Islamic Ethics

Divine Command Theory in Arabo-Islamic thought

Mariam al-Attar

Culture and Civilization in the Middle East

ISLAMIC ETHICS

This book explores philosophical ethics in Arabo-Islamic thought. Examining the meaning, origin and development of "Divine Command Theory," it underscores the philosophical bases of religious fundamentalism that hinder social development and hamper dialogue between different cultures and nations.

Challenging traditional stereotypes of Islam, the book refutes contemporary claims that Islam is a defining case of ethical voluntarism, and that the prominent theory in Islamic ethical thought is Divine Command Theory. The author argues that, in fact, early Arab-Islamic scholars articulated moral theories: theories of value and theories of obligation. She traces the development of Arabo-Islamic ethics from the early Islamic theological and political debates between the Kharijites and the Murji'ites, shedding new light on the moral theory of Abd al-Jabbar al-Mu'tazili and the effects of this moral theory on post-Mu'tazilite ethical thought.

Highlighting important aspects in the development of Islamic thought, this book will appeal to students and scholars of Islamic moral thought and ethics, Islamic law, and religious fundamentalism.

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INTRODUCTION

The divine origins of moral values and rulings are regarded by many as the only valid and genuine cause for acknowledging and retaining their legitimacy. They consider moral values almost synonymous with religious values and religion as the only guarantee of the truthfulness of moral judgment. Religious texts are assumed to be the ultimate source of moral knowledge, and obedience to whatever is considered to be commanded by God would accordingly be the most highly regarded, basic virtue. Yet believing in God as the supreme creator, without considering and emphasizing His essential attributes, such as Goodness, Justice, and Rightfulness might introduce serious suspicions concerning the morality of the believers who obey His commands. His commands, if not ethically contemplated and morally justified, could be wrongly interpreted and used by unjust authorities to impose their own views and promote their own social, political or economic interests. For this reason, it is safer to hold that any rule that deserves to be obeyed has to be rationally and morally justified. This also applies to what are considered divine rulings when these are related to morality.

In some Muslim countries, where the Islamic education syllabus is taught in primary and middle schools, divine rules are considered rules that are reasonably justified. Rules of conduct and moral values derived from the Holy Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth are interpreted as serving individual and community interests. For example, at primary schools, in grade five, students are taught that some virtues decreed by God have to be appreciated and practiced, not merely for the sake of obedience, but also because they are for our own welfare. These virtues are such as politeness, helping others, and the etiquette of social conduct.[1] They are justified by showing their reliability in organizing social relations and improving the quality of life. Even the five pillars of Islam, including prayer and fasting, are justified in terms of human interests in this life,[2] as well as being rewarded in the afterlife. Thus, children are taught that there are reasoning and wisdom (*ḥikma*) behind divine rules, which indicate the objective nature of divine prescriptions. Such education is indispensable if knowledge and understanding are the objectives of the educational process, not blind obedience to commands. However, some people maintain that divine commands and rules have to be obeyed regardless of the social or moral implications, as there is no rationale beyond their being divine commands. Those people are consciously or subconsciously adopting Divine

Command Theory in ethics. By doing so, they are actually exempting morality and even religion from their ultimate meaning.

This book will study some Islamic ethical doctrines and theories from a philosophical viewpoint. The development of Arabo-Islamic moral thought will be investigated from the early beginnings until the culmination of moral doctrines in the Muʿtazilite ethical theory provided by ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d.415/1024). The importance of his theory lies in it being a genuine ethical theory that opposes "Divine Command Theory" and provides an alternative basis for morality.

Some Muslim scholars have proposed that the study of Arabo-Islamic cultural heritage (*turāth*) has to be goal-oriented in order to contribute to socio-political development.[3] Consequently, ethical theories that hinder socio-political development must be challenged. Professor Mohammed Arkoun has called for a radical rethinking of Islam. "It is necessary," he says, "to clear away the obstacles found in Islamic as well as Orientalists literature on Islam."[4] In another book he declared that "some problems have been intensively discussed at some time or another and have been rejected and relegated to the domain of unthinkable."[5] One of the examples, as he says, is the famous theory of God's created speech.[6] The problems dealt with in this book may be thought of as another example. Arkoun says:

> Philosophical and religious ethics developed as two competing, differentiated systems until the tenth and eleventh century. The competition ended with the elimination of the philosophical trend of thought, this historical fact generated an intellectual handicap and a cultural gap which prevent contemporary Islamic thought from joining in the debate on ethics on its constraining level: namely biological, anthropological, sociological, psychological, and ultimately philosophical.[7]

It seems that what Arkoun really means by "religious ethics" is what can be called "ethical voluntarism" or Divine Command Theory, which actually represents only one possible interpretation of Islamic ethics. Thus, he could have better called it "ethical voluntarism" instead of "religious ethics," since many religious Muslims today are participating in different ethical debates, and their religious beliefs do not prevent them from participating in such debates.[8]

This work, as proposed by Arkoun, is meant to be goal oriented in order to contribute to socio-political development process. Thus, some obstacles found in Islamic as well as in orientalists' literature on Islamic ethics will be cleared. For example, Donaldson's insistence to trace back any progress in ethical thinking in Arabo-Islamic culture to foreign influences will be challenged. His conclusion that there are restrictions from Qur'ān and Sunna (prophetic tradition) that prevents Muslims from working out a system of moral philosophy,[9] will be disproved, together with ethical voluntarism, which he considered the only possible interpretation of Islamic ethics.

Ethical voluntarism, sometimes called Divine Command Theory,[10] was inspired by the notion of an all-powerful God in control of everything. According to this theory God simply wills things and they become reality. He wills the physical

world into existence, He wills human life into existence, and similarly, He wills all moral values into existence. Thus moral values are established by God, and if He willed He could have changed them.

Divine Command Theory has sparked off a good deal of discussion amongst contemporary professional philosophers.[11] To suppose that God's commands form the basis of the believer's morality raises difficulties of its own. If the proposition: "God's command is good" is analytic, then anything that God commands will be *ipso facto* good. If it is synthetic[12] then it is contingent and if true, then its truth depends upon God's command matching some prior standard of goodness.[13] This theory, which is still discussed in Western philosophy, in relation to Christian thought and religious thought in general, has also long raised philosophical discussions in Arabo-Islamic thought. Ethical voluntarism can also be called "theistic subjectivism" and can be contrasted with ethical objectivism. It is subjective because it relates values to the view of a judge who decides on them, denying anything objective in the character of the acts themselves which would make them right or wrong independent of anyone's decision or opinion; and it is theistic because the decider of values is taken to be God.[14] Contrary to ethical subjectivism, ethical objectivism states that God adopts objective standards. This allows for the view that man can discriminate between good and evil through independent reasoning even without the assistance of divine revelation. The proponents of ethical voluntarism in Islam are usually considered to be the Ashʿarites, whereas the proponents of objective morality are usually considered to be the Muʿtazilites.[15] The issue discussed in Islam was whether revealed law establishes good and evil or merely indicates it (*al-shar' muthabbit am mubayin*). If it is the divine law (*al-shar'*) that establishes what is good or evil, then no morality is perceived without religion. Yet if *al-shar'* only indicates what is good and what is evil, then good and evil exist independently and thus, in principle, could be known without revelation.

The development of Islamic ethical thought

In the initial prophetic period of Islam (CE 610–632) the Qur'ān was revealed and prophet Muḥammad explained and reinforced it through his own teachings and practices. The prophet provided rulings on different issues as and when they arose. One example considered the matter of inheritance. The Qur'ān introduced radical but ambiguous innovations. Prophet Muḥammad clarified the position by establishing a relationship between the new heirs named in the Qur'ān and the old heirs of the customary law, declaring that "the shares are to be given to those who are entitled to them in the Qur'ān, what remains goes to the nearest male heir."[16] Another example is when the Prophet limited the bequest to one third of the property so that the rights of the legal heirs were not adversely affected.[17]

In the period following the Prophet, his companions took a rational approach towards the textual materials, the Qur'ān and the Sunna, as they sought to understand their underlying rationale, effective cause, and purpose.[18] Some incidents

can be found in which some of the rulings of the Qur'ān and the Sunna were suspended or replaced because they no longer served the purpose for which they were initially introduced. One example is when the second caliph, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d.23/644) suspended the share of the *mu'allafah al-qulūb*[19] in the revenues of *al-zakāt*. The Qur'ān assigned a share for them, which the caliph discontinued on the ground that God exalted Islam and it was no longer in need of their support. The caliph thus departed on purely rational grounds, from literal adherence to the Qur'ān, to be in harmony with the spirit of the text.[20]

However, questions on the nature of ethical values, their ontological status, and the source of knowledge of such values seem not to have been explicitly raised before the middle of the eighth century when jurists needed to expand the sources of law as new problems appeared that could not be solved according to the literal sayings of the Qur'ān or the Sunna. Within the span of a century, the Islamic empire embraced a great complexity of races, cultures, and religions, and tremendous administrative problems faced the Arab rulers.[21] Jurists accompanied each army and were settled in the newly established garrison towns such as Kūfa, Baṣra, and Fusṭat. Here the law was expounded and expanded, and "opinion" or "*al-Ra'y*" was claimed to be a legitimate legal method and source.[22] In addition, political conflicts regarding the legitimate successor appeared soon after the death of the Prophet and raised various legal and moral issues. Different groups held divergent opinions regarding political, religious, and moral matters. The door was flung open for the possibility of endless conflicting interpretations of religious texts, giving rise to endless sectarian or factional rifts.[23]

The following era, the era of independent reasoning according to the historians of the theories of law, extended roughly from 132/750 to 338/950 and witnessed major developments that were later manifested in the emergence of the four major legal schools, the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfiʿī, and Ḥanbalī schools.[24] This era also witnessed the rise of the Muʿtazilites, such as Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d.227/841), al-Naẓam (d.230/845) Bishr b. al-Mu'tamir (d.209/825), and Abū'l Ḥusayn al-Khayyāṭ (d.c.300/912) who articulated the five fundamental principles (*Uṣūl*) on which, despite their divergence, all the Muʿtazilites agreed. The Muʿtazilites also agreed on two fundamental principles which are essential for any genuine moral theory, namely, that in the domain of will, individuals are free or capable of choice, and in the domain of outward action or doing (*fi'l*), they are capable of carrying out their freely chosen designs.[25] The Muʿtazilites are regarded as the founders of rational or philosophical theology in Islam[26] and the first genuine group of moralists.[27] They were concerned with establishing that the nature of right and wrong can be determined rationally and independently of divine prescriptions.[28] More recently, there is growing interest amongst moderate and modernist Sunni Muslims in certain aspects of what we could call the "spirit of Muʿtazilite discourse," especially its emphasis on reason, dialogue with others, and its rational basis of ethics.[29]

The rival trend to the Muʿtazilites was mainly initiated by Al-Ashʿarī (d.323/935), who started as a Muʿtazilite but later reacted against their doctrines.

In ethics, he opposed their doctrines and claimed that good or evil was determined exclusively by divine commands.[30] He formulated a thesis that apparently tried to take an intermediate position between free will and predestination, called the theory of *al-kasb*, yet still implied predestination,[31] as argued by the Muʿtazilites.[32] However, it should be mentioned that Ashʿarism was not a powerful movement until the late eleventh century,[33] when the turning point in the suppression of the Muʿtazila occurred with the "Qādirī creed," beginning in 407/1017, of the Caliph Qādir (r. 381/991–422/1031). This was followed by Ḥanbalite demonstrations in Baghdād in the 452/1060s and favor being shown to the Ashʿarites by the Seljūq sultans and their vizier Niẓam al Mulk (408/1018–485/1092).[34]

It seems that Al-Ashʿarī theologically articulated the early reactions of some jurists such as Ibn Ḥanbal (163/780–240/855) against the exercise of independent ethical judgments practiced by the followers of Abū Ḥanīfa (79/699–150/767), and Mālik b. Anas (96/715–141/759). The former developed the doctrine of juristic preference (*istiḥsan*), and the later advocated the public interest (*istiṣlaḥ*). These were considered sources of law, in cases where neither the Qurʾān nor the Ḥadīth could provide explicit solutions. Al-Ashʿarī was fully acquainted with Muʿtazilite doctrines and arguments, as he was himself one of them until he was forty years old,[35] which made him well equipped in his arguments against them, and in defending the dogmatic doctrines and beliefs of *Ahl al-Sunna*.

The same era, the era of independent reasoning also witnessed the establishment of the House of Wisdom (Bayt al-Ḥikma) in Baghdād, by the Abbasid caliph al-Maʾmun (170/786–218/833). It became a great institute for translation and research. Consequently, the translation movement was accelerated by organized translations of Greek science and philosophy. It is also this era that witnessed systematic philosophical writings such as those of al-Kindī (178/795–252/866); Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (251/865–between 310/923 and 333/935); Abū Sulaymān al-Sajistānī (d.329/941); al-Fārābī (264/878–338/950); Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī (d.363/974) among others. They were followed by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, (the Brethren of Purity), who were founded in Baṣra around (372/983), Ibn Sīnā (369/980–428/1037), Abū al-Ḥasan al-ʿAāmirī (d.381/992), and Ibn Rushd (520/1126–594/1198).

The impact of the philosophers and their influence on ethical thought in Islam cannot be denied. However, the more genuine and philosophically interesting ethics were produced by those who were usually classified as theologians. Ethical philosophy that can be related to contemporary ethical problems was produced by those who were not directly influenced by Greek philosophy, but by those who worked extensively on legal and theological issues in Islam. Hourani indicates that the method in Muʿtazilite ethics is "primarily philosophical, in a modern sense"[36] and he rightly remarks that it grew quite naturally out of the early theological and juristic debates.[37] The Muʿtazilites introduced genuine philosophical theories, yet they might have been classified as theologians "because of their origins, their interests and, above all, the absence of explicit influences from Greek philosophy."[38]

The three disciplines, namely philosophy, theology (*ʿIlm al-Kalām*), and the fundamental principles of jurisprudence (*Uṣūl al-Fiqh*), are usually regarded as

distinct fields of knowledge. Yet they should not be segregated in the way they are today. A prominent scholar, Ḥasan Ḥanafī says that the discipline of *ʿIlm al-Kalām* – what he prefers to call *ʿIlm Uṣūl al-Dīn* – or the discipline of the fundamental principles of religion aims to prove the religious tenets by certain definite evidence and to ground the Islamic belief (*ʿaqīda*) on a rational basis; so that the faith could be understood, represented, and defended. This discipline or branch of learning is parallel to the discipline of the fundamental principles of law (*ʿIlm Uṣūl al-Fiqh*), which in turn is concerned with deriving legal judgments from certain firm evidence. "Both of them are disciplines of fundamental principles, yet the first establishes theoretical grounds, while the other establishes grounds for practice."[39] This view was also ascertained by Wael Hallaq in his book about legal theories in Islam, where he demonstrates the relevance of theological tenets to the fundamental principles of jurisprudence. He says: "legal theory, logically and substantively, presupposed theology, for the foundational premises upon which it was squarely based."[40] Reinhart also recognized that no Muslim scholar studied Islamic law without also being familiar with Islamic theology.[41] He maintained that "Islamic law is not merely law, but also an ethical and epistemological system of great subtlety and sophistication."[42] Many theologians and philosophers have also been jurists, like al-Fārābī (264/878–338/950), Ibn Rushd (520/1126–594/1198), and al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (323/935–415/1025), the prominent Muʿtazilite scholar, whose contribution to philosophical ethics will be carefully studied in this book.

ʿIlm al-uṣūl, or "knowledge of the fundamental principles" which encompassed both *ʿilm al-kalām* and *ʿilm uṣūl al-fiqh* contained the most genuine ethical doctrines in Islamic thought, as will be shown in the context of this study. Some books on *uṣūl al-fiqh* were written by the *mutakallimīn*, and therefore included their intellectual methods. The term *kalām* (literally means: "the science of speaking," or "knowledge of conversation") has been most often translated to "theology," but this is not appropriate, as it gives the impression that *kalām* is restricted to issues of divinity. Translating *kalām* to theology does not take into consideration the fact that *kalām* essentially emerged to support different political, social, and ethical arguments, and laid down foundations for legal rulings in addition to its role in establishing and defending Islam against other religions and traditions. Wolfson noticed that even the old Arabs "translated the Greek term for theologians" to "masters of the divine *kalām*" (*aṣḥāb al-kalām al-ilāhi*) or to "the *mutakallimūn* in divinity" (*al-mutakallimūna fī al-ilāhī*), while "the *mutakallimūna* is used as a designation of the masters or exponents of any special branch of learning."[43] This clearly indicates that *kalām* was not only concerned with issues of divinity, nor was it merely "Islamic theology." Watt emphasized that in Islam "theology tends to be regarded as a subdivision of law."[44] While Goldziher went on to say that *kalām* is "in the true sense of the phrase, a philosophy of religion."[45] Furthermore, the Muʿtazilites, considered the pioneers in *ʿIlm al-kalām,* are at the same time considered to have "emphasized reason and logic in arguing for a universal ethical framework."[46] Thus, *kalām* will not be translated as theology in the context of this

study, as it has a broader meaning, encapsulating all the *uṣūl* or fundamental principles of Islamic religion. *'Ilm al-kalām* also bears the name of *'Ilm uṣūl al-Dīn*, knowledge of the fundamental principles of religion. The fundamental principles of the Muʿtazila, which are their well-known *al-uṣūl al-khamsa,* are the five basic fundamental principles in the Muʿtazilite *kalām.* These *uṣūl* in Muʿtazilite thought are the basis of theory as well as practice, belief, and action, *kalām* and *fiqh*. Their works on *uṣūl* included both *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *uṣūl al-dīn* and reflected the awareness of the important relationship between theory and practice. This is evident in the work of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wa'l-'Adl*, which will be the main source used in this book.

Some earlier Arab and Western scholars denied the existence of ethical thought in Arabo-Islamic culture, maintaining that Muslims had no need for philosophical speculation on ethical issues, since they were content and satisfied with the teachings of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.[47] Yet others have investigated different genuine ethical trends and hence asserted that philosophical ethics constituted an important and distinguished field in Arabo-Islamic culture.[48] Sahban Khalifat,[49] has recently argued that *al-Uṣūliyūn* (the scholars who worked on *'ilm al-uṣūl*), were not short of methodological tools. They developed a method of linguistic and logical analysis, which first evolved amongst the circles of the grammarians and the philologists, whose foremost concern was to understand the meaning of the Qur'ān.[50] Linguistic and logical analysis of ethical judgments played an essential role in developing ethical theories in Islam. It will be shown in the fifth chapter of this book that the true meaning of normative ethical judgments, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, is determined by the conditions of its use. A judgment is true only if it fulfills conditions of rational obligation. In modern linguistic analysis the true meaning of propositions, including moral ones is also determined by the conditions of its use, not only by corresponding observable facts as held by logical empiricists.[51]

Normative judgments of moral actions are dealt with in the *fiqh* literature. Thus, considering whether a certain action is obligatory (*wājib*), recommended (*nadb*) or prohibited (*maḥẓūr*) is the subject of *fiqh*. The meaning and the ground of normative judgments is the subject of the *uṣūli* works. Issues concerning normative ethics are dealt with in the works of jurisprudence or *fiqh*, whereas issues concerning metaethics are found in works written on *uṣūl*.[52] However, in Arabo-Islamic thought metaethical issues related to the meaning and nature of moral terms are not divorced from normative ethical concerns. As the attempts to set forth rational and objective normative ethics, which is the ultimate aim of moral philosophy, require adequate knowledge of the meaning of moral concepts, it is through metaethical analysis that the meaning of moral concepts is determined. Moreover, as stated by Kai Nielsen (a contemporary moral philosopher): "Metaethical analysis can undermine certain obscure beliefs about morality and in that way can further the moral life."[53] To discover what is meant by saying that a certain action is obligatory or forbidden requires metaethical analysis. Thus, saying that normative judgments merely express our preferences is a metaethical theory, as is the

claim that normative judgments express the will of God. "Metaethical analysis of the meaning of 'x is wrong' or 'x is right' may enable one to be clearer and more certain in the organization of his moral beliefs and in his efforts to justify them."[54] However, not all discussions of normative ethical beliefs are metaethical. Explanations as to why people use moral language and accounts of the origins of moral language that could support certain ethical theories cannot be properly called metaethical. In the context of the fifth chapter of this book, it will be argued that accounts of the origins of moral language according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār support his objective ethical theory. According to Nielsen, accounts of the origins of moral language properly belong to descriptive ethics, as with statements of fact about people's moral opinions.[55]

Metaethics and normative ethics

In this study, ethics will not be divided into philosophical or theological branches, according to previous classifications. Consequently, metaethics and normative ethics will be considered philosophical regardless of their being expounded in what are considered theological writings or the writings of jurisprudence. It is appropriate to define what is meant by metaethics and normative ethics, as these are the modern names that properly describe Muʿtazilite moral discourse as accumulated in the works of ʿAbd al-Jabbār.

Ethics in this work is considered the philosophical study of morality. It involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behavior. A philosopher is not concerned with a descriptive account of the attitudes and values that people hold. Such accounts may be of interest to the anthropologist or sociologist, but they are of little interest to moral philosophers.[56] Thus, the study of ethics is split into two branches – normative ethics and metaethics. The overlap between the two is extensive, and it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between them. Normative ethics considers what kinds of things are good and bad and how we are to decide what kinds of actions are right and wrong.[57] Examples of normative ethical statements are: "one ought to help his/her friends," and "respecting your parents is an obligation." There are also more abstract and general normative statements that often occur in traditional philosophical treaties. The following are typical examples: "pleasure and pleasure alone is intrinsically good, and pain and pain alone is intrinsically evil" and "those rules and practices ought to be adopted which harmonize most fully the interests of as many people as possible."[58] Metaethics is about normative ethics and seeks to understand the terms and concepts employed there.[59] It is the study of concepts, methods of justification, and ontological assumptions.[60] Typical examples of what are considered metaethical statements are: "the truth of fundamental moral statements can be known only through intuition" and "the criteria for what can count as 'a good reason' for moral claims can be determined only by determining the overall rationale of that discourse."[61] Metaethical theories, "where they are

not explicitly subjective, attempt to account for four central features of moral discourse: that moral judgments claim universality, autonomy, and objectivity, and that moral discourse is a form of practical discourse – it guides conduct and tends to alter behavior."[62] It will be shown in the context of the last two chapters of this study how Muʿtazilite ethics took account of the central features of moral discourse, as universality, autonomy, and objectivity were considered norms and presuppositions of normative judgments.

Previous literature

The vast majority of the books which deal with "Islamic ethics" or "Muslim ethics" do not cover the ethical problems that concern this study. The book written by Donaldson in the early fifties, *Studies in Muslim Ethics*,[63] as well as Majid Fakhry's *Ethical Theories in Islam*,[64] both provide the reader with a general knowledge of what is usually referred to as Islamic ethics – especially the book of Majid Fakhry. Yet, neither of them deals in depth with the philosophical ethical problems that are related to contemporary philosophical interests. In the preface of his book, Donaldson stated that "In the narrow sense of systematic moral philosophy, Muslim ethics may be represented as the story of one remarkable book that was written in Arabic by Miskawayh (d.421/1030), *The Correction of Dispositions* (*Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq wa Taṭhīr al-Aʿrāq*)."[65] However, this is not true as this and similar works influenced by it represent only one trend of Islamic ethical thought, those intensely influenced by Greek philosophy. Such writers as Miskawayh, although outstanding in general philosophy, should not be regarded as representatives of the distinctive aspects of Islamic ethical thought. However, regardless of the misconceptions and errors that appeared in Donaldson's book, already mentioned above,[66] it was the first to be written on Islamic ethics by a Western scholar. In addition, it was also written before the discovery of some important primary sources such as those written by ʿAbd al-Jabbār and other Muʿtazilite masters.

Majid Fakhry surveyed major aspects of different ethical trends in Islam. However, his division of Islamic ethics into four major branches – scriptural morality, theological ethics, philosophical ethics, and religious morality – is not clearly justified. In addition, considering al-Shāfiʿī, al-Mawardī, al-Ghazālī, and Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī as representatives of religious morality, which he considers the ethical trend "most characteristically Islamic"[67] is not justified or supported by any evidence. He provides no criteria for this classification.

Aḥmad Maḥmūd Ṣubḥī's book *Al-Falsafa al-Akhlāqiya fī-'l-fikr al-Islāmi*, *al-'Aqliyūn wa-'l-Dhawqiyūn aw al-Naẓar wa'l-'Amal*[68] is the most comprehensive book in Arabic to investigate the truly philosophical ethics in Islam. Ṣubḥī concentrates on ethical problems as represented in two major trends in Islamic thought: rationalism and Sufism. In the first part of his book he states that the main representatives of rationalism in ethics are the Muʿtazilites, as they believed that good and evil were objective qualities of actions and that moral values are

necessary and universal. He emphasized the fact that they believed that it was the task of the human intellect (*al'aql*) to reveal the objective truth of good and evil actions.[69] This seems the main reason for their being called rationalists (*'aqliyūn*). Ṣubḥī's work is indispensable for anyone interested in the philosophical aspects of Islamic ethics as represented by the Muʿtazilites.

A three-volume work by Saḥbān Khalifāt, entitled *The Logical and Linguistic Methodology in the Arab Islamic Thought (Theory and Application)*,[70] provides the reader with a thorough knowledge of Arabo-Islamic thought. It concentrates on logical and linguistic methodology in Arabo-Islamic thought. His foremost concern is ethics and he applies the same methodology established by Arabic-Islamic philosophers to expound moral views and theories that deal with contemporary ethical problems. This voluminous book is an important reference in Arabo-Islamic thought with its valuable insights and arguments, and will be referred to in different parts of this book.

George Hourani's *Islamic Rationalism – The Ethics of 'Abd al-Jabbar*[71] is a pioneering work in the study of Muʿtazilite ethical thought. Hourani rightly points out that the writings usually described as ethics by philosophers such as Miskawayh (d.421/1030) and Ṭusi (d.637/1240)[72] are mainly concerned with the classification and description of vices and virtues in the manner of Aristotle's treatment in the Nicomachean ethics. He also noticed that theories of values and ethics could be reconstructed from the works of the leading philosophers, but that their bases were regularly Neoplatonic, incorporating Aristotelian elements.[73] Such books, according to Hourani, offer little of general philosophical interest that is new.[74] Therefore, he considers the Muʿtazila to be the first genuine moralists of Islam. He reconstructed a "deontological" moral theory from the works of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, and provided the reader with valuable insights into Muʿtazilite ethics. My work hopes to provide new insights into the ethics of ʿAbd al-Jabbār and an alternative interpretation of the nature of his ethical theory.

Michael Cook's work *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*[75] is a detailed study of the various interpretations and applications of the Islamic moral principle that is reflected in the title itself. This book is full of anecdotes, which range between ethical behavior that reveal political and social concerns for justice, and other stories that show obtuse and aggressive social behaviors. Although the author surveys many subjects such as forbidding unjust rulers and commanding justice, these subjects vanish in the vast quantity of stories which concentrate on ill-mannered social behaviors of some extremist parties that were present and are still present in different societies. It is an interesting and important book, yet it definitely belongs to sociological not philosophical studies.

Suffering in the Mu'tazilite Theology, *'Abd al-Jabbār's Teaching on Pain and Divine Justice* by Margaretha T. Heemskerk[76] is a work that provides an extensive study of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's biography including his masters and his pupils who belonged to the same Muʿtazilite school of thought, namely the Bahshamiyya. She traces the chain of transmission of this Baṣran school and gives a valuable presentation of each of the Bahshamiyya masters. Her work, as revealed by the title itself, is

dedicated to the study of different aspects of pain and suffering as depicted by ʿAbd al-Jabbār and other Muʿtazilite thinkers. However, as stated by Oliver Leaman, Muʿtazilite discussions of pain are not related or compared to any thinkers outside of the Islamic tradition to reveal wider significance of this important topic. The problem of pain was treated by different philosophers and theologians for its importance and relevance to every human experience and concern, but as indicated by Leaman, this problem in Heemskerk's work seems "to exist in a hermetically sealed historical discussion between a number of Muslim theologians."[77]

Moral Agents and Their Deserts: The Character of Mu'tazilite Ethics[78] by Sophia Vasalou is the first book to deal with the concept of desert in Islamic ethics, which makes it a significant contribution to the study of Mu'tazilite thought. She approaches medieval philosophical thought with a philosophical interest, highlighting some important philosophical questions that the Mu'tazilites attempted to answer and actively engages in a dialogue with the Baṣran Mu'tazilites. Vasalou emphasizes theological aspects of Mu'tazilite ethics as she tackles questions that are concerned with reward and punishment and divine justice. However, she treats Mu'tazilite ethics as theology not as moral philosophy.

Amyn B. Sajoo, in his handbook *Muslim Ethics: Emerging Vistas*, [79] considers an array of social settings in which Muslim conceptions of the good have developed and are today unfolding, including biomedicine and ecology, civility, humanism, and governance. In the chapter entitled "A Humanist Ethos" Sajoo remarked that the Mu'tazilite philosophers argued that the tenets of justice are universal and preceded revelation itself.[80] It is this Muʿtazilite argument that will be explored in the context of the present book, as it is crucially important for the progress of Muslim Ethics.

Alongside the books mentioned above, many other important works are related to different aspects of this book. These are referred to in the context of this study.

Framework and methodology

The main concern of this study is to investigate the source and the nature of moral values and moral judgments in Arabo-Islamic thought. Yet, the ultimate goal is to provide new insights into Islamic ethics and to partially participate in the general revival in the study of ethics in Islamic philosophy. It has been mentioned above that ethical theories that hinder the socio-political developmental process should be challenged. In order to move towards this goal, this study will focus on "Divine Command Theory" which restricts the utilization of reason in the realm of ethics and Islamic law. Its meaning, origin, and development will be investigated and its significance in Islamic thought will be appraised.

This study demands a synthesis of certain methodological approaches. Historical and descriptive methods will be applied to reveal the political and intellectual history of the formative period in Islam, and comparative case study methods will be used in the process of understanding and interpreting different

ethical discourses. Philosophical arguments, ethical concepts, and doctrines will be approached analytically in order to exploit and critically assess various views.

In order to achieve the objectives mentioned above, this study is divided into six chapters. The first four chapters will investigate the theoretical, historical, textual, and intellectual roots of some moral concepts and moral dilemmas. Chapter One will shed light on the theoretical and historical background of the problem under investigation. It will focus on pre-Islamic history of ethical thought as deliberated mainly in Greek and Christian thought. Ethical views that were developed in old civilizations such as Mesopotamia and Egypt will be considered alongside some Jewish ethical beliefs in order to uncover the political and social roots of ethical voluntarism. In addition, Plato's dialogue *Euthyphro* will be analyzed for a better understanding of the philosophical nature of the problem of the origin of moral values. In the second chapter of this work, some Qur'ānic ethical presuppositions will be investigated. This will be followed by a study of the Ḥadīth that supports different moral views. Some historical events that occurred in the formative period will be underscored in order to illuminate the socio-political controversies that led to the development of different ethical arguments. Therefore, Chapter One of this study aims to provide an adequate platform for the particular research focus to be presented within a wider historical and theoretical framework. Chapter Two aims to find out whether any of the controversial moral views can claim a textual basis in the Qur'ān or in the Ḥadīth compilations. In the third Chapter, the ethical nature of early *kalām* arguments will be investigated and related to different social and political positions. The development of different ethical doctrines and moral connotations of some controversial concepts and arguments will be underscored. Special attention will be given to the doctrines and theories of the Khārijites and the Murji'ites, while some light will be shed on the Qadarites, the Shī'ites, and Ahl al-Ḥadīth, where appropriate. This will eventually clarify pre-Mu'tazilite moral doctrines and similarities between Mu'tazilite moral views and views of pre-Mu'tazilite Islamic groups. The fourth Chapter will represent the main ethical views agreed upon by the Mu'tazilites. Thus, the five *Uṣūl* of the Mu'tazila will be expounded and their different ethical connotations and arguments will be underscored. This will lead to the study of the ethical philosophy of Al-Qādi Abd al-Jabbar (323/935–415/1025). The main reference of this study will be his voluminous work *al-Mughnī*[81] as the authenticity of this book has never been questioned.[82] The last two and longest chapters are dedicated to the study of the Mu'tazilite ethical theory as culminated in the ethics of 'Abd al-Jabbār. Chapter Five studies ethical presuppositions of moral judgments and Chapter Six aims to disclose the ultimate meaning of moral judgments in 'Abd al-Jabbār's ethics. The main purpose of these two chapters is to reveal the ultimate nature of 'Abd al-Jabbār's ethics and to investigate the pertinent features of his ethical thought that are relevant to contemporary ethical concerns.

1

THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter aims to shed light on some aspects of pre-Islamic history of ethical thought. It will be shown that the systems of values and rules of practices in ancient societies have been regarded as manifestations of divine authority. The ancient ways of regulating a settled society reflect the early efforts to establish firm ethical structures to provide the bases of societal support, political legitimacy, and political regime endurance. Thus, in the first part of this chapter, the nature of ancient ethical thought and its relation to divinity will be investigated, which will shed light on the traditional human tendencies of acquiring authority and sustaining it through providential ideas.

In the second part of this chapter, some aspects of Greek philosophical ethics will be explained, with more emphasis on Socrates and especially on his dialogue with Euthyphro. This dialogue strongly elaborates on the main ethical tenet of this study. Moreover, the dialogue demonstrates that Socrates seems to be the first philosopher who explicitly articulated the main ethical problem related to the subject of this work, which is the source of ethical values. Therefore, Euthyphro's dialogue will be analyzed in order to clarify the theoretical roots of the ethical dilemma, which is the focus of a large part of this book.

In the third part of this chapter, early Christian theology as well as the views of the most prominent scholars who had a significant impact on the question of ethics and divine authority will be investigated.

Divine authority and ancient ethics

In his article "Ancient ethics," Gerald A. Larue argues that from the early second millennium BCE Mesopotamian legal texts and codes show that the "king governed according to a code which was supposed to have been revealed to him by a chief deity but which, in each instance, is clearly a projection of current social ethics and practice."[1] The violations of such codes, which were assumed to be of divine origins were interpreted as offenses against the gods. The law code of the Semitic King Lipit-Ishtar composed during the early nineteenth century BCE showed that each ruler declared that he was divinely chosen for office, thereby linking earthly rule to divine wishes. The most famous Mesopotamian law code, that of

Hammurabi of Babylon (1728–1646 BCE) echoes much that appeared in the earlier codes. He was also divinely appointed to ensure justice so that "strong might not oppress the weak."[2] Yet the laws in that time clearly reflected social discrimination, they "protected the male over the female and the aristocrat over the freeman and slave."[3]

In another great ancient civilization, which flourished in Egypt, we find the term ma'at, (a word at the heart of ancient Egyptian ethics), which signified justice, balance, order, truth, and what is the correct action. All these values were established in the beginning by the gods, and were later assured by the Pharaoh. It is also significant that some dimensions of Egyptian ethics are related to their belief in an afterlife, and one of the most powerful forces motivating adherence to accepted social values was considered fear of judgment in the next life.[4]

In a book entitled *Mughāmarat al-ʿAql al-Ula* (*The First Adventure of the Intellect*), Firās al-Suwwāḥ, in his study of Mesopotamian and Syriac legends makes some text comparisons between those legends and the Old Testament; trying to prove that textual similarities show that Judaism, the first monotheistic religion had evolved from Syrian, Babylonian, and Egyptian background.[5] Hebrew kingship, like that of Mesopotamian, was established through divine choice. In the tenth century BCE the Hebrew God, Yahweh, chose David and established the Judean line of rulers. The Torah, which developed between the tenth and the fifth centuries BCE, like Mesopotamian law, provided an identity for worshippers as a chosen people bound to their deity in a binding covenantal and legal relationship.[6] Therefore, it might be appropriate to conclude that Jewish ethics, strongly echoes motifs found in previous legislation; wherefrom an ethical theory developed, that might be considered the extreme version of what was later called the Divine Command Theory. It considered that "whatever morality might be, its basis is in God's will."[7]

Divine authority and Greek culture

Most probably, the first written philosophical discussion of the nature and source of moral values, whether they are related to gods or not was laid down in Greece, the country which witnessed the development of most philosophical theories, and where the human intellect was given confidence and high priority. However, it is worth mentioning that Greek wisdom did not come from a void, nor was it a miracle that started with Thales of Miletus (585 BCE) and reached its zenith in two centuries.[8] Knowledge is accumulative, and Thales himself had studied geometry in Egypt.[9] Homer's Iliad, written between the ninth and eighth century BCE, also reveals ancient religious and mythical thought, where deities interfere in every human affair, like those of ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian deities.

