd al-Jabbār responds to this question by arguing that “we are not basing our argument of the mutual hindrance (*tamānuʿ*) on the actuality of its occurrence, but on the assumption (*taqdīr*) of it.” The assumption of mutual hindrance, he argues, is enough to become a foundation for its implications, such as the occurrence of the will of both, or the denial of both wills. When the implications indicate that it is inconceivable for the existence of two eternal beings, this implies that there is only one eternal being who is omnipotent and omniscient by His essence.<sup>145</sup>

In another argument, ʿAbd al-Jabbār states that the existence of the second eternal being besides God is impossible, since this implies that one produced thing (*maqdūr wāḥid*) is created by two able beings (*qādirayn*), which is impossible. Explaining this argument, he states that

If there is another eternal being with God, he must be able with his essence [too], and if there is another eternal being who is able by his essence, that necessitates the produced thing (*maqdūr*) of both is one; for the essence of one of them is similar to the other [due to their eternity]. And since their essence is similar, so are their relations (*taʿalluq*) with the produced thing, otherwise both will not be similar.<sup>146</sup>

To confirm his ground of the impossibility of a produced thing created by two agents, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues first by proving that an agent (*muḥdith*) cannot create

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<sup>144</sup> *Mughnī*, iv, 262. Based on this argument, Ibn al-Malāḥimī is mistaken when he said that ʿAbd al-Jabbār does not reply on this critic, cf. Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 515.

<sup>145</sup> cf. Māndkīm, *Sharḥ*, 283. See also Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 515.

<sup>146</sup> *Mughnī*, iv, 267.

(*mukhtari*<sup>ċ</sup>) in two ways (*wajhayn*). Explaining this argument, he states that a thing that can be created, if it has not been created, is non-existent (*ma<sup>ċ</sup>dūm*). Therefore, for a thing to be created there is only one way for this to occur. Without following this way, a thing cannot be created. If it is possible for an agent to create in two ways, it implies that it is possible to create a thing from another way, which is non-existent. This implication, according to <sup>ċ</sup>Abd al-Jabbār, is impossible.

Having proved the impossibility of an agent creating in two ways, <sup>ċ</sup>Abd al-Jabbār argues that if this is impossible from one agent, it also impossible for two agents. Elucidating his argument, <sup>ċ</sup>Abd al-Jabbār states that if it is possible for a thing to exist from two ways, this implies both of the agents (*qādirayn*) are capable with two powers, because what one of them is specifically associated with cannot be shared by the other. Therefore, this implies the existence of two powers in one able agent. Since this implication is false in one agent, it also false in two able agents (*qādirayn*). Based on this argument, <sup>ċ</sup>Abd al-Jabbār insists that the creation of one produced thing (*maqḍūr wāḥid*) from two able agents is impossible. Therefore, there is no second eternal being beside God.<sup>147</sup>

After rejecting <sup>ċ</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's argument on the occurrence of mutual hindrance (*tamānu<sup>ċ</sup>*), Ibn al-Malāḥimī again rejects <sup>ċ</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's second argument because, for him, the production of a produced thing by two able agents is possible.<sup>148</sup> By rejecting both of <sup>ċ</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's rational arguments, it seems that Ibn al-Malāḥimī is not left with many choices except to employ the revelation in order to support his

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<sup>147</sup> *Mughni*, iv, 254-7.

<sup>148</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Mu<sup>ċ</sup>tamad*,

proof of the oneness of God. Therefore, we observe that Ibn al-Malāḥimī's difficulty in proving the oneness of God by reason alone is obvious when he develops two arguments to prove it based on the revelation.

In the first proof, he argues that there is no way to know the existence of the second eternal being in the first place, and neither is he known by himself. If this is the case, it must be denied, because confirming it will lead to ignorance. Therefore, there is no second eternal being beside God. He argues that there is no way of knowing this because the way to know is either through our reason (*ʿaqlinā*) or revelation (*samʿinā*), and nothing in either indicates the existence of a second eternal being.<sup>149</sup>

Meanwhile, in his second proof, he argues that if there is a second eternal being besides God, he will also share all other essential attributes and must be wise (*ḥākīm*). If both are wise, it is inconceivable for them to send messengers who are lying in their messages. One of those messengers, Prophet Muhammad, for instance, told us that God is one. He also reports the word of God in His book: "Say He is Allāh the One; and there is none comparable unto Him."<sup>150</sup> All other prophets also transmit the same message of the oneness of God. All of these proofs indicate that there is only one God and no second god with Him.<sup>151</sup>

From this contention, one might observe that Ibn al-Malāḥimī is having difficulty in establishing the proof of the oneness of God based on reason alone. One obvious point is his disagreement with ʿAbd al-Jabbār on the concept of action. In this regard,

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<sup>149</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 535.