Still, it might be considered that ethical philosophy began in the fifth century BCE, with Socrates, whose mission was to emphasize the need for rational criticism of conventional beliefs and practices. He believed that "by the use of reason man could arrive at a set of ethical principles that would reconcile self-interest

with the common good and would apply to all men at all times."[10] He drew attention to the problem of tracing the logical relationship between values and facts and thereby created ethical philosophy. Although he did not separate judgments of value from judgments of facts, the negative result of his method of questioning implied such a distinction. Most of the ethical theories developed since Socrates may be considered as various interpretations of fact–value relationship. Our knowledge of Socrates' thought is mainly derived from the dialogues of Plato (429–347 BCE), where we find the Socrates of the early dialogues raising questions about the meaning of ethical terms, such as justice in *Republic*, virtue in *Protagoras*, and piety in *Euthyphro*.[11]

Plato constructed a systematic view of nature, God, and man. Out of his system he derived his ethical principles. The foundation of his metaphysical system was his theory of Forms. The nature of the objects of ethical knowledge is more abstract than the geometrical forms and numbers. They are concepts and principles unified under the concept of the good. Good, for Plato, means resemblance to the pure form, or universal model of goodness, which serves as the standard for all value judgments.[12] Aristotle (384–322 BCE) tailored his ethical principles to the demands of human nature, thus establishing a rival philosophical tradition. Aristotle concludes that there are many different senses of "good," yet the supreme good can be identified with the good of the most general practical science, which is ethics on an individual level and politics on the social level. He regarded personal happiness to be the supreme end of ethics and social welfare the supreme end of politics.[13] It is believed that Plato's philosophy laid down the foundations of religious and idealistic ethics, while Aristotle engendered the naturalistic tradition.[14] Ethical views which considered a supra-natural source such as God or pure reason as standards for values stemmed from the metaphysics of Plato, while naturalistic philosophers who found standards of value in the basic needs, tendencies, and capacities of human being were generally considered to be guided by Aristotle.[15]

Nevertheless, Plato's dialogue, *Euthyphro*, which has special significance and relevance to this book, investigates the nature and source of ethical value by questioning the essence of piety. *Euthyphro* is one of Plato's early dialogues, thus considered to represent fairly Socrates' own thought. Its importance, as the first philosophical treatment of the nature of values, calls for a detailed consideration.

Analysis of Euthyphro's dialogue

Euthyphro is given the role of a man who pretends to be religious and pious. He meets Socrates at the court, indicted of "impiety and innovations in religion"[16]; while Euthyphro, to Socrates' surprise, comes to the court to pursue his own father for a murder. It was not actually an intended murder, and the dead man was a murderer himself; which explains the position of Euthyphro's family, considering the father innocent and regarding Euthyphro's intention to prosecute his father as impious action. In defending his dogma, Euthyphro claims that their attitude

"shows how little they know what the gods think of piety and impiety."[17] Socrates interferes by asking Euthyphro about the nature of the piety that makes him prosecute his father. Euthyphro answers that piety is doing what he does, because he is following the tradition of Zeus who is "the best and the most righteous of the gods."[18] Then Socrates asks for a more precise answer, not by giving an example or following a tradition, but by explaining the general idea that makes all pious things to be pious. Euthyphro answers: "Piety is that which is dear to the gods, and impiety is that which is not dear to them."[19] Yet, Socrates points to the possibility that what is dear to the gods might be impiety rather than piety, because enmities arise when the matters of difference are the just and unjust, good and evil, honorable and dishonorable, and the quarrels of gods are of a like nature. Euthyphro explains that in his case all gods agree as to the propriety of punishing a murder. Such an answer does not convince Socrates. He argues that any human being, as well, will not argue that a murderer or any sort of evil doer ought to be left off, because gods and men alike, if they dispute at all, dispute about some act which is called in question, and which by some is affirmed to be just, and by others to be unjust. He explains that even if Euthyphro does prove that all the gods absolutely agree in approving Euthyphro's act, which is accusing his father of murder, still piety and impiety are not adequately defined, because what is needed is a standard by which he may measure actions. Here Euthyphro gives a sharp definition, saying that "what all the gods love is pious and holy and the opposite which they all hate, impious." This answer made Socrates to ask his most significant question, which has ever since become the main ethical dilemma in all religions, and the subject of most controversial arguments regarding the relation between revelation and reason, God and morality. Socrates asks: "Is the pious and holy beloved by the gods because it is holy or holy because it is beloved by the gods?"[20] Socrates is inquiring about the nature of piety or goodness, whether it follows the gods' arbitrary will, or whether there is an intrinsic value in things and actions that makes them good or evil in themselves, and consequently the reason for the gods' love or hate. Socrates' argument is that any state of action or passion implies a previous state. This argument leads Euthyphro to admit that anything is loved because it is holy, not holy because it is loved. Thus, even if we admit that God loves holy, pious, or good things, this would not provide knowledge of the essence, which makes that thing holy or good.

Socrates is then being made by Plato to approach the problem from a different perspective, by introducing the concept of justice and considering it as a more extended notion of which piety is only a part. Piety is that part of justice that attends to the gods, as there is the other part of justice that attends to men. Considering piety as justice done to gods in contrast to the other part of justice done to people, Euthyphro was lead to define piety as "learning how to please the gods in word and deed, by prayers and sacrifices." Such a definition could not satisfy Socrates, for he says: "There is no good thing that they do not give; but how we can give any good thing to them is far from being equally clear."[21] Here Plato seems to point to the mystic feeling of gratitude, which finds no satisfying way of expression. The

idea resembles various strong mystic tendencies to humiliate oneself or to annihilate in the divinity out of desperation and awareness of uselessness of anything they might do for God whom they love as the highest ideal of goodness.

God has no benefit from human piety, so defining piety as "an art which gods and men have of doing business with one another" was declared invalid. Piety, as part of justice, would imply "just business," yet this is unattainable for a human being as he is useless in the eyes of gods no matter what he does.

Finally, Euthyphro's last attempt to define piety was "piety is what pleases gods and what is dear to them."[22] Consequently, the argument comes round to the same point where it started. At the end Socrates ironically asks Euthyphro to tell him what piety really is? Pointing out that he must have known what piety is, otherwise he was at risk of doing what is wrong in the sight of gods and in the opinions of men. He says:

> If you had not certainly known the nature of piety and impiety, I am confident that you would never, on behalf of a serf, have charged your aged father with murder. You would not have run such a risk of doing wrong in the sight of the gods, and you would have had too much respect for the opinions of men.[23]

Ethical philosophy therefore can be considered as Socrates' invention. It will be considered throughout this study as a discipline separated from moral advice and moral preaching. It has been shown briefly that speculations about ontological aspects of ethical values, along with its epistemological aspects, seem to be common in ancient ethics. Inquiries about the divine origin of such values and the role of human reason in deciding moral judgments were common in various cultures, even before the advent of the three recognized monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Philosophy and religion

Other ethical problems, closely linked to the problem of the source and nature of ethical values are the problem of divine justice, free will, and moral responsibility. Divine justice necessarily implies humans' ability to choose, or free will, as it is not justice to preordain for people their destinies and still judge them for their actions. It is obvious that if one is not free to choose he cannot be responsible for his actions. The concept of free will and moral responsibility did not become matters of great concern until the rise of Christianity, when people became preoccupied with divine rewards and punishments for moral conduct.[24]

After the death of Aristotle in the fourth century BCE, interests shifted from theoretical to practical ethics, so that little advance was made in the clarification of meanings of ethical concepts, while on the other hand, new conceptions of the goals of human life and new codes of conduct were fashioned. The philosophical schools of Skepticism, Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Neoplatonism that

set the ethical tone of Hellenistic thought offered a type of intellectual guidance that was more like religious teaching than philosophical inquiry and paved the way for Christianity. According to skepticism, no judgment, either of fact or of value, can be adequately proved.[25] It was declared by the skeptics that the entire philosophical venture of their predecessors was hopelessly wrong and that their error was without a remedy.[26] Epicureanism, founded by Epicurus (341–270 BCE), and Stoicism, founded by Zeno of Citium (c. 334–262 BCE), were the two dominant philosophical schools of the era between the death of Aristotle and the rise of Christianity. Epicurus held that pleasure is the single standard of good, yet, by the use of reason, momentary pleasures could be sacrificed for long-lasting benefits. With the Stoics, the concept of duty acquired a central place in ethics, as conformity to moral rules, which they identified with laws of human nature. Many of the Stoics were fatalists maintaining that man can control his destiny only by resigning himself to it, a principle that contrasted vividly with their emphasis on rationality. However, both Epicureanism and Stoicism, as philosophical views, could interest only those of a sufficiently high level of education to place intellectual values above all others.[27] In addition, the prevalence of skepticism after Aristotle was greater than during the time of Socrates. The situation in the period that followed was described by Ritter. He said:

> The feeling of alienation and the yearning after a higher revelation are characteristics of the last centuries of the ancient world; this yearning was in the first place, but an expression of consciousness of the decline of classical nations and their cultures.[28]

This situation "called into life not only Christianity but also before it pagan and Jewish Alexandrianism and other related developments."[29]

Deep religious anxieties, which appeared before Christianity in Eastern beliefs, were echoed in Greek philosophies, especially in Pythagoreanism, Stoicism, and Platonism. This religious feeling, which might be the root of Gnosticism, took advantage of the existing philosophies and, when Christianity appeared, Gnosticism tried to adopt it and contain it with other religious and philosophical elements in one union.[30] Alexandria was a meeting place for Greek and Eastern thought. The result of this mixture of Greek and Semitic cultures was the synthetic civilization known as Hellenism in comparison to the Hellenic or purely Greek civilization. Hellenism rose to supremacy not only in Alexandria and Syria but also throughout western Asia.[31] All Gnostic beliefs remained ambiguous and mysterious until they were adopted by Plotinus (CE 205–270) who organized Gnostic believes into a philosophical system which might be approved by reason.[32] Plotinus was the founder of Neoplatonism, which had a profound influence on Islamic philosophy as well as on medieval and renaissance Christian philosophy. He was a pupil of Ammonius Saccus, who was also the teacher of Origen (c. 185–254).[33] The significance of Origen's thought has been widely recognized. It was said that "if speculation in divine truth is permissible or even necessary, no Christian theologians deserve a

higher place than Clement and Origen."[34] This fact necessitates a quick survey of what those theologians had to say about ethics. Clement, born about CE 150, and Origen were well acquainted with Philo (born about 20 BCE),[35] who is well known for his allegorical interpretations of the Old Testament. Although, the method of allegorism was not his invention, as Greek moralists had long treated Homer, by quoting lines from him, to enforce moral truth. Allegorism was becoming the common property of all the higher religions and was the easiest refuge for intellectualists who belonged to established religions and wished to accept divine texts without accepting absurd beliefs or immoral views.[36]

Origen insists that no word or letter of Scripture can lack a profound meaning, and that every historical text has a body, soul, and spirit, that is, a literal, moral, and spiritual sense.[37] He says: "Some of the laws of Moses are absurd and others impossible" and "I should blush to admit that God has given such commands, which are inferior to many human enactments."[38] Origen, without making any boastful claim, believes himself to be illuminated. The previous quotations imply his belief in human reason as the source of values and their knowledge. He quotes St. Paul in support of the view that the heathen who were without a revelation from God had a natural religion, having had the law written on their hearts.[39] Origen finds an allusion to the two-fold knowledge of God, that is, in God's writing the Ten Commandments twice: the first represents the innate law written on man's heart, the second is "the prophetic word preparing the soul as it were, after the first transgression for the writing of God a second time."[40] Clement was also quoted as saying: "What is commonly referred as knowledge in which the natural as well as the irrational faculties participate is not knowledge," as "knowledge in a special sense is characterized by judgment and reason."[41]

Against the reliance on reason as the source of moral knowledge, Augustine (354–430) maintained that such apparently admirable traits as prudence, justice, wisdom, and fortitude – the four cardinal virtues identified by Plato and stressed by Stoics and Christians – are of no moral worth when not inspired by Christian faith. Augustine opposed the classical tendency to define the moral concepts of rightness and virtue in terms of individual and social well-being and interpreted moral right and virtue as obedience to divine authority.[42] He did not look for justice on earth "for justice was essentially supernatural – to give God his due – and therefore beyond human reach."[43] Thus, Augustine constructed a system of theology, ethics, and theory of knowledge that soon became the authoritative framework of Christian thought, "modified, but not supplanted by subsequent church philosophers."[44] Even Thomas Aquinas (c. CE 1225–1274/621–672 H) considered that reason provides only complementary knowledge of standards of ethical judgment, and where conflicts between science and religious authority arise, they must be due to inadequate understanding of science, since church authority and dogma are infallible. This view seems to have prevailed in the Christian thought until the later thirteenth century when faith and reason were separated. Only then, according to a historian of the Christian medieval thought, "the authority that faith had so long exercised over reason was rejected and with it medieval Christian thought."[45]

It might be noticed that there are some similarities between Augustinian ethical views and some Sunnite Islamic views. In addition, there are some similarities between Origen's ethical views and the Muʿtazilites' views. Yet such similarities do not provide evidence of direct transmission. Indeed, no one can deny the doctrinal communalities and the historical relationship between different religions. Therefore, a certain amount of comparison between the developments of ethical thought in different religious traditions is inevitable for serious understanding of any moral doctrine that claims to be religious, including Islamic moral doctrines. Yet, the first and foremost account is to be sought in the socio-political milieu of a particular period. Such an account will be pursued in the third chapter of this work, where the origins of some Muʿtazilite moral doctrines are traced back to different political and moral considerations of Islamic scholars who belonged to different schools of thought and practice.

The position of those who attempted to reduce the origin and development of Islamic thought to Christian sources is not adequately justified. An example is Morris Seale's attempt to void the entire Muʿtazilite thought from its originality by reducing it to the influence of the church fathers. Morris Seale, in his book *Muslim Theology*,[46] stressed the influence of Origen, Clement, and other early church fathers' theology on Islamic thought.[47] Surprisingly, no parallel attempts are made to trace back the opposing Sunnite view to Augustine's influence. The influence of Christian church fathers cannot be completely denied, yet it should not be exaggerated to the point of trying to trace back each idea in Islamic thought to some foreign influence. Similarities are not always explained by direct influence, they might be explained by the common cultural heritage and especially Greek philosophy and, more importantly, by similar human interests and concerns.

It is quite significant that in Islam as in Christianity the first theologians (*Mutakallimūn*), who were the Muʿtazilites, like the first Christian theologians Origen and Clement, were concerned to establish faith on reason, thus deserving to be called rational theologians. They were seeking the true meaning of religion. Whereas the role of later theologians, such as Augustine in Christianity and al-Ashʿarī in Islam, emphasized consolidating religious dogma and establishing what might be called religious authority based on divine commands that should not be subjected to human reason. Such views, in fact, contributed in strengthening secular authority by spreading the culture of blind obedience and imitation of authorized religious figures. The meaning of justice as normally understood to implement the laws and establish institution for the sake of welfare of their societies was abandoned. It is not surprising that Origenism was condemned as heresy in CE 533,[48] and that the Muʿtazilites faced the same fate after the consolidation of the rival tradition.

An ethical problem that caused many controversies in religious thought was the problem of free will and predestination. The Qadarite movement supported free will in early Islam. The socio-political causes that led to the rise of this movement will be studied later and the textual evidence from the Qur'ān, for and against, will then be investigated. The Muslim opponents of the Qadarite movement

traced their views to external influences, and particularly to Christianity. John of Damascus (d.132/749) indicated determinism as pure Islamic doctrine, with which he contrasted free will as the specifically Christian doctrine.[49] Among modern scholars who asserted this claim were Alfred Von Kremer, Becker, and William Thomson.[50] Morris Seale claims that "it was formerly held that the origins of Muslim theological thinking were to be sought outside Islam."[51] He quotes al-Ashʿarī and Ibn Ḥanbal, the well-known opponents of the Qadarites and the Muʿtazilites in support of this view.[52] A contemporary scholar has rightly remarked that if someone deliberately considers every Islamic theological idea to have its origin in Judaism or Christianity (just as he can trace Jewish and Christian ideas back to some earlier ideas), he can find plenty of proof for that. "The same goes for some Muslims, especially at the time of the controversies of the past, who made the Jewish, Christian, or other influences scapegoats of their critique of their opponents."[53]

Apart from the controversies regarding the extent of any influences, it is appropriate to remark that such controversies about free will appeared also among Christian theologians. Thus, why should anyone seek to prove the foreign origin of the free will doctrine while ignoring the possibility of the foreign origin of the doctrine of predestination, though it was also found in Christianity, as in other religions? There have always been difficulties in religious thought to find a reasonable solution to the problem of contradiction between the concept of free will of human being on one hand, and divine omnipotence and God's foreknowledge of human decisions and actions on the other hand. Moreover, if a Muslim looked outside Islam for suggestions on the question of free will, he would find affirmation of free will in Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism.[54] Yet this would not exclude the fact that he would be thinking for himself within the circle of Islamic discussions.[55]

The reason why Greek and Christian thought is explored in the first chapter of this work has nothing to do with priority regarding its possible influence on Islamic thought. This chapter aimed to expound philosophical, religious, and political roots of the investigated problems and to shed light on pre-Islamic cultural and religious approaches to the issues concerned. It is not the aim of this study to prove certain influences of various foreign factors on Islamic thought nor to deny such influences. Nevertheless, it is obvious that certain ideas have been developed through history which crossed cultural and religious boundaries, and there are as many studies that emphasize Christian and foreign influences as there are others that emphasize Islamic influence on Christian theology. For example, Tribbechovious (1641–1687/1050–1099) is quoted to say: "All the knowledge which the Scholastics possessed came from the Arabs." He includes as scholastics Anselm (1033–1109), Aberald (1079–1142), Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus (1206–1280), and Duns Scotus (1266–1308).[56] It seems that in different ages Muslims and Christians have taken from each other what they have found useful, and adapted it to their own cultures and needs.[57]

Many cultural factors could have influenced Islamic thought, but still, nothing can be compared to the efficient and decisive role of the Muslim's sacred text,

the holy Qur'ān. All Muslim scholars, regardless of their cultural backgrounds and influences, and their differences, were concerned to construct their doctrines and theories according to the Qur'ānic ethos. It should be clear that the Qur'ān by its nature and purpose is not a theoretical book, and therefore takes up no explicit positions on the questions of philosophy and theology. Nevertheless, most Muslim scholars invoked Qur'ānic texts in support of different ethical doctrines. The purpose of the next chapter will be to investigate whether the Qur'ān implies certain ethical presuppositions. In addition, Ḥadīth literature that supports some controversial doctrines will be the subject of the last part of the next chapter.

2

ETHICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS OF THE QUR'ĀN AND THE ḤADĪTH

The first part of this chapter will investigate ethical presuppositions of the Qur'ān. It is divided into four sections according to the four major ethical problems related to philosophical ethics. Ethical presuppositions of the Ḥadīth will be the subject of the fifth section. Verses from the Qur'ān used to support different views will be surveyed in an attempt to indicate the Qur'ānic point of view, related to the following problems:

1 The ontological problem of the nature of ethical value concepts. It will be investigated whether the Qur'ān supports an objective or a subjective view;
2 The epistemological problem of the source of knowledge of ethical values, whether reason or revelation;
3 Divine justice;
4 Human free will and capacity set against predestination.

Ontological status of ethical value concepts

The first and the second problems have been elaborately treated by George Hourani in his book *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics*.[1] The reason why these two closely related issues concerning ontological and epistemological aspects of moral values are considered separately in this study is due to the possibility of giving different answers to each problem. For example, believing in the objective status of ethical values does not necessarily imply that they can be known by reason. Thus, some may hold that although goodness and badness are innate properties of things and actions, revelation is the only trusted source of ethical knowledge. The two rival theories concerning the nature of ethical values, encapsulated by Euthyphro's dilemma, were also debated by Muslim scholars. The proponents of each theory claimed that they represented the true meaning of the Qur'ān. Whether Muslims were aware of Euthyphro's dialogue or not is beyond the limits of this study. It is obvious that such theories may naturally emerge in discussing any ethical problem. Thus some Qur'ānic verses which were considered to support each view will now be studied and an attempt to reveal the most appropriate and most probable interpretation will be made.

These theories are

Ethical Objectivism: which means that right has an objective meaning and that value has a real existence in particular things or acts, regardless of the wishes or opinions of any judge or observer. It should be clear that objectivism is not necessarily absolutist, in fact, most objectivist theories include a certain type of relativism.[2]

Ethical Subjectivism: implies that right is whatever is approved or commanded by someone or other. Ethical subjectivism can be divided into three positions:

1 Individual or human subjectivism, which is clearly condemned in the Qur'ān because values are not based on human likes or preferences. Apart from many verses that may be stated to prove this point, this is what should be expected from a divine religion.
2 Social or communal subjectivism, which means that right is whatever is approved and commanded by the Muslim community. Such a view may promote using reason in ethical judgments, if correlated with ethical objectivism, so that a firm basis for moral judgment that will adopt social welfare and human interest as standard may be established and approved after reasonable discussion by the social community. But the term "communal subjectivism" in the context of this study, better applies to different social groups who claimed religious authority, based on their interpretation of the Qur'ān and prophetic tradition (*Sunna*), and in particular to the people of tradition and community (*Ahl al-sunna wa'l jama'a*), who used the Ḥadīth reports to support their authority.
3 Theistic subjectivism[3]: states that values are those approved or commanded by God. It is more commonly known as ethical voluntarism, since it claims that ethical value concepts must be understood in terms of God's will. His will does not presuppose any objective value, thus it might be arbitrary. No morality could be perceived apart from revelation, thus, it is also called Divine Command Theory. It will be distinguished from, what will be called in this work, Divine Purpose Theory, which is the name that better describes the moral position of those who held that divine commands are purposeful and promote human well-being.

In support of the ontological objective status of ethical values, three points are worth mentioning at the beginning:

First, the Qur'ān used a pre-existing language in revealing the divine message, the Arabic language, in the dialect of Quraysh. It used the particular concepts with their specific meanings and connotations, and addressed many ethical terms to pagans, such as *'adl* (justice), *ẓulm* (transgression), *khayr* (goodness), *sharr* (evil). Therefore it used ethical terms in a way that people could understand. If good and evil deeds mentioned in such verses as Q.16:90, "Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion; He admonishes you that you may be

mindful"[4] meant only "obedience to commands," the whole sentence would be almost tautologous and pointless. It is significant that this was also the opinion of Ibn Taymiya (d.728/1328), who explicitly rejected the Ashʿarite opinion which says that good and bad actions are defined and known only through the commands and prohibitions of God.[5] He said that good and evil are known by reason, otherwise God would not use such terms, and He would not have blamed people for doing anything, as all their acts would be like eating or drinking and any action would therefore be bad only because it was prohibited by Him and not for any intrinsic meaning.[6] Ibn Taymiya declares that all people approve that certain things are good and admired, such as knowledge, justice, and telling the truth, and that other things like lying, injustice, and ignorance are repulsive qualities that all people, regardless of their religion, would consider wrong.[7] Among the most common terms in the Qur'ān for virtuous acts is *ma'rūf*, literally, "the known." In the *Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān*, Reinhart draws attention to the fact that, although this term appears thirty-two times in the Qur'ān, the commentators do not feel a need to explain it because it is taken for granted. He adds that: "It is worth noting that the implication of *ma'rūf*, as an ethical term, is that 'the right thing is known.'"[8] The Qur'ān states that some groups of people (people of the book), which most probably refers to Jews or Christians, command right and forbid evil (Q.3:114): "They believe in Allah and the last day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and they strive with one another in hastening to good deeds, and those are among the good." Also in Q.31:17, the pre-Islamic sage Luqmān asked his son to command right and forbid wrong or evil: "O my son! Keep up prayer and enjoin the good and forbid the evil, and bear patiently that which befalls you; surely these acts require courage." Such verses support the view that the values and the duties promoted in the Qur'ān were well-known to some people before Islam, and this implies that divine commands expressed in the Qur'ān are not arbitrary commands, but righteous ones, appealing to human ethical knowledge.

The second point is that many ethical attributes are predicated of God, and these are impossible to interpret in terms of obedience to His own commands, which were made for man. Like the assertion in Q.10:4: "He may with justice recompense those who believe and do good" and the continuous assertion in the Qur'ān that He is never unjust to his servants; as in Q.8:51: "Allah is not in the least unjust to the servants" and that "Allah is Benignant to His servants" as in Q.42:19.

The third point is that if God is not just and good in a human sense, but in another transcendent sense, then those divine attributes will be rendered meaningless and unappealing to man's moral feeling and religious devotion. All that will be left for man is fear of a supernatural power, unknown to him, and a blind obedience to arbitrary commands. This is surely not the message of the Qur'ān regarding man's relation to God. The motive to believe and to do good deeds and avoid bad is not only punishment and reward in the hereafter but also God's pleasure and love. For example in Q.5:13, "surely Allah loves those who do good

(to others)." And in Q.3:159, "place your trust in Allah; surely Allah loves those who trust."

Thus a general view of the Holy Qur'ān will not support ethical voluntarism, for it is a book full of human ethical attitudes, and these attitudes are ascribed to God as part of His perfection. There is nothing that suggests that what is considered good is good for some reason extrinsic to itself.[9]

The two terms *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* are often used by ordinary Muslims to refer to good and bad. Inspite of their clear ethical implications, the two terms: "permitted" (*ḥalāl*) and "forbidden" (*ḥarām*) refer to what is permitted or forbidden by God. Most ordinary Muslims would be quite satisfied with a simple answer regarding certain conduct in terms of *ḥalāl* or *ḥarām*, although it is legitimate to ask further why such conduct is deemed *ḥalāl* or *ḥarām*. Finding a reason for the prohibition or permission might indicate the objective value. Stating this in terms of Euthyphro's dilemma, one may ask whether *ḥarām* is *ḥarām* because it is evil or is it evil because it is *ḥarām*? The answer to this principal question will categorize the voluntaristic and objectivistic position. There is nothing in the Qur'ān that denies the use of reason, on the contrary there are many sentences that promote the use of *'Aql* (reason) and others that promote reflection and deliberation, as will now be shown.

The source of ethical knowledge

The term *ʿaql* (translated variously as "intellect," "reason," and "mind") is used forty-nine times in its various verbal forms for the activity of thinking, reflecting, and rationalizing. There are places where the word seems to suggest something like "using common sense" and others where it means to "reflect and draw logical conclusions."[10] Both aspects of using *'aql* are relevant for epistemology and ethical knowledge. The Qur'ān in Q.2:44 enjoins the believers to act in accordance with their speech, and to reflect on that: "What! Do you enjoin men to be good and neglect your own souls while you read the Book; have you then no sense? (*a-fa-lā ta'qilūn*)." Also, the signs of God, which include but are not limited to scripture, must be reflected upon, which leads man to moral truth. In Q.67:10, the people of hell would say: "Had we but listened or pondered (*na'qilu*) we should not have been among the inmates of the burning fire." Ethical reflection in Q.36:62 can prevent one from being led astray into moral transgression: "And certainly he led astray numerous people from among you. What! Could you not then understand?"

In the Holy Qur'ān many verses emphasize the demand to obey God and the Prophet, for example Q.64:12, "And obey Allah and obey the Apostle" and in Q.7:43, "we would not have found the way had it not been that Allah had guided us; certainly the apostles of our Lord brought the truth." Also Q.45:18 says, "Then We have made you follow a course in the affair, therefore follow it, and do not follow the low desires of those who do not know." Such verses should not be considered to support ethical voluntarism, because the obedience of divine commands and

following the right path are contrasted with low desires, whims, and passions, and not to deliberate reflection on ethical judgments of human reason. They imply that God should be obeyed because His commands are right, just, and good, not merely because they are the commands of the most powerful authentic authority.

It is important to emphasize that in the last verse stated above the contrast is between God's path and man's *hawā*, which is translated as "passion" or "low desires." So what is really ruled out is the appeal to vain desires and ignorance, not reason.

Passion (*al-hawā*) is an arbitrary force, "whims and fancies," leading man to error (*ḍalāl*) in his practical decisions. Some other examples from the Qur'ān are (5:48) "judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their low desires (to turn away) from the truth that has come to you; for every one of you did We appoint a law and a way." Also (Q.6:119), "most surely many would lead (people) astray by their low desires out of ignorance." It is clear that all such verses may be understood as rejecting egoistic subjectivism, not reasonable judgments which coincide with revelation. In spite of heavy reliance on revelation, the use of independent reasoning in ethical judgments is never ruled out explicitly. Early Qur'ānic exegesis interpreted the meaning of *al-hawā* in terms of passion, whims, and low desires. Al-Ṭabarī (d.310/923), for example, in explaining the previous verse (Q.6:119) mentioned that those people who lead others astray with their whims and desires do so "without knowing what is right, and without any proof for their argument."[11] If good and evil emanate only from a divine command, then there would be no rationale for repeated exhortations in the Qur'ān to use reason and intellect. Had the arguments of those who said that good emanates only from divine order been true, God would have ordained mere obedience. On the contrary, God has exhorted man to ponder on his own self and the universe surrounding him so that by reasoning he can find the truth. The Almighty has explicitly stated that He has endowed the knowledge of good and evil in human nature. The Qur'ān (91:7–10) states: "And the soul and Him Who made it perfect, then He inspired it to understand what is right and wrong for it. He will indeed be successful who purifies it, and he will indeed fail who corrupts it." Here the knowledge of good and evil is one of the capabilities inspired by God. God has therefore mentioned this knowledge as His special bounty. In the *Tafsīr* of Ibn Kathīr (d.773/1372) it is reported that Ibn ʿAbbās interpreted "*alhamaha fujūraha wa taqwāha*" to mean that "He explained the good and the evil to it (the soul)." And Saʿīd b. Jubair also stated this, saying: "He gave him inspiration (to see what was) good and evil."[12] In Q.90:8–10 the Holy Qur'ān says: "Have We not given him two eyes, and a tongue and two lips, and pointed out to him the two conspicuous ways (*wa hadaynāhu l-najdayn*)." This last verse indicates that the ability to distinguish between good and evil is also a blessing from God. Ibn Kathīr stated in his Tafsīr that it has been reported from Ibn ʿAbbās (d.68/687), ʿAbdulla b. Masʿūd (d.32/652) and others that the two ways means: "The good and the evil."[13] Man is also endowed with a divine spark, described in the Qur'ān (Q.15:29) as divine spirit breathed into man: "So when I have made him complete

and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down making obeisance to him." The Holy Qur'ān further emphasizes that faith is man's nature but he is prone to forget it. God has been sending His messengers to remind him of this forgotten faith. So Q.30:30 says: "Then set your face upright for religion in the right state – the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion, but most people do not know." Q.40:53–54 states: "And certainly We gave Mūsā the guidance, and We made the children of Israel inherit the Book, A guidance and a reminder to the men of understanding." In Q.24:35 good nature and divine inspiration have been described as "light upon light." So, divine revelation is not light over darkness but light upon light.

God's covenant with mankind is mentioned in the Qur'ān, where all human beings acknowledged their obligation to obey God, their creator. In Q.7:172 it is stated that "And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them bear witness against their own souls: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes! we bear witness. Lest you should say on the day of resurrection: Surely we were heedless of this." The last sentence makes it clear that humans are innately morally responsible. Thus the covenant with humans and the divine breath in human beings indicates that all Adam's descendants possess a conscience that distinguishes good from evil.

It is also significant that besides some of the ritual and dietary prescriptions and prohibitions that could be understood in terms of pure decrees or rules, there are other Qur'ānic injunctions of the sort of principles and admonitions to virtue. Principles are defined as "standards to be observed because it is a requirement of justice or fairness or some other dimension of morality"[14] as in Q.41:34: "And not alike are the good and the evil. Repel (evil) with what is best." To obey this injunction is not like avoiding pork. One must judge that a given act in a given situation is better than some other alternatives and it goes without saying that such judgments clearly assume that people are capable of using reason in application of such a golden rule. Other rules might be considered, as in Q.6:141: "and do not act extravagantly; surely He does not love the extravagant" and Q.13:22: "And those who are constant, seeking the pleasure of their Lord, and keep up prayer and spend (benevolently) out of what We have given them secretly and openly and repel evil with good; as for those, they shall have the (happy) issue of the abode." There are no rules in either of these texts, rather, they contain principles. The Muslim has to weigh the value of spending versus the folly of extravagance, according to the situation. In the *Encyclopedia of Qur'ānic Ethics* Reinhart asserts that "in fact, the majority of the Qur'ānic injunctions are guidelines rather than stipulations."[15] It is clear that such principles have more to do with judicious judgments after reflection, than with mere obedience or following prescriptions.

Finally, it is appropriate to conclude that although the Qur'ān lays heavy emphasis on itself as the prime source of ethical knowledge and guidance for man, as Hourani concludes in his study,[16] it still clearly presumes objective values, thus laying down the basis for the independent use of man's reason in ethics. From what has been said one can conclude that Hourani's assertion that according to

the Qur'ān, the neglect of religious guidance leaves open only one alternative, an immoral one: to follow passions,[17] is not evident.

Divine justice

The problem of divine justice is closely related in one sense to the ontological status of ethical judgments discussed above. Therefore the first question that might be asked is whether justice is independent ontologically from divine commands or if it is merely the obedience of divine revelations. It has been shown that terms, such as just (*'ādil*) and other value terms, become meaningless if not understood in terms of their true linguistic meaning. Divine justice is analogous in its essence to human justice. As good and evil are innate in the essence of things themselves, so justice and injustice are innate in the essence of things and actions as well. The Qur'ān (16:90) states that "Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion; He admonishes you that you may be mindful." Justice surely has a specific meaning otherwise it would mean that God commands what He commands, which makes the whole imperativeness meaningless, and it is obvious that no Muslim would accept such a result. The term *'adl* was commonly applied to interpersonal relations, as with corresponding concepts in other cultures. It could never have meant the mere obedience to commands of revelation although the latter interpretation developed out of the emphasis on divine guidance as the sole source of knowledge of ethical values, including justice. But it by no means represented the true or the only meaning of justice as used in the Qur'ān.