<sup>150</sup> Qur. 112: 1&4. See also Qur. 42: 11; 2: 163

<sup>151</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Muʿtamad*, 537.

the former holds a theory of action similar to the idea of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, who maintains that motive is necessary in every act. Since motives are created based on knowledge, two eternal beings will definitely have the same motive because they know all the aspects of wisdom and goodness. Therefore, mutual hindrance will not occur. Meanwhile, °Abd al-Jabbār, in his theory of action, does not consider that motive is a necessary part of it. He maintains that when an agent is able (*qādir*) and there is no hindrance (*māni*), the act will occur, even without motive.<sup>152</sup>

## 5.6. Divine Justice

°Abd al-Jabbār, in agreement with his Mu°tazilite predecessors, considers that ‘justice’ (*°adl*) is one of the attributes of God. °Abd al-Jabbār maintains that God is exalted from any types of injustice and all types of acts that appear to be evil or unethical based on the seen world (*al-shāhid*). On this he writes:

And you know that God does not impose faith upon the unbeliever without giving him the power (*qudra*) for it, nor does He impose upon a human what he is unable to do (*taklīf mā lā yuṭāq*), but He gives to the unbeliever [freedom] to choose unbelief by his own choice. And you know that God does not will, desire or want disobedience. Rather, He loathes and despises it and only wills obedience, which He wants and chooses and loves. And you know that He does not punish the children of polytheists (*mushrikīm*) in Hellfire because of their fathers’ sin, for He has said: “Each soul earns only on its own account”;<sup>153</sup> and He does not punish anyone for someone else’s sin because that would be morally wrong (*qabīḥ*), [and] God is far removed from such. And you know that He does not transgress His rule (*ḥukm*) and that He only causes sickness and illness in order to turn them to an advantage [for human beings]. Whoever says otherwise has allowed that God is unjust (*ẓulm*) and has ascribed disrespect to Him.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>152</sup> For more on °Abd al-Jabbār’s concept of action, see above, 141.

<sup>153</sup> Qur. 6:164.

<sup>154</sup> *Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 81. See also, Martin, *Defenders of Reason*, 92.

°Abd al-Jabbār's argument on the divine justice (°*ādil*) is based on the principle that all God's acts are good and He is completely free from any evil act. He argues that God does not do what is evil (*qabīḥ*) because (i) He knows the evilness of all evil acts and (ii) He does not need them (*ghaniyy*). Therefore, it is impossible for Him to do evil. His argument is based on the analogical reasoning between the seen (*shāhid*) world and the unseen (*ghā'ib*). °Abd al-Jabbār argues that if one knows that injustice and lying are bad, and does not need them (*ghaniyy*), it would be impossible for one to choose injustice and lying. Consequently, if God is self-sufficient without need of any immoral or evil thing, it necessarily follows that He would not choose it based on His knowledge of its evilness. Therefore, no evil thing that happens in the world is the act of God.<sup>155</sup>

In this argument, the original case (*aṣl*) is 'human action'; the secondary case (*far°*) is the unseen 'God's action'; the ground (°*illa*) is 'knowledge of the evilness of the act and the self-sufficiency of the agent from it'; and the judgment (*ḥukm*) is 'not doing evil'. When this ground is similar in the seen world and the unseen, the judgment applies in both worlds. Based on this analogical argument, °Abd al-Jabbār manages to prove the justice of God.

However, as we discussed earlier, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and the Ḥusayniyya reject the analogical argument. Therefore, they cannot apply this proof in confirming divine justice. Consequently, Yusūf al-Baṣīr (d. 431/1040), a Karaite Mu°tazilite scholar,

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<sup>155</sup> °Abd al-Jabbār also uses revelation to support his case. He argues that that God has distanced Himself from immoral thing with his saying: "But God never wishes injustice to His servants" (Qur. 40:31); and his saying "Verily God will not deal unjustly with man in anything" (Qur. 10:44). Cf. Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 72.

has accused him of being unable to prove the justice of God due to his rejection of this proof. Al-Baṣīr insists that without analogical argument, one will not be able to prove that God will not do evil because one has no grounds to do so.<sup>156</sup>