The second question that might be asked is whether God is just in a human sense or some other transcendent sense. In Q.10:4 it is stated that "He may with justice recompense those who believe and do good." In Q.41:46 God assures people that he is not unjust: "Allah is not in the least unjust to the servants." In Q.46:19 the Almighty says: "And for all are degrees according to what they did, and that He may pay them back fully their deeds and they shall not be wronged." The Qur'ān affirms God's justice almost exclusively in negative terms as mentioned by Majid Fakhry, yet that God may be termed "just" (*'ādil*) on the basis of Qur'ānic evidence is not even in question. [18]

There are also other terms in the Qur'ān which mean justice such as *haqq*, which literally means "truth" and *qist* "equity." God is said to create the world *bi'l haqq*, an expression which might be neutrally translated as "with justice" as in Q.14:19, Q.30:8, and in many other verses. The word "*qist*" is almost synonymous with *'adl*. This term appears in the Qur'ān either to denote a property of human action approved by God, or as a norm and quality of God's actions and decisions, as in Q.10:4 and Q.21:47 which talks about a just scale set up by God on the Day of Judgment: "And We will set up a just balance on the Day of Resurrection, so no soul shall be dealt with unjustly in the least; and though there be the weight of a grain of mustard seed (yet) will We bring it, and sufficient are We to take account." This verse clearly implies that divine justice is not different

from what one might consider to be justice, as it states that even the smallest human deeds will be taken into account on the Day of Judgment so that justice will be done to all. Also, God's justice is made an object of God's own vindication on one hand and that of the angels and men of learning on the other, so that its validity can never be questioned.[19] The Qur'ān (3:18) states that: "Allah bears witness that there is no god but He, and (so do) the angels and those possessed of knowledge, maintaining His creation with justice; there is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise."

One of the questions that were raised early in Islam and is closely related to divine justice is the question of whether a human being is capable of acting and deciding freely or if his actions are predetermined by divine will. This was an old problem which was regularly raised in faiths that believed in omnipotent power, like Judaism and Christianity. This problem is closely related to ethics as it is evident that denying humans free will implies denying the reality of moral choice. In the first/seventh centuries this was the first major theological issue to split the Muslim community into the proponents of human freedom or capacity (*istitā'ah*), known as the *Qadarites* and their opponents the determinists known as *al-Mujbirah* or *al-Jabriyyah*.

Human free will and predestination

It is important to state right from the beginning that the terms used for predestination in later disputes: "*qaḍā'* and *qadar*" do not mean, in their Qur'ānic context, the predetermination of human moral choice. It has been generally accepted that *qaḍā*' means deciding, commanding, judging, or discharging an obligation, while *qaddara* means to measure or to estimate.[20] Morris Seale suggested that the original determinist sense is due to Syriac influence, pointing out that the two Arabic words *qaḍā*' and *qadar* are the exact equivalents of the Syriac terms: *qaḍā*' is equivalent to *posquno* which means judgment, sentence (and thus decree), while *qadar* is equivalent to *helqo* which means a share, something measured (and thus allotted fate). It is therefore possible that the original determinist sense of the Syriac was transferred to the Arabic terms which have no such sense in the Qur'ān.[21] However, a form of determinism was not a new or strange idea in Arabia as ancient Arabs generally believed in it. They believed that events in the lives of human beings were preordained by fate, and therefore inevitable. The course of events was believed to be determined by *dahr* or "time," so that *surūf al-dahr* or the "changes wrought by time" was a frequent expression used by the Arabs and their poets. The same feeling is expressed in several of their poems, proverbs, and maxims.[22] Thus, it is not surprising to find that similar views prevailed in the first centuries of Islam and that the dogma of predestination was accepted among the Muslim masses. It is interesting to find that some of the Ḥadīth reports forbid cursing time and complaining about time: "Let none of you complain about time (*dahr*), for Allah is time."[23]

Therefore, some Muslim commentators of the Qur'ān gave the Qur'ānic terms a connotation which reflects either the influence of the Syriac *puscano* and

helqo, or pre-Islamic cultural background. Some modern translators also introduced destiny where there is no mention of it in the original text. An example is Rodwell's translation[24] of Q.25:2 which he translates as: "All things that he created, and decreeing hath decreed their destinies (*qaddarahu taqdiran*)." While Arberry correctly translated the same verse as: "He created all things and ordained it very exactly."[25] Abdullah Yusuf Ali translated it as: "It is He who created all things, and ordered them in due proportions."[26] M. H. Shakir translated the verse as: "Who created everything, then ordained for it a measure." The verb *qaḍā* is used to indicate order or decision as in Q.17:23: "And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve (any) but Him, and goodness to your parents." In the *Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān* Reinhart also supports the view that terms for "predestination" used in later disputes "*qadar*," "*taqdīr*", and "*qaḍā*," do not, in the Qur'ān, necessarily suggest predetermination of human moral choice.[27] Yet, there are several Qur'ānic verses which might suggest that it is God who causes the sinners to sin and the errant to err, but if this was the case, divine judgment and punishment for moral transgression would be unjust, contradicting divine justice as previously asserted. An example is Q.2:6–7: "Surely those who disbelieve, it being alike to them whether you warn them, or do not warn them, will not believe. Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing and there is a covering over their eyes, and there is a great punishment for them." This might be interpreted (as with the Mu'tazila) that the seal of God is a penalty, a result of the rejection of faith, as it was not God who wanted them to reject faith, it was their choice for which they were punished.[28] Al-Ṭabarī narrates that "some people have said that the meaning of sealing their hearts (*khatama 'ala qulūbihim*) is that God is informing us of their arrogance and their turning away from listening to the truth they were called to, as when it is said that someone is deaf, if he does not want to listen because of his arrogance and does not want to understand because of his pride."[29] Although al-Ṭabarī states the above possible interpretation, he does not agree with it, and he states a Ḥadīth that explains the verses (2:6–7). He says: "Abū Hurayra narrated that the messenger of Allah said: 'When the believer commits a sin, a black dot will be engraved on his heart. If he repents, refrains, and regrets, his heart will be polished again. If he commits more errors, the dots will increase until they cover his heart.' This is the *Rān* (stain) that Allāh described in Q.83:14 which says: 'Nay! But on their hearts is the *rān* which they used to earn.'"[30] Ibn Kathīr states that Al-Qurṭubī said: "The *Ummah* has agreed that Allāh has described Himself with sealing and closing the hearts of the disbelievers, as a punishment for their disbelief,"[31] while al-Zamakhsharī believes that there is no real sealing nor covering and that this is actually a metaphor, denoting man's rejection of the truth and arrogance.[32] Another example is Q.4:88 which says: "while Allah has made them return (to unbelief) for what they have earned. Do you wish to guide him whom Allah has caused to err? And whomsoever Allah causes to err, you shall by no means find a way for him." Also Q.5:49: "but if they turn back, then know that Allah desires to afflict them on account of some of their faults; and most surely many of the people are transgressors," and Q.61:5:

"when they turned aside, Allah made their hearts turn aside, and Allah does not guide the transgressing people." Such verses, of which the few stated above are only a sample, clearly contradict (in their literal form) those emphasizing divine justice, such as "He is not in the least unjust to the servants" in Q.8:51, and "He is Benignant to His servants" in Q.42:19. Therefore, these verses should have been interpreted in accordance with the whole Qur'ānic ethos in order to avoid contradictions. This is what early Muslim interpreters have rightly done, as in the interpretation of Q.2:6–7 above. Not only does such a deterministic view, if not rightly interpreted, contradict divine justice, it contrasts with a large number of texts that may be considered to support human capacity and responsibility for moral acts, which clearly presuppose freedom of moral choice. In Q.10:108, for example, the whole responsibility of choosing the right way, or accepting guidance or choosing the alternative, is upon human beings. It reads: "Say: O people! Indeed there has come to you the truth from your Lord, therefore whoever goes aright, he goes aright only for the good of his own soul, and whoever goes astray, he goes astray only to the detriment of it, and I am not a custodian over you." In Q.18:29 the Almighty clearly states that the human being is free to believe or disbelieve: "And say: The truth is from your Lord, so let him who pleases believe, and let him who pleases disbelieve" Also Q.41:46: "Whoever does good, it is for his own soul, and whoever does evil, it is against it; and your Lord is not in the least unjust to the servants." Human responsibility is affirmed in Q.74:38: "Every soul will be held in pledge for its deeds." Yet some verses are controversial, especially those similar to Q.16:93, which, if taken literally seems to support both human responsibility, and therefore human freedom on one hand and moral predestination on the other. It says: "And if Allah pleased He would certainly make you a single nation, but He causes to err whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases; and most certainly you will be questioned as to what you did." This verse was interpreted by the Muʿtazilites in accordance with the Qur'ānic spirit. Thus divine erring is a punishment for previous transgression, and that one is caused to err if he deserves it, and that God guides the people who deserve it as a result of their faith and good deeds.[33] It could also be interpreted that God causes to err the one who wants to do so, and that He guides the one who wants to be guided. Thus human will to follow the right path, and behave rightly, is followed by divine guidance, contrary to the rival understanding, which considers divine will the only and the ultimate cause of right guidance. It is possible to understand it in such a sense from the original Arabic text: "*Yaḍillu man yashā' wa yahdī man yashā'*." However, in most such verses, not to say all, which mention erring or guiding (such as Q.22:13, 10:25, 14:4, 16:93, 24:46, 28:56, and 74:31) there is no final evidence that would support a definite interpretation. Therefore, it may be convenient to conclude that literally the Qur'ān might seem to support equally both rival views, and if one intends to accept it literally, he has to overlook or disregard the logic of human reason, no matter how odd this might sound. So one may be tempted to agree with Izustu who states that "Qur'ānic thought unfolds itself on a plane which is essentially different from that of the logic of human reason. And as long as one keeps oneself

on this level of thinking there can be no place for such a problem."[34] Yet, by interpreting some verses, taking into account the general spirit of the Holy Qur'ān, one might be justified in concluding that the Qur'ān does not deny human capacity, responsibility and, therefore, freedom of moral choice – an interpretation clearly emphasized by the Muʿtazila.

Ethical presuppositions of Ḥadīth

The Prophetic tradition (*Sunna*) is believed to be transmitted by companions of the Prophet and the following generations until collected and documented at the end of the second and the beginning of the third centuries after the Hijra (at the end of the ninth century according to the Gregorian calendar). Among six recognized selections, the compilations of Bukhārī (d.870/256) and Muslim (d.875/261) are called the two authentic ones (*Ṣaḥīḥān*) and are considered so by *Ahl al-sunna*. One might be justified in exploring the Ḥadīth and its doctrines related to ethical questions raised above after investigating first the historical and political controversies and opinions of different religious groups, because the proponents of Ḥadīth (*Ahl al-Ḥadīth*) used to identify themselves explicitly as the people of tradition and community (*Ahl al-sunna wa'l jamāʿa*). One tradition which is stated in the introduction of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* and which goes back to Ibn Sirīn says that scholars before the first civil war (*al-fitna*) did not care to mention the chain of the transmitters of any Ḥadīth. Yet, after the civil war, they started to investigate the transmitters. Ḥadīth reports narrated and transmitted by those who were considered *Ahl al-sunna* were included, and Ḥadīth narrated or transmitted by those who were considered by *Ahl al-sunna wa'l jamāʿa* as innovators (*Ahl al-bidaʿ*) or heretics were rejected.[35] This fact might have resulted in dismissing many valuable Ḥadīth reports and might have allowed the inclusion of some fabricated reports. Ironically enough, one of the Ḥadīth reports included in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* states that the Prophet said: "Do not take down anything from me, and he who has taken down anything from me except the Qur'ān, he should efface that."[36] Whereas in another Ḥadīth the Prophet asserts that he is only a human being, which implies that not everything he says should be given divine status, as some people know better their worldly interests. The Prophet says: "I am a human being, so when I command you about a thing regarding religion, do accept it, but when I command something out of my personal opinion, keep in mind that I am a human being."[37] Therefore good or evil, at least in worldly matters, including politics, economy, medicine, and other matters treated in detail in the Ḥadīth compilations should actually be left to people to solve in conformity with Qur'ānic injunctions which stressed justice, rightfulness, and good character. Some Ḥadīth reports explicitly state that *ḥarām* and *ḥalāl* are evident, following this by referring to the heart, which implies that one's heart, if not corrupted, naturally knows good and evil. One Ḥadīth says: "Both permitted and forbidden (*ḥarām and ḥalāl*) are evident. There is a piece of flesh in the body if it becomes reformed the whole body becomes good, but if it gets spoilt the whole

body gets spoilt and that is the heart."[38] However, such reports are rare, and one cannot conclude that the Ḥadīth reports support objective ethics, especially when considering many reports that tend to emphasize predestination, and others in which goodness is given a political dimension advocating conformity to the will of the community and its leader, while evil is said to consist simply in following any heretical group.[39] Conformity to the community and its head is stressed in many Ḥadīth reports such as that which was narrated on the authority of Abū Hurayra,[40] that the Messenger of Allah said: "The one who disobeyed the *Amīr* and separated himself from the main body of the Muslims, if he died in the state of disobedience he would die the death of the one who belongs to the days of *Jāhiliya* (i.e, would not die as a Muslim)."[41] Also another Ḥadīth narrated by Abū Hurayra says: *"* 'There will be leaders who will not follow my guidance and who will not take my ways. There will be among them men who will have the hearts of Satan in the bodies of human beings.' I [i.e. Abū Hurayra] said: 'What should I do, Messenger of Allah, if I happen to live in that time?' He replied: 'You will listen to the *Amīr* and carry out his orders; even if your back is flogged and your wealth is robbed, you should listen and obey.'"[42]

The *Jamā'i-Sunni 'ulamā'*, or scholars, gained great popular respect, not only due to their piety and religious devotion, which they actually shared with others but also for the following reasons:

First, due to their having monopolized the Ḥadīth compilation industry and having identified themselves as *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*, which implied that they were the only true followers of the *Sunna* or the Prophetic tradition to the exclusion of the others. Thus, they supported their religious authority by presenting themselves as faithful followers of the prophetic tradition.

Second, due to their sincere tendency to pacify all parties and to reunite the Muslim community after the early civil wars that finally brought the Umayyads into power, and because, after the war, people were looking for solutions and answers – they wanted to know who was right and who was wrong. Tired of war, they found some peace in accepting a compromise – acknowledging the Umayyad dynasty. They regarded the first four Caliphs as rightly guided, including ʿUthmān and ʿAlī. Such a solution was introduced by the Murji'ites[43] and also by *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* and *Jamā'i-Sunni 'ulamā'*. The whole movement of the piety-minded opposition to the Marwānis had a certain disrepute among the Ḥadīth folk.[44]

Many Ḥadīth reports emphasize obedience to the ruler as long as he is considered faithful, regarding faith as merely adherence to ritual practices. One such Ḥadīth about rulers who are tyrannical, and are in turn hated by their own people says that the Prophet, when being asked whether such rulers should be overthrown by the sword said: "No, as long as they establish prayer among you. If you then find anything detestable in them, you should hate their administration, but do not withdraw yourselves from their obedience."[45] Justice so highly praised by the Muʿtazila and enjoined in the Qur'ān is given no priority in the Ḥadīth reports mentioned in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, whereas obedience to the ruler is strongly emphasized. Even the prophetic tradition which states: "The finest form of holy war (*jihād*) is speaking

out (*kalimata haqq*) in the presence of an unjust ruler,"[46] mentions nothing more than speaking out, while it seems that the right action against a tyrannical ruler would be to overthrow him and restore justice. Yet, the most significant are those reports which suggest that rulers from the tribe of Quraysh are the only legitimate rulers. In his *Ṣaḥiḥ*, al-Bukhārī includes a Ḥadīth narrated by Muʿāwiya, which is worth quoting. It says: "That while he [Muʿāwiya] was included in a delegation of Quraysh staying with him, he heard that ʿAbdullah b. ʿAmr had said that there would be a king from the Qaḥṭān tribe, whereupon he became very angry. He stood up, and after glorifying and praising Allah as He deserved, said: ʿTo proceed, I have come to know that some of you men are narrating things which are neither in Allah's Book, nor has been mentioned by Allah's Apostle. Such people are the ignorant among you. Beware of such vain desires that mislead those who have them. I have heard Allah's Apostle saying, This matter (the Caliphate) will remain with Quraysh, and none will rebel against them, but Allah will throw him down on his face as long as they stick to the rules and regulations of the religion.'"[47] It is well-known that Muʿāwiya, the narrator of the above Ḥadīth, was the first Umayyād ruler. This Ḥadīth is actually not included in Muslim's collection, but his compilation includes many others on the same subject such as: "The Caliphate will remain among the Quraysh even if only two persons are left on Earth."[48] Such reports which admit privilege of birth clearly contradict the basic principles of political justice. This view was explicitly rejected by the Khārijites,[49] which means that they must have also denied the truth of such reports.

It has been shown above that many Ḥadīth reports emphasized obedience to rulers, and the sovereignty of Quraysh. However this did not prevent some leading proponents of Ḥadīth, like Malik b. Anas from issuing a *fatwa* or juridical opinion, which clearly implied refusing to submit to the ruler by claiming that the Caliphate belonged rightfully to al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, a descendant of the holy Prophet.[50] It is also right to mention that one of the principles that tended to be abolished in the Abbasid Caliphate was the duty to "command right and forbid wrong." The proponents of Ḥadīth did not deny the duty, especially among private individuals, but they did not insist on it in public matters.[51] Therefore, regardless of their piety, it seems that *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* tended to use prophetic traditions in rival controversies with other groups to assure their own control over symbolic goods without which political power could not have been assumed or exercised. It is also worth mentioning that other groups competed for the control of tradition, namely the Twelver Shiʿa who recognized the compilation entitled *Suitable for the Science of Religion*, started by Kulayni (d.327/939) and supplemented by the collections of Ibn Babuyi (d.380/991) and Ṭūsī (d.459/1067), and the Khārijites who use the Ibn Habīb collection (dating from the end of the eighth century) called *The True One of Spring* (*al-sahih al-rābīʿ*).[52] Ideally, one has to survey all the Ḥadīth compilations to reveal ethical views that may have been used as ideological tools for the different groups, but the scope of such a large project is too broad to be included in this book. Besides that, this work is concerned mainly with the Sunni tradition, thus the compilations of Bukhārī and Muslim can be considered adequate.

From Bukhārī and Muslim one cannot produce much systematic material pertaining to the problem of the nature and knowledge of ethical values and divine justice, whereas there are many reports that are related to the question of predestination and free will, and, in fact, each of the two mentioned compilations contains a separate section or book on the problem of al-*Qadar*. It has already been mentioned that the term *qadar* is not used in its Qur'ānic context to indicate determinism or predetermination. Nevertheless, it was used in an obviously deterministic sense in almost all the Ḥadīth reports. The terms *qaḍā'* and *qadar* are used to refer to God's predetermination of everything, including ethical values, human moral choices, and the destiny of every individual. For example one of the reports attributed to the Messenger of God says: "When the drop of (semen) remains in the womb for forty or fifty (days) or forty nights, the angel comes and says: 'My Lord, will he be good or evil?' And both these things would be written. Then the angel says: 'My Lord, would he be male or female?' And both these things are written. And his deeds and actions, his death, his livelihood; these are also recorded. Then his document of destiny is rolled and there is no addition to and subtraction from it."[53]

In another report attributed to the Messenger he says: "'There is not one amongst you to whom a place in Paradise or Hell has not been allotted and about whom it has not been written down whether he would be an evil person or a blessed person.' A person said: 'Allah's Messenger, should we not then depend upon our destiny and abandon our deeds?' Thereupon he said: 'Acts of everyone will be facilitated (*muyassar*) in that which has been created for him so that whoever belongs to the company of the blessed will have good works made easier for him and whoever belongs to the unfortunate ones will have evil acts made easier for him.'"[54] Another report states that "'There is not one amongst you who has not been allotted his seat in Paradise or Hell.' They said: 'Allah's Messenger, then, why should we perform good deeds, why not depend upon our destiny?' Thereupon he said 'No, do perform good deeds, for everyone is helped or facilitated (*muyassar*) in that for which he has been created'; then he recited the verse (Q.92:5–10) 'So he who gives in charity and fears God, and in all sincerity testifies to the best, we will indeed make smooth for him the path to bliss. But he who is a greedy miser and thinks himself self-sufficient and gives the lie to the best, we will indeed make smooth for him the path to misery.'"[55] Although predestination is explicitly expressed in the above reports which are only samples of more than twenty, all emphasizing predestination, some assertions like: "Every one is facilitated for that for which he has been created" or "Every doer of deed is facilitated in his action,"[56] might be interpreted to indicate free will. However the verse used in the context of the latter report seems to indicate that the human being is free to choose, and that his choice will be facilitated, whether right or wrong. This Ḥadīth fails to support its claims with reason or with reference to the Qur'ān. It has been rightly mentioned that the Ḥadīth reports which identify belief in *qadar* with orthodoxy, in a similar manner as the Ash'arite theologians were to do in the tenth century, and those which denounce Qadarites and, by implication, the Mu'tazilite

view obviously cannot be taken at face value, but should be dismissed as fabrications of eighth or ninth-century scholars determined to find a textual basis in the Ḥadīth for their strictures against their scholastic opponents.[57] Therefore, it is appropriate to designate a chapter to the study of early Muslim groups (*firaq*), mainly the Khawārij, the Murjiʿa and the Qadariya groups, to reveal their significant doctrines and their contribution to the development of ethics, as it is among these groups that the first ethical doctrines and theories were formed. The origin of their doctrines and their contribution to the development of ethical thought will be the subject of the following chapter.

In the present chapter it has been proved that the Qur'ān does not support ethical voluntarism as it clearly allows for the existence of moral values before the advent of revelation and to the knowledge of such values. It has also been shown that the Qur'ān allows for various interpretations regarding free will and predestination. Yet, most importantly, one can conclude that the Muʿtazilites cannot be declared as heretics depending on Qur'ānic basis; because neither ethical objectivism nor human free will (the most distinguished doctrines of the Muʿtazilite moral thought) are denied in the Qur'ān.

3

PRE-MUʿTAZILITE ETHICAL DOCTRINES

It is commonly held that some of the doctrines and issues raised in early Islam, after the first and the second *fitna* (schisms or civil wars), were closely related to politics and can therefore be considered religio-political doctrines. Yet, it should be emphasized that the subjects of these doctrines were, in themselves, ultimately ethical by nature in that they dealt with the conduct of human beings. Thus it might be argued that the beginnings of *al-Kalām,* which reflected intellectual activity of Arabo-Islamic society, implied political and social interests expressed within an ethical framework.

In the context of this chapter it will be clarified that while the first disputes raised in Islam were political – concerning the issue of *imāmate*, or the "religious and political authority" – the first theoretical arguments of *al-kalām* were mainly ethical. This is because it was concerned with the character and conduct of the *īmām* or the religio-ethical prerequisites of the assumed *imāmate*. Questions arose, such as: is being a *mu'min* or a believer sufficient for assuming the right to the *imāmate*? If so, then what does *īmān* or faith really entail? Are deeds intrinsic components of *īmān*? And if so, aren't righteousness and justice to subjugate people prerequisites of any religious and political authority? Politics, religion, and ethics were all intermingled at the beginning. Concepts such as faith and justice raised by different groups were given various definitions and different analyses. The Qur'ān, as already indicated in the previous chapter, could not have provided the final verdict that would have been accepted by all rival groups; because of various possible textual interpretations. Different groups held opposing views with conflicting ethical doctrines that could all have been equally supported by religious texts. Therefore, there was a need to develop other disciplines of knowledge like linguistic, juridical, and ethical disciplines to unveil the truth and to correctly interpret religious texts.

In this chapter, the ethical nature of early *kalām* arguments will be investigated and the development of different aspects of ethical doctrines and their incorporation into Muʿtazilite ethical thought will be highlighted. Particular attention will be given to the ethical doctrines and theories of the Khārijites and the Murji'ites, and some light will be shed on their relationship to the doctrines of the Qadarites, the Shiʿites, and Ahl al-Ḥadīth, where appropriate.

The controversies between the Khārijite groups and the Murji'ite groups regarding the issue of *īmān*, "faith" or "belief," is one of the main religious and moral issues that is particularly related to pre-Muʿtazilite ethics, along with the issue of *Qadar* or "free will and predestination." The problem of free will and predestination in pre-Muʿtazilite ethics was fully investigated by W. Watt,[1] thus it will not be given specific attention here despite its relevance and importance.

The ethical nature of *'ilm al-kalām* might be supported by observing the overwhelmingly ethical arguments that led to the emergence and thus the development of *'ilm al-kalām*. Examples of controversial issues that raised ethical arguments are: the possibility of judging human beings and evaluating their conduct and practices. In other words, is it possible to judge people? If so, could they be judged according to their acts and deeds or is there a higher quality, namely *īmān* that would safeguard whoever is considered a *mu'min*? And if humans are judged according to their acts, usually referred to as "acts of obedience," or "acts of disobedience," then did the acts of obedience include only religious rituals or were they extended to cover all social and political aspects of human conduct? Disputes over such ethical issues were treated by the various groups within the Khārijītes and the Murji'ītes. Assumptions regarding the legitimacy of ethical judgments, based on human conduct were behind the controversial arguments concerning the issue of *īmān* regardless of its religious appearance and eschatological connotations; since "the problem of *īmān* is a form of the issue of ʿthe grave sinner'"[2]. The "grave sinner" (*murtakib al-kabīra*) is not only a person who commits wrong towards God, or who disobeys clearly written and detailed religious prescriptions, but also anyone who commits wrong towards others. The fact that ʿUthmān, or ʿAli (or both) were considered grave sinners by some early groups clearly indicates political and ethical connotations of the term. As no one could have said that these two companions of the prophet did not follow religious rituals or that they disobeyed clearly written and detailed religious prescriptions. Therefore, the problem of "grave sinners" and *īmān* was essentially and originally an ethical problem. Another example is the problem of human moral responsibility which stimulated and involved the arguments regarding predestination (*qadar*). Other examples are the concept of justice (*al-'Adl*) and the divine judgment or (*Ḥukm Allah*).

It seems that controversial issues can be better understood and better placed within their political and social contexts if some "apparently" religious concepts are interpreted and clarified using "moral terms." Different groups attach different meanings to these concepts according to their diverse ethical and political positions. It is therefore appropriate to define the ethical connotations of some key concepts:

Qadar: is a Qur'ānic term that has been thoroughly discussed in the previous chapter. Qadar was given the meaning of "predestination" of a person's actions, whereas *al-istiṭā'a,* literally "ability," meant the human capability to choose and perform actions. Controversies concerning *Qadar* reflected controversies about human free will and predestination. If a person's actions are predetermined, then

he could not be held responsible for his deeds, whereas if a human is free to act then he should be held responsible for his actions.

Imān: literally means "faith" or "belief" and clearly implies belief in the existence of God. Yet heated disputes concentrated on the true meaning of the word and invoked linguistic and logical arguments. Early Islamic scholars disagreed over the meaning of the term *īmān*. Moral implications of the term were suggested, as *īmān* was usually connected in the Qur'ān with performing good deeds. It is significant that an ethical argument from the daily language of the time was utilized; saying that a sinner is not usually called a *mu'min,* because it is a term used to praise, and nobody would praise a sinner.[3] The question of whether *īmān* includes acts or if it is merely an internal state clearly reveals the essentially ethical implications of the term.

Ḥukm Allah or "divine judgment": the relation of divine judgment to ethical or human judgment reveals the ontological and epistemological status of moral values. Divine judgment when contrasted and opposed to contemplative and reasonable human judgment implies ethical voluntarism. Ethical voluntarism, reflected in the doctrine of divine judgment as held by most of the Khārijītes and the Murji'ītes, will soon be explored.

Al-ʿAdl or the principle of justice: be it divine or human, the concept of justice itself is the same on both levels. The emphasis on this concept reflected Muʿtazilite ethical, political, and social concerns. *Al-ʿadl* with its profound ethical implications was the most important principle which later encompassed, in an ethical system, three other Muʿtazilite principles (dealt with later), besides the principle of divine unity or *al-tawḥīd.* This lies behind the Muʿtazilites being called: "the people of justice and unity" or "*Ahl al-ʿAdl wa'l-Tawḥīd.*" Of course, *ʿadl* was not a concept invented by the Muʿtazilite thinkers, nor was it a foreign concept imported to serve intellectual needs of perceiving the truth of divine entity. It is a Qur'ānic term, which frequently appears in the context of enjoining justice.[4] Different aspects of this axial term must have been discussed before the advent of the Muʿtazila, who considered *ʿadl* their most important defining principle.

Before proceeding to study the ethical doctrines of the Khārijites and the Murji'ites it is important to shed some light on the historical and political circumstances that led to the emergence of different Islamic groups and their various political positions.

The historical framework of early controversies

Political authority was the first cause of disagreement in Islamic history. ʿAlī, the messenger's cousin, was regarded by some people, from the early beginning, as the most legitimate leader for Muslims after the death of the prophet (11/632). The Shiʿites insisted that this was the will of the Prophet, explicitly expressed in some Ḥadīth reports. Yet it was Abū Bakr who became the first Muslim Caliph (successor of the Prophet in political and religious leadership), followed by ʿUmar, and then by ʿUthman. Although some controversies developed very early, still

the most important events that split the Muslims happened during the reigns of ʿUthman (the third Caliph), and ʿAlī (the fourth Caliph). In his book, *The Venture of Islam*, Hodgson rightly states that

> The events of the first generations after Muḥammad were almost as formative as those of Muḥammad's own time. Later Muslims have identified themselves in terms of these events and of the factions that grew out of them. They interpreted the whole of history in symbolism derived from them, and have made the interpretations of those events and of the leading personalities in them the very test of religious allegiance.[5]

The Prophet passed away without explicitly nominating a successor for the Muslim community; therefore it was assumed that the Muslims had to elect a leader. It was natural that disagreements about this issue were raised following the death of the Prophet. Even the election of Abū Bakr did not pass off without a struggle. The *anṣār*[6] regarded themselves as rightful heirs of the leadership, yet, their own conflicts and the quick and skilful interventions of the companions of the Prophet aborted their ambitions. In the first elective council the choice fell upon Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq who was soon recognized by most Muslims as the first Caliph. His piety and his affection for and close intimacy with Muḥammad played a crucial role in their accepting his leadership.[7]

Abū Bakr died only two years after the Prophet (13/634). He nominated ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, and the people confirmed the nomination. ʿUmar established sharp and clear standards to prevent demoralization; he tightened up family law and discouraged decadence among the Arabs which was the natural consequence of conquered wealth.[8] He set up the *dīwān*, a register of all the Muslims of Medina and Mecca and of the conquering armies. Loot from the conquests was to be distributed to people listed in the *dīwān* according to their rank.[9] The *dīwān* gave a clear social status to all the Muslim Arabs, based not on descent but on faith. Priority was given to those who had converted to Islam the earliest.[10]

ʿUmar died in (23/644), leaving a panel of Medinan leaders to choose his successor. They chose ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, the pious early convert and son-in-law of the Prophet. Neither ʿUmar nor Abū Bakr were members of the two most important competing families of Quraysh, namely, the Banu Umayya and the Banu Hāshim, although they were both from Quraysh. ʿUthmān was of the Banu Umayya family,[11] thus it might be held that he actually paved the way for what was later to become the Umayyad caliphate. Although ʿUmar had made extensive use of the experiences and skills of members of the Banu Umayya family, ʿUthmān gave them and their associates almost a monopoly of top posts, often letting himself be dominated by them.[12] The accumulation of wealth and power lead to the formation of an elite class. In his valuable book titled *al-Fitna*, Hishām Djaʿīṭ elaborately explores the roots and the causes of the first Muslim civil war (35/656–40/661) showing how the loose economic policies of ʿUthmān and his extravagance differed from the simple and almost ascetic lives led by Abū Bakr

and ʿUmar. Because of this, ʿUthmān was considered by some companions of the prophet and the vast majority of Muslims to have abandoned the tradition of the prophet and his successors.[13] In fact, elements that stimulated the crisis developed due to the economic policies pursued by ʿUmar, but they became more pronounced in the days of ʿUthmān. The opposition to ʿUthmān had become so powerful, especially in Iraq and Egypt, that finally a delegation of a few hundred arrived in Medina to demand redress for their grievances and reform of government. Some compromises appeared to have been reached, but on their way back the Egyptians discovered a letter ordering the governor of Fusṭaṭ to put the leaders of the mutineers to death on their return. They returned to Medina and confronted ʿUthmān, who denied knowledge of the letter, claiming it had been forged. This did not convince the mutineers and they demanded his abdication. ʿUthmān answered "I will not put off the robe with which I have been invested by God."[14] It is clear that ʿUthmān tried by such an answer to give his authority a divine basis, as if the Caliphate was a divine assignment, and that a man had no right to resign nor be made to resign from such a responsibility.

Some sources tell us that there were some arguments among the "mutineers" regarding the legal reasons that would permit the killing of a Muslim. They sought textual justification, but they couldn't find anything in the Qur'ān that might support killing someone for causing corruption and evil.[15] An unjust ruler could not be killed on a Qur'ānic pretext, and the killing of ʿUthmān was never justified by any party in Islam. Yet Uthmān's perception of the Caliphate as a divine assignment was also neither religiously nor morally justified. However, it was adopted and extremely exaggerated by the Umayyad rulers.

Indeed, it is beyond the aim of this study to explore all the rival interests among the various groups: al-Ansār, al-Muhājirīn, the Iraqis (especially those known as the *Qurrā'*), the Egyptians, and others whose interests, mainly financial, played the decisive role in the crisis that led to the assassination of ʿUthmān.[16] However, a few facts and important events acknowledged by various historical interpretations must be mentioned because of their important roles in shaping different ethical and theological views. Thus, the positions of the groups which held specific political doctrines such as the Khawārij, Murji'a, early Shīʿa, and the Qadariya will be clarified.