However, Ibn al-Malāḥimī, in defending the Ḥusayniyya's view, considers that the analogical proof is not the only way to know the divine justice. Instead, he applies the concept of motive to prove the divine justice. He argues that every act produced from the able agent must be based on a certain motive (*dāʿi*). The motive to do an evil act is impossible to God, for that motive is 'ignorant' (*jahl*) of the evilness of the act and also the need (*ḥāja*) to do an evil act. Therefore, Ibn al-Malāḥimī maintains that it is impossible for an evil act to occur from God due to the absence of a motive for it.<sup>157</sup>

From this argument, Ibn al-Malāḥimī seems to be able to free himself from the analogical proof of the traditional Muṣṭazilites. However, one might ask him how it is possible to know that the motive preponderates the occurrence of certain produced things in the unseen world (*ghā'ib*). This knowledge must be known through the seen world (*shāhid*). The implication is that the analogical proof that is defended by ʿAbd al-Jabbār and other traditional Muṣṭazilites is necessary. To answer this question, Ibn al-Malāḥimī goes back to the immediate knowledge. He considers that the knowledge that (i) we are the real agents of our action; (ii) we are capable of doing

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<sup>156</sup> Al-Baṣīr's criticism toward Abū al-Ḥusayn is based on the latter's rejection of the existence of accidents as an independent being or essence (*dhawāʾil*) that normally inhere in bodies and are the cause of attributes (*ṣifāt*) and characteristic (*aḥkām*) in them. The rejection of accidents, al-Baṣīr argues will obstruct the path to knowledge of the doctrine of Unicity and Justice. Cf. al-Baṣīr, Y., *Refutation*, 37-8.

<sup>157</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Fāʾiq*, 129-30.

different acts and (iii) we choose certain acts due to motives, are all immediately (*darūrī*) known. This situation, he considers, is the same in every living agent who is able. Similarly, this state also applies in the unseen world.<sup>158</sup>

However, I suggest that Ibn al-Malāḥimī does not answer the previous question adequately. He still needs to rely on the seen world in order to establish that the motive outweighs (*yurajjih*) in the unseen world. From here, one might observe that Ibn al-Malāḥimī cannot get away from using the analogical proof in his argument on divine justice. Yet, he applies this proof without detailing it, in contrast with what we observed in °Abd al-Jabbār's argument.

From this contention, we observe that because of his rejection of the analogical proof by the traditional Mu°tazilites, Ibn al-Malāḥimī chooses another route by stating that knowledge that every act occurs based on motive is immediately known. However, he does not come up with any convincing argument to establish the immediacy of that knowledge. Perhaps to consider a statement as immediate knowledge is a less difficult option for the *mutaklimūn* to maintain without a need for proof. Immediate knowledge is improvable and created by God directly in the human mind.

°Abd al-Jabbār supports his argument by describing the possible implications if one accepts that God can do an unethical thing. If so, He will possibly punish the prophets and righteous ones (*ṣālihīn*) and send them to the Hellfire (*al-nār*), or send enemies of the prophets to paradise. Also, He could possibly send human beings a

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<sup>158</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Fā'iq*, 130.

messenger who called them to unbelief (*kufṛ*) and error (*ḍalāl*), and manifest through him a miracle and proofs. This is because, if it is possible for Him to do what is unethical, what would prohibit Him from doing all the evil acts we mentioned earlier? These implications, according to °Abd al-Jabbār, will lead to disbelief of the Qur’ān and Sunna, and ignorance of the revelation. Furthermore, it will lead to uncertainty as to whether what we are doing is true or not. Whoever reaches this level of thinking, according to °Abd al-Jabbār, his error is shameful (*faḥūsha*) and his disgrace is great.<sup>159</sup>

Having proved that God will not perform an unethical acts, °Abd al-Jabbār goes on to prove his second foundation of divine justice by dissociating God from evil acts performed by human beings. On this, he reports:

You know that all humans’ acts of injustice (*ẓulm*), transgression (*jawr*) and the like cannot be of His creation (*min khalqih*). Whoever attributes that to Him has ascribed to Him injustice and insolence (*safh*) and thus strays from the doctrine of justice.<sup>160</sup>

He argues that humans’ acts are not created by God but by themselves; for if they are created by God, the implications are that (i) praise and blame, or rewards and punishments, will be useless; (ii) they will not occur based on our intention and motivation, for since they occurred based on our intention and motivation, that indicates that our acts are not created by God; (iii) God will not create human acts that include cursing and insulting Him and (iv) the creator of injustice must have been unjust, therefore, if God created injustice, it implies He is unjust. Whoever says

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<sup>159</sup> *Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 84-5

<sup>160</sup> *Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 81.

this is an unbeliever (*kufir*). Therefore, °Abd al-Jabbār concludes that all humans' acts are created by themselves and not by God.<sup>161</sup>

°Abd al-Jabbār maintains that since God does not perform evil acts, instead they are performed by human beings; therefore, God is just (°*ādil*). He indicates that to know the divine justice is to know that God is free from (*tanzīh*) all that is morally wrong (*qabīh*) and all His acts are good. However, what if someone asks, how can you say that God does not do evil acts, while there is pain and suffering in the human beings that were created by Him?

To see °Abd al-Jabbār's answer to this question, it is important to observe the concept of pain and suffering according to him. °Abd al-Jabbār considers that pain and suffering are perceived in a direct, immediate way that does not need reflection; however, one needs to reflect to know their causes.<sup>162</sup> He defines pain as "a form of separation which occurs in a composite substance."<sup>163</sup> Suffering, in °Abd al-Jabbār's theology, is considered evil if it is any injury without benefit exceeding it or repulsion of harm greater than it, and which is not deserved. But when these reasons are reversed, that is when pain and suffering (i) confer benefit, (ii) avoid a greater injury or (iii) are deserved, they should not be considered evil.<sup>164</sup>

Answering the previous question, °Abd al-Jabbār argues that pain and suffering created by God is not injustice, since the reasons why God causes pain and suffering

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<sup>161</sup> *Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 85.

<sup>162</sup> See *Mughnī*, xiii, 229-30. Cf. Friemuth, *God and Humans*, 69.

<sup>163</sup> For details on pain see *Mughnī*, ix, 52; see also Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 134.

<sup>164</sup> *Mughnī*, xiii, 299; cf. Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 71; Friemuth, *God and Humans*, 69.

are either because of benefit or because it is a deserved punishment. °Abd al-Jabbār regards this benefit as an admonition (*ʿtibār*) or lesson (*miḥna*), which leads to reflection on the reasons for this pain and its warning of danger. On this he writes:

He [God] only causes sickness and illness to turn them to advantage [for human beings]. Whoever says otherwise has allowed that God is unjust (*zulm*) and has ascribed disrespect to Him. And you know that, for their sakes, He does the best for all of His creatures, upon whom He imposes [moral and religious] obligation (*yukallifuhum*), and that He has indicated to them what He has imposed upon them and clarified the path of truth so that we could pursue it, and He has clarified the path of falsehood (*ṭarīq al-bāṭil*) so that we could avoid it. So, whoever perishes does so only after [all this has been made] clear.<sup>165</sup>

Therefore, °Abd al-Jabbār explains that the sufferings caused by disasters are considered trials and probably warn others who are influenced by this disaster. Therefore, God will compensate (*ʿiwaḍ*) these sufferings with some rewards in the Hereafter, in order to remove all of their evil aspects. For that reason, °Abd al-Jabbār infers that the suffering of children is evil if it is perpetrated by human beings, but it is not evil if it is done by God, since God can compensate for the suffering in the Hereafter.

°Abd al-Jabbār considers that, although there is difficulty (*mashaqqa*) in the *taklīf*, it is not evil because by implementing the obligation, one will be able to obtain praise and rewards in the hereafter. Instead, he maintains that the *taklīf* is good. For without this obligation, one cannot achieve the position and reward provided by God.<sup>166</sup> Supporting °Abd al-Jabbār's argument on the goodness of *taklīf*, Ibn al-Malāḥimī explains that *taklīf* is good because it is an act of the Wise (*Hakīm*) who does no evil. He argues that despite its difficulty, *taklīf* enables man to acquire a great benefit

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<sup>165</sup> *Mughnī*, xiii, 298.

<sup>166</sup> *Mughnī*, xi, 134.

(*manāfi*<sup>°</sup> *°azīma*) that cannot be achieved through other means. In this regard, he insists that *taklif* is no evil because, if so, the all wise would not do it.<sup>167</sup>

## Conclusion

In his argument on knowing God, °Abd al-Jabbār considers that the only way to do so is through reflection (*naẓar*). By doing this, he disagrees with the view of Abū al-Hudhayl al-°Allāf, who maintains that knowing God is immediate knowledge. °Abd al-Jabbār also argues against those who consider that knowing God is possible through uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*). His main argument in rejecting uncritical imitation is based on his immediate knowledge. He argues that by doing *taqlīd* on two or more contradicting views will imply the combination of two contradictions, which is inconceivable.