After the assassination of ʿUthmān in (35/656), the Muslim community became involved in two civil wars or *fitnas*, which split the community into what became four major groups, namely: the Khawārij, Murji'a, Shī'a, and the Umayyads. The Khārijites or literally "seceders" broke off from ʿAlī's party during the first civil war (35/656–39/660) as they found him willing to compromise with Muʿāwiya, the first Umayyad Caliph (r. 40/661–60/680). Their main political doctrine was that the Caliph was to be elected by the Muslim community; he didn't have to be from the Quraysh tribe and he could be deposed if necessary. Thus their principles were absolutely democratic.[17] Their other important doctrine was that a grave sin excluded the sinner from the community.[18] For centuries the Khārijites continued to be a thorn in the side of all established authority. Their movement inherited the

most uncompromising demands for egalitarian justice which had arisen among the opponents of ʿUthmān. At the opposite extreme from the Khārijites in political matters stood the Shīʿites, who glorified ʿAlī and his descendants and regarded the Caliphate as belonging to them by divine right. Shīʿism, started as a political matter but soon became a theological one as well. Their main doctrine was that there must be a divine law or *naṣṣ* regulating the choice of the *Imām*, or leader of the Muslim community.[19] The Murji'ites arose out of the civil wars between the Shīʿites, the Khārijites, and the Umayyads. Murji'ism as a political movement opposed the political puritanism of the Khārijites and the uncompromising spirit in which they damned all who differed from them.[20] The main Khārijite thesis that "grave sin excludes from the community" was explicitly rejected by the Murji'ites.[21] In politics they held that the Umayyads were the rulers of the Muslim state and as long as they recognized the unity of God and the apostleship of the prophet it was the duty of all Muslims to acknowledge their sovereignty and to postpone all judgments or condemnation of any sins they might commit till the Day of Judgment. "Sins less than polytheism (*shirk*) could justify no one in rising in revolt against them and in breaking the oath of fealty."[22] The name "Murji'ite" was sometimes extended to anyone who supported the Umayyads in the name of the *Jamāʿa* principle of unity of the Muslim community.[23]

On the other hand, the same period also witnessed the rise of a new and revolutionary spirit, sparked off by the enquiries of the Qadarites such as Maʿbad al-Juhanī (d.79/699) and Ghaylan al-Dimashqī (d.124/743) and headed by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d.109/728),[24] the teacher of Wāṣil b. ʿAtā', the founder of the Muʿtazila. The term *qadar* was considered by most Muslims to mean the eternal decree of God; although the Qadarites were actually the defenders of free will and human responsibility. They challenged the official doctrine of predestination held by the Umayyads and in the process came into conflict with the Umayyads due to the political implications of their moral theology.[25] By the middle of the second/eighth century the Qadarite movement received fresh impetus from the Mu'tazila movement.[26]

The Khārijites

The Khārijite slogan "*lā ḥukma illa li-llāh*" literally "no judgment but Allah's" or "judgment belongs only to Allah" was not only "perfectly suitable for generalization and for taking on an anarchic twist"[27] as stated by Tilman Nagel, but also a statement that fully revealed a position of ethical voluntarism coupled with what they considered a strict and uncompromising adherence to the revealed text. According to their slogan: no human being had the right to judge, not even the most pious of Muslims such as ʿAlī b. Abi Ṭālib (d. 39/660), from whom they disassociated themselves after considering him guilty of compromising his divine right to the Caliphate. ʿAlī allowed men to judge between him and Muʿāwiya b. Abi Sufyān (d.60/680). Whereas according to the Khārijite slogan, all judgments, even political judgments should strictly follow divine prescriptions. The

arguments of ʿAlī and his adherents, who indicated ʿAlī's religious authority and his right to derive judgments from the Qur'ān, couldn't change the Khārijites' uncompromising radical position. Regardless of their famous assertion and almost in contrast with their expressed theoretical position, the Khārijites carried out their own judgments, in the name of God, and executed people accordingly.

Their supposed idealism degenerated into fanaticism, mostly because of the transgression of the ruling authority in those days and also because of the violent suppression they faced, first under ʿAlī and then under the Umayyads. The appearance of the Azraqites (regarded as the most violent and extreme group of Khārijites) was the consequence of the brutal attacks with which the political authority dealt with its opponents. The sad story of Abū Bilāl al-Mirdās (d.62/681) a moderate, non-rebellious Khārijite who was executed with his companions while praying is well known, besides the unfortunate events of Karbalā' in 61/680 which significantly moved religious and political feelings and had a great impact on various pious groups. Despite the fact that the various Khārijite groups never had much in the way of political unity, and that some of the groups were quite moderate such as the Ibādites, the name "Khārijite" was designated to most of the groups who possessed revolutionary spirit because they were in general aggressive opponents of the ruling authority and always prepared to rebel against injustice.

On the other hand, in opposition to the established dynasty, the Khārijites held that the *imāmate* was the right of any righteous Muslim elected by the community, without discrimination between a Qurayshite or a non-Qurayshite. "Whoever they chose was regarded by them as an *imām*, provided he ruled people according to their ideas of justice and equity."[28] They strongly held that a Caliph disobedient to God, or an unjust ruler, should be deposed.

Yet, of all the Khārijite groups, the one that was considered the most extreme was that led by Nāfiʿ b. al-Azraq (d.65/656) whose movement constituted a permanent threat to the security of Baṣra and its surroundings. This was mainly because Nāfiʿ considered people who held Khārijite opinions but did not participate in their battles as unbelievers. His dissociation from them, regardless of their passive agreement with his principles is actually in accordance with another Khārijite doctrine which states that it is the acts rather than the words or beliefs of a Muslim that reveal his faith. Therefore, by deeds not by words, they judged all people including their own adherents. Most of the Azraqites agreed that whoever committed a grave sin became an unbeliever and was consequently excluded from the Muslim community. Moreover, such an unbeliever would be held eternally in hell with other polytheists and unbelievers. This extreme view was not shared with all the other groups who were also labeled as "Khārijītes." They supported their claim by "the example of Iblīs who, they say, committed only a grave sin when he was ordered to prostrate himself before Adam but refused, even though he had acknowledged the oneness of God."[29] Iblis was considered an unbeliever because of his behavior not due to his belief. To this, some Murji'ites later responded by raising a different interpretation of the given example; for them Iblīs "became an unbeliever through his pride,"[30] not because he committed an act of disobedience.

So it was his pride that counted, not his deeds. The Murji'ites emphasized the inner state of the believer; for them love and sincerity was all that mattered: "a believer enters Paradise on account of his sincerity and love alone, not on account of his deeds and his obedience."[31]

Although the Khārijites never had any true unity of military or political action,[32] nor a uniform body of doctrines, their ethical views on justice and their insistence on regarding works and actions as the decisive elements of faith had great impact on the development of Arabo-Islamic ethical thought. The very radicalism of their theories were an attraction to many cultivated minds, much as similar doctrines have done in other times and places. Some early ʿAbbāsid scholars were thought to cherish Khārijite views, like the famous philologist Abū ʿUbayda Muʿamar b. al-Muthannā (111/729–209/824).[33] It should be noted that the same puritanism which characterized the Khārijite concept of *Imāmate* and *īmān* is found in their ethical principle which demands purity of conscience as an indispensable complement to bodily purity for the validity of acts of worship.[34] Their sincere piety was not denied by Muslim heresiographers, yet the extremism and violence of some of their groups was clearly condemned. They did consider struggle against unjust rulers obligatory, and in this they did not stand alone, it is also reported that the Muʿtazila, the Zaydiyya, and many of the Murji'ites considered struggle against aggressors obligatory if deposition was achievable by the sword.[35]

Regardless of the extreme views and violence attributed to the Khārijītes, some groups held moderate views, and some of them held the principle of justice as did the Muʿtazila. Some sub-groups of the ʿAjārida, according to Muslim heresiographers were believed to have held "the doctrine of justice in the manner of the Muʿtazila."[36] The Maymūniya and the Ḥamziya maintained that the power to do good and evil belongs to man, and that a man's act is created and brought into being by himself.[37] The Khārijites were profoundly important to the development of ethical thought that this study covers, for "at the centre of their theological teaching," according to W. Watt, "was the conception of a righteous God who demands righteousness from His subjects."[38] This doctrine led by an irresistible logic to the doctrine of human responsibility with its corollary doctrine of *al-qadar*.[39] Watt further suggests that Maʿbad al-Juhanī (d.80/699) might have been a Khārijite, as this was the sort of milieu in which we should expect to find the originator of discussions regarding *qadar*.[40] Therefore, it might be appropriate to discuss, analyze, and underline some of the views that might have had a profound influence on Muʿtazilite ethical thought, before expounding early Murji'ite thoughts and their influence.

Faith, righteousness and justice

The most important of the Khārijites' doctrines was that if a Muslim committed a grave sin he would be rendered an unbeliever and would be condemned to hell forever. Al-Shahrastānī attributed this view to a group of the Khārijites whom he called Waʿīdiya,[41] which is actually one of the names given to the Muʿtazila,

derived from one of their five principles, namely *al-waʿd waʾl-waʿīd.* But while the Muʿtazilites also condemned the grave sinner and considered him unworthy of being called a *muʾmin* or a "faithful believer," they disagreed with the Khārijites by believing that repentance might save one from eternal hell, and so didn't call the sinner an unbeliever, but rather a *fāsiq*, who was given an intermediate position between believers and unbelievers. Therefore, Al-Ashʿarī's assertion that "the Muʿtazilites and the Khārijites held the same view regarding the threat (*al-waʿīd*),"[42] was evidently wrong. However, the uncompromising spirit of the Khārijītes that demanded righteousness and justice from the faithful, and held that work was a component of faith, was deeply incorporated into Muʿtazilite ethical thought.

A group of the Ibādites held that acts of obedience might be accepted even if the act was not done for the sake of obeying God.[43] This meant that any good act performed by man and which happened to be commanded by God would be regarded as obedience, even though it was not meant to be done for the sake of mere obedience to God. One could better argue that what is meant by "accepted obedience," not done for the sake of pleasing God, is that obedience has different motives; it either reflects one's convenience that what is asked to be obeyed is right, and therefore obedience would be synonymous with morals, or it can be performed merely to avoid punishment and in the hope of reward. Therefore, what is meant by "accepted obedience not done for the sake of obedience" is the rightful conduct that would be approved by God even though it was motivated by moral reasons, not merely prudent reasons of fear and hope. Al-Shahrastānī also reported what al-Kaʿbī said about the Ibādites: "They believe in an act of obedience, *ṭāʿa*, not directed towards God, as Abū al-Hudhayl did."[44] If such reports are correct, and there is no reason to believe they are not, then one can trace the theory of ethical objectivism in Islam, discussed earlier, to some Khārijite sources. The late Muʿtazila were not eager to consider any of the known Khārijites among their early authorities nor did they acknowledge Khārijite influences in their books that established the Muʿtazilite chain of authorities, although some anecdotes related Wāṣil b. ʿAtāʾ to some Khārijites.[45] It seems that the opponents of the Muʿtazila emphasized the similarities between Khārijite and Muʿtazilite doctrines in order to discredit the latter, whereas on the other hand the Muʿtazila excluded the Khārijites, most probably for political reasons, from their *ṭabaqāt al-Muʿtazila* (chains of authority). However, they did include Ghaylān al-Dimashqī among these.[46] Ghaylān, according to Al-Shahrastānī "combined three different doctrines: free will, Murjiʾism and Khārijism."[47] Ghaylān was politically active in the Umayyād period, was mainly classified among the Murjiʾa, and was a pupil of Muḥammad b. Ḥanafiyya; whereas the Khārijites remained active in the time of the ʿAbbasids and continued to be a thorn in the side of every established dynasty.

Grave sinners were considered by the Ibādites as "monotheists (*muwaḥḥidūn*) and not believers (*muʾminūn*)."[48] So this moderate group considered polytheism the gravest sin, thus, although the grave sinner was still considered an unbeliever, they allowed for discrimination between an unbeliever due to grave sin, naming

him *ʿkāfir ni'ma'* or "one who does not acknowledge God's favour," and between an unbeliever *ʿkāfir'* or *'mushrik'* (polytheist). Yet regardless of this discrimination they still believed that unbelievers would go to hell forever.[49] Such discrimination between two kinds of unbelievers diluted Khārijīte absolutism and allowed them to associate with other Muslims who were recognized as monotheists (*muwaḥḥidūn*), despite being grave sinners and unbelievers in the sense of not showing gratitude towards God or *ʿkuffār ni'ma'*. This was a term used to indicate grave sinners, including both ethically wrong people and those people who did not observe religious rituals. It is also worth noticing that the term "acts of obedience" was used to indicate both religious acts of worship as well as ethical or moral acts. It is obvious that it was the former which Kaʿbi referred to when he said that "some Ibādites believe in an act of obedience (*ṭā'a*) not directed towards God."[50] Therefore their views might be regarded as similar to the Muʿtazilites', who named the *ʿkāfir al-ni'ma'* mentioned above as *fāsiq*, moderating further the uncompromising Khārijite attitude, but never allowing the grave sinner to be called a believer (*mu'min*), nor even a *mu'min ḍāl* (literally: "a believer who went astray"), as did some Murji'ites and other Muslim groups. They insisted on keeping the title of *mu'min*, like most of the Khārijītes, for the righteous, faithful believer, opposing the late Murji'ites and most of Ahl al-Ḥadīth who considered it right to follow the existing ruler, regardless of his piety or righteousness and who considered rebellion against him unlawful (this was covered in an earlier chapter when talking about the Ḥadīth reports that emphasized obedience to authority).

It is also significant that "all the Khārijites say that the Qur'ān is created"[51] and that "their view concerning the unity of God is the same as the view of the Muʿtazila."[52] This clearly suggests Khārijite origins for some main Muʿtazilite principles, although it is also obvious that al-Ashʿarī was trying to discredit the Muʿtazila by highlighting their similarities with the Khārijites. This, however, does not change the fact of Khārijite influences on Muʿtazilite doctrines.

Ethical objectivity and necessary knowledge

It is reported that the Bayhasiya[53] dissociated themselves from other Khārijites who believed in suspension of judgment of a person who has done what is bad or unlawful out of ignorance of whether it was lawful or not. Abū Bayhas, the founder of this group, seems to have held that moral judgments are necessarily known, thus he could be the one who introduced the concept of "necessary moral knowledge" held by the Muʿtazilites.[54] He held that there is no reason for suspension of judgment on a person who does not know the revealed law, and that ignorance of a revealed truth can not be an excuse, because a man "should have known whether it was lawful or not."[55] This indicated that some moral principles are necessarily known to all and ignorance of revealed law could not be an excuse for immorality. Furthermore, *īmān*, according to Abū Bayhas, is "knowledge both of all that is right and all that is wrong."[56] Al-Shahrastānī continues that "most of the Bayhasiya, on the other hand, held the view that ʿknowledge, confession,

and deeds all constitute faith'"[57]. So it is obvious that Abū Bayhaṣ, by defining ethical knowledge as constituting faith, did not mean to exclude deeds, as this would have separated him from the Khārijites, and he would have been considered one of the Murji'ites. His ethical position becomes clearer when contrasted with another Khārijite who belonged to the same group but was reported to assert that "nothing is forbidden apart from what is revealed in the words of God."[58] This indicated, therefore, that ethical knowledge is not necessary knowledge, and that what is wrong cannot be known except through revelation. Abū Bayhas' view might be further clarified when compared to the view of another Baihasiya subgroup called the questioners or "*Ahl al-Su'āl*" who had, contrary to Abū Bayhas, allowed for moral ignorance before revelation, considering that ethical knowledge is possible only through revelation. However, according to *Ahl al-Su'āl,* if one does what is unlawful, evil, and forbidden by God, not knowing that it is unlawful, "he becomes an unbeliever."[59] But for this group "there is no harm in not knowing the obligation until the situation demands a knowledge of it; then he should ask;" indicating that he should ask those who know better what is lawful according to revelation.[60]

A Khārijīte group called al-Aṭrāfīya held the same views as the Ḥamziya and the Maimūniya regarding the question of *Qadar*. The name "al-Aṭrāfīya" seems to be derived from their doctrine, "absolve the *aṭrāfīya*[61] from guilt if they do not adhere to the part of the *sharīʿa* of which they are ignorant, as long as they do what is manifested by reason as obligatory."[62] Al-Shahrastānī also explains that this group believed that there were obligations based on reason, as do the Qadariya.

The Khārijites held different and sometimes opposing views regarding the doctrine of free will (*qadar*), the issue of faith (*īmān*), and as has been shown, the issue of ethical knowledge. Such doctrines seem to have been discussed in their circles, and this suggests that Wāṣil b. ʿAṭā', who used to discuss different issues with the Khārijites[63] and was sometimes even considered as one of them,[64] might have learned a lot from them. It has been shown that the kernels of most of the Mu'tazilite ethical doctrines were raised by the Khārijītes. Consequently, it seems inaccurate to relate some issues exclusively to just one figure and conclude that Wāṣil adopted them from him, as ethical issues were raised and discussed by different Khārijīte figures as has been shown. Hence, Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d.128/745) could not be the first to discuss the issue of rational knowledge of good and evil, as held by some prominent scholars like al-Nashshār,[65] especially after what has been said about obedience not directed towards God, and necessary moral knowledge (known without, or before revelation) discussed by some early Khārijite groups, who were active even before Wāṣil, the founder of the Muʿtazila.

Nevertheless, it is commonly believed that the Khārijites did not recognize any obligations which were not revealed. This view goes well with their early declared slogan that "judgment belongs only to God." However, such an assertion does not take into account the development of Khārijite thought and the diversity of their ethical doctrines. When al-Ashʿarī wrote about this issue, he could not assert it,

but had somehow hesitantly stated that "somebody has said that the Khārijites ʿdo not admit any obligation (*farḍ*) which is not revealed by prophets, and that obligations are imposed by prophets.'"[66] It has been shown that at least some of the Khārijites seem to have believed in necessary knowledge of moral principles and consequently that ethical obligations could be known even before revelation.

The Murji'ītes

It has been maintained that the doctrine of *Irjā'* was a powerful tool serving the Umayyad rulers by implying that judging them and their actions should be postponed to the Day of Judgment.[67] A contemporary Muslim thinker also considers the Murji'ītes the "thinkers of the Umayyad party."[68] This might be true, especially if one believes that no philosophical doctrine is innocent from political implications. Yet the Murji'a was not a compact school; the name was given to all who thought alike on some subjects. It is worth noticing that men of all sects except the Shīʿa bear this label.[69] According to some sources, the Murji'a emerged from al-Madina and were founded by ʿAli's grandson al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya (d.100/720) as a response to the fanatical Khārijite sects.[70] ʿIbn Saʿad and other sources describe Muḥammad b. al-Hanafiyya's son as the author of the doctrine of *al-Irjā'*, which he first defended in a circle of scholars debating the conflict between ʿUthmān, ʿAlī, Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr.[71] Although some doubt has been cast on the role of al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya and the authenticity of the *Kitāb al-Irjā'* attributed to him, there are no cogent reasons to reject them.[72] Al-Shahrastānī states that al-Ḥasan "did not make deeds secondary to faith." He went on to say: "nevertheless, he [al-Ḥasan] maintained that a man committing grave sins does not become an unbeliever, because committing acts of obedience and refraining from acts of disobedience are not essential to faith, in the sense that faith would cease to exist in the absence of them."[73] The main Khārijite thesis that "grave sin excludes from the community" was the thesis explicitly challenged by the Murji'a. The principle that the grave sinner was not to be excluded from the community was accepted by nearly all Muslims. "Suspension of judgment was obligatory in regard to the past which could no longer be witnessed" and "the identification of faith with true belief to the exclusion of acts, which later became the essential trait of *irjā*' was clearly implied, though not central in the early Murji'īte teaching."[74]

Al-Shahrastānī believed that there were different groups of Murji'a: "The Khārijite Murji'a, the Qadarite Murji'a, the Jabrīte Murji'a, and the pure Murji'a."[75] He tried to exclude Abū Ḥanīfa and his followers from the Murji'a, by arguing that a jurist like Abū Ḥanīfa "who had been so engaged in the sphere of deeds" could not favor "disregarding deeds."[76] Yet, by this he excluded him from the extreme Murji'a who held that "disobedience with faith is not harmful just as obedience with disbelief is not beneficial" because at the end he lists Abū-Ḥanīfa's name among other Murji'ite leaders who are acknowledged as "authorities of Ḥadīth" and who "do not declare those who commit grave sins as unbelievers,

nor do they maintain that they shall be eternally in hell."[77] Al-Shahrastānī emphasized that *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*, who might be considered the Murji'a of the Sunna, differed on the account of the above doctrine from both the Khārijites and the Qadarītes.[78] Whether the unrepentant grave sinners deserved eternal hell or not "was the main point of disagreement between *Ahl al-Sunna* on one side and both the Khārijites and the Muʿtazila on the other side."[79] When it comes to the definition of *īmān* it is important to realize how some prominent late Islamic thinkers like al-Tahānawi who died after 1158/1745 and Ibn Hazm (d.456/1064) considered that *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*, and *al-fuqahā'* believed that *īmān* included all – knowledge, confession, and deeds – just as held by the Khārijites, the Muʿtazila and the Shīʿa.[80] Therefore, it is obvious that the Muʿtazilite concept of *īmān*, which is similar to that of the Khārijite in considering that a grave sinner cannot be considered a believer (because works are an essential component of faith), seems to have prevailed in Islamic thought. Yet, the unrepentant sinner, according to the Muʿtazila, deserved eternal hell as did polytheists, which is consistent with their assertion that faith includes deeds. Some of *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* and *al-fuqahā'* and those who considered themselves *Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jamā'a* seem to have been inconsistent in holding this doctrine because they were bound to many Ḥadīth reports that referred to the intercession of the Prophet for his community. It must be mentioned that the Qur'ān "has no clear statement about Muslim sinners being released from hell after a time,"[81] but still, "it came to be generally held that Muḥammad would intercede for the sinners of his community, and that these will leave hell after being sufficiently punished."[82]

The role of deeds in deciding the final fate of Muslims was generally underestimated in some of the Ḥadīth reports. Although, it is definitely the ultimate fate of the wrongdoer which really matters, this is because decision or judgment of one's fate and whether it depends on his deeds or not reflected the importance attached to people's deeds and actions. Therefore, no matter what definition was given to faith, *Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jamā'a* were still closer to the Murji'a than to the Khārijites or the Muʿtazilites, who emphasized the principle of justice and the principle of threat and reward. This can be held regardless of the fact that "in the books of theological sects various groups of Murji'ites are described and regarded as heretical," because "this is in respect of some secondary matters and not in respect of their main thesis."[83] It seems that *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*, who considered themselves *Ahl al-Sunna wa'l Jamā'a*, were primarily concerned about the political unity of the Islamic community, which was also the position ascribed to Ḥasan b. Muḥammad. Therefore, consolidating this unity by creating a united community of believers was their first priority. The Umayyads seem to have been the only political force that were able to re-establish harmony, and it is significant that the Umayyads "praised the year 73H (which began on 4 June 691), the end of the second civil war, as the year of the [harmonious] community *'ām al-jamā'a'*."[84] This partially explains why the Muʿtazilites were not eager to be called *Ahl al-Sunna wa'l Jamā'a*.[85]

However, it is appropriate to mention in this context that a prominent Islamic figure, Ibn Taymiyya, developed a theory of *īmān* that seems to have outlived both

the Muʿtazilite and *Ahl al-Ḥadīth's* perception of faith, by linguistic analysis of the term *īmān*, and by introducing an organic bond between the inner or psychological states constituting *īmān* on one hand and the deeds of a human being on the other.[86] In Ibn Taymiyya's ethical thought *īmān* became the source and the basis of ethical obligation.

Interpretation of divine judgments

It is remarkable that the Murji'a seem to have grasped the essence of the Khārijite slogan "judgment belongs only to God" and carried it further, pushing it to its logical conclusions, which is that judging opponents should be postponed till the Day of Judgment as only God knows the truth and has the right and authority to judge according to His will. So, ironically, the Murji'a can be seen as sharing their initial ethical presupposition with their opponents, the early and extreme Khārijites. Both the Murji'a and the Khārijites can be labeled as ethical voluntarists.[87] The Khārijites, who upheld the dogma "*lā ḥukma illa li-llāh*," denounced the arbitration between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, and claimed that judgment should not be decided by humans. They considered themselves the true interpreters of divine judgment and that all their opponents were unbelievers. The same principle, ethical voluntarism (which implied that true values cannot be known through human reasoning), led the Khārijites to consider both the followers of ʿAlī and of Muʿāwiya as wrongdoers, and thus unbelievers, because, as Watt put it: "To the Khārijites the judgment of God is clear and already known, and it only remains to carry it out, so far as this is work for human agents."[88] However, the same belief led the Murji'a to conclude that since judgment belongs only to God, human beings have no right to practice ethical judgments. Furthermore, ethical knowledge is not within a man's capacity.

Faith as a supreme value was assumed by the Murji'a to be the ultimate divine criteria for judgment. Faith was assumed to be "belief in God," and one could not recognize believers or unbelievers from their deeds. Izustu asserted that "the Murji'ites did not deny absolutely the value of *ʿamal (*action), yet, they did not consider it one of the pillars (*arkān*) of *īmān*."[89] Even if some of them emphasized motive *(niyya*), which plays an exceedingly important role in the Ḥadīth,[90] and iterated that "*īmān* is something lying deep in the human heart, a spiritual event occurring in the very depth of the mind,"[91] *īmān* according to them still wouldn't safeguard the believer against sins, "since *īmān,* in this world, does not root the will in good, the possibility of sin in the believer is still present."[92] They believed that God would judge people, disregarding their deeds, as shown by the belief that the allocation of places in heaven to certain companions of the prophet was not forfeited by their later engagement in the civil wars. They were all faithful believers as they all belonged, according to divine promise, to the people of paradise. The Murji'a addressed the contradiction that the companions of the prophet were all people of paradise, yet had been involved in bloody wars against each other, thus some of them had to be wrong. They forwarded a solution

to such dilemmas by introducing a concept of *īmān* which could not be altered or decreased by evil deeds, a superior quality or highest moral value which would override and supersede all other values, and would guarantee ultimate salvation for all believers.

From a certain perspective, as has been argued above, both the Murji'a and the Khārijites seem to stand on the same ground and proceed from the same meta-ethical assumption, although, following their different political intentions each arrived at different conclusions which suited their political positions and interests. The Khārijites, as an uncompromising political opposition wanted to condemn all their opponents to hell by narrowing the definition of belief or faith, till it excluded all but themselves. Whereas the Murji'ites aiming to enhance the unity of the community wanted to send all Muslims to heaven, by widening the definition of belief or faith, till it included even transgressors and unjust rulers. The former believed that they were the only true believers and denounced their opponents as unbelievers or "*kuffār.*" Some, like the Azāriqa, excluded those they denounced from their community and executed without mercy those whom they believed to be unbelievers. They assumed complete knowledge of divine judgments. While al-Murji'a also believed that divine judgments were the only legitimate judgments; yet, this led them to the conclusion that one should refrain from judging people according to their deeds. Therefore, even the leadership of a corrupt Caliph should be accepted as he might still be a believer, going to heaven in the end. Divine criteria cannot be known; therefore it is wise to postpone judgment to God. Consistently, one should not judge people or take action against an aggressor if God might choose to allow him to go to paradise. This final judgment was what mattered and this gave a person some protection in society, regardless of his sins. Finally, it might be held that the doctrines of both parties, the Murji'a and the Khārijtes belonged to an era when Islamic thought was still searching for Islamic criteria for ethical and religious judgment.

Faith and ethical non-cognitivism

Faith (*īmān*) seems to have been considered and praised as the highest moral value or the ultimate virtue and its opposite, *al-kufr,* was condemned as the lowest moral vice. Those who assumed that they could judge people on their acts as indicative of their faith might be classified as holding some kind of ethical cognitivism, as they believed that ethical knowledge (which was of course considered in complete agreement with religious knowledge), could be attained. The Khārijites might be classified as ethical cognitivists as they could decide upon who was a believer and who was not according to his acts. While the Murji'a, who rejected the possibility of being able to judge, even according to divine judgments can be classified as having a view close to ethical non-cognitivism.

Those who believed that it could not be decided whether someone would go to heaven or hell left that decision to the Day of Judgment, as God is the only one who might know all the details of a person's moral and religious life. It was held

that Muḥammad b. Ḥanafiyya himself said that "I do not testify that anyone is safe or is one of the men of heaven – except the prophet – not even ʿAlī my father."[93] This was the position of the pioneering Islamic scholars, who represented the first stage of *irjā'* and opposed the extreme groups of the Khārijites, namely the Azraqites, who persecuted the people they considered as condemned to hell and only considered their faithful adherents as the people of paradise, *Ahl-al-Janna*. However, the Murji'a regarded all Muslims as *Ahl al-Qibla.* In this regard it is interesting to note how "the phrase *Ahl al-Qibla*, the people who pray towards Mecca replaces *Ahl al-Janna*, the people of paradise,"[94] an indication that the community of Islam contains people other than those who will definitely go to paradise.[95] Among those who held a mild form of Murji'ism one might find some groups of the Murji'a who opposed and even fought against established authority. They allowed for mercy and forgiveness of God without compromising the concept of righteousness. Although, "they held that Muslims would not lose their status of believers by any action, they were prepared to condemn wrong-doers as aberrant believers *mu'minūn ḍullāl*, who might ultimately be punished or forgiven by God."[96] Watt indicated that "these Murji'a held the righteousness in the same manner as the Khārijites,"[97] because of their conception of righteousness, according to Watt, they moved to the opposition towards the close of the Umayyad period.[98] However, their inconsistency seems to have been noted and criticized, as it has been narrated that a Kūfan ʿAwn b. ʿAbd Allah (deceased in the 110s) attacked their views while joining the rebellion of Ibn al-Ashʿath in (81/701), saying: "They asserted that the kings of their people had ʿwronged people and been insolent in the earth without right' [cf. Qur'ān 42:40], yet they do not know whether by this they have deserved punishment or mercy."[99]

It has been held by ʿAli al-Nashshār that the early Murji'a were a group that emerged from the school of Muḥammad b. al-Hanafiyya (d.81/700), named *al-Maktab*[100] and aimed essentially to support Muslim unity and oppose the extremists among the Khārijites. They were mainly concerned for the unity and welfare of the society. The circumstances that prompted al-Ḥasan to write his thesis *'fil-irjā'* are relatively obscure. In principle, the Murji'ītes, including al-Ḥasan, acknowledged the legitimacy of Umayyad rule, thus, as argued by a contemporary scholar, they would be logically bound to approve of the latter's claim to rule by divine decree. Yet, this stood in total contradiction to the view held by the Qadariyya.[101] The main representatives of the Qadariyya movement were pupils of al-Ḥasan. Ghaylān al-Dimashqi, who was a pupil of al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya (d.100/718) and studied with him in al-Madina, was one of the early Murji'a, although he held the doctrine of *al-Qadar*, opposed the fiscal policy of he Umayyads, and was also considered by the Muʿtazila as one of them.[102] ʿAlī al-Nashshār suggests also that Maʿbad al-Juhanī (d.80/699) was a member of the same school – Maktab Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya in al-Madina al-Munawwara.[103] Maʿbad al-Juhanī is the first well-known proponent of the doctrine of *al-Qadar*, which was the opposite of the doctrine of predestination held by Muʿāwiya in support of the Umayyad authority. He grew up in al-Madina and narrated Ḥadīth from Abū

Dharr al-Ghafāri,[104] whose views regarding justice and whose hatred of Muʿāwiya and ʿUthmān are well-known.

Murji'īte doctrine recommended loyalty to the current sovereign regardless of his personal traits.[105] This stands in contradiction to the fact that "the Murji'a were reportedly involved in three risings against the Umayyad authorities."[106] It seems true that in "the very non-partisan character, there was inherently latent an element of pragmatism which made it expedient for an array of personages and interest groups, through the era, to embrace *irjā'* and develop it in response to their needs and changing circumstances."[107] However, towards the end of the second decade of the eighth century Murji'ism seemed to have united all its factions as a loyal party to the Umayyads.[108] Yet, despite the pro-Umayyad leaning of the traditional *irjā'*, the drift towards the Umayyads would not have come so early had the Murji'ītes not been driven to it by their religio-political rivals, the Shīʿa and the Khawārij.[109]

The later Murji'a believed explicitly that works are excluded from the definition of *īmān,* and therefore could still consider any wrongdoer a faithful believer as long as he was a monotheist. Therefore, they would have considered it wrong and illegal to fight or condemn any Muslim, even an aggressor as long as he was a believer. Whereas Al-Sharastānī maintained, as has been already mentioned, that al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya "did not make deeds secondary to faith as did some Murji'īte sects."[110] He also concluded his study of the Murji'a by providing a supplementary list of reported leaders of the Murji'a, stressing the fact that they were "all authorities on Ḥadīth,"[111] thus tracing the authorities of the Ḥadīth to the authorities of al-Ḥasan.

However, the second stage of the *irjā'* might be considered as the stage of the quietism of the Murji'a, who were politically on the opposite side of the Khrāijites and intellectually on the opposite side of the Muʿtazila. It might include a group of *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* or *Ahl-al-Sunna wa'l-Jamā'a* who over-emphasized the obligation of obedience to the ruling caliphate, underestimated the value of justice, and strongly supported predestination of human action.[112] Although it is quite interesting to see how most of the Sunnites condemned the Murji'a and considered them innovators, it should be emphasized that this was on account of their other doctrines, not because of their main conception of faith. Al-Ashʿarī presented in his *Maqālāt* various points of disagreements among the Murji'a. He says that some of them held the principle of divine unity in a Muʿtazilite manner,[113] some held that the Qur'ān was created, and others held the doctrine of *al-qadar*.[114] The Murji'a, as might be concluded from al-Ashʿari discussed most of the controversial issues of the time and held divergent and often sophisticated views concerning those issues.[115]

Although Ashʿarite authors and those who consider themselves *Ahl-al-Sunna wa'l-Jamā'a* explicitly denied their relation to the Murji'a, it has been noticed that the doctrine of faith held by most of the Murji'a is almost the same as that held by Abū Ḥanīfa and *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*,[116] which also coincides with the view of the Ashʿarites.[117] Another scholar noticed that "a large section of the school of

al-Ashʿarī came to define *īmān* basically as belief (*taṣdiq*) in God, while assigning acts to a second rank, a doctrine not far removed from *'irjā'*."[118] The doctrine of *'irja'*, postponement of judgment to God, has been combined with the slogan "judgment belongs only to God" and with a view of deeds as of secondary significance in relation to *īmān* to provide the authority with the religious and theoretical tools it needed along with the doctrine of *al-jabr* or fatalism. Both doctrines of *al-irjā'* and *al-jabr* found their way into Ashʿarite ethics. It is not without significance that both "Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Taymiyya among others expound the creed of Jahm and the Ashʿarīte creed under the title of the extreme Murji'a (*al-ghulā min al-Murji'a*)."[119]

It seems that the controversies regarding the definition of faith are behind the discrimination made between the "five pillars of Islam" and "the five pillars of faith." It is difficult to find out exactly when they were established, yet it is significant that the first includes mainly the religious rituals, namely: *al-shahādatayn* (the two testimonies or saying that there is only one God and that Muḥammad is his prophet), praying, fasting, pilgrimage, and alms-giving. While the pillars of faith (*arkān al-īmān*) include only the main religious beliefs, namely: belief in God, His prophets, His books, His angels, and belief in the Day of Judgment. The belief in *qaḍā'* and *qadar* is often added by traditionalists. The pillars of Islam stress the ritual acts of the religion while the pillars of faith mention only the beliefs. This might be contrasted to the five principles of the Muʿtazila, which combined faith and action, works and beliefs, and emphasized justice as the main principle besides the unity of God (*al-tawḥīd*). Also, the Muʿtazila were closer to the Khārijites than to the Murji'a in considering deeds as essential components of faith, they have traced their predecessors to Abū-Hashim b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, not to his brother Ḥasan, who was considered the founder of the Murji'a. Yet, it is important to mention that there were actually no definite lines between the different sects mentioned in Islamic heresiographical books, as the same person might have held different doctrines and therefore been classified differently in different heresiographic sources.