°Abd al-Jabbār also disagrees with *Aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* who maintain that the Qur'an is the proof of knowing God. Based on the principle established from the subsection on indirect knowledge (what resembles a means), °Abd al-Jabbār argues that the validity of the Qur'an can only be accepted after the existence of God and His attributes has been proved. He argues that the Qur'an is antecedent (*far*<sup>°</sup>) and the essence of God is precedent (*aṣl*). Therefore, the antecedent cannot prove the existence of the precedent, since the former's validity depends on the latter. Therefore, he concludes that the only way to know God is through rational reflection.

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<sup>167</sup> Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Fā'iqa*, 201.

The analogical proof between the seen world (*shāhid*) and the unseen (*ghā'ib*) is the key argument employed by °Abd al-Jabbār on knowing God. To establish the *shāhid*, he bases this on immediate knowledge; first on the direct knowledge for confirming his existence, and second on the perceptible knowledge to establish the outside world. In order to establish the unseen world, °Abd al-Jabbār bases this on the acquired knowledge through reflection. Based on a similar analogy (*qiyās*) applied in Islamic jurisprudence, he establishes the existence of the unseen world. °Abd al-Jabbār's analogical proof also relates with his theory of action. The ground (*illa*) of his analogy is based on the knowledge that man is the real agent of his act.

Therefore, due to the difference in their theory of action from °Abd al-Jabbār and the traditional Mu°tazilites, the Ash°arites and the Ḥusayniyya do not employ the analogical proof, based on the temporality of the world, in their argument on the existence of God. Both groups, however, apply the proof of particularisation and proof from design.

°Abd al-Jabbār also employs the analogical proof in confirming the attributes of God, the oneness of God and the divine justice. Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī again faces a problem regarding the oneness of God and the justice of God. The main reason for this is his rejection of the existence of accidents because God is an independent being. Yūsuf al-Baṣīr accused him of being unable to prove that God is one and just. However, when examining the Ḥusayniyya's argument, we observe that Abū al-Ḥusayn manages to solve the problem by referring to his concept of motive (*dā'i*).

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

ʿAbd al-Jabbār is a prominent Muʿtazilite scholar who lived in the fourth/tenth century during the ʿAbbāsīd Caliphate. One of the significant features of this century was the revival of the role of the intellect among Muslim theologians. For several centuries previously, it had been the Muʿtazilites who had been considered the defenders of reason in religious doctrines. However, during ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s time, the role of reason in theological argument became significant and well accepted among the majority of scholars. This development can be observed through the revitalization of the Ashʿarites school, a Sunnite version of rational theology by al-Bāqillānī and al-Baghdādī. We also observe the approach of some Ḥanbalites, which is similar to the method of *kalām*, such as in the work of Ibn al-ʿImād al-Ḥanbalī.

The balance of political power between the ʿAbbāsīd Caliphs and the Buyid *Amīr*s also contributed to the revitalization of *kalām* schools during this century. Both parties belonged to different theological schools; the ʿAbbāsīd Caliphs inclined towards the Sunnites, while the Buyid *Amīr*s were Shiʿites. Therefore, political interference in religious doctrines rarely happened and were not significant. The Caliphs had no army to enforce the theological decrees. The *Amīr*s, in turn did not impose Shiʿism on people due to their political interest. During this time, inter-religious debates between Jewish, Christian and Muslim also occurred widely. This phenomenon in turn contributed to the survival of some of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s and his students’ works, even today.

The discussion on the theory of knowledge also becomes a significant part of *kalām* discussions during this time in the learned circles at the court of the Caliph and the *Amirs* in Baghdād, Shirāz and Rayy. The translation of Greek philosophy into Arabic during the time of al-Ma'mūn and his successors also contributes to the enrichment of the discussion, which leads to a significant result in the works on the theory of knowledge among the *mutakallimūn*.

In his theological epistemology, °Abd al-Jabbār in general bases his argument on the traditional Mu°tazilites' epistemology, with some modification. From our discussion, we can observe the relationship between °Abd al-Jabbār's epistemology and his theology in his discussion on the definition and the types of knowledge.

In his discussion on the definition of knowledge °Abd al-Jabbār follows the method of Wāṣil b. °Atā' and the majority of the Mu°tazilites who reject the existence of God's attributes, including knowledge. Therefore, when defining knowledge, °Abd al-Jabbār excludes God's knowledge from the discussion. For this reason, he conceives that defining knowledge with belief (*i°tiqād*) and entitative being (*ma°nā*) is plausible. However, in contrast with the Mu°tazilites, the Ash°arites consider that God has the attribute of knowledge; therefore, when defining knowledge they also include God's knowledge in their definition.

The *mutakallimūn* in general agree that the human's knowledge is divided into two types, immediate and acquired. Yet they disagree on the content of immediate knowledge. This disagreement has resulted in a different theology. °Abd al-Jabbār,

for instance, considers that basic ethical principles are immediate knowledge; by this he establishes the ground for rational obligation (*taklīf<sup>°</sup> aqlī*); for when one knows good and evil, one must act based on those principles. The immediacy of ethical knowledge, however, was rejected by the Ash<sup>°</sup>arites. They considered that one can only know ethical principles through revelation; therefore, without revelation there is no obligation since good and evil is unknown.

The dispute concerning the content of immediate knowledge also occurred between <sup>°</sup>Abd al-Jabbār and Abū al-Hudhayl al-<sup>°</sup>Allāf. The latter suggests that knowing God is immediate knowledge; therefore, he considers that every *compos mentis* person (*°āqil*) has the knowledge of God in his mind. This knowledge, according to Abū al-Hudhayl, becomes a ground for the obligation of knowing God in detail, such as His laws, the ways to worship Him, His commands and prohibitions. However, <sup>°</sup>Abd al-Jabbār considers that knowing God is not immediate but acquired knowledge; therefore insists that every *compos mentis* person needs to use his intellect in order to acquire the knowledge of God.

In the arrangement of the types of knowledge <sup>°</sup>Abd al-Jabbār includes what resembles a means in the immediate knowledge. This arrangement plays a significant role in the discussion on the sources of knowledge. The Ash<sup>°</sup>arites, however, do not include this knowledge in their immediate knowledge. The difference appears when they discuss the hierarchy of proof. <sup>°</sup>Abd al-Jabbār, based on the principle derived from what resembles a means that the antecedent (*far<sup>°</sup>*) cannot prove the existence of the precedent (*asl*), states explicitly that reason is prior to the Qur'ān in the hierarchy

of proofs. The Ash<sup>ʿ</sup>arites, however, despite their agreement with the Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>tazilites that the validity of the Qur'ān is proved through the intellect, do not consider it as the main emphasis; therefore, they maintained that the hierarchy of proofs starts by the Qur'an.

This approach is significant when they deal with the proofs of the attributes of God. Because of the principle that precedent cannot be proved by the antecedent, <sup>ʿ</sup>Abd al-Jabbār and the Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>tazilites do not use the Qur'anic proof in order to prove the existence of God, His attributes, and the oneness of God. They only use the Qur'anic evidence after the existence of God, who is just and wise, is proven through reason alone. Therefore, we observe that they have to deal with many questions that are related to God's attributes, such as, what are God's attributes? Are these attributes existent or nonexistent? If they exist, are they eternal or temporal? The answers to these questions are problematic for the Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>tazilites. Therefore, they choose the safest way, in their opinion, by denying the existence of the attributes of God in the first place.

The Ash<sup>ʿ</sup>arites, meanwhile, who maintain that obligation is only possible through revelation, have a different epistemological background. They deal with the issue of the attributes of God differently, since they have Qur'anic support from the commencement of the obligation. Therefore, the validity of the Qur'anic argument is accepted by them from the beginning. The Qur'an becomes an important source for them in dealing with the issue of the attributes of God. Since there are several verses in the Qur'an that explicitly indicate the existence of God's attributes, such as

knowledge (*ilm*) and power (*qudra*), they consider them as the ground for their argument on the attributes of God.

The difference is in the knowledge of action, the first acquired knowledge: According to <sup>o</sup>Abd al-Jabbār, the knowledge of action is considered an introduction to knowing God. He differs with the Ash<sup>o</sup>arites and his own student Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī on this issue. <sup>o</sup>Abd al-Jabbār differs with the Ash<sup>o</sup>arites, since the latter maintain that all acts including human acts, are created by God. God is the only real agent, while human beings have only acquired (*kasab*) their actions. Due to this view, the Ash<sup>o</sup>arites have no ground to establish the original case (*aṣl*) of the analogical proof. Therefore, we observe that the analogical proof is not their main argument for knowing God.

The difference between <sup>o</sup>Abd al-Jabbār and Abū al-Ḥusayn in the knowledge of action is due to their disagreement on the concept of motive (*dāʿi*). The former considers that motive is not a requirement for action. However the latter disagrees and maintains that motive is a requirement in every act. This disagreement has led to a different argument in proving the oneness of God and divine justice.