4

MUʿTAZILITE ETHICS

Moral interpretation of the five principles

So far it has been shown that ethical thought in its initial stage reflects internal, political, and social interests and developed from various debates and arguments raised by different Islamic groups. The second stage in the development of Arabo-Islamic ethical thought might be distinguished by the rise of *I'tizāl* or Muʿtazilism which was an intellectual movement, headed by devoted, pious, and highly committed figures who took upon themselves the task of expanding religious and ethical knowledge. The roots of this movement lie deep in previous cultural, political, and social structures and its origins have been traced back to figures who were dissatisfied with the impiety of the Umayyads, and with the extremism of the Khawārij, and to those who appreciated ʿAlī, but couldn't adopt the exclusively Shiʿīte position regarding the nature of the *Imamate*. The Muʿtazilites seem to have accepted the doctrine of the early Irjā', which implied the postponement of judgment on the participants of early strives, yet they totally opposed later Murji'ism and its pro-Umayyad political implications. It is beyond the scope of this study to investigate the various opinions regarding the origin of the Muʿtazilites and their name.[1] It should be mentioned that the popular story which links the beginnings of the Muʿtazilites to Wāṣil's disagreement with al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri, although accepted and narrated by Muʿtazilite authors themselves, should not be taken for granted, because the word "Muʿtazila" encompasses various groups of people who withdrew from public or political life during internal strives. The people who might be linked to the early Muʿtazilite movement are those who dissociated themselves from all immediate political concerns, out of grief, when Muʿāwiya prevailed and al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī abandoned his father's cause. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (d.1371/1952), in an introduction of a book edited by him,[2] drew attention to a paragraph written by Abu al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad al-Malaṭi (d.377/987) which says:

> When al-Ḥasan relinquished and gave over the Caliphate to Muʿāwiya, a group of people abandoned both parties and separated themselves (*i'tazalū*) from both, they stayed in their mosques devoting themselves to the pursuit of knowledge and worship. They were, before that, close companions of ʿAlī. These were the origins of the Muʿtazilites.[3]

It seems that al-Kawtharī was the first modern scholar who linked Abu Hāshim, ʿAbd Allah and Ḥasan the sons of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiya to the above-mentioned group of the Muʿtazila.[4] Thus, the Muʿtazila (the school of Wāṣil) might have taken their name from the aforementioned scholars who disassociated themselves from the proponents of early political strife. Waṣil's teachers were the sons of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya in al-Maktab, which was a school established by their father,[5] and which seems to have been the centre of the intellectual opposition to the Umayyad dynasty. When the doctrine of *al-Jabr* or predestination became the religio-political tool of the Umayyad dynasty, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiya and his son Abu Hāshim quietly decided to declare the opposite doctrine, that of *al-Qadar*.[6] Many important Islamic figures are linked to this school of thought, such as Ghaylān[7], Wāṣil, and, above all, Maʿbad al-Juhanī, who is regarded as the initiator of the doctrine of *al-Qadar.* He is not mentioned in Muʿtazilite sources as one of them,[8] although he grew up in Madina and was a contemporary of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyạ, and must have been one of his pupils.[9] Wāṣil, who is usually regarded as the founder of the Muʿtazila, is actually only a distinguished link in a long series of influential figures.

The aim of the present chapter is to investigate the ethical aspects of Muʿtazilite thought. Ethics was the Muʿtazilites' most important contribution to Arabo-Islamic thought. It has been noticed by a contemporary scholar that "where there is rationalism exclusive to the Muʿtazila, it is in the sphere of ethics."[10]

Different approaches could be adopted in the study of Muʿtazilite ethics, as one could study each of the main Muʿtazilite figures and his contribution to ethics individually, or instead define major ethical problems discussed by individual Muʿtazilite figures and investigate their various contributions. Yet, different Muʿtazilite scholars held divergent and sometimes opposing views on various moral issues. However, they developed five fundamental principles upon which all the Muʿtazilites agreed. These five principal teachings were considered the basic criteria in evaluating whether a person may be considered a Muʿtazilite or not. They are: belief in the Divine Unity (*al-Tawḥīd*), Justice (*al-ʿAdl*), the Promise and the Threat (*al-Waʿd wa'l-Waʿīd*)), the Intermediate State (*al-Manzila bayn al-Manzilatayn*), and Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil (*al-Amr bil-Maʿrūf wa'l-Nahī ʿan al-Munkar*). Al-Khayyaṭ (d.289/902) stressed that "nobody deserves the name of Muʿtazilite unless he sums up in his belief those five principal teachings."[11]

Al-Khayyāṭ seems to be the first to announce the Muʿtazilites' agreement on the five fundamental principles (*Al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*), although it was believed that these principles were agreed upon since the early days of Abū-al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf, who learned them from ʿUthmān al-Ṭawīl, who in his turn had learned them from Waṣil b. ʿAṭā', who is believed to be the founder of the Muʿtazila. This chain of Muʿtazilite authorities is identified in their own texts.[12] They also believed that their knowledge could be traced back to the prophet, through ʿAlī, and his son Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, who established a school of thought in al-Madina. It is important to focus on the five principles on which they agreed, and to try to reconstruct their ethical views from their principal teachings.

The preceding chapter illustrated how ethical debates held by opposing groups emerged out of internal strife. Different doctrines related to the Murji'a and the Khawārij were explored, and some similarities with Muʿtazilite ethical views were highlighted. This justified the assumption that some of their views and ethical doctrines (namely those concerning *īmān*, *qadar*, *ʿadl*, and knowledge of ethical values) were developed and integrated into Muʿtazilite ethical theory.

However, early Muʿtazilite scholars are distinguished from the Khārijites on one side, and from the Murji'ites on the other. They seem to have believed in the power of intellect as opposed to the Khārijite belief in the power of the sword. Thus, they established and developed what became known as *ʿIlm al-Kalām*, which reflected the intellectual legacy of the Muʿtazila and their substantial efforts to form reasonable theoretical bases that identified what they believed to be true Islamic thought based on reasonable arguments that could be rationally defended and explained and thus capable of facing the theoretical challenges of opponents.

Before proceeding further, it is important to remember that the Mu'tazilites were not only exclusively linked to what has been traditionally known as *ʿIlm al-Kalām* (or later *Uṣūl al-Dīn*). Indeed they were the founders of *Ilm al-Kalām*, but they were also actively involved in establishing *usūl al-fiqh*.[13]

What is usually known as "the knowledge of the principles" or *ʿIlm al-Uṣūl*, has been a Muʿtazilite concern from their early beginnings. Wāṣil himself had been actively involved in what later became known as *Uṣūl al-fiqh*[14], which is quite logical and expected, as one cannot believe that those who were involved in establishing the principles of religion (*ʿIlm al-Kalām*), could have been indifferent to debates related to the principles of law. Their ethical doctrines were mainly formed to serve social and political purposes and to provide law with essential moral foundations. Hence, although Reinhart, a modern scholar, was right in holding that "Islamic law is the central domain of Islamic ethical thought"[15] he was wrong when he said that "the purely theoretical efforts of Islamic theologians (such as Muʿtazilite and Ashʿarite) to describe, for example, whether God creates and is responsible for human actions, is arguably not part of Islamic ethics."[16] This is because the specific example that he mentions is actually an important issue in philosophical ethics, as obligation, or ethical judgment assumes man's ability to act and his full responsibility. This could not have been established without theoretical reasoning found in *kalām* literature. A similar position is held by Makdisi,[17] since he perceived *ʿIlm al-Kalām* as a field which has nothing to do with ethics; a field that was established by the Muʿtazila, the pioneers of *ʿIlm al-Kalām*, and opposed by Shāfiʿī, the pioneer of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* or what he called "juridical theology." He says that "to the philosophical theology of the Muʿtazila, Shāfiʿī opposed his juridical theology of praxis, a moral theology."[18] This is not true, because Wāṣil, the founder of the Muʿtazila was actively involved in both *ʿIlm al-Kalām* and *Uṣūl al-Fiqh.* He was the first to talk about four sources of *fiqh* knowledge, namely the Qurān, anonymous Ḥadīth, rational argument (*ḥujatu ʿaql*), and consensus, and was the first to expound some issues related to *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*.[19] Al-Shāfiʿī, as reported by al-Jāḥiẓ, seems to have been heavily influenced by the

Muʿtazilites, since he learned from Ibrāhīm b. Abū Yiḥya and Muslim b. Khālid al-Zanjī, both prominent members of the Muʿtazilites.[20] In addition, the question asked by Makdisi: "What are the fundamentals of religion (*Uṣūl al-Dīn*)? Is *Uṣūl al-Dīn* the *Kalām* or is it the law?"[21] is not a question that would, as he maintained, "bring us closer to understanding the conflict between traditionalism and rationalism,"[22] because *Uṣūl al-Dīn* is usually seen as referring to *ʾIlm al-Kalām*,[23] and "the relationship between the two types of *Uṣūl* was strong from the beginning."[24] The originality of both fields of learning lies in applying analytical methodology in studying terms and phrases and specifying their meanings and conditions of use.[25] Furthermore, different tendencies, rational and traditional, existed in the books written in both fields since the same author could have written in any or all of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, *ʾIlm al-Kalām* or *Uṣūl al-Dīn*,[26] Al-Makdisi himself noticed that "most books on *uṣūl al-fiqh* do, in fact, also treat problems which are not properly those of *uṣūl al-fiqh* but rather of *kalām* and legal philosophy."[27] He mentioned, among others, such problems as the determination of good and evil, the qualification of acts before the advent of revelation, and the imposition of responsibility or obligation beyond one's capacity.[28] The impact of the Muʿtazilites is clear in introducing such problems and dealing with them under the title of *uṣūl al fiqh.* The fact that such problems are not found in Shāfiʿī's *Risāla* does not mean that such problems should not be dealt with under *uṣūl al fiqh*, as the name "*uṣūl al-fiqh*" itself was later given to this field of knowledge in which al-Shāfiʿī occupied a distinguished position. The Shāfiʿite contribution to the field is seen as crucial and his work is regarded as a revolution against the methods of his day. Even though Abū Ḥanīfa, for example, preceded al- Shāfiʿī in the study of *uṣūl al fiqh*, "he founded the fundamental principles (*al-uṣūl*) on the branches of *fiqh* (*furūʿ*), whereas al-Shāfiʿī inverted the direction, and established the branches (the normative judgments) on the *uṣūl* (linguistic and logical rules.)"[29]

ʾIlm al-Kalām, or more specifically the Muʿtazilite *kalām*, with its five fundamental principles was regarded by their exponents as rational and yet in full agreement with the spirit of the Qurʾān and served as a tool for the exegesis of the Book. They also served as criteria for accepting or rejecting some Ḥadīth reports, for example, the reports that emphasized the predetermination of human acts. Such Ḥadīth reports were regarded as unauthentic, due to their content, and regardless of the chain of transmitters.

Therefore, the moral views entailed in the five fundamental Muʿtazilite principles should have provided the legislator with the general ethical principles which were thought to be rational and consistent with the overall religious and moral message of the Qurʾān. The role of reason and of moral philosophy and its methodology of logical and linguistic analysis[30] must have been used when the most controversial source of Islamic legislation *al-qiyās* had to be invoked.

The introduction of *qiyās* (analogy) was important to eliminate subjective individual opinion (*al-raʾy*) that was not based on evidence. Since the earliest period in the development of Islamic thought, *al-raʾy* was recognized as an approved source of law; even the prophet and the early Caliphs gave their officials the permission

to abide by their own opinions if they could not find appropriate textual basis for their judgments. Yet, to leave this source of *fiqh* without any limitations would eventually allow for divergent and opposing views. Therefore, only a rational basis on which all human beings could agree would be the appropriate alternative to subjective individual opinion in order to support reasonable judgment. This was cleverly linked to evidence obtained from revelation, by inferring the cause or motive of certain moral or legal prescription (*'illat al-shar'*), hence "in the investigation of the *'illat al-shar',* the motive of law and the resulting reduction of doubtful cases to a rational point of view, we find this principle [*qiyas*] given systematic validity." [31]

It has been pointed out that Wāṣil considered rational argument (*ḥujat 'aql*), which can be compared to *qiyās*, as one of the sources of *fiqh* knowledge long before al-Shāfiʿī.[32] Therefore the Muʿtazila, who considered the reason of revelation and the motive of law to be good and just, were the scholars who were qualified to continue and develop the legacy of Shāfiʿī's legal philosophy. Thus, "the rationalist elements in *uṣūl al-fiqh* were there to stay"[33], and therefore, the first independent and comprehensive work on uṣūl al-fiqh, after that of Shāfiʿī, that has come down to us was the *Muʿtamad* of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d.463/1070), a Muʿtazilite pupil of ʿAbd al-Jabbār.[34]

A Muʿtazilite would never accept a judgment that contradicted the principle of justice or any other of the five principles (*al-uṣūl al-Khamsa*). Therefore, the moral significance of these five principles will be revealed below.

One might be tempted to start with their principle of justice, as it was regarded as their fundamental principle, which logically contained all their other principles, except the principle of divine unity. Divine unity and discussion of God's attributes consists of a necessary basis upon which the attribute of justice stands, and because the principle of divine uniqueness is not void from ethical connotation, an attempt will be made to understand Mu'tazilite ethics from their five established principles, in their usual order.

Divine unity (*al-Tawḥīd*)

Al-Tawḥīd was emphasized by the Muʿtazilites as the exclusively Islamic conception of divine unity against all perceived forms of divine pluralism. In its unsophisticated, embryonic form the principle of *al-tawḥīd* was stressed against those who were usually called "corporalists" (*al-Mujassima*) and "anthropomorphists" (*al-Mushabbiha*) identified with the *Ḥashawiyya* and *al-Nābita*,[35] who represented different non-intellectual groups. They mainly believed in the corporeal nature of God and attributed to Him features and aspects similar to those of mortal creatures. In their refutation of anthropomorphism, the Muʿtazilites completely denied any resemblance between God and his creations. Accordingly, all Qur'ānic verses that describe God as corporeal were figuratively interpreted. *Al-Tawḥīd* is the foremost Islamic principle and it will be argued that the emphasis on this principle had some essential moral implications.

Emphasizing the uniqueness of God and his transcendental nature was meant to liberate human beings from subordination to any oppressive, political or allegedly religious power that dared to claim divine legacy in support of its authority. Therefore, political and religious parties whose practices and doctrines indicated such tendencies must have been interpreted by the Muʿtazila as undermining the concept of divine unity. The Muʿtazila distanced themselves and refuted the beliefs and practices of all parties who claimed divine legacy in support of their fallible authority. They were not content with the political power practiced by the Umayyad rulers and so challenged the doctrines that were used to support them. On the other hand, Shīʿite claims of the divinely ordained, infallible *imām*, could not satisfy Muʿtazilite rational inclinations. Against all the doctrines which could be used to restrict a person's intellectual and political freedom they developed an ethical theory which was based on the principles of unity and justice. Emphasizing divine unity was meant to free human beings from subordination to anything except Allah and stressing divine justice allowed for the refutation of any injustice done by any authority in the name of Allah. One might say that an important aspect of the originality of Muʿtazilite ethical philosophy rests on its relevance to the socio-political reality.

Against deifying the imāms

The first party to be considered is that of the extreme Shīʿites and in particular the anthropomorphists, who ascribed human attributes to God and divine attributes to human beings and tended to deify their *imāms*. They held that some human beings were endowed with the gift of divine knowledge, which means that they must be followed and obeyed, regardless of whether their orders agreed or contradicted the Qur'ān. The Muʿtazilites raised the principle of the uniqueness and transcendence of divine essence against the first doctrine. Against the second doctrine, they emphasized the uniqueness of the attribute of knowledge, an attribute of divine essence which, according to most of the Muʿtazila, was not distinguishable from His eternal essence and could therefore not be compared to man's knowledge, which is acquired (not eternal) and therefore changeable. The two Shīʿite doctrines, and the opposing Muʿtazilite doctrines, although closely linked will be treated separately in what follows.

First, regarding their doctrine of the uniqueness and transcendence[36] of divine essence, Al-Ashʿari reported that all Muʿtazila agreed that:

> Allah is one; there is nothing like him, He is hearing, seeing; He is not a body, not a form … He is not comparable with men and does not resemble creatures in any respect … He is omniscient, almighty, living; He is the only eternal being, and there is no eternal except Him, no deity apart from Him; He has no partner in His rule, no vizier sharing His authority, no assistance in creating what He creates.[37]

Such a view seems to have been first raised against the anthropomorphists and those who ascribed divine attributes to human beings. Al-Shahrastānī reported that

anthropomorphism, which was vigorously attacked by the Muʿtazila, first appeared among the Shīʿites, saying: "Anthropomorphism first arose among the Shīʿites and was only later found among some of the Sunnites."[38] Yet, before going further it should be clarified that many of the groups who could be branded as Shīʿites adopted different Muʿtazilite doctrines, and even among Shīʿite contemporaries of Wāṣil, some of them were clearly distanced and even opposed to the extreme groups like the Ghāliya and the Kaysāniya. These were the Zaydiyya, who generally agreed with the Muʿtazila on most of their doctrines. Thus, different groups mentioned in the following quotations from Shahrastānī held different doctrines. "The Shīʿites are divided into different sects: the Kaysāniya, Zaydiya, Imāmiya, Ghulāt (the extremists), and Ismāʿīliya. In questions of *kalām,* some of these sects lean to Muʿtazilism, some to Orthodoxy, and others to Anthropomorphism."[39] Hence, only those who had anthropomorphistic leanings and who tended to deify their *imāms*, like the Kaysāniya and the Ghulāt were particularly attacked by the Muʿtazila.

It seems that some early Shīʿites at the time of Waṣil and before tended to deify ʿAlī, and others tended to ascribe to ʿAlī and even to the following Shīʿite *imāms* qualities which according to the Muʿtazila belonged only to Allah, such as complete knowledge and immortality. It should be mentioned that such beliefs also developed around the figures that were highly regarded by the Muʿtazila and considered their teachers, namely Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya and his son Abu Hāshim. Therefore, the Muʿtazila should have been anxious to refute any false ideas about their ancestors and should have made it clear that they completely disagreed with those who deified them.

Kaysān, the founder of the Kaysāniya is said to have been a pupil of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya.[40] It was said that "common to the Kaysāniya is the doctrine that religion consists of obedience to a man."[41] Also: "some, though not descendants of ʿAlī, actually claimed the authority of the *imāmate*."[42] The salvation of everyone totally depended on their obedience and loyalty to whoever was considered the true *imām*. Among some followers of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya also appeared, for the first time in Islam, the doctrine of concealment and the return from concealment which they applied to Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya.[43] Yet only the divine essence is eternal and therefore only Allah deserves to be worshiped and obeyed as held by the Muʿtazila. Furthermore, we are told that among the anthromorphists, the group called *al-Ghāliya*, "excluded their *imāms* from the limitations of creatures and bestowed upon them divine qualities. Sometimes they likened an *imām* to God, at other times they likened God to man."[44]

The argument that the principle of divine unity was used against some Shīʿite tendencies was also supported by a contemporary researcher, saying that "the principle of divine unity implied a response to the extreme Shīʿites who deified ʿAlī."[45] Therefore, the Muʿtazila had high regard for ʿAlī, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya and his sons and considered them their teachers, yet in the face of those who raised them to divine status they emphasized the doctrine of *tawḥīd* which meant besides unity, the uniqueness and transcendence of Allah, and denied any possible similarities between God and man.

Second, in connection with the above principle of uniqueness, the Muʿtazilite perception of God and their concept of His divine attributes were defined in opposition to the early Shīʿite perception of God and His attributes. It has likewise been recognized by a modern scholar that "the basic *imāmī* concepts of God can indeed best be defined in contrast to some of the Muʿtazilite concepts."[46]

The concept of divine knowledge in Muʿtazilite thought might have been formed so as to oppose the early Shīʿite concept, which constituted the basis of the Shīʿite principle of *badā'*,[47] which was first introduced by al-Mukhtār (the early Shīʿite who linked himself to Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiya). The doctrine of *badā'* was later adopted by most Shīʿite scholars and was based upon a specific concept of divine knowledge. This particular concept should have been opposed by the Muʿtazila when they considered knowledge to be an attribute of essence which is immutable and unchangeable. The Shīʿite principle of *badā'*, has been understood in different ways:

> first it was taken as a change in knowledge, in a sense that God may attain to knowledge which is the opposite to his former knowledge; secondly as enlightenment with respect to will, that is, that God may discover that the opposite to what he willed and decreed was right; thirdly as a change in command, that is, that God should command something and afterwards command its contrary.[48]

This doctrine was reported by al-Ashʿari as being accepted by most of the *rāfiḍa*[49] who were the early imāmiya.[50] The concept of *badā'* was first raised by al-Mukhtār and the anthropomorphists. The concept of the return of the *imām* (*al-raj'a*), and metempsychosis was raised by the Kaysāniya who were also linked to Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya.[51]

The later Imāmiya were influenced by the Muʿtazila, yet it seems that their point of departure remained the doctrine of the *imāmate* and the divine attributes. It has been reported in this regard that the "Imāmiya follow closely the Muʿtazila in matters of doctrine, but on the question of divine attributes they follow the *Mushabbiha* (anthropomorphists)."[52]

It is clear that accepting the doctrine of *al-badā'* would have had dangerous consequences on ethics and Islamic law, as it would have allowed for personal opinions, not based on reason, but merely on whims and passions of anyone who could convince people that he was endowed with a divine gift of knowledge. It is obvious that such irrational tendencies must have alarmed the defenders of reason in Islam, and their first representative Wāṣil b. ʿAṭā'. It has been reported that:

> Mukhtār was led to adopt the belief in *badā'* by his claim that he knew events which were about to take place because of a revelation he had received or because of a message from the *imām*. Whenever he foretold an event to his followers, and the outcome was in accordance with what he had said, he would make use of it as proof of the genuineness of his

> mission. If, however, it turned out otherwise he would say that God had changed His mind. He made no distinction, therefore, between *naskh* (abrogation) and *badā*', but simply said, "If abrogation of commands is possible so also is change in the foretelling of future events."[53]

What became known of Waṣil's thought must have been in response to such extreme views, as he is reported as being the first to hold that: "abrogation is only possible in commands and prohibitions, not in *akhbār* (informing or telling events)."[54]

Moreover, the logical consequences of the Muʿtazilite doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'ān would be to consider knowledge as also created, and therefore *ṣifat fi'l* (an attribute of action) not *ṣifat dhāt* (an attribute of essence). It seems that stressing divine knowledge as an attribute of essence (implying that it cannot be created or changed in time) was held against the Shīʿite, who considered knowledge changeable and created in time. One is justified to conclude that the Muʿtazilite concept of the attribute of knowledge was essentially formulated to discredit the Shīʿite principle of *badā'*, although some of their predecessors among the Qadariyya "denied the pre-existent knowledge of God in order to remove any compulsion (*jabr*)."[55] Al-Ashʿari also informed us in this regard that:

> The Muʿtazila agreed that Allah the Exalted did not create knowledge ʿ*ilm muḥdath* with which he becomes knowing, and it is not possible for Him to change his mind, and his telling of events cannot be abrogated; because if such abrogation was possible, and we were told that something will be, but then this information was abrogated by telling us that it will not be, then it is inevitable that one of the two contradicting stories was a lie. Abrogation is only possible in commands and prohibitions.[56]

In the above quotation it is clear that the Muʿtazilite denial of created knowledge was linked to their refutation of the doctrine of *badā'*. Some Imāmites, like Hishām b. al-Hakam (d.179/795–6) attacked the Muʿtazilite doctrine of eternal knowledge, indicating that such a doctrine would imply predestination (*jabr*). Al-Khayyaṭ reported that Hishām's argument was that if Allah knew from eternity that the unbelievers will not believe, then what was the point of sending prophets? It would not be wise from Him to call upon those whom he knows will not respond.[57] It is clear that there was an inconsistency between the Muʿtazilite conception of divine knowledge or omniscience and their doctrine of divine justice, which supported human free will.[58] It has been pointed out that "most attention and criticism among the Muʿtazilites was due to their views on the divine attribute of knowledge. It was this weak doctrine that was also one of the main reasons of al-Ashʿari's conversion."[59] Al-Ashʿari (d.324/936) pushed the above argument further, trying to discredit the Muʿtazilite concept of divine justice by asking: "If Allah the Exalted does not do anything except what we consider to be just, then why did he create those whom He knew would disbelieve and whom

he would send to eternal hell?"[60] Thus, an inconsistency was indicated between certain attributes of essence, like power and knowledge and the principle of divine justice. Some have tried to resolve the problem and, consequently, the whole theological field in which divine attributes were discussed came into being, and different views were borrowed from the surrounding cultures to support the rival theological positions. However, the problem of attributes is beyond the interest of this work, which seeks to focus on ethical thought.

Thus, the Muʿtazilites first stressed the doctrine of unity in opposition to some extreme Shīʿite views. Such views were opposed because they promoted full obedience to fallible human beings, who are not guarded against error. Common to the Kaysāniya was "the doctrine that religion consists of obedience to a man."[61] The refutation of such views was by stressing divine unity, which would clearly imply moral emancipation from any religious authority, as one should not blindly follow any single person.

Against deifying the caliphs

The second party to be considered here is some rulers who behaved as if glory and majesty, the exclusively divine qualities, belonged to them. Political authority with supreme personal power in Islam was first made hereditary in Marwān's family. It even seems that some were considering calling themselves "Caliph of Allah," instead of "Caliph of the Prophet of Allah." We are told that later scholars discussed the propriety of the title "God's caliph" and mostly held that it should not be used. There are fewer instances of its use under the ʿAbbāsids than under the Umayyads, but it does occur, and other titles with a reference to God, such as "the shadow of God on Earth," are common.[62] These rulers, contrary to the prophet and the following four caliphs, seem to have exalted themselves and allowed others to glorify them, even though glory and majesty belong to Allah alone and no human being has the right to be glorified and exalted above others, or to claim divine attributes. According to the Muʿtazila, only Allah has the qualities that are distinguished from those held by his creatures. All worship of God that was not an end in itself could be branded as *shirk*. It has been pointed out by a modern scholar, in different contexts, that "a number of moral defects were subsumed under *shirk*. Hypocritical piety, calculated to gain the approval or admiration of others, is *shirk* … Hypocrisy and true monotheism do not go together. Pride, too, is a kind of *shirk*. For these reasons, Islamic ethics could delineate the category of the 'lesser shirk' *al-shirk al-aṣghar* or hidden *shirk,* hidden in the depth of the soul, *al-shirk al-khafī*."[63] Therefore, neither the religious authority of the Shīʿi *imāms* nor the political authority of worldly rulers could claim any kind of link to divine authority, nor should people glorify any human being.

It has been indicated in the previous chapter that the doctrine of *al-Jabr* served the cause of the ruling authority as it allowed them to claim that their power was predestined, and that they ruled according to divine will. Even their evil acts could have been regarded as divinely decreed, thus opposing their power was tantamount

to opposing the will of God. The Qadarites, like Ghaylān and Maʿbad al-Juhanī opposed the doctrine of *al-Jabr*, upheld the principle of divine righteousness and justice and believed that the rulers themselves were responsible for their evil acts, which were performed according to their own volition and had nothing to do with divine will. The Muʿtazila also believed in human free will and a human's capacity to act, like their Qadarite predecessors. Moreover, they made this belief the main tenet of their principle of justice (*aṣl al-ʿadl*) and because the Muʿtazila, as has been already argued, were preoccupied with ethics and religio-political issues, the principle of justice was their foremost concern. But in order to be able to defend their principle of justice against different opponents who held different conceptions of divine attributes, and different conceptions of justice, they must have reflected upon the divine attributes, which should have been considered in accordance with their principle of divine justice. Therefore, because a person's acts should never be regarded as preordained by God, nor should anyone be able to justify his wrongdoing by claiming that it was according to divine will, Allah should be exalted above his creatures, only goodness should be attributed to him, and justice, in such terms that would safeguard a human's free will and moral responsibility. The doctrine of human responsibility and free will was the first religio-political doctrine raised against the proponents of *jabr*. This doctrine was amalgamated in the Muʿtazilite principle of justice. The discussion of divine attributes came later. Thus it can be reasonably held that the Muʿtazilite distinction between the attributes of divine essence and the attributes of divine acts came to serve and safeguard the doctrine of justice, and the basis of a human's moral responsibility. For example, the attribute of speech was held to be an attribute of act, regarded as created by God and not eternal, because if divine words were eternal, and if the Qur'ān, which contains some information about historical events, was thus considered eternal, then there would be a presumption that the events were predetermined.[64] It has been pointed out by Watt that "historically it is more likely that the concrete discussion of the Qur'ān preceded the abstract discussions about the essential attributes."[65]

It seems that the main reason for declaring the Qur'ān to be created is to deny eternal decree or fatalism (*jabr*), as it might have been understood that certain Qur'ānic verses that refer to some kind of pre-existence of the Qur'ān on a heavenly tablet indicate that the Qur'ān, which is the word of God, is eternal and not created. If this was so, then what is written in the Qur'ān, even the historical events, were predestined. Moreover, unless there is a certain link between the early debate over *al-Qadar* and other issues, it would be difficult to understand the real reason behind the problem of divine attributes in Islam, and even more difficult to understand the reason behind what we might call the Muʿtazilite dogma of the creation of the Qur'ān.

The Christian influence that many scholars referred to could not have initiated the problem,[66] although intra-religious arguments might have had an influence on refining the arguments in defense of divine absolute unity. Yet whether the Muslims got the idea of using the distinction of a created or uncreated Qur'ān

from Christians or not does not highlight the reasons behind the importance of the intra-Islamic argument. Only the problem of *Jabr* and early political and intellectual reactions against it could explain the problem of the creation of the Qur'ān[67] and therefore highlight reasons behind the problem of divine attributes in Arabo-Islamic thought.

The discussion of divine attributes and the problem of divine unity might have been refined as the result of rivalry and intra-religious disputes, since the first Muslim intellectuals took up the challenge of refuting the prevailing dualist position of the Zoroastrian tradition. It has also been observed by a contemporary scholar that: "there was significant tension between Islam's radical monotheism and Christendom, which was accused of deifying Jesus. Dualistic ideas which view the entire history of the world as a conflict between a good and evil principle, thrived on Iranian soil as before."[68] Therefore, in defense of the Islamic perception of *tawḥīd* (divine absolute unity, uniqueness, and immutability), the Muʿtazilites generally agreed on a certain conception of divine unity. For them, in general, Allah's attributes (*ṣifāt*) were inseparable from his essence (*dhāt*).

However, one should not lose the full significance of the principal of *al-tawḥīd* by relating it only to intra-Islamic disputes, because "in those days the Muʿtazilites were missionaries of Islam against the Eastern religions, and *tawḥīd* was their battle-cry against every form of dualism and polytheism."[69] Detailed discussion of the issue of any external influences on Mu'tazilite doctrines is beyond the scope of this work which aims to concentrate on ethics. However, it has already been established, by tracing the development of the main ethical ideas in the previous chapter that the central ethical views of the Muʿtazila emerged from genuinely internal debates, regardless of any similarities with foreign ideas. Similar ideas did exist in different cultures, but this is natural, as all human beings share same rational abilities and similar ambitions for a better world. It is worth mentioning, as pointed out by George Ḥourani, that:

> There should be methods and criteria for establishing historical truth in matters of intellectual transmission. Thus to reach an adequate proof of affiliation of ideas, an intellectual historian needs one or both of two kinds of evidence: 1) external evidence of affiliation; for example, a report of a biographer that one scholar was taught by another or was favourably impressed by his works; 2) detailed resemblance so close that they could not be accidental; for example, exact correspondence of sentences, or numerous correspondence of technical terms.[70]

Such methods were not followed by the modern scholars who wrote without any concrete evidence that all Muʿtazilite *kalām* was derived from Christian origins. These scholars, starting with Von Kremer and followed by de Boer, Macdonald, Goldziher, Arnold, and Becker have followed John of Damascus' polemical assertion that predestination is the characteristic doctrine of Islam, and that Muslim opponents to this must have drawn their doctrine of *qadar* from a non-Muslim

source.[71] For example, Morris Seale asserts that: "the Muʿtazili ideas only became clear and meaningful when referred back to their source in the Church Fathers."[72] He rejects Watt's moderate opinion that the doctrine of *Qadar* developed logically from native Muslim antecedents, claiming that this was not possible, without explaining why, and by quoting al-Ashʿari, the well-known opponent of Muʿtazilism, and Ibn Hazm, he jumps to the conclusion that even later Muslims "persistently ascribed tyranny to God"![73] Seale's main evidence in support of the idea of Christian origin of Muʿtazilism was taken from al-Ashʿari and Ibn Ḥanbal, the traditional opponents of the Muʿtazila. Their polemical views are without value as historical evidence of Christian influence, and so is Seale's groundless assertion that Muʿtazilite ideas only become meaningful when "referred back to their source in the Church Fathers."

Before proceeding to the second fundamental principle of the Muʿtazila, it is important to explain the link between the first and the second principle, namely *al-tawḥīd* and *al-ʿadl*. This was demonstrated by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, who said:

> The Muʿtazila agreed upon considering that among Allah's attributes is that he is *ghanī,* [which means that He is not in need of anything], He is self-sufficient and it is impossible for Him to be affected by benefits or harms, therefore they made this the basis to what they have agreed upon of the principle of justice.[74]

According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār needlessness or self-sufficiency is an essential attribute of divine essence. A human being can also be described in the same manner, but that would only mean that he can dispense with particular things. No human being can be described as absolutely self-sufficient, as such an ideal attribute applies explicitly to divine unique essence. The meaning of being self-sufficient (*ghanī*) is analyzed with respect to its application to humans, which can be observed and understood. Then, the result of this analysis is applied to understand divine attribute, according to the well-known Muʿtazilite methodological principle which is "the analogy of the invisible to the visible" (*qiyās al-ghāʾib ʿala al-shāhid*). This is illustrated by the following example provided by ʿAbd al-Jabbār:

> The proof of this is: that it has already been established that The Exalted One knows the evilness of evil (*qubḥ al-qabīh*) and that He can dispense with (*ghaniyyon ʿanhu*). Whoever is in such a [self-sufficient] state would not choose to do evil. This is proved by the fact that if any one of us could dispense with injustice and lying, knowing their evilness, and knowing that he has no need of them, then he would dispense with them [injustice and lying].[75]

The above quotation reflects how the Muʿtazilites linked divine unique attributes to ethical concepts, and how they explained divine attributes in accordance with

their ethical analysis of moral concepts and situations as applied to human beings. Allah, being absolutely self-sufficient and knowledgeable is necessarily just. This is proved by the fact that whoever really knows evil and injustice, and knows that he can dispense with *ya'lamu annahu mustaghnen 'anhu* would certainly not choose to perform it.

Justice (*al-ʿadl*)

It was a well-developed and scrutinized concept of social and political justice that led the Muʿtazilites to deny any aspect of injustice ascribed to God. The irrational and oppressive blind power of fatalism, which was ascribed to God in order to silence and oppress proponents of justice and righteousness, was theoretically challenged and refuted in the name of God Himself, whose needlessness or self-sufficiency (*ghinā*) implied the unfeasibility of ascribing to him any act of injustice, and moreover the impossibility of claiming Him responsible for the conduct and deeds of tyrants claiming divine sanction.

It should be recalled that Wāṣil studied in Madina, in the school of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiya, who, after being politically oppressed and neutralized must have chosen, as indicated at the beginning of this chapter, to declare and propagate the doctrine of *al-qadar*, opposing the doctrine of *al-jabr* held by the political authorities of the time.

The principle of divine justice was formed and theorized to conform to the freedom and responsibility of human beings. In order to sustain a person's ethical responsibility they had to refute and invalidate fatalistic tendencies by refuting arbitrariness and tyranny implicitly ascribed to God by the fatalists (*al-mujbira*), and by stressing divine goodness and justice as essential attributes of divine essence. In this regard, ʿAbd al-Jabbār explained that the Muʿtazilites articulated the principle of divine justice "in opposition to the fatalists *mujbira*, who ascribed to Allah all evil (*qabīh*)."[76] Also, that "the belief of the *mujbira* that injustice was from Allah the Exalted is wrong"[77] and so is "what they ascribe to Him of oppressing or doing injustice to people."[78] It has also been pointed out by a modern scholar that "the earliest problems that faced Muslim philosophers had to do with the metaphysical foundation for the science of ethics."[79] Since "divine justice" was an indispensable foundation for their ethics to stand against the *Mujbira*, they became involved in what might be called theological disputes. Therefore, the metaphysical foundations for the science of ethics "were likewise theological questions as they have most generally been so considered, but the reader will recognize at once their striking importance for the Muslim system of ethics."[80] The above quotations indicate that some scholars have long acknowledged the Muʿtazilite contribution to ethics, although they were generally considered theological issues with no ethical connotations.

The concept of justice could not only be understood to indicate theodicy (as held by some scholars), as the significance of the Muʿtazilite concept of justice for ethics is evident in its definition, as stated by ʿAbd al-Jabbār:

> The act which is distinguished by this attribute [justice] is every act which is done to benefit or harm someone in a way that is good (*ʿala wajh yaḥsunu*), where what somebody does for himself to benefit himself or to repel harm is not described as such. For that reason it is not said that Zayd, by eating or drinking or doing what is religiously necessary (*wājib*) or recommended (*nadb*), is being just. When he benefits or injures someone else in a way that is good, it is said that he is being just to him and that what he did was just. For this reason it is not said that a judge acted justly between opponents unless what he did to them was good and just (*inṣāf*), either by bringing about benefit or injury.[81]

For the Mu'tazila, good and evil are known by reason, therefore justice and the goodness of justice are also known by reason. They defined justice in terms comprehended and justified by human reason, and by applying their principle of "analogy of the invisible to the visible," they understood divine justice in the same manner that is applied to humans. They attributed the quality of needlessness to divine essence, and from it derived the necessity of absolute divine justice, which is based on His absolute needlessness or self-sufficiency.

What remains is to reveal the different implications of divine justice and how they were implemented to safeguard human ethical responsibility, and linked to the remaining three Muʿtazilite principles.

Divine justice was conceived by the Muʿtazila as a blameless attribute that is comprehensible as a good quality, therefore, knowledge of the nature of divine justice presupposed one's moral knowledge which entails knowing the evilness of evil, and its blameworthiness and the goodness of good and its praiseworthiness. They considered that Allah is necessarily just in the same sense that our reason understands justice: "when one benefits or injures someone else in a way that is good, it is said that he is being just to him and what he did was just."[82] Such a morally informed and ethically contemplated conception of justice might be better appreciated when contrasted with an Ashʿarite concept of divine justice. For al-Ashʿari, Allah is necessarily just whatever he does, even if he acted in a contrary fashion and prescribed different obligations he would still be just. The disagreement between the Muʿtazilites and the Ashʿarites regarding the concept of justice is best represented by the Ashʿarite author al-Shahrastānī, who wrote:

> As for justice according to the orthodox [the Ashʿarites], Allah is just in His deeds in the sense that He disposes freely of what is His own and is under His dominion, doing as He pleases and doing as He wills; for justice consists in putting everything in its due place, and disposing freely of what is under one's dominion according to one's pleasure and knowledge. Injustice is the opposite of this. For Allah, therefore, any injustice in His judgment is inconceivable. According to the Muʿtazilites on the other hand, justice is that which reason manifests as in accord with wisdom, and which consists in acting in a manner that is right and promotes good.[83]

It is obvious that the Ashʿarite conception of divine justice, as represented by al-Shahrastānī, is void of meaning, as it is only a name given to whatever is done or commanded by God. Therefore it is not surprising that it accommodates a definition of justice which seems to be beyond man's reason and beyond ethical contemplation, as everything said about justice before the advent of revelation was invalidated because "nothing is considered unjust except what was forbidden by God, and there is no wrongdoing except what was forbidden by Him and there is no justice except what was commanded or permitted by Him."[84] The Muʿtazilites agreed that the justice and wisdom of Allah, just like the intrinsic goodness or badness of an action, can be established on rational grounds. Therefore, they agreed that by virtue of His goodness and needlessness no evil should be attributed to Allah. They were sincerely strict in prescribing goodness and justice to Allah, "therefore what was proved to be evil could not be prescribed to Him, and what was proved to be committed by Him could not be evil."[85] Yet, they faced many problems when they tried to explain the distressing facts of life, such as pain and suffering, as they did not want to compromise divine omnipotence and omniscience, nor His justice and goodness.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār, while reviewing the points of agreement and disagreement of the Muʿtazila concerning justice, recognized that they all agreed that Allah is just and good, therefore He would never fail to do anything that by virtue of His rightfulness ought to be done *(yajib*). They also agreed on exempting Him from any evilness (*qubh*). However, their disagreement was over what is considered an obligation (*wājib*) that ought to be done, and what ought not be done, and upon what is considered evil (*qabīh*) and what is not considered so.[86] This indicated that ethical concepts like: obligation, good and evil were the main controversial issues among the Muʿtazilites, and the subject of extensive scrutiny and analysis, among ʿAbd al-Jabbār's own masters, who developed an ethical theory, which will be investigated in the following two chapters.

The remaining three Muʿtazilite principles are considered under the main principle of justice, as they might be inferred from the premises of justice.[87]

Promise and threat (*al-waʿd wa'l-waʿīd*)

Apart from the usual definition of this principle which implies the truthfulness of God and the necessity dictated by His justice to fulfill his promises and threats, the ethical connotations of the Muʿtazilite doctrine of promise and threat could be seen as emphasizing the certainty of rational knowledge in ethics, as there are right actions which deserve to be praised and rewarded and there are wrong actions which deserve blame and punishment. Punishments cannot be cancelled and rewards cannot be forgotten in the same way that wrong cannot suddenly become right and approved by God, and right cannot become wrong. This goes well with their conception of justice and emphasis on reason, as they "tended to hold that the punishment of grave sinners was known by reason to be obligatory, and to insist that God must treat alike everyone in the same position."[88] The

doctrine of *waʿīd* was considered the opposite of *irjā'*, as it might be said about somebody that "he left the doctrine of *irjā'* and held the doctrine of *waʿīd*."[89] ʿAbd al-Jabbār informs us that "the disagreements with the Murji'a were over the principle of *al-waʿd wa'l-waʿīd*."[90] The moral earnestness underlying the Muʿtazilite views regarding *waʿd* and *waʿīd* was acknowledged by Watt,[91] and it was the presupposition of the political attitudes implicit in their following two principles.

The intermediate position (*al-manzila bayn al-manzilatayn*)

According to their conception of justice, a sinful Muslim (*murtakib al-kabīra*), should be punished; he could not be given the same status as a *mu'min* or faithful believer and could not be called a *mu'min,* as held by most of the Murji'a, nor could he be considered a *kāfir*, or given the same status of a *kāfir,* and excluded from the community as held by the Khawārij; because he still might repent from his sin and compensate for doing it. The grave sinner according to the Muʿtazila is a *fāsiq*, "transgressor," who belongs to an intermediate position, between *kufr* and *īmān*. The Muʿtazilite doctrine of the intermediate position of the sinful indicated the importance of human being's actions in determining their moral status and therefore their deserved reward or punishment in the hereafter.

The Muʿtazilite emphasis on the principle of the intermediate position of the grave sinner reflects both their moral position and their social and political concerns. The concept of *īmān* as held by the Khawārij and as held by different groups of Murji'a was discussed in the previous chapter, where it has been indicated that the Muʿtazilite concept of faith was closer to the Khārijite's, in considering deeds as an essential component of faith.

By scrutinizing the doctrine of the intermediate position, the Muʿtazila aimed to discredit the extreme doctrine of the Murji'a which had dangerous moral and political implications. The Murji'ite conception of *īmān* allowed the transgressor to claim the status of *mu'min*, by virtue of merely being a Muslim and confessing belief in God, regardless of his sins. Consequently, if a ruler was a transgressor, he could still have been a *mu'min* according to the Murji'a, and only if he became a *kāfir* (which no ruler would confess), would it be lawful to depose him.

The concept of *irjā'* carried two possible meanings: it either meant postponing judgment on humans to God or postponing judgement on acts and considering deeds less important than belief. In both cases it is implied that human beings are not capable of making ethical judgments, either because God knows better, or because they have no "barometer" to measure the degree of faith in one's heart. As faith, according to the Murji'a's conception is not necessarily manifested in a person's deeds or character; indeed it is not even negated if evil acts are committed.

Therefore, the Muʿtazila raised the issue of the intermediate position of the *fāsiq* against the doctrine of *al-irjā'* which considered the *fāsiq* still a *mu'min,* just as they raised the doctrine of divine justice against the doctrine of *jabr*. Both doctrines *jabr* and *irjā,'* as indicated in the previous chapter, were used

in support of the ruling authorities. The doctrine of *al-jabr*, was vehemently opposed by the Qadariyya movement including Maʿbad al-Juhanī and Ghaylān al-Dimashqī, whereas the doctrine of *al-irjā'*, though first established against extreme Khārijites, soon developed to an extreme position and was vehemently attacked by al-Khawārij. Waṣil b. ʿAṭā', who might be considered the founder of the Muʿtazila, had close contact with different opposing groups and was in the right place, within al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's circle,[92] to introduce and efficiently propagate his principles, among which the principle of the intermediate position of the grave sinner was accepted by ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd and others, although not accepted by al-Ḥasan himself who believed that the great sinner is a *munāfiq* (hypocrite).

Wāṣil's contribution was significantly different from that of al-Ḥasan, although sometimes regarded as similar. Wāṣil "held that the grave sinner was not a *mu'min*, nor *kāfir*, nor *munāfiq*, but *fāsiq*."[93] Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī held that the grave sinner was a *munāfiq*, but this is a term or "a name given to someone who is hiding his *kufr* and pretending to be a Muslim, which is not the case of the grave sinner"[94] In addition, the social and political status of the *munāfiq* would not be different from that of a *mu'min* because hiding his *kufr* would make it impossible to treat him as a *kāfir*, nor will it be possible to blame him. The significance of Wāṣil's contribution lies in introducing a separate category for the morally wrong person, giving him a specific name and a specific moral judgment: a *fāsiq* is the one who deserves to be dishonored and blamed in this world, and punished in the hereafter if he dies without repenting. His judgment (*ḥukmuhu*) is different from that of a *kāfir* and of course from that of a *mu'min*, which is a term that could never be given to any moral transgressor, regardless of his religious belief.

The principle of the intermediate position, if considered in the context of Muʿtazilite ethical theory and specifically their concept of justice, clearly contradicts the view that any sin other than polytheism does not exclude its committer from *īmān.* This is because the former view implies that only wrongful beliefs about God are significant in determining a person's fate, whereas the Muʿtazila, assumed that the welfare of human beings was the ultimate purpose of revelation. If the welfare of human beings was the purpose of revelation, there is no reason for considering *īmān*, which is the highest religious value, as essentially different from any other ethical or moral value. As the purpose of religion is human welfare, *īmān*, which determines the fate of human beings and should entail all ethical and moral values that contribute to the welfare of human beings, was enjoined and prescribed in the Qur'ān. Thus, good deeds, according to the Muʿtazila, are essential components or manifestations of *īmān*.

Commanding good and forbidding evil (*al-amr bil-maʿrūf wa'l-nahī ʿan al-mumkar*):

The Mu'tazilites' last principle is one that could not be disregarded by any Muslim, as it is an obligation explicitly stated in the Qur'ān. Therefore, the distinctively Muʿtazilite understanding of the obligation must lie in their interpretation of the

two terms *maʿrūf* and *munkar*. In accordance with their principle of justice, which entailed that humans are endowed with reason and capable of attaining ethical knowledge prior to revelation, *maʿrūf* and *munkar*, or "good" and "evil" must have been regarded as being known by reason. In addition, for the sake of consistency, they must have regarded the principle itself as a moral principle that was known through reason. Yet it seems that not all of the Muʿtazila were consistent, as it has been reported, for example, that "Abu ʿAlī and Abu Hāshim al-Jubāʾi disagreed on whether the obligation of commanding good and forbidding evil was known by reason or by revelation. Abu ʿAlī held that it was known through reason,"[95] whereas Abu Hāshim, followed by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, believed that obligation was known through revelation in all cases, except in the case of injustice committed against somebody, as in that case the transgressor had to be stopped, as could be inferred from reason.[96] It is significant that one of the features that distinguish Muʿtazilite accounts of this duty is, as asserted by Cook: "the activism that runs through them in varying degrees"[97] and that "Muʿtazilite opinion is overwhelmingly in favor of heroism that redounds to the great glory of the faith."[98]

5

ETHICS OF ʿABD AL-JABBĀR

Presuppositions of ethical judgments

Introduction

Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad al-Hamadhānī al-Asadabādī (d.415/1024) was a leading member of his school, who represented Muʿtazilite thought in its maturity. Ever since the rediscovery of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's works in the mid-twentieth century, his thought has been the subject of interesting academic investigations. His life, works, his pupils, and his predecessors were studied in various publications.[1] Dissertations have been submitted covering different aspects of his moral thought, such as the relation between reason and revelation, the relationship between God and human beings, and the notion of good and evil.[2]

In this work, no attempt will be made to study his life in detail, as this has been already thoroughly investigated. Nevertheless, a short account might be useful for understanding his status and position among the Muʿtazila. ʿAbd al-Jabbār was a direct student of Abū Isḥāq b. ʿAyyāsh (d.unknown) and Abū ʿAbdalla al-Baṣrī (d.369/979), who were both pupils of Abū Hāshimal-al-Jubbā'ī (d.321/933), the founder of the predominant branch of the Baṣran school of the Muʿtazila, named after him as Bahshamiyya. Abū Hāshim's father was Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbā'ī (d.304/915), the Muʿtazilite teacher of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d.324/935), before the latter converted to a more traditionalist doctrine and formed the rival prominent school named after him as Ashʿariyya. ʿAbd al-Jabbār was a leading member of the Bahshamiyya school and in his works he frequently reports and discusses the arguments of the above mentioned Muʿtazilite scholars and regards them as his masters. He served as a chief judge in Rayy, where he stayed most of his life. He composed numerous works including books on theology, jurisprudence, Qur'ānic exegesis, prophecy, and Muʿtazilite biographies.[3]

The main purpose of this chapter and the following one is to investigate some philosophically interesting features of his ethical thought that are relevant to contemporary ethical concerns. ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethical theory will be approached from a different perspective to attain some new insights. Thus some salient features of his ethical thought that lend themselves to comparison with contemporary ethical theories will be emphasized, and the originality of Muʿtazilite's ethics will be highlighted.[4] Therefore, in the present chapter, ʿAbd al-Jabbār's articulation of the presuppositions of ethical judgments and moral norms will be studied,

discussed, and assessed. First, the significance of articulating conditions for assessing the validity of ethical judgments will be underscored, and the meaning of each of the presuppositions will be clarified, and where appropriate interpreted. This will be followed, in the last chapter of this book, by the analysis of normative ethical judgments to reveal their ultimate meaning and significance. In addition, an attempt will be made to interpret the nature of his moral theory by comparing some of his doctrines with doctrines held by other Muʿtazilite scholars.

Before proceeding, it is appropriate to relate this study to some analogous academic concerns and approaches in studying the ethics of ʿAbd al-Jabbār. Particularly interesting and relevant are the approaches of those who focused on the methodology of the *uṣūli* scholars (i.e. those who wrote on *uṣūl al-dīn and uṣūl al-fiqh*), because ʿAbd al-Jabbār was also an *uṣūli* scholar himself, and those who compared ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethical views to some modern and contemporary ethical trends. A brief account of some academic concerns and approaches will explain and justify the comparisons made in this work between ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethical views and the views of some contemporary philosophers who adopted the logico-linguistic analysis methodology. It is the similarity between their methodology and the methodology of the *uṣūli* scholars and ʿAbd al-Jabbār that allows for such comparisons and allows for a new insight into the nature of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethical views.

Logico-linguistic analysis is generally considered a very modern trend in philosophy, yet it best fits when describing ʿAbd al-Jabbār's methodology in approaching ethics. The existence of such methodology in Arabic-Islamic thought has long been noticed by various scholars. For instance, Frederick S. Carney stated that some salient features of Islamic ethics "lend themselves congenially to comparison with Western thought and practice."[5] And before him, George Hourani, who thoroughly studied ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethics, indicated resemblances between ʿAbd al-Jabbār and British intuitionism.[6] He also indicated resemblances between ʿAbd al-Jabbār and J. O. Urmson who argued that modern ethics usually operate within three categories, "obligatory" or "a duty," "permissible," and "wrong," and that these are insufficient; we should add a fourth, consisting of recommended or altruistic acts, beyond the demands of duty, including saintly and heroic acts. This scheme corresponds to ʿAbd al-Jabbār's categories of moral judgments.[7]

The different comparisons that will be made in this study between contemporary philosophical ideas and those of ʿAbd al-Jabbār are not detached from other scholars' concerns. However, what justifies the comparisons that will be made between ʿAbd al-Jabbār's views and the views of some contemporary philosophers is, as already indicated, the similar methodology applied by both ʿAbd al-Jabbār and the contemporary analytical philosophers. This methodology seems to have been recognized by R. M. Frank who said about the Muʿtazilite approach to ethical issues:

> What is perhaps most conspicuous in the Muʿtazila's discussion of human action … is that their primary effort was to describe and to account for the phenomena as these are revealed in our experience and in the way we talk (in Arabic) about and describe agents and their actions, without

> simplifying or trying to get around the fundamental difficulties.[8]

In addition, Josef Van Ess, in his article "the logical structure of Islamic theology" seems to have recognized that logical and linguistic analysis methods were practiced by Islamic scholars. He said:

> No Islamic jurist could do without logic; he had to use the most subtle hermeneutic methods to interpret the Qur'ān and he had to apply all kinds of logical processes to adjust the commands found by this interpretation to the individual cases of daily life. The same is true of the *kalām*, Islamic theology.[9]

Thus, Van Ess noticed the original method adopted by Islamic scholars, although he failed to see its significance and called it "disappointing verbalism."[10] This might be because his article was mainly concerned in revealing the similarities between Islamic and Stoic logic, concluding that "logic of the early *kalām* is built on a stoic basis."[11] One cannot deny that there are some similarities, yet the conclusion stated above goes far beyond the existing evidence. Alternatively, Saḥbān Khalifat did not exclude the possibility of Stoic influence. Yet, he indicated that there is no clear evidence to prove that Arabic thinkers knew the Stoic heritage before the crystallization of their own method. Thus, he was content to indicate such similarities, without going beyond that to determine any factual transmission, having in mind the other possibility, which is that the Arabs might have developed their own methodology while facing their own problems using their own linguistic and logical tools.[12] Unfortunately, the latter possibility was excluded by some scholars.[13] In the previous two chapters, one of the main concerns was to show how ethical theories were developed in Arabic-Islamic culture, while people were struggling to solve their own religious, social, and political problems. Meanwhile, they also developed original methodological tools suitable for dealing with various problems.

Strongly related to the question of originality of Arabic-Islamic methodology is the tension between the proponents of linguistic analysis in Arabic-Islamic thought (which is a method that can be traced to the grammarians, *al-naḥawiyūn*), and the proponents of Aristotelian logic. This tension has been well recorded and documented. It shows that the Arab and Muslim thinkers who developed their own method were highly critical of the new philosophical tradition that arrived at Baghdād during the first half of the fourth/tenth century and centered on the study of and commentary on the Aristotelian corpus.[14] The members of the new school came to be known as "logicians" (*manṭiqiyyūn*) to distinguish them from thinkers such as the physician al-Rāzī who were called "physicists" or "naturalists" (*ṭabīʿiyyūn*).[15] Jurists, theologians, and philologists, who gave enough attention to the question of method, believed that the upholders of the new tradition were "fanatic Philo-Hellenes and servile imitators of Aristotle."[16] Whereas the masters of the new school claimed that philologists are concerned with unimportant details and that only new logic (Aristotelian) can teach one how to speak sensibly and scientifically.[17] This is, of course, not true.

A celebrated debate took place in Baghdād in (326/938) between the logician Abū Bishr Mattā b. Yūnus (d.328/940) and a much younger dialectical theologian, jurist, and grammarian, (*naḥawī*) Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī (d.368/979).[18] The details of this debate indicated the establishment of the method of logical and linguistic analysis in Arabic-Islamic culture. Its significance and importance could be emphasized in view of "the recent revival of interest in the relation between language and logic."[19] In its time the debate was instructive and it seemed to have profound influence on many philosophers and theologians, like al-Fārābī (d.339/950), Yaḥā b.ʿAdī (d.363/974), Abū al-Ḥasan alʿAmirī (d.381/992), al-Shahrastānī (d.548/1153), and Ibn Taymiyya (d.728/1328) among many others.[20]

The method of logical and linguistic analysis had also been applied by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, which is clear from his continuous reliance on linguistic use of terms in defining their meanings and his logical and linguistic arguments against different opponents. Thus, when studying ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethical thought, some similarities between his way of analyzing and the modern method of linguistic analysis, especially in the tradition of the later Wittgenstein[21] will be indicated in order to expound ʿAbd al-Jabbār's own views.

It is worth mentioning that different Arabic and Islamic figures applied this analytical method in different ways. Thus, although they could be considered as belonging, somehow, to the same trend, they actually developed different views and ideas. The variations among them might be compared to the variations among the members of the modern school of analytical philosophy. The term "analytical" is used in our time to describe various philosophical positions, like that of G. E. Moore (d.1958), Bertrand Russell (d.1970), Carnap (d.1970), Wittgenstein (d.1951), and Hare (d.2002) among many others. Morton White, in his excellent book entitled *The Age of Analysis*, said about the twentieth century analytical philosophers: "When they begin to say what is analysis, or when they actually engage with it, we can see differences that are critical, indeed so critical that they sometimes loom as large as more traditional differences between philosophers of rival schools."[22] The same can be said about various Arabic and Islamic scholars who shared logico-linguistic analysis methodology and belonged to a wide spectrum of schools (*madhāhib*).

Abū Hāshim (d.321/933), the founder of the Bahshamiyya school, to which ʿAbd al-Jabbār belonged, is also reported to have argued with Mattā, against the supremacy of Aristotelian logic. He said: "Is logic (*manṭiq*) anything more than a mere derivative of *nuṭq* (normal articulated speech)?"[23] His view is considered to represent the position of the Muʿtazila, as he was the master of the Baṣran Muʿtazilites at this time. Moreover al-Sīrāfī himself, mentioned above, is also most likely to be a Muʿtazilite.[24]

The most important features of the position of the opponents of Aristotelian logic are the belief that language and thought are the same, so one cannot separate thought from language, therefore the analysis of language is the analysis of thought at the same time; and the rules of language are the rules of logic. According to al-Sīrāfī, "logic [Aristotelian logic] cannot be identified with reason … because

logic is not an art of reasoning but an art of speech or language. It is the art of speaking a particular language logically."[25] Therefore, they did not need an artificial language that would resolve the complications of the natural language; they created an adequate method to analyze the language and reveal its natural logic. As al-Sīrāfī said, "One cannot invent a language inside a language that is already fixed among those who speak it."[26] It is remarkable that al-Sīrāfī's view about language and his described method of reasoning is comparable to the contemporary analytical trend that also rejected the need of a purified ideal language to substitute the complex ordinary language. Wittgenstein himself finds no philosophical value in the construction of artificial languages.[27] This is because "philosophy requires no more than attention to ordinary language as a prerequisite."[28]

The existence of the analytical methodology in Arabic-Islamic thought was explicitly declared and proved, in a detailed and thorough study accomplished by Khalifat in a voluminous work entitled: *The Logical and Linguistic Analysis Methodology in the Arabic Islamic Thought*.[29] He said: "It is important to acknowledge the existence of this analytical method in Arabic thought in order to understand the treatments and the solutions given to various problems. Without such acknowledgement we are not going to be able to reach the depth and attain the heart of this thought, nor grasp the philosophical experience of our predecessors."[30] He rightly held that "looking at the problems treated by those thinkers as philosophical problems, treated by certain methodology could allow us to disclose the guiding principles of Arabic thought. And therefore we shall possess the methodological tool needed to study the heritage (*al-turāth*) systematically, depending on foundations and methods, through which this heritage was formed."[31] Therefore, following the above advice, problems treated by ʿAbd al-Jabbār will be looked at as philosophical problems, treated by a definite methodological approach.

In this chapter, which is dedicated to the study of the presuppositions of ethical judgments, it will be argued that ʿAbd al-Jabbār established his ethics using appropriate methods for appraising moral judgments. The importance of the subject of appraising moral judgments lies in them being important before making up one's mind on matters of morals. It will be illustrated that according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, moral judgments and moral rules can be evaluated, not only morally, but also in other ways. They may be considered rational or irrational, according to certain independent normative criteria. ʿAbd al-Jabbār, proposed and defended some "morally neutral" but normative principles for evaluating moral judgment, and deciding whether they are rational or not under the title "*shurūṭ ḥusn al-taklīf*"[32] which can be properly translated to "conditions of rational obligation"[33] He dedicated a few chapters to the discussion of the conditions that must be fulfilled by any moral agent (*mukallaf*) in order to be qualified as a moral agent and hence the proper subject of moral judgments. Accordingly, normative judgments of actions: forbidden (*maḥẓūr*), obligatory (*wājib*), and recommended (*mandūb*) presuppose certain qualities on the part of the agent which are considered conditions of valid moral judgment. On the other hand, there are also certain norms that have to be fulfilled by any moral judgment in order to be a valid moral judgment, namely

universality, impartiality, objectivity, and rationality. These norms are clearly implied in different arguments and doctrines presented by ʿAbd al-Jabbār.

A contemporary moral philosopher has suggested that one of the tasks of moral philosophers is to propose and defend criteria for evaluating moral judgments and deciding whether an alleged moral judgment is to be considered true or false.[34] It is remarkable that ʿAbd al-Jabbār seems to have been aware of the importance of this task as he proposed and defended criteria for evaluating moral judgments. The importance of the subject treated by ʿAbd al-Jabbār can be highlighted by quoting Neil Cooper, who said: "If one finds out what moral judgments imply or presuppose, he/she shall be in a position to shoot holes in any moral judgment which implies or presupposes what is false, impossible, or otherwise unacceptable."[35]

In the twentieth century, some moral philosophers suggested that "there is no final decision-procedure in morals, the best each of us can do is to ʿwalk by the light of his own candle.'"[36] Those are, in fact, the ones who held non-cognitive ethical theories.[37] Others maintained that we have methods of appraising moral judgments, and that these methods of appraising are therefore a proper concern for the moral philosopher. It is significant that while ʿAbd al-Jabbār carefully developed and articulated such methods, he refuted, at the same time, subjective ethical theories including ethical voluntarism. Thus, he established a moral theory which might be considered the zenith of Muʿtazilite intellectual accomplishment.

The purpose of this chapter, as already indicated is to investigate the presuppositions of moral judgments articulated by ʿAbd al-Jabbār and to highlight, in due course, the importance of his ethical views. Therefore, we shall now turn to the main purpose of this chapter.

Presuppositions of moral judgments

ʿAbd al-Jabbār's criteria for evaluating ethical judgments consist of a number of conditions or presuppositions. Those presuppositions can be discovered by examining what one implies or presupposes when making a moral judgment. One could presuppose certain qualities on the part of the agent, such as maturity, moral knowledge, ability to comprehend ethical judgment, ability to choose, and perform the chosen course of action, and, definitely, to be a responsible agent. Other presuppositions are norms that are important conditions of morality and are considered central features of any moral discourse, such as universality, impartiality, objectivity, and rationality.[38] Khalifat has indicated that the *mutakallimūn* have articulated such norms and presuppositions in great detail which indicates that they were aware of the importance of such norms in evaluating normative judgments.[39] It must be mentioned that presuppositions of moral judgments as articulated by ʿAbd al-Jabbār were also discussed by Abū ʿAlī and his son Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī, the two prominent Baṣran masters. According to the two masters, perfection of the intellect (*kamāl al-*ʿaql), bestowing power, and capacity are prerequisites to the imposition of obligation upon men.[40] These presuppositions also fit the Muʿtazilite principle of justice discussed in the previous chapter.

It is convenient to start first with the treatment of the conditions of ethical judgments that are related to the addressee who is the agent of the required or the judged action, as these were explicitly discussed by ʿAbd al-Jabbār. This will be followed by conditions or norms related to the moral judgment itself. All of them are conditions of moral judgments and are closely related, which justify treating them in the same chapter. Presuppositions of ethical judgments in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethical theory includes the following:

1 *Necessary moral knowledge*: It is reasonable to consider that moral judgments presuppose a human agent's ability to understand them. This implies that human beings possess a certain knowledge of what is morally right and what is morally wrong; otherwise they would not be able to understand moral judgments as moral – one might then regard them as mere orders or commands that express arbitrary volition.[41] Thus the addressee, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, should know "the attribute of what he/she should not do"[42] in case of a negative ought judgment, and should know that an act is a duty or obligation or that it is recommended (*nadb*)[43] in case of positive ought judgment. This means that the addressee should know good and evil, in order to understand any command, or assignment of obligation, and to differentiate between true moral judgments and false. Ought judgments presuppose one's ability to understand and reflect, this explains the reason why ʿAbd al-Jabbār asserts that ought judgments are not addressed to animals, insane people, and immature individuals, like children.[44]

2 *Human autonomy*: a moral judgment also presupposes human autonomy or ability to act independently of any deterministic factors, in order to consider him/her responsible of his/her acts. Therefore, "a responsible human being (*mukallaf*) is the one who is able to act (*qādir*), knowing (*ʿālim*), living (*ḥayy*), and *willing* (*murīd*).[45] And imposing an obligation that is impossible or intolerable is considered irrational (*taklīf mā lā yuṭāq qabīḥ*)."[46] Thus, it is irrational, for example, to ask a paralyzed person to walk.[47] Moral judgment is irrational unless it presupposes a certain physical and mental capacity on the part of the addressee that makes him/her responsible for the choice and action.

3 *Purposefulness*: Human beings have purposes and motives, and this is presupposed in any valid ought judgment. Human beings have "desire or aversion for certain things."[48] They ultimately seek what is beneficial and avoid what is harmful. They might feel aversion towards certain things such as a particular medication, but still they use it because it is beneficial. It is bad (*qabīḥ*) to act arbitrarily or to perform useless acts (*ʿabath*).[49] A moral judgment has to be purposeful and not arbitrary, thus if one "had no purpose in assigning an obligation, then the assignment of the obligation would be irrational (*qabīḥ*)."[50] The purpose of any moral judgment should definitely conform to the ultimate purpose of human beings that is to avoid harm and seek benefit.

4 *Universality and impartiality*: Ethical judgments are universal; they apply to all people regardless of their cultural, ideological or religious backgrounds. ʿAbd al-Jabbār asserted that evil is evil regardless who commits it,[51]

and he emphasized the truth that all human beings are morally responsible (*mukallafūn*), because ethical knowledge is the same for all, and everyone is obliged to do what is good. Even "the atheists (*mulḥida*) who know the evilness of injustice, although they do not know the divine commands or the commander [are morally responsible]."[52]

5 *Objectivity and rationality*: A rational human being or an adult with a sound mind (*al-ʿāqil*) "should do what is obligatory by reason (*wājib fī ʿaqlihi*) for its goodness."[53] According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, reason (*ʿaql*) is essential for guiding human's behavior. Moreover, any ought judgment has to be objective, independent of the "imperative form" in which a moral judgment might be expressed[54] and independent of any reward or punishment[55] if it is to be considered an ethical judgment.

In what follows, the presuppositions of moral judgments mentioned above, will be studied in some detail which will highlight different, but related issues.

Necessary moral knowledge

The most common definition of necessary knowledge, shared by different Arabic Islamic scholars including ʿAbd al-Jabbār, is knowledge that cannot be repudiated by doubt.[56] According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, necessary knowledge includes sense perceptions,[57] as for him "sense perception necessitates knowledge."[58] It also includes rules of logic,[59] immediate knowledge of one's own physical and mental states,[60] and principles of ethics.[61] The necessary moral knowledge is the most relevant to the purpose of this study, and will be the subject of detailed discussion and interpretation. In a revealing paragraph ʿAbd al-Jabbār states some principles of morality that form an essential part of what is necessarily known:

> Knowing some aspects that make actions good and some that make actions bad, and some obligations indicate the maturity of the intellect (*kamāl al-ʿaql*). Thus an adult with sound mind necessarily knows the evilness of transgression (*qubḥ al-ẓulm*), the evilness of being ungrateful to a benefactor (*kufr al-niʿma*), and the evilness of lying if it is not intended to bring about benefit or to repel harm. One also knows the goodness of compassion and giving (*al-iḥsān waʾl-tafaḍul*). One also knows that thanking a benefactor and returning a trust when asked for and being just are all considered obligations.[62]

A person is qualified as a responsible moral agent only when he possesses necessary knowledge, and thereby he is said to be intellectually mature (*kāmil al-ʿaql*). The set of necessarily known matters and principles constitutes by itself what is called *al-ʿaql* that provides us with basic assumptions needed to pursue further investigation and reflection and build upon it additional knowledge.

Necessary moral knowledge is considered general (*mujmala*), whereas the detailed knowledge (*mufaṣala*) of the value of a particular act is acquired by reflection and reasoning.[63] The "necessary known" principles make us capable of reflecting and thinking. In other words, *al-ʿaql* enables us (*yumakkinuna*), or provides us with the necessary power (*qudra*) to pursue reasoning and acquire knowledge. We would not be able to reflect without it, and would not be qualified as responsible agents. On the other hand, what is known by reflection and reasoning is not "necessarily known," it belongs to another branch of a human being's knowledge which is called the "acquired knowledge" (*al-maʿrifa al-muktasaba*). People do not differ in "necessary knowledge" as what is known necessarily is known to all, and what is necessarily known constitutes the intellect or *al-ʿaql*. However, they differ in their use of necessary knowledge and in the way they reflect and think.

All the necessarily known issues are related to each other, and all contribute to what constitute the necessary presuppositions of ethical judgment. Thus a human being's intention, his/her experience and moral knowledge are not known separately according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār. They all together constitute the maturity of the intellect.[64] In order to interpret the meaning of necessary knowledge and appreciate its significance, the relationship between human moral knowledge and the knowledge of one's own intentions and purposes and the intentions and purposes of others will be investigated.

Necessary moral knowledge is ultimately grounded in the knowledge of a human's intentions and purposes. This is also indispensable for the knowledge of divine intentions and purposes, because the ultimate purposes of human beings are also the purposes of law (*al-sharʿ*). However, knowledge of divine intentions is considered acquired knowledge by ʿAbd al-Jabbār. That divine intentions and purposes are the same as humans' is explicitly stated by ʿAbd al-Jabbār:

> In case of disagreement on the meaning of a certain text [i.e. from the Qur'ān], it should be understood and interpreted in a way that conforms to Muslims' intentions or purposes *maqāṣid*, which are also, necessarily the purposes of law and its intended meaning. [65]

Knowing others' intentions is derived from the way they use language, act, and signify different objects. It is true that ʿAbd al-Jabbār affirmed that divine intention is known through His speech,[66] yet interpreting the speech according to our language implies interpreting it according to our intentions and purposes, because language, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, is conventional and necessarily expresses a speaker's intentions, as will be demonstrated in a separate section in this chapter.