The difference also relates to their dispute on the reality of accidents (*ʿarāḍ*). <sup>o</sup>Abd al-Jabbār, in agreement with the majority of the Mu<sup>o</sup>tazilites, maintains that accident is a real independent being that exists in bodies (*ajsām*). However, Abū al-Ḥusayn, in contrast, maintains that accident is not a real independent being. Therefore, he rejects the foundation of <sup>o</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's analogical argument that is based on the role of

human beings as the real agents of their actions. Due to his rejection of traditional Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilite analogical argument, Abū al-Ḥusayn faces a problem in proving the justice of God. He was accused of not having a ground to prove the principle of God's unity and justice.

Yet he manages to prove divine justice by depending on his theory of motive. Abū al-Ḥusayn's theory of motive, however, leaves him with another problem in the argument to prove the oneness of God. <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār applies the proof of mutual hindrance (*tamānu<sup>c</sup>*) to prove the oneness of God. However, based on Abū al-Ḥusayn's theory of motive, mutual hindrance will not happen between two eternal beings, since both have the same motive, for both of them know with their essence and have an unlimited knowledge; therefore, they know all goodness and evil. For this reason, Abū al-Ḥusayn has to prove the oneness of God based on the proof from revelation.

<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār establishes the obligation of knowing God based on his immediate knowledge. He considers that several concepts are known to every *compos mentis* person immediately, such as fear (*khawf*), divine notion (*khāṭir*), and thanking the benefactor (*shukr al-mun<sup>c</sup>im*). Based on these concepts, he manages to establish rational obligation (*taklīf<sup>c</sup> aqlī*). <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār considers that man's first obligation is to reflect in order to know God, which is to know the existence of God, His attributes, His oneness and His justice.

Epistemology plays an important role in ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s theology. This reality can be observed in his discussion on the types of knowledge. By using immediate knowledge, he manages to establish the existence of the self, the existence of the seen world (*shāhid*), and the obligation of certain acts upon human beings. This knowledge became the foundation for his analogical argument, which is considered the key proof of knowing God. By using analogical proof, he goes further to establish the existence of the unseen world (*ghā’ib*) based on his first acquired knowledge, which is the knowledge of actions. Based on the analogical proof, ʿAbd al-Jabbār manages to prove the existence of God, His attributes, His oneness and His justice.

The Ḥusayniyya, the last school of Muʿtazilites formed by Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, is considered the most critical of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s argument on knowing God. The points of difference between them can be observed as follows: The first is the difference on the definition of knowledge. This dispute, however, does not significantly affect the general structure of their theology, since Abū al-Husayn, despite his criticism of ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s definition of knowledge in the *Mughnī*, defends the definition that is introduced by Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā’ī, which was also accepted by ʿAbd al-Jabbār in his earlier works before the *Mughnī*.

The disagreement between Abū al-Ḥusayn and ʿAbd al-Jabbār is more obvious in the discussion on the types of knowledge. Although they agree that man is a real agent of his action, both disagree on the details regarding the concept of actions. ʿAbd al-Jabbār, for instance, considers that an agent only needs a capacity (*qudra*) in order to

act. However, Abū al-Ḥusayn disagrees, considering that capacity alone is insufficient, since an agent needs something else in order to prefer action to non-action. Therefore, he maintains that, in addition to capacity, an agent needs a motive to act. Abū al-Ḥusayn's disagreement with his teacher on this issue left him with no option except to follow a different route in his argument on the oneness of God, for his theory of motive does not support the proof of mutual hindrance (*tamānu<sup>ʿ</sup>*) that is defended by <sup>ʿ</sup>Abd al-Jabbār and the traditional Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>tazilites. However, in his argument on the justice of God, the theory of motive provides him with an alternative foundation after his rejection of the traditional Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>tazilites' analogical argument. Abū al-Ḥusayn's argument is that an able agent who is omnipotent and omniscient in His essence will definitely know the difference between good and evil acts. Therefore, His motive will be good all the time. An agent who is in this situation, he argues, will not do evil acts, and all His acts are good.

Abū al-Ḥusayn's disagreement with <sup>ʿ</sup>Abd al-Jabbār was most likely influenced by the philosophers. This influence can be observed in his critique on <sup>ʿ</sup>Abd al-Jabbār's analogical argument. Abū al-Ḥusayn argues that the ground of need of the created being for its creator is not temporality (*ḥudūth*), as maintained by the traditional Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>tazilites including <sup>ʿ</sup>Abd al-Jabbār. Instead he argues that the ground of need is contingent (*imkān*). This argument had been applied earlier by Ibn Sīnā. Most likely Abū al-Ḥusayn was influenced by Ibn Sīnā's view, since the latter's idea was not unfamiliar during his time.