Before pursuing to understand the sophisticated arguments that relate morality to intentions and language, it is appropriate first to shed some light on ʿAbd al-Jabbār's understanding of necessary moral knowledge through investigating his accepted definitions of knowledge, *al-ʿilm* or *al-maʿrifa*[67], his conception of rational obligation (*taklīf ʿaqlī*) as compared to religious obligation (*taklīf sharʿī*),

to be followed by discussing a controversial issue, the issue of reliable report (*khabar mutawātir*), and ʿAbd al-Jabbār's view regarding the truth of necessary known reliable reports. His view seems inconsistent with his understanding of necessary knowledge. In addition to the above issues, his conception of necessary knowledge and the categories included in it will be first compared to some opposing Muʿtazilite and Ashʿarite views.

It must be mentioned that most of the views presented and held by ʿAbd al-Jabbār were attributed to the late Baṣran Muʿtazilites, particularly to Abū Hāshim and his school. Most times, it is difficult to decide whether a certain idea was ʿAbd al-Jabbār's own idea or whether it was adopted from one of his masters, as he was not eager to emphasize any discrepancy between his views and the views of Abū Hāshim, although some disagreements did exist. These were indicated by him, as will be shown in the last chapter of this work. However, the foremost purpose of this work is to investigate the Muʿtazilite moral theory as culminated in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's moral thought and to explore its most important features, its originality, and consider its possible effect on subsequent Islamic thought. Thus, no detailed study will be attempted to decide which particular idea genuinely belonged to ʿAbd al-Jabbār and which was adopted by him from his masters, except where it is particularly relevant to the understanding of some salient aspects of the moral theory.

Muʿtazilite controversies over necessary knowledge

The concept of necessary knowledge (*ʿilm ḍarūrī*) is of significant importance to the different scholars.[68] Necessary knowledge includes the kinds of knowledge that no rational human being could deny, as it is indubitable and indisputable knowledge. It includes the knowledge of what we now call analytical propositions, and of some synthetic propositions. Most of the scholars agreed on the necessary knowledge of analytical propositions, but they overtly disagreed on which type of the various synthetic statements may be known necessarily.[69] Some of them considered that all kinds of knowledge were necessarily known. Among those who held this doctrine was al-Jāḥiẓ (d.255/869) and thus he and his followers were called *aṣḥāb al-maʿārif*.[70] It is also most probable that it was al-Jaḥiẓ or Thumama b. al-Ashras who first introduced the concept of necessary knowledge into the Muʿtazilite thought, and the reason for this might have been their emphasis on a human's ability to know truth without the aid of revelation.[71] The view of the early and the Baghdādian Muʿtazilites, as explained by al-Nīsābūrī, shows that they considered all knowledge that was derived from necessary knowledge also necessarily known. Al-Nīsābūrī said: "Some people who associated with the Baghdādians[72] said that inference (*istidlāl*) and deduction (*istinbāt*) consists of relating together some known issues to produce another known issue."[73] Whereas according to the Baṣrans, mainly the followers of Abū Hāshim and including ʿAbd al-Jabbār, inference (*al-Istidlāl*) is an enquiry or reflection which leads to knowledge. Al-Nīsābūrī supported his argument against the Baghdādians' view

by appeal to language. He said that the meaning of *istidlāl* in the Arabic language conformed with the Baṣran definition, thus it was an enquiry and reflection that lead to knowledge (*al-naẓar al-mu'addī ilā al-ma'rifa*).[74] He further argued against the Baghdādian method of deriving knowledge and defended the Baṣran method in a way that recalls the arguments of Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī against the logician Matta b. Yunus, mentioned above. He stated that not all knowledge is derived in this way, because logical inference is only possible when we have two related premises, that is, when the subject in one of the premises is the predicate of the other premise. He pointed out that not all knowledge can be derived in this way.[75]

Against the view held by al-Jāḥiẓ, and others, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argued that not all knowledge was necessary knowledge. Knowing God, for example was not considered necessary knowledge. He said: "If knowing God is a necessary knowledge then rational people should not disagree on this issue as they do not disagree on necessarily known matters, like the darkness of the night and the brightness of the day, whereas it is well known that they disagree about God. Some of them deny His existence and others affirm it."[76] Abū ʿAlī and Abū Hāshim, before ʿAbd al-Jabbār had also argued against al-Jaḥiẓ's conception of knowledge. Their criticism seems to be known to ʿAbd al-Jabbār through his immediate master Abū ʿAbdullah who wrote a book about knowledge ʿ*Kitāb al-'Ulūm'*, in which he presented the criticisms raised by the two Jubbā'ī masters against al-Jāḥiẓ and his followers.[77] The two Jubbā'ī masters linked their arguments against al-Jaḥiẓ's perception of knowledge to their argument against determinism (*al-jabr*). Abū ʿAlī, for example, is reported to have said: "If all knowledge occurs by nature (*bil-ṭab'*) [i.e. necessarily] then why does one need to think and reflect?"[78] If all knowledge is considered to occur by nature, and God created nature, then all knowledge is from God. However, for al-Jaḥiẓ knowledge occurs by nature when one thinks and reflects. Yet, the argument raised against him by the two Jubbā'īs and ʿAbd al-Jabbār was that whatever occurs by nature is not considered to be chosen by an agent, as it occurs necessarily because of his nature. Al-Jaḥiẓ's conviction that all knowledge occurs by nature also necessarily implies, according to Abū ʿAlī, that no one can ever be blamed and that no reflection or debate can ever be useful. If knowledge occurs by nature then even writing books would be futile, because if people know by nature, and they have the same nature, then everybody must know the same things. Thus if somebody does not know a certain matter, he should be left alone, as it should be left to God, who creates nature, including human nature, to create reflection and knowledge in him.[79] Consequently, obligation would not be valid. It is important to notice that such an argument might be raised against the Muʿtazilite perception of necessary moral knowledge, as people also disagree on moral matters. Yet, in contrast to al-Jāḥiẓ, ʿAbd al-Jabbār divided knowledge, as already mentioned, into necessary and acquired. The concept of acquired knowledge, including the acquired knowledge of the value of particular acts served as a basis to refute the argument which aimed to invalidate the concept of necessary moral knowledge by referring to actual moral disagreements. An important example, often mentioned by ʿAbd

al-Jabbār in various contexts, was the example of al-Khawārij. It seems that the Khārijite position was often used as an example for people who held different moral views. It was argued that those who believed that killing their opponents was not evil, could justify their action by claiming that they knew that their act was good. If all knowledge is necessary knowledge, which cannot be repudiated by doubt, then it would not be possible to blame the Khawārij for their actions as they cannot be blamed for knowing what they necessarily know. But ʿAbd al-Jabbār said that they necessarily know that injustice was evil, yet they needed to reflect in order to know that a particular action was injustice. Their transgressions were not explained by appealing to their ignorance of necessarily known moral principles, but by them not knowing that a particular action was good or evil. One should reflect to know that a certain action is unjust. According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, one should reflect to know that a certain action, such as killing in the above example, is not deserved, or performed to avert greater harm or to bring about an outweighing benefit in order to know whether it is an injustice.[80] Therefore, the Khārijites should have reflected in order to know the truth. Thus, "a Khārijite is blamed because he is able to know that what he believes is wrong."[81] It is important to recall that according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār necessary moral knowledge is general, while the knowledge of the value of a particular act is acquired knowledge.

For ʿAbd al-Jabbār and his masters, obligation (*al-taklīf*) also includes the obligation to reflect and attain knowledge. Thus if all that is known is necessarily known then there would be no need for reflection and people would not be obliged to pursue knowledge. Contrary to al-Jāḥiẓ, and in agreement with the late Muʿtazilite masters, ʿAbd al-Jabbār excluded knowledge attained by reflection and reasoning from the category of what is necessarily known. However, contrary to some Ashʿarite opponents, he included principles of morality in this category.

However, what really concerns this study is not the disputes among the Muʿtazila themselves, since almost all of them considered knowledge of some moral principles a necessary knowledge that precedes revelation, but how did they, and particularly ʿAbd al-Jabbār perceive necessary knowledge of moral principles. It is well known that the Ashʿarites "announced" position ran contrary to the Muʿtazilite view, as they maintained that knowledge of morals was not a condition for obligation, and thus denied necessary moral knowledge.

It is interesting to note that the late Ashʿarites raised against the Muʿtazilite view of necessary moral knowledge some arguments that were similar to those raised by ʿAbd al-Jabbār and his Baṣran masters against al-Jāḥiẓ and the Baghdādians. The main points raised against al-Jāḥiẓ and those who agreed with him can be summarized as follows:

- Knowledge is not all necessary, and this is proved by the fact that people actually disagree on different issues. If all that is known is known necessarily, then people would not disagree on any issue.
- The doctrine that all that can be known is known necessarily implies predestination, and therefore contradicts with divine justice. People are blamed for

evil actions even if such actions are based on erroneous beliefs, because they are obliged to think and reflect to attain the right knowledge and acting in agreement with what one believes or knows to be true is not an excuse.

Muʿtazilite–Ashʿarite controversies

The first arguments raised by the late Baṣrans against adherents of the doctrine of necessary knowledge were used by the Ashʿarites against the Baṣran doctrine of necessary known moral principles. For example, al-Bāqillānī (d.403/1013), the Ashʿarite contemporary of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, stated that justice and injustice cannot be known by reason, because, if they could then all human beings would necessarily know them.[82] The fact that people evaluate justice and injustice differently is proof for al-Bāqillānī that it is not necessarily known to be evil. He also argued against the view that lying is always evil, saying that God permitted one who is afraid for himself to lie.[83] Similar arguments against the Muʿtazilite's necessarily known moral principles were also raised by later Ashʿarites like al-Ghazālī who argued that the fact that they disagree on what the Muʿtazilite consider to be necessarily known is proof that there is nothing as necessarily known moral principles.[84] He did not deny that some moral principles are commonly held by people and praised, but what he denied is that they were necessarily known by reason. The source of moral knowledge, according to al-Ghazālī, is either religion or human purposes (*al-aghrāḍ*).[85] Al-Ghazālī thus does not seem to deny that commonly accepted moral principles could be determined by investigating humans' purposes. However, he states that these purposes are subtle and concealed, so that they might not be recognized except by those who scrutinize and investigate (*lā yantabih laha illa al-muḥaqqiqūn*).[86] In contrast to what the Muʿtazilites held to be necessarily known by reason al-Ghazālī stated that "thanking the benefactor is not obligatory by reason."[87] However, maybe the most subtle arguments against the Muʿtazilite concept of necessary moral knowledge and rational obligation is presented in al-Shahrastānī's *Nihāyatu al-Iqdām*.[88] Interestingly enough, he ascribes to Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī a saying that implies distinction between the ontological and the epistemological view of moral values. Al-Ashʿarī, according to al-Shahrastānī, held that "all knowledge is derived by reason (*al-ʿaql*), but obligation is established by revelation."[89] Al-Shahrastānī explains that this was held to deny rational obligation (*al-wujūb al-ʿaqlī*) not to deny the knowledge occurring by reason.[90] Thus, knowing that something is good is separate from knowing that it is right or obligatory or recommended. In other words, ethical judgments are not grounded in value judgments. Knowledge of ethical judgments is explicitly derived from divine commands and prohibitions, although all other kinds of knowledge, including the knowledge of good and evil are derived by reason.[91] They seem to have distinguished between knowledge of facts and knowledge of values, as if, for them "ought cannot be derived from is." Therefore, knowledge of what is the case is known by reason, yet knowledge of what ought to be done is derived from divine commands.

The argument, raised by the Ashʿarites against the Muʿtazilite doctrine of necessary moral knowledge, does not take into account the fact that the Baṣrans distinguished between what is necessary known and what is acquired. The fact that people disagree on practical moral issues is not due to their disagreement on what is necessarily known, but is due to their erroneous beliefs that are acquired by inadequate reflection and reasoning. An example is the Khārijites who were not ignorant of the fact that injustice is evil, but they wrongly perceived their act of killing opponents to be in accordance with justice.[92] In addition, ʿAbd al-Jabbār held that not every one necessarily distinguishes between what is necessarily known and what is acquired, because knowing whether a particular knowledge is necessary or acquired is itself an acquired knowledge.[93]

However, knowledge, whether acquired or necessary is considered true knowledge. Therefore, the Khārijite belief that what they were doing was right could not be considered knowledge at all, because it is not true. Knowledge as defined by ʿAbd al-Jabbār is

> A cause or ground (*maʿnā*) which necessitates (*yaqtaḍī*) the tranquillity of the soul (*sukūn al-nafs*) of the knower in regard to what he has considered. As such, it is distinct from everything else. This *maʿnā* [knowledge] would not be distinguished by this assessment unless it was a conviction (*iʿtiqād*) that in a distinct way (*wajh*) convinced one of itself in accordance with what it actually is.[94]

It is important to realize that tranquillity of the soul, mentioned in the above definition, although a personal experience, refers only to the psychological state of the person (*ḥāl*); the state that is caused or necessitated by one's true convictions that the thing is as it really is. This certainly does not imply that knowledge is subjective; because ʿAbd al-Jabbār explicitly refutes the view that whoever thinks he is in the state of tranquillity possesses knowledge. An ignorant person might think that he knows because he finds himself in that psychological state; yet he is not really in this state, because his tranquillity of mind will soon disappear after discussing and investigating his beliefs.[95] Indeed, ʿAbd al-Jabbār and the Muʿtazilites in general did not ascribe any subjective measure to knowledge. Knowledge according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār's above definition is ultimately an objective conviction that a thing is as it really is. It necessitates the tranquillity of the soul, yet the state of the tranquillity itself is not a proof for knowledge, it is merely a state that accompanies true knowledge.

Rational obligations (taklīf ʿaqlī)

Detailed ethical knowledge, which guides human conduct and enables one to establish normative criteria for judgments of actions, is acquired by reflection and investigation, and it is derived from general moral principles that are necessarily known by all rational human beings. Those moral principles, like the evilness

of injustice and the obligation to return a deposit constitute necessary ethical knowledge and are, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, the basis for rational obligation (*taklīf ʿaqlī*).[96] He clearly distinguishes between rational obligation and religious obligation (*taklīf samʿī*). The latter, no doubt, only applies to those who know God and accept religion, whereas the former applies to all rational human beings. Moreover, it is on the basis of the first one, that is, *al-taklīf al-ʿaqlī*, that ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethical theory is established. Both kinds of obligation are considered to be assigned by God, yet ʿAbd al-Jabbār, like Abū al-Hudhayl before him believes in "obedience not directed toward God,"[97] that might be practiced by all people, regardless of their religious beliefs. Performing rational obligations is considered by him a kind of worship, he stated:

> Rational worship (*al-ʿibādāt al-ʿaqliya*), in order to be properly performed, does not require anything except to be performed in the right way. Approaching the One who has to be worshiped is not a condition for the validity of rational worship, but it is a condition for religious worship (*al-ʿibādāt al-sharʿiya*) [like praying and fasting].[98]

Thus those who follow what is rationally obliged to be followed are considered obedient, not because they believe in God and follow His commands, but because they perform what they know by reason to be good. He also said:

> A responsible human agent (*al-mukallaf*) might rightly obey God, even though he does not know about Him. Hence the obedient (*al-muṭīʿ*) is actually obedient by his conduct [when he performs obligatory or supererogatory actions]. Obedience [as such] is required from him, whether he knows the Obeyed [God] or does not know Him, and whether he knows His will or not. In the same manner, the disobedient (*al-ʿāṣī*) is sometimes said to obey Satan (*ʿmuṭīʿ lil-shayṭān'*), although while being disobedient, he does not know that Satan wants him to do so. Moreover, perhaps Satan does not even come to his mind.[99]

Contrary to what has been mentioned by some scholars, ʿAbd al-Jabbār explicitly stated that an agent deserves praise and "reward from God" for rational obligations,[100] such as refraining from injustice and returning a deposit.[101] ʿAbd al-Jabbār said that this was also true according to the doctrine of Abū ʿAlī and Abū Hāshim. He said that it was his immediate master Abū Abdullah, who distinguished between what deserved praise and what deserved reward, and ʿAbd al-Jabbār does not accept his view.[102] Of course, religious obligations, known through revelation, such as praying and fasting, cannot be performed without knowing God, but this does not apply to rational obligations. ʿAbd al-Jabbār said: "Nobody should ever say: 'If it is not legitimate to deserve reward for religious obligations unless one knows God and His reward and punishment, then the same should apply for all other obligations.'"[103] This means that reward is deserved

for moral obligations even if the agent does not know God. In addition, one's knowledge of him being rewarded or punished, is not a condition for obligation.[104] Thus morality is independent of any precautionary attitude of the agent, and independent therefore of religious sanctions. This view recalls the doctrine of those called al-Aṭrāfīya among the Khawārij, who were mentioned in the third chapter of this book. Al-Aṭrāfīya absolves the people who had no opportunity of knowing about faith from guilt, as long as they do what is manifested by reason.[105] What is then the role of the prophets? Is religion superfluous for morality and not needed by those who perform all their rational obligations. ʿAbd al-Jabbār said:

> Knowing God is considered grace (*luṭf*), since one then knows that punishment will be deserved for evil doing and reward will be deserved for good deeds. Thus the person (*al-mukallaf*) becomes closer to avoiding evil and pursuing worship.[106]

Thus believing in God and in the Day of Judgment does not necessitate rightful behavior. However, fear and hope might strengthen one's motive to do what is right and help people to put their hearts into what they are doing. This indicates that ʿAbd al-Jabbār is fully aware of the fact that there is no necessary link between religion and morality, and that there exist people who know nothing about God, but are still moral. He chooses to call them obedient.

However, both religious and rational obligations presuppose, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār the above mentioned conditions. For him both rational obligations and obligations known from revelation are assigned by Allah the Almighty, and thus there must be no contradiction between them.[107] Yet, what if such a contradiction does occur, or what if people disagree on the meaning of a certain text? He held that in case of disagreement on the meaning of a certain text [i.e. from the Qur'ān], it should be understood and interpreted in a way that conforms to people's intentions or purposes (*maqāṣid*).[108] In other words, the text has to be understood in a way that conforms with public interest or (*maṣlaḥa*).

Elsewhere, ʿAbd al-Jabbār, unfortunately abandons the dictates of reason, and deviates from what he considered moral and accepted by reason to a primitive interpretation of the text, holding that slavery is not accepted by reason, yet is permitted according to *al-shar'*.[109] In a similar manner, he allows the slaughtering of animals[110] and accepts some inheritance laws.[111] Thus, one might wonder whether it was really a deviation from morality to the apparent meaning of the text, or was it an interpretation that conforms with the benefit (*maṣlaḥa*) of the elite class in his time. Perhaps he was just unwilling to deviate from what was generally considered an accepted practice in his days, although he knew that slavery was unjust and contradicted rational morality. In this context one is prompted to quote ʿAbd al-Jabbār's own words for he said: "If a rational human being errs, the reason for his error is other than his intellect (*sababu al-khaṭa' ghayr al-'aql*)."[112] Indeed this also applies to him. When he wrongfully conceived slavery to be permitted, he was not reflecting on the necessary known moral rule "injustice is evil." He deviated

from reason to accept a familiar interpretation of the Qur'ān in his days. His position is not justified by him saying that his preference of Qur'ānic judgments, when these contradict with reason, is based upon a convention that God knows better the circumstances of his creatures and what is beneficial for them,[113] and this allows His judgments to override human judgments. His view stated above contradicts his doctrine of rational obligation, the zenith of Muʿtazilite moral thought, besides that slavery is accepted no more by any decent Muslim or non-Muslim.[114]

Necessary knowledge of reliable reports

One point remains to be discussed before proceeding to investigate the possible meaning of necessary moral knowledge and how it is related to intentions, purposes, and language. It has been mentioned that ʿAbd al-Jabbār, like the Ashʿarites al-Baghdādī and al-Bāqillānī considered knowledge of reliable report (*khabar mutawātir*) a necessary knowledge.[115] For the Ashʿrite to consider the truth of a reliable report necessarily known is not surprising as it is consistent with their belief that all kinds of transmitted knowledge is necessary, but it does not seem consistent with the Muʿtazilite doctrines. A contemporary scholar, while discussing ʿAbd al-Jabbār's theory of knowledge, did not mention that the knowledge of reliable reports, which includes any type of transmitted knowledge, was considered by ʿAbd al-Jabbār as a necessary knowledge. He mentioned that transmitted knowledge (*'ilm sam'ī*) was considered to be necessary by al-Bāqillānī (d.403/1013), who denied that any moral rule was necessarily known.[116] He rightly notices that including different types of knowledge in the category of necessary knowledge, reflected different worldviews.[117] One might infer from this that considering reliable reports necessarily known does not fit the worldview of ʿAbd al-Jabbār or the Muʿtazila. However, ʿAbd al-Jabbār mentioned that the two Jubbā'ī masters disagreed on considering a reliable report necessarily known. Abū ʿAlī considered transmitted knowledge necessarily known just as knowing perceptible was considered a necessary knowledge. Abū Hāshim appeared to have held the same view in some of his books. Yet, in one of his books called *al-Ilhām* he said that it does not contribute to the perfection of the intellect (*laysa min kamāl al-'aql*), and that the perfection of the intellect does not require such knowledge and also that obligation is possible without it.[118] Abū Hāshim held that the knowledge of reliable reports is based on a continuous custom, it usually occurs (*bil-'āda*). ʿAbd al-Jabbār believed that even though such a knowledge is based on continuous custom, it is indispensable for religious obligations (*al-taklīf al-sam'ī*).[119] It is clear that ʿAbd al-Jabbār's view in considering knowledge of reliable reports a necessary knowledge comes from it being a presupposition of that part of obligation which cannot be known by reason, that is, religious obligations, like praying and fasting. The truth of reliable report is necessarily known according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār.[120] He supports his view by different arguments, and considers that if the same historical event is narrated by a large group of people, who have no reason to lie, then such a narration is necessarily true. He also argues that we know that some countries exist from what we have heard, although we have never been there. Therefore, knowledge that a certain country exists is necessary knowledge

based on narrated experiences and reliable reports.[121] ʿAbd al-Jabbār stated that even the Qurʾān was known by reliable reports.[122] However, not all the Muʿtazilites held the same position. Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d.436/1044) reported a disagreement between Abū al-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī and the two Jubbāʾī masters concerning whether knowledge that resulted from the reliable reports was considered necessary or acquired. Abū al-Qāsim held that it was acquired, whereas the two Jubbāʾī masters maintained that it was necessary.[123] Abū al-Ḥusayn, although a pupil of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, considered that the transmitted knowledge was an acquired type of knowledge, because the truth of any report cannot be known before investigating the truthfulness of the transmitters, and inspecting whether or not they have any reason to lie. Those who held that it was necessary argued that knowledge obtained from reliable reports cannot be repudiated by suspicion, and they maintained that this was in fact what distinguished necessary knowledge.[124] Abū al-Ḥusayn denied the necessary knowledge of reliable reports because, although such a knowledge was on the same level [of certainty] as necessary knowledge, it was attained through reflection and reasoning.[125] It should be noted that what is at stake here is not the priority, or the degree of certainty of a certain type of knowledge. Knowledge, as shown above, was defined by ʿAbd al-Jabbār as a conviction related to the object as it actually is, in a way that necessitates the tranquillity of the mind. It includes both acquired and necessary knowledge. Thus, when the transmitted knowledge was classified by Abū al-Qāsim, and later by Abū al-Ḥusayn under the acquired type of knowledge, they did not mean that it was less certain or important. They only meant that it is not the kind of knowledge that is necessarily known to every human being; it is not attained immediately but upon reflection and consideration. Obviously, Abū al-Ḥusayn's argument is more convincing than the arguments of his Baṣran masters including ʿAbd al-Jabbār. However it needs to be emphasized that necessary knowledge of reliable reports is, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, as already mentioned, a presupposition of religious obligation (*taklīf sharʿī*) and not of rational obligation, whereas it is the necessary knowledge of some moral principles that is a condition of moral obligation. Thus, although the view that a reliable report is a necessary knowledge is shared by ʿAbd al-Jabbār and his Muʿtazilite masters on one hand, and by some Ashʿarites on the other, it is important to distinguish between the two positions. The former could dispense with it in matters of rational obligation, whereas for the latter it is the ground of all obligations.

In the following subsections the relation between intention, language, and necessary knowledge shall be investigated. It will be argued that although ʿAbd al-Jabbār frequently mentions that necessary knowledge is created by God, a detailed study of his conception of the origin of language and its relation to humans' intentions allows for an alternative interpretation.

Intentional and conventional basis of morality

The traditional view of the origin of language that seems to have been common before the rise of the Baṣran Muʿtazilites in the fourth/tenth century is that language was created by God. Such a view appeared to go well with the literal

meaning of the Qurān: God taught Adam the "names" (Q.2:31). Accordingly, names, attributes, and any utterances serve to reveal God's will. If He is the one who created language then the meaning of any utterance is established by divine absolute free will. Such a conception of the origin of language has definite moral connotation, which conforms to ethical voluntarism; because if good and evil are the names of the properties assigned according to divine will, then whatever is called evil or good is called so for no other reason but divine will. Nevertheless some scholars who accepted that semantic assignment occurred by divine instructions did not accept its moral connotation. Most of the Muʿtazila, before Abū Hāshim, seem to have accepted the view that semantic assignment occurred by divine instructions, including Abū al-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī and Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī.[126] Al-Kaʿbī's assertion that "the beginning of languages must have been by (*tawqīf*)" is explained by a contemporary scholar who says that the view that a language was established initially by *tawqīf* was held by al-Kaʿbī, who explicitly denied that the language is a human social invention, as it must have been created by God and transmitted from generation to generation.[127] Apparently, such a view about the origins of languages was behind ʿAbbād b. Sulaymān's (d.250/864) convention that utterances signify meanings by themselves.[128] Accordingly, he held that changing the names entails changing the meanings,[129] as there is a necessary connection between the words and the meanings they stand for. Such a convention was also behind Abū al-Qāsim's assertion that people are not allowed to change names for any purpose.[130] This issue must have raised different debates among the Muʿtazilites. Some debates are reported under the title "The possibility of inverting names" (*qalb al-asmāʾ*).[131] The Baṣrans held that it is possible to invert names and invent new concepts that serve new purposes. They considered that this is how names are given to serve new purposes. They argued that this is what actually happened when different scholars needed new terms and concepts to refer to new meanings in the field of grammar and other fields of knowledge.[132] It seems that such arguments allowed for the development of a radically different view about the origin of language, and it is Abū Hāshim who is credited for introducing an alternative view about the origin of language. According to him language was first established by conventional agreement (*al-muwāḍaʿa*), and it is a genuinely human social invention.[133]

ʿAbd al-Jabbār, like Abū Hāshim credits humans with the invention of language.[134] In a chapter entitled "Concerning the validity of the convention of language, and what is related to it,"[135] he explains that a name (*al-ism*) becomes a name of a certain nominate (*musammā*) by intention,[136] otherwise there would be no reason for things having certain names that distinguish them from other things. He explains that two persons could agree not to use a certain name except when intending to refer to a certain thing, therefore by convention or agreement it becomes a name of that thing. Others could follow, and therefore "conventional agreement becomes a language for a group of people."[137] What is significant in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's position is his emphasis on the importance of human

intention (*al-qaṣd*) and the fact that he considers it a condition for the validity of conventional agreement:

> Convention is not valid (*lā taṣiḥu*) except from the one who necessarily knows his intentions … and it is proved that the condition for the validity of the agreement or convention (*muwāḍʿa*) is the necessary knowledge of the intentions (*al-maqāṣid*).[138]

A person necessarily knows his/her own intentions and purposes, as "nothing is more evident to a person than his own state of being."[139] One can also know the intentions of others, as "the intent of a person is known through his sign or denotation (*ishāra*), behaviour, and speech."[140] Thus, human intentions are manifested in their conduct and speech, and not concealed in their hearts. Moreover, he considers that the knowledge of others' intentions is indispensable for the validity of moral judgments. He says: "If one didn't know that [i.e. the intentions of others], the knowledge needed for praise or blame wouldn't be possible."[141]

A human being knows first of all himself/herself, his/her will, and his/her intentions,[142] and then knows the intentions of others. He/she also knows what is useful and good for himself and distinguishes it from what is harmful and bad.[143] One does primarily describe acts that lead to harmful consequences as bad and those that result in useful consequences as good. Good (*ḥasan*) and bad or evil (*qabīḥ*) are terms which are intentionally and conventionally used to indicate the moral values of actions. Therefore, when ʿAbd al-Jabbār credits people for the invention of language, preceded by intent he also credits them for conventionally naming the beneficial acts as good and naming the harmful acts as bad. He also says:

> Scholars of linguistics agreed on describing the one who performs acts of transgression or injustice according to his motives, will, and intentions as a transgressor (*ẓālim*).[144]

Any one who behaves in the same manner is described as a transgressor, as the name *ẓālim* does not describe only one particular agent, according to the method of convention.[145] In a revealing passage, he explains:

> The precedence of language and convention in the existence of the name *ẓālim* is parallel to the precedence of the maturity of the intellect in deserving blame for an evil act.[146]

This means that when people agreed on naming the one who acts in a specific way as *ẓālim*, by the method of convention, they must have also been aware of the moral value attached to such a name. Because one's knowledge of the evilness of transgression is based on one's own experience of pain, anxiety, and what leads to them, and one's knowledge of his and other's intentions and needs. Any judgment, stating that something is good or evil, should be preceded by one's

knowledge of what is described as good or evil, otherwise such terms would be rendered meaningless.

In a chapter dedicated to refute the theory which states that truth is subjective,[147] ʿAbd al-Jabbār successfully argues against the view that there is no real truth and against the view that truth is relative.[148] In a following chapter, he clarifies a method to attain knowledge of the truth. It is significant that he considers the knowledge of some aspects of physical reality and the knowledge of moral principles to belong to the necessary knowledge. He considers both types of knowledge a kind of a priori knowledge, not in the sense that it precedes experience, but in a sense that this necessary knowledge is not the kind of knowledge we attain from direct perceptual experience.[149]

In explaining the necessary knowledge that is not derived empirically, ʿAbd al-Jabbār puts forward some moral and some immoral examples. Treating them under the same kind of knowledge indicates that he considers them both as belonging to what might now be called synthetic propositions.[150] He states that

> A rational being knows that a body (*jism*) cannot occupy two places at the same time, and he also knows that objects or bodies (*ajsām*) exist, and that it is impossible for them to be existent and nonexistent, eternal and created at the same time, because he knows that it is impossible for a thing to have an attribute and not to have it at the same time. [151]

Such knowledge is necessary, yet this does not mean that it is not preceded by the knowledge of the object or the body, and its existence.[152] In a similar manner ʿAbd al-Jabbār proceeds to explain the necessity of moral knowledge saying that: "a rational being, after distinguishing what is a lie from what is not, and knowing that it was not said to repel harm (*maḍarra*) knows that it is necessarily evil (*qabīḥ*)."[153] He also says: "One should necessarily know the evilness of transgression or unfairness (*al-ẓulum*), only after knowing what pain and anxiety are and what leads to them."[154]

The above two fields of knowledge (*ʿilmayn*) as conceived by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, are necessary and somehow a priori for all rational human beings.[155] For him ethical judgment of action relies on experience (*khibra*).[156] However, such experience should not be confused with empirical knowledge, based on direct perception.

God and necessary moral knowledge

ʿAbd al-Jabbār often says that "necessary knowledge must be created in us by God."[157] This seems to disagree with what has been said above, and contradicts the above quoted assertions, principally that the precedence of language and convention is parallel to the maturity of the intellect and that one should necessarily know the evilness of transgression or unfairness only after knowing what is pain, anxiety, and what leads to them. According to what has been said above, necessary knowledge is based on human experience just as language is based on human intentions and conventions.

Belief that necessary knowledge is created in us by God goes well with the belief that language itself was initially created by God. Such a view might fit the world view of some of the Muʿtazilites like Abū al-Qāsim who believed that language was created by God or Abū ʿAlī who considered both views and did not make up his mind.[158] Yet for someone like Abū Hāshim or ʿAbd al-Jabbār who held that names and descriptions were conventional,[159] it would be contradictory to hold that necessary ethical knowledge is created in us by God. If people agree by convention to describe wrongdoing, for example, or not returning a deposit as evil, and if these are part of what constitutes necessary knowledge then how is it possible that necessary knowledge is created in us by God? According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār's theory, the invention of language follows our intentions and describing wrongdoing as evil is part of our language, whereas God's intention is exclusively known from His speech.[160] According to Abū Hāshim:

> Knowing His intentions follows knowing Himself [i.e. His attributes], thus knowing His intentions cannot be necessary while knowing His essence is acquired … this would lead to [the wrong belief] that knowing what is not clear (*khafī*) is necessary while knowing what is clear is acquired.[161]

To say that necessary knowledge is created by God is to provide a straightforward and simple explanation. This view is consistent with the views of the Muʿtazilites who believed that language was first created by God, but for ʿAbd al-Jabbār, who held a sophisticated theory about the origin of language and its relation to human intentions and conventions, such an easy explanation of the origin of the necessary moral knowledge seems incompatible with his thought. In the context of his thought, it could only be understood as meaning that we are created in a way that enables us to possess such necessary knowledge. Otherwise, such knowledge would not have been considered by ʿAbd al-Jabbār as indicating the maturity of the intellect,[162] and it would be available to children and insane people, which is not the case. According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, children and insane people are not subjects of moral judgment.[163]

Moreover according to the above theory which considers the precedence of language parallel to the precedence of the maturity of the intellect, it is also not comprehensible to consider necessary moral knowledge an intuitive knowledge, as held by some scholars,[164] unless one understands intuition to be common sense. The view that ʿAbd al-Jabbār held an intuitive and deontological theory in ethics will soon be further discussed, and a new interpretation of the truth of the necessary known moral judgment will be introduced.