Abū al-Ḥusayn rejects the analogical proof of the traditional Muṭazilites with the argument that it was based on a wrong ground, therefore implausible. Abū al-Ḥusayn also criticizes the original case (*asl*) of the analogical argument, which is human action. He argues that humans are able to affect existing bodies, but not to produce them, for he maintains that accidents are not real existence, but merely attributes and changeable characteristic (*aḥkām*). Based on this critique, he maintains that there is little basis for an analogy between man's free choice of activity and God's creation of the world. However, Abū al-Ḥusayn's argument does not at all demolish ʿAbd al-Jabbār's analogical proof, since the latter does not claim that human beings are the creator (*mukhtariʿ*) of their actions from nothing. He maintains that the only agent who acts from nothing is God. Hence, ʿAbd al-Jabbār's argument in developing his original case is based on humans' actions in relation to existing bodies or atoms. Thus, the argument is not about the production (*ikhtirāʿ*) of a thing, but about the doer (*fāʿil*) of a thing. Therefore, Abū al-Ḥusayn's critique does not demolish ʿAbd al-Jabbār's original case in his analogical proof.

By rejecting the traditional Muṭazilite analogical proof, Abū al-Ḥusayn has to find another solution in his effort to prove the existence of God, the oneness of God, and His justice. In his argument on the existence of God, he applies the detailed argument from particularization. This argument is based on the principle of causality that is similar to that of the philosophers. He manages to avoid the controversial implication of the philosophers' view, which is the eternity of the world, by maintaining that the creator must be a freely choosing agent and not a necessitating cause. In his argument on the oneness of God, Abū al-Ḥusayn cannot apply the proof of mutual

hindrance (*tamānu*'), since this proof is not compatible with his theory of motive. Therefore, he bases his argument on the proof from revelation. As for his argument on divine justice, Abū al-Ḥusayn depends on his theory of motive. However, when he was asked how to establish the relation between the seen world and the unseen, Abū al-Ḥusayn answered: by immediate knowledge.

One might observe from his arguments that Abū al-Ḥusayn is using immediate knowledge and the proof from revelation to prove the existence of God and the oneness of God. This approach, however, is different from that of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, who maintains the rational argument throughout his proof on knowing God. Abū al-Ḥusayn's rejection of the analogical argument on knowing God seems to be the main reason for the differences between the two men in their arguments on knowing God. Although Abū al-Ḥusayn manages to establish several arguments to prove the existence of God, His oneness and His justice, which are not based on the analogical argument, he still has a problem in establishing the relation between the seen and the unseen world. His solution of using immediate knowledge is not entirely satisfactory. Therefore, I suggest that ʿAbd al-Jabbār's argument on knowing God is more plausible than that of Abū al-Ḥusayn.

In general we observe that the difference between ʿAbd al-Jabbār and Abū al-Ḥusayn in their theological epistemology is at the level of argument and not at the doctrinal level. Both of them believe in the oneness of God, and the justice of God and believe that human beings are the real agents of their actions. They also deny the attributes of God. Where they differ is their arguments in order to establish that doctrines. This

phenomenon, however, is different from the Ash<sup>c</sup>arites'. Their differences with <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār on theological epistemology seem to end up in a different doctrine, such as on the attributes of God and the justice of God. However, I suggest that the differences among the *mutaklimūn* in general, including the Ash<sup>c</sup>arites and the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites, are based on their interpretation of the doctrines that are agreed by all, such as the existence of God, the oneness of God, the perfection of God, and the justice of God. All of these doctrines are in general accepted by all *mutakallimūn*. The disagreement only occurs when interpreting these doctrines.

As al-Rāzī mentioned earlier, the roots of contention are based on the attributes of perfection (*kamāl*) and imperfection (*nuqṣān*). The Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites consider that a perfect being must be different in every aspect from an imperfect being, for any similarity with an imperfect being implies imperfection. Therefore, they try to deny any similarity between God and His creation. For instance, since by accepting that God knows through knowledge will imply a similarity with human beings, they reject the existence of knowledge in God. However, the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites' rejection of the attribute of knowledge is not to deny God's perfection, since they believe that the outcome of knowledge; the precise acts, are still in God. The Ash<sup>c</sup>arites and the Ṣifātiyya, in contrast, maintain that the perfect God must have all the attributes that bring perfection in human beings, such as knowledge, power and life. Without these attributes, God will be considered imperfect.

As for future research, I suggest a comparative study should be made on the theological epistemology of the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites and the Karaites. Several new

publications from the group of the “Muṣṭazilite Manuscripts Project” have shed light on this issue, which is significant for understanding the relationship between Islam and Judaism during the classical period.

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