An interpretation of the truth of necessary moral knowledge

It has been mentioned above that necessary knowledge of moral principles, in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's thought, corresponds to what is now called "synthetical and necessary truth."[165] His assertion that moral knowledge is not possible unless

preceded by the knowledge of one's and the other's intentions, pain, anxiety, and what leads to them, means that moral knowledge depends on some kind of experience. Therefore, the truth of "necessary moral knowledge" is verifiable. It can be verified by appeal to the nature of social life.[166] This is similar to Toulmin's assertion that synthetic necessary truth can be verified by appeal to the nature of the subject matter.[167]

From what has already been said about "necessary moral knowledge" in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethics one could indicate the following aspects about the truth of necessary moral knowledge:

1 It does not depend only on linguistic convention.
2 In whatever language moral propositions are expressed, it must always remain unaffected, i.e. it must be as true or as false in Arabic, Persian or English.[168]
3 We do not discover the truth by observation or experiment. In other words, its truth is not based on sensory perception.[169]
4 Necessary moral knowledge relies on some kind of experience, yet such general experience is distinguished from empirical knowledge based on sensory experience.[170]

From the above stated aspects, which distinguish ʿAbd al-Jabbār's features of necessary moral knowledge, one might infer that he established a meaningful and verifiable basis of morality, so that its truth can be grasped by any rational being.[171]

The doctrine of personal preference (*istiḥsān al-raʾī*) was heavily attacked by the traditionalists and considered to be based on whims and passion.[172] Yet, ʿAbd al-Jabbār provided a rational basis to what is considered good and evil, and a criteria for evaluating moral judgments, upon which all rational human beings could agree. This allowed for the doctrine of rational preference (*istiḥsān ʾaqlī*) to replace the doctrine of personal preference (*istiḥsān al-raʾī*). Moreover, his ethical theory might have had great impact on the development of legal theory in Islam, particularly in articulating what is called "the purposes of law."[173]

It is interesting to compare the role of ʿAbd al-Jabbār in the field of ethical thought to the role of post-Wittgenstein moral theory in our times. The appeal to mere personal preference is worthless, and can be easily attacked by the proponents of ethical voluntarism. Arguments, raised by the opponents of preference (*al-istiḥsān*) are comparable to the arguments raised by modern philosophers who held non-cognitive theories in ethics, against intuitionism. For example, Ayer maintained that "It is notorious that what seems intuitively certain to one person may seem doubtful, or even false, to another. So that unless it is possible to provide some criterion by which one may decide between conflicting intuitions, a mere appeal to intuition is worthless as a test of a proposition's validity."[174] Toulmin and other post-Wittgensteinian moral philosophers surpassed intuitionism and non-cognitivism and proposed rational basis for morality. Toulmin maintained that "In order to justify what we call ʿsynthetic necessary propositions', we need not

appeal to the evidence of any mysterious (sixth sense) (insight) or (intuition), but only to our understanding of the nature of the subject matter under discussion."[175] In a like manner ʿAbd al-Jabbār, in order to justify what he calls "necessary moral knowledge" did not appeal to intuition, but to our understanding of the nature of the subject matter under discussion, that is, to our understanding of the state of the action, its circumstances, and consequences. Therefore, he based his ethical theory on an understanding of the nature of the subject matter, not on intuition.

It has been already indicated that some scholars have compared ʿAbd al-Jabbārs ethics to the intuitionism of Ross[176] and some have also emphasized the deontological aspect of his ethics.[177] It is true that there are some resemblances, which justified such comparisons. Yet, ʿAbd al-Jabbar's ethics can never be categorized as deontological, nor his necessary knowledge as intuitional. Although those principles about refraining from lying, breaking promises, and wrongdoing resemble Ross's "prima facia obligations" or Kant's "categorical imperatives," as first indicated by Hourani; they all function as an accepted criteria for what is good, grounded in social welfare (*maṣlaḥa*) and aim to prevent human suffering. An example such as the duty "to keep a promise," if abolished, might be expected to have intolerable social results. Such duties are ultimately based on the rights of others, as will be shown in the next chapter, and rejecting the duty to prevent avoidable suffering, cannot happen, without completely abandoning the very idea of "duty" and of "ethics," as explained by Stephen Toulmin.[178] Furthermore, deontological ethics more appropriately fits ethics of conservative parties like some of the *Ahl-al-Sunna*, whereas Mu'tazilite ethics in general and ethics of *usūl al-fiqh* scholars which was influenced by the Mu'tazilites, is better described as teleological.[179] A contemporary scholar rightly noticed that "moral principles that are completely detached from consequences are incongruous within ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethical landscape itself, one which is naturally and necessarily teleological."[180] She also says: "it is in a teleological framework that the need for non-teleological moral axioms are framed."[181] It was also maintained that: "primitive ethics is ʿdeontological', a matter of rigid duties, taboos, customs, and commandments."[182] Therefore, neither ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethics nor Mu'tazilite ethics can be properly described as deontological.

Autonomy of moral agent

A second presupposition for the validity or rationality of moral judgments is human autonomy,[183] which entails ability and power to act, to will a particular action, to choose it, and intend to do it. In other words, it is the ability to act independently of any deterministic factors. The concept of autonomy is vitally important, since only agents acting autonomously can be held responsible for their actions. Human autonomy could be challenged by factors that are considered to limit or constrain freedom and which are imposed by internal or external causes. ʿAbd al-Jabbār considered such factors. He was aware of some compelling situations that necessitated a certain action.

The strong conviction that we are often autonomous agents is grounded in the basic experience we have of our own states of being:

> The necessary knowledge of one's own state like being willing (*murīdan*), or hating (*kārihan*) or believing (*muʿtaqidan*) … is the basis (*al-aṣl*) for knowing that an action is an agent's action (*taʿalluq al-fiʿl bil-fāʿil*).[184]

ʿAbd al-Jabbār believes that we have the capacity of self-government because he believes that, whatever forces may be pressing us to act it is ultimately up to us to determine what to make of them. The autonomy of moral agent in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's thought will be clarified through three closely related conditions of ethical judgments that were explicitly considered by him, and which together form the condition of autonomy. They are: the power to act, will and motivations, and human responsibility. It will be shown that he considered a responsible agent (*al-mukallaf*), who is the proper subject of ethical judgment to be an autonomous human being who is capable of acting (*qādir*), choosing his act (*mukhtār*), and willing to do it (*murīd*).

The ability or the power to act (al-qudra)

ʿAbd al-Jabbār accepts Abū Hāshim's definition of *al-taklīf*, saying that "it is, in fact willing (*irāda*) [from the addressee *al-mukallaf*] something to be done that includes some hardship or difficulty."[185] His definition is justified by appealing to the ordinary use of language. He argues that when one of us wants someone to perform something that includes some hardship or difficulty, he is said to be assigning obligation (*kallafa*), whereas if one wants from another something that does not include any hardship, like eating delicious food, then he is not said to be assigning obligation.[186]

Human power to act is limited by natural laws, and that is why a moral judgment should not assign what is naturally or physically impossible. ʿAbd al-Jabbār, ascribes the attribute (*qādir*) (literally the able one, or the one who exhibits the power to act) to a human being, and says that a responsible moral agent is " al-*qādir*, *al-ʿālim* (the knowledgable), *al-mudrik* (the observer), *al-ḥayy* (the alive), and *al-murīd* (the willing one) or the intending one."[187] However, ascribing the attribute *qādir* to the human being, by no means implies that he is capable of doing anything and everything. ʿAbd al-Jabbār says: "What is known to be actually impossible could not be the object of a will (*lā yajūzu an yurād*)."[188] Therefore, there are things which are actually impossible, and it is irrational to require from a human being to do such things. The actually impossible acts are better presented in a book written by a pupil of ʿAbd al-Jabbār. Abū Al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī gives some examples of what he considers impossible. These are: combining two opposites, changing the past, or requiring someone to do many actions in a very limited time.[189]

For ʿAbd al-Jabbār, one has to have the power (*qudra*) to do an action before it is required from him to perform the action.[190] He says that a human being is

endowed with power to act and he explains that this power does not necessitate action, as it is "a power to perform an action or its opposite."[191] To say that you ought to perform an action or to do its opposite, both presuppose the power to act (*qudra*). This might seem obvious. Yet it needs to be emphasized, because it might be argued that God, by creating the *qudra* in an agent, He thereby causes him to act. This was argued by al-Ashʿarī, for example, who refused to consider a human being truly acting (*fāʿil ʾalā al-ḥaqīqa*).[192] For him, humans are only metaphorically said to act. [193] Of course, this is closely linked with debates concerning free will and predestination. If a power to act is created in us at the time of acting, then it would imply that it is a power to act in a definite way, which implies predestination of human acts or fatalism. Yet, by emphasizing the fact that power exists before the action, and that it is the power to perform an action or its opposite, the power created by God could not be considered the cause of choosing a certain action. It is a necessary condition for action and for being able to fulfill any obligation. ʿAbd al-Jabbār says: "The power to act (*qudra*) is a necessary condition that should precede the performance of the assigned obligation."[194] It is, by no means, considered by ʿAbd al-Jabbār a determining cause. On the contrary its definition safeguards the freedom of action, the freedom to choose an action or its opposite. It therefore safeguards human's autonomy, or freedom to act.

In addition, one could not be morally responsible for not performing an action if one lacks the necessary tools needed to perform the required action. Lacking the necessary tools could restrict a human being's ability to act and to perform certain obligations. Thus in order for the addressee to be able to act, he should be provided with the necessary tools needed to perform an action, if that action cannot be performed without those tools. He says:

> We have demonstrated previously that some acts, in order to be performed in certain aspects require a tool … and if this is true, then just as it is irrational (*lā yaḥsunu*) to assign an obligation to perform an act, unless the addressee is capable, or has power (*qādir*) to perform it, in order to be considered truly his action; it is also irrational to assign an obligation unless the agent is given the tools or that tools are made available for him before the action … just as it is irrational to assign an obligation if there is no power. It is also irrational to assign obligation if there is no tool.[195]

For example, one cannot request a boy to ascend to the rooftop without him having a ladder.[196] It is bad or irrational to obligate any act which requires for its actualization something that is unavailable. Interestingly enough, he considers it bad or irrational to require someone to pay his debts when he is unable to pay; because he has no money. He says: "assigning this obligation when one has no money is irrational."[197] Moreover, asking someone to go to the roof, when he has no ladder, and asking someone to pay his debts when he has no money are as unintelligible as asking a bird with broken wings to fly.[198] The ability or power to fulfill certain obligations requires, therefore, the availability of the tools needed

to perform what is required. Therefore, a sub-condition of the ability to act is the availability of necessary tools, when needed.

Yet it should be noted that the above does not imply that one should not do one's best to perform one's obligations, as ʿAbd al-Jabbār explicitly states that the ought judgment itself implies that the action required cannot be performed without some hardship or difficulty (*mashaqqa*).[199] He supports this by evidence from ordinary language, saying that "we do not use ought judgments in assigning obligations to do actions of pure benefit to the agent which are not associated with any harm or difficulty."[200] Every ought judgment entails some degree of difficulty or hardship, which should not be so difficult as to become impossible to perform.

The above conditions or presuppositions stated by ʿAbd al-Jabbār are similar to the presuppositions of moral judgments presented by a contemporary moral philosopher who asserted that a moral judgment presupposes logical, physical, and technical possibility. Neil Cooper stated that "any moral judgment is pointless or irrational if it is impossible to the addressee to perform what it prescribes."[201] He also said:

> If you know that an action is physically impossible, it is irrational to say either "you should do it" or even "you should try to do it," but if you know it to be merely technically impossible, while it is irrational to say here and now "you should … " it is not irrational to say "you should try … " Since techniques, unlike the course of nature, are to a certain extent in our power.[202]

A judgment that requires from an agent to do what is physically or technically impossible is an irrational judgment, because for a moral judgment to be rational it should require what is realistically and technically possible to achieve. It has been proved that according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār it is irrational to impose obligations that human beings are not capable to do. This is fully expressed in the Muʿtazilite's maxim, taken from the Qur'ān, which asserts that it is bad or irrational to impose unbearable obligations (*taklīf mā lā yuṭāq*).[203] On the other hand by believing in human autonomy ʿAbd al Jabbār, definitely, does not assume that there are no external factors which could influence our desires, motivations, and choices. However, none of those factors should constitute a sufficient cause for action if the action is to be considered a freely chosen one.

In various places ʿAbd al Jabbār emphasizes that actions are performed according to our intentions and motivations (*bi ḥasbi qaṣdina wa dawāʿīna*).[204] Indeed, it is also a presupposition of moral judgments that the agent should have purposes and motivations.[205] This will be treated below as a separate condition. However, the question that one is prompted to ask is whether any of those motivations or purposes could amount to an internal or external compulsion in a sense that they impel the person to act or in any way produce his action. It will be shown that, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, motivations and purposes can be autonomously deliberated upon by reason. Consequently, it will be shown that ʿAbd al-Jabbār

has provided us with a "theory of action"[206] that is compatible with his assertions about a human agent's ability to act.

The will (al-irāda), intention and motivations

Human will (*irāda*)[207] is distinguished from motivation and from any emotional tendencies related to human appetite or desire (*shahwa*) and aversion (*nufūr*).[208] Desire and aversion are somehow considered the acts of nature, whereas the will is properly the agent's will.[209] We might naturally have aversive feelings towards things that are ultimately useful for us; such as taking medication, but we are willing to take the medication although it might be abhorrent. In a similar manner we might not choose to follow our appetitive desires even when these are pleasant, because we choose and will (*nurīdu*) what is beneficial in the long run. ʿAbd al-Jabbār says: "Pleasure follows the appetitive desire (*al-shahwa*) and not the will."[210] Motivations are also distinguished from will, and motivation to do a particular action is, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār,

> knowledge, belief or merely one's assumption that a certain act would be preferential, because it is beneficial, or because it prevents some harmfulness, or simply because it is morally good.[211]

Usually there is more than one motivation, and often there is a conflict between different motivations, which makes an agent undetermined, and his act not caused by merely one single motivation. In other words, a motivation does not necessitate an action. "and the agent hesitates between various motives that motivate different actions."[212] In an important article,[213] R. M. Frank relates motivation to intention volition or choice, highlighting the fact that motivation is merely the reason for acting intentionally. He says:

> Motivation is the state of the agent in his being aware of having a reason, and the reason for doing something is also the reason for forming the prescriptive intention (the volition or choice) to do it. It is in short the reason for doing it intentionally.[214]

Intention in this context could be defined as "the will to act."[215] However, more often perhaps, because of our natural needs and appetites, there is a conflict of motivations such that it is not easy and pleasant to do what is right. Similarly, it is not always easy to do what is most truly in our own self-interest, and is therefore obligatory on the principle that one ought to avoid harm to oneself, such as taking a detestable medicine, which is not pleasant, yet it is beneficial. Normal adult human beings usually act rationally, for perceived ends.[216] Motivations according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār "are not determinant causes; they simply entail that a given act is more appropriate (*awlā*) than another to be chosen by the one who is able to act."[217] The sense of *awlā* from the standpoint of the agent is that he has better

reason to do the given act than to do something else.[218] Motivations are actually necessary conditions for producing an act, yet they are not sufficient conditions. The necessary conditions together with the intention and will to act make all together what is called *'illa mūjiba,* or sufficient reason for producing the act. Therefore ʿAbd al-Jabbār's conventions about the nature and the function of motivation allows for the conclusion that by holding that a human being should be able to will, intend, and choose his actions in order to be the proper subject of moral judgment ʿAbd al-Jabbār recognized human autonomy and considered it a presupposition of moral judgment.

Responsibility

Having the freedom to perform or not to perform an action is a necessary condition for moral responsibility. Responsibility as a presupposition of moral judgment cannot be separated from the freedom of choice. A human being is responsible for actions performed consciously. The actions of unconscious or unaware (*al-sāhī*) and a sleeping person are not willed or intended, therefore their agent (*al-fā'il*) should not be held responsible for doing them.[219] However there are actions that are performed consciously, but still their agents are not held responsible for doing them according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār. Such are the actions of the agent described by him as *muḍṭar*, or the one who acts under causal constrain (*al-ḍarūra*), and the actions of *al-mulja',* which is the name of the agent who performs his actions for compulsory motivations (*dawā'ī mūjiba*). It is important to notice that ʿAbd al Jabbār recognized the difference between the acts performed under causal constraint (*al-ḍarūra*) and those performed for compulsory motivation (*al-ilja'*). He says:

> It might appear to an able person (*al-qādir*),something which implies that he has to do a certain action, yet that does not rule out the fact of his being able, in contrast to the causally constrained (*al-muḍṭar*), to whom something was done that he cannot avoid, and he is forbidden to act. This is why it is impossible that the forbidden (*al-mamnū'*) is compelled (*mulja'*) to do what he was actually forbidden from doing or not doing.[220]

Therefore, the one who acts under compulsory motivation is still capable of acting otherwise, whereas the one who acts under causal constraint has no choice at all.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār accepts Abū Hāshim's definition of *al-mulja',* which says: "The compelled, *al-mulja',* is the one who is pushed to do one of two alternative harmful actions, and then prefers the less harmful."[221] ʿAbd al-Jabbār says that it is possible to consider *al-'iljā':* "the strong motive that amounts to making the capable person *qādir* to be compelled, *mulja'.*" Yet motivations are, as mentioned above, beliefs and reasons endorsed by the agent and not really external to him, and thus the compelled person is still able to choose, although he will most probably choose

the actions supported by the strongest motivation. For example, if one is told that there is a lion somewhere on the road, and he believes it is true, because of certain evidence, then he is compelled to avoid being killed by the lion, by choosing a different road.[222] Theoretically, he could still choose to follow the same way and maybe fight with the lion but practically, to avoid the lion is his only rational choice. Whereas the *muḍṭar*, is the one who cannot avoid doing or not doing an action. For example, "the paralysed person is described to be *muḍṭar*."[223]

He recognizes that linguisticians, *ʿahl al-lugha*, do not differentiate between the two concepts, but the *mutakallimūn* need to distinguish between the agent who is completely under the influence of an external act and between the agent whose own motivation compels him to act.[224] The distinction made by ʿAbd al-Jabbār between acts we are forced to do, or forced not to do and have no choice to avoid and acts that we are compelled to do because of a powerful motivation seems very reasonable. Yet, what seems unreasonable is the fact that ʿAbd al'Jabbār considers the compelled agent and the agent who has no choice both morally irresponsible for their acts. He agrees with Abū Hāshim when considering that the compelled (*al-mulja'*) is excluded from deserving blame or praise,[225] and that a human being is compelled not to harm himself.[226] He also maintains that one is compelled not to kill himself; therefore "one of us should not be praised for not killing himself."[227] However, he seems to have forgotten about the people who are tempted to commit suicide, for whatever reasons. If he considered these people, he would not have assumed that all people are compelled not to kill themselves, and then those who have a tendency to commit suicide, but choose not to do it for any good reason, deserve to be praised. Following his masters, ʿAbd al-Jabbār considers that the compelled person is not a responsible agent. Consequently, he considers it irrational to impose obligation on him. Thus, if a person's powerful motivation compels him to do a certain action he should not be blamed or praised, and so he is excluded from being considered a responsible agent. This is a view that shall soon be critically examined.

It could be argued that such a view might have undesirable results, because anyone would be able to avoid blame or punishment by claiming that he was compelled to do whatever, even if he could in fact have easily chosen not to do it. An example might be given of a person who is threatened to be tortured unless he betrays his country, or say his religion. Maybe such a person should not really be blamed, if one allows for human weakness, or if his own situation is taken into account. Yet, he should certainly be praised if he chooses to endure the torture rather than to betray his country. Moreover, there is really no point in distinguishing between the one who is compelled, yet still able to choose and another who has no choice at all because he is under causal constraint, unless it allows for holding the former responsible for his action. ʿAbd al-Jabbār acknowledged the normative judgments of recommended or supererogatory actions, i.e. the actions whose omitter does not deserve blame, but whose performer deserves praise.[228] Thus, one might argue that he could have better considered that the person acting under compulsory motivation deserves praise if he does not choose to do what he is strongly motivated to do, but what is better in the long run. It is worth mentioning that he considered

that a person is sometimes compelled to eat the meat of a dead animal[229] that was not killed according to religious law (which is forbidden in Islam). Thus, one might wonder: what if this person chose to endure hunger rather than eat what is forbidden. Certainly, he will then deserve to be praised, although he should not deserve blame for eating it. His action, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār's theory, must be considered among the category of recommended actions (*mandūb*), the actions whose omitter does not deserve blame, but whose performer deserves praise.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār also considers that a person who is compelled not to do what is bad or evil does not deserve praise.

> The one who is compelled (*mulja'*) not to do a bad or evil act does not perform it actually, because he is compelled, and not because it is evil. Yet, it was proved that deserving praise and award follows restraining from doing evil because it is evil, not for anything else. Thus [for example] one does not deserve to be praised for not drinking alcohol when [drinking it] harms him [for being sick], but if one refrains from drinking [alcohol] because it is evil, then he does deserve to be praised.[230]

ʿAbd al-Jabbār's view that a person compelled to act is excluded from moral responsibility, though he is an able person whose action ultimately depends on him, is open to discussion, and his view might be proved incompatible with his understanding of the nature of a motivation. It has been shown above that a motivation, according to him, is knowledge, belief, or merely one's assumption that a certain act would be preferred to be done. Of course, circumstances might exist that constitute good reason for a certain action to be performed, but this does not actually impel the person to act or in any way produce his action. It merely constitutes a good reason for doing what he did. The same person could have done what he was compelled to do, even without compulsion. Therefore, in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's above mentioned example, the person who is compelled not to drink because he is sick and afraid of harming himself could still deliberately have chosen not to drink if he were not sick. The mere fact that the agent actually has choice in what he is doing, and as a capable agent participates in performing the action is enough to consider him responsible for his action. The person, after all, willed (*arāda*) what he did, so that it is not right to say that he did what he did only because he could not have done otherwise. Even a person's knowledge that he stands to suffer an intolerable harsh penalty does not mean that he cannot perform any action but the one he does perform. After all, it is still open to him, and this is crucial, to defy the threat if he wishes to do so and to accept the penalty his action would bring down upon him. Someone's inability to resist the threat does not mean that he cannot do otherwise. Indeed, even ʿAbd al-Jabbār has noticed that any compelled act could still be done without compulsion.[231] As, for example, when he mentioned that if the person under threat is promised a greater reward if he does not do what the threat requires him to do then he is not compelled any more.[232] He also considers that a coward is compelled to act in a certain way, while a brave person is not considered to be compelled *mulja'*.[233] Moreover, he noticed that some people in

India are not compelled not to kill themselves.[234] Thus, one might wonder why ʿAbd al-Jabbār excluded acts of the compulsory motivated agent from moral responsibility and considered his status similar to the status of the person who has no choice at all, who is causally constrained (*muḍṭar*).[235]

Nevertheless, ʿAbd al-Jabbār's position regarding the issue under consideration might be defended if one closely examines what he and his Muʿtazilite masters really meant by the concept of *al-iljā'* and why he insisted on differentiating between the concept of *iljā'* and the concept of *iḍṭirār*.

It has been already mentioned that *iljā'* is related to a strong compelling motive.[236] Yet it seems that this strong compelling motive, which an agent finds himself compelled to so act accordingly, is always good and beneficial. ʿAbd al-Jabbār agrees with his master Abū Hāshim on considering that "a human being is sometimes compelled to benefit himself and repel harm from himself and from the people he cares about, and every one who is compelled (*mulja'*) to do something, would be obliged to do it if he were not compelled."[237] Thus, the same action that one is compelled to do would actually be considered obligatory *wājib*. He derives from this, following his master, that "one then cannot be compelled to lie or to kill."[238] So it seems that he believes that people are only compelled to do what is good, but they are never compelled or strongly motivated to do evil. Maybe this is the reason why he does not consider blaming a person for doing what he chooses to do according to a strong motive. Since he assumes [regardless of the truth of this dubious assumption] that *iljā'* necessitates only good actions that are beneficial for oneself and for his kin, then one does not deserve to be praised for performing what is beneficial for himself.[239]

However, apart from the controversial concept of *iljā',* which exempts a person from being qualified for a moral judgment by not deserving blame or praise, it should be mentioned that according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār and most masters of the Muʿtazilite school, the human being is always responsible for his actions. In this regard, it is appropriate to quote a prominent western scholar who stated that:

> The original ontological possibility of an action (*ṣiḥḥat al-fi'l*) is grounded in the power of efficient causality (*qudra*) which is an attribute of the human agent, at the disposition of his intentions (*qaṣd*) and free choice (*ikhtiyār*), so that he is truly an autonomous agent, so the knowledge and judgment of the acts whose possibility lies within his power of efficient causality are also his as an attribute that belongs to him properly as a human individual, so that he is truly responsible as an autonomous agent.[240]

Purposefulness

In a separate section of his book *al-Taklīf* ʿAbd al-Jabbār considers having purposes (*aghrāḍ*) and motives (*dawā'i*) a necessary condition of moral judgment.[241] This

justifies treating the condition of purposefulness, following ʿAbd al-Jabbār's explicit statement, as a condition required on the part of the addressee; though, purposefulness can also be considered a substantive condition of ethical judgment or a norm that any judgment has to satisfy in order to be considered rational moral judgment. The condition of purposefulness is ultimately based on understanding human beings' purposeful attitudes, and assumes that any ought judgment has to be related to purposes and motives of the addressee if it is to be fulfilled. Of course, any ought judgment requests the addressee to behave according to what it recommends or requests, and seeks that its recommendation is fulfilled; otherwise, it would be irrational or would not be a moral judgment at all. Thus, any moral judgment in order to fulfill its purposes has to be related or based upon an understanding of human purposes and motives. The fact that human beings have purposes and motives and that they act accordingly is clear from ʿAbd al-Jabbār's continuous assertion that human beings act according to their motivations and intentions, or states and purposes (*aghrāḍ wa aḥwāl*).[242] He considers it bad (*qabīḥ*) to act arbitrarily or to perform useless acts (*ʿabath*).[243] Indeed, it is now considered "a psychological fact that people are unwilling to make purposeless ethical judgments."[244]

It is useful in this context to refer to ʿAbd al-Jabbār's clarification of the two terms *al-dāʿī*, "motive" and *al-gharaḍ*, "purpose." He says that *al-dāʿī* is originally used to indicate "the one who calls" or the "caller." However, it is conventionally used by the *mutakallimīn*, that is, scholars of *kalām*, to indicate the reason for which an agent performs his action.[245] Whereas *al-gharad* indicates "knowledge of an expected result," and it is more specific (*akhaṣ*) than the "motive." "Thus if an action has a product or result (*thamara*) in the future, one can correctly say that the agent's purpose (*gharaḍuhu*) from performing the action is that result."[246] The condition, or the norm of purposefulness might exclude any ought judgment that requires a human being to do something which contradicts his natural tendencies, or an ought judgment that requires an agent to harm himself. The condition of purposefulness excludes ought judgments that cannot be accepted because they are simply "out of touch" and do not fit among humans' purposes and motivations. A moral judgment is also irrational or arbitrary if it requires some acts that are purposeless. Examples of purposeless or useless acts are hiring someone to transfer the water of the sea from one side to the other, and unnecessarily breaking a drowning person's arm while rescuing him, that is if he could be rescued without breaking his arm and so on.[247]

The content of the ought judgment reveals the intentions and the purposes of the speaker. It should take into account the purposes and intentions of the addressees and should aim at their benefit. Even divine judgments would be irrational and not valid if prescribed for no purpose, ʿAbd al-Jabbār says: "If He had no purpose in assigning an obligation, then the assignment of the obligation would be irrational (*qabīḥ*)."[248] His judgments could not be based on purposes related to His own benefit.[249] Thus, "His purpose (*gharaḍuhu*) must be for the benefit of the addressee (*al-mukallaf*)."[250]

Universality and impartiality

Universalizability is a feature of moral judgments acknowledged in one form or another by most philosophers.[251] Yet it is a necessary condition for moral judgments, not a sufficient one. As there are non-moral principles which are universal, like, for example, aesthetic ones.[252] Universalizability as a concept is not explicitly discussed by ʿAbd al-Jabbār. However, it is evident that moral obligations, known by reason are according to his conventions, necessarily universal. The moral agent or morally responsible human being (*al-mukallaf*) is every human being who fulfills the conditions of ethical judgments, and rational obligation (*al-taklīf al-ʿaqlī*) is valid for everyone. It is not specially related to some people to the exclusion of others,[253] because all mature humans are necessarily aware of some essential moral principles, and are autonomous, and have similar needs and purposes. Therefore, any valid moral judgment is valid universally.

However, universalizability does not by itself enforce impartiality or equal treatment.[254] Abd al-Jabbār's ethics definitely endorsed the impartiality as a criteria of ethical judgment. For him the goodness or badness of a certain action has nothing to do with the status of its agent, be it a slave or a master.[255] Transgression or injustice is evil regardless of its agent.[256] Evil is evil even if it came from prophets or angels.[257] The impartiality of ethical judgments is exemplified in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's thought, when he said: "An action if considered evil for occurring in a certain way, then it must be evil from any agent if it occurs in the same way."[258]

Objectivity and rationality

Objectivity and rationality are necessary conditions of moral judgments. What is meant here by objective moral judgment is a moral judgment that can somehow be verified by referring to the circumstances and consequences of the proscribed or the prescribed action. It is distinguished in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethics from a subjective moral judgment which ultimately refers to the state of the speaker, that is, to his will or passion. The argument that ʿAbd al-Jabbār considered objectivity, in this sense, a norm of ethical judgments will be demonstrated in the next chapter where it will be shown that the ground of normative judgment is the state of action, rather than the state of the agent or a determinant cause.[259] His convention that the ground of normative judgment, good and evil, are objective and can be known by reason clearly opposes the doctrine of divine subjectivism or ethical voluntarism. According to ethical voluntarism, good and evil are established by God's will, and obligation is only valid when it is obliged by God. ʿAbd al-Jabbār explicitly announced that "being obliged by God is not a condition for obligation."[260]

He considers that a duty or an obligation is an obligation, even if no one actually obliged it. He recognized the fact that "obligation" or "*al-wājib*" is linguistically a derived term, saying that the term "*wājib*" according to linguistics is derived from the verb's past tense "*awjaba*."[261] In Arabic, as in English, when it is said "obligation" or "*wājib*" it immediately comes to one's mind that there is an

"obligator" "*mūjib*" who obligated the obligation, which implies that the source of obligation is God. However, ʿAbd al-Jabbār explains that although this term is linguistically a derived term, it is conventionally (*iṣṭilāḥan*) used by him and his masters for purposes [indicating moral purposes] that were not yet recognized by scholars of language (*ahl al-lugha*). He says: "It is originally a derived term, yet it is not necessarily so conventionally."[262] His arguments against ethical voluntarism and other subjective views of morality will be investigated in the next chapter.

Closely related to the norm of objectivity is the norm of rationality, as objective moral judgments are known by reason, and all mature humans are rationally obliged to do what is good and refrain from doing what is evil. Good and evil are objective qualities and are known by reason.

The norm of rationality is also implied in the conditions of moral agents, discussed above. It can be said that it is irrational to assign obligation to someone incapable to understand, unable to act, or someone who cannot be held responsible for his actions. Also the one who recommends the impossible, or the unbearable, or recommends not to do the unavoidable, necessarily fails to promote his ends. His recommended actions or his ethical judgments are therefore irrational.

One can also conclude that the rationality of moral judgment is not known by "intuition." It is known by reason, after reflection and consideration as to whether a moral judgment fulfills the necessary conditions of moral judgments. ʿAbd al-Jabbār accepts his Baṣran masters' definition of reason *al-ʿaql*, and says:

> *Al-ʿaql* is a set of distinctive kinds of knowledge, when present in a responsible being (*mukallaf*) legitimize discursive reasoning and reflection (*ṣaḥḥa minhu al-naẓar wa'l-istidlāl*) and accomplishing one's obligations.[263]

One might notice that this definition emphasizes *al-ʿaql's* function rather than its essence or nature. He refrains from defining it as a substance (*jawhar*), or a sense (*ḥassa*) or a faculty (*quwwa*), and provides good reasons for not defining it in such ways.[264] Some have suggested translating *ʿaql* as "common sense,"[265] and others as "intuition."[266] Yet "intuition" properly stands for "*ḥads*" or "*badīha*." According to an ordinary dictionary, intuition is "ability to understand or to know something immediately, without conscious reasoning."[267] Thus it cannot properly stand for *ʿaql* as defined above, because *al-ʿaql* enables one to reflect and accomplish one's obligations. ʿAbd al-Jabbār's definition of *al-ʿaql* in terms of its epistemological content and function better corresponds to the modern meaning of reason or intellect. Reason is understood as "the intellectual faculty or normal or sound powers of mind"[268] or as defined in a standard Oxford dictionary: "The power to think, understand, and draw conclusions logically."[269] Intellect can also refer to the mental capacity to comprehend ideas and relationships and to exercise judgments, or simply the power to learn and think.[270] It is true that ʿAbd al-Jabbār refrained from defining *al-ʿaql* as a faculty or mental capacity (*quwwa*). However, he explicitly stated that if what is meant by faculty is something without which

one would not be able to reflect and thus acquire knowledge, then it has the same meaning and it is right. However, he does not find the term "*quwwa*" appropriate. He refrains from defining the nature of the intellect because this is not an issue. The important thing is its function and purpose, as "it is a means by which one acquires knowledge, and enables one to perform his obligations."[271] Thus the true meaning of *al-ʾaql* does not suggest that "it is a storehouse of various stuff."[272] In addition, we are informed by al-Tahānawī that what was said about *al-ʾaql* by the Muʿtazilites is not far from considering it a faculty:

> The Muʿtazilites, who held that good and bad are known by reason (*ʾaql*), explained that [*al-ʾaql*] is something by which one knows the goodness of the good and the badness of the bad. This definition is not far from what was said that it is a distinguishing power (*quwa mumayyiza*) between good and bad. It has also been said that it is faculty (*malaka*) that happens by experience (*tajārub*) and enables one to derive interests and purposes.[273]

One can recall ʿAbd al-Jabbār's view that what is intended or the true meaning does not change in different languages, nor does naming change the nominate. The name Allah was translated as God, because both are names that signify the Supreme Being and the creator of the universe. If other aspects about His nature held by different religious traditions, or even different views within the same religion were taken into account, people might prefer to hold to different names that correspond to various interpretation of His nature. Every one might say: "what I mean is different than what you mean" because there are so many interpretations about the nature of God. Similarly there are also so many interpretations of the nature of the intellect. If Allah in the Muʿtazilite theology is translated as God by most scholars, then indeed one can see no reason why *ʾaql* would not be translated as reason or intellect. If one emphasizes all the possible connotations of a term, and various possible meanings, then translation would be impossible and communication and debate between different nations would become hopeless. However, one is justified in translating *ʾaql* as meant by the Baṣran Muʿtazilites as reason, just as *ʾāqil* is translated as rational being, and *taklīf ʾaqlī* is translated as rational obligation, taking into consideration the context and the use of these terms.

6

ANALYSIS OF NORMATIVE ETHICAL JUDGMENTS

Before proceeding to the analysis of normative judgments in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's thought, one should keep in mind that a normative judgment according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār presupposes a certain set of conditions which are: knowledge of good and evil, necessary ethical knowledge, human autonomy, responsibility, purposefulness, having will (*al-irāda*), universality, impartiality, objectivity, and rationality.

I will be investigating the normative categories of ethical judgments in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's thought and the grounds for these judgments in this chapter. Light will be shed on his arguments against subjective theories of moral value and against ethical voluntarism or Divine Command Theory. Also a debate concerning the place of Divine Command Theory in Islamic ethics will be considered from different comparative perspectives. The meaning of the grammatical forms of language and their relation to morality will be given special attention, as ʿAbd al-Jabbār's views concerning the language of morals established a hermeneutical approach that provided a linguistic basis for understanding moral obligations in Islamic ethics. The Muʿtazilite interpretation of the story of Ibrāhīm will be considered and compared to similar stories that are sometimes quoted in support of ethical voluntarism in Christianity. An attempt will be made to interpret the nature of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethical theory using his definitions of value terms and disclosing the meaning of ethical judgments, depending on ʿAbd al-Jabbār's own definitions and arguments. The grounds of normative judgments will be fully investigated to determine the nature of value judgments in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethical theory, to be followed by an investigation into the post-Muʿtazilite perception of moral values and normative judgments and an interpretation of the place of Divine Command Theory in Islamic thought.

Normative judgments and value judgments

Ethical judgments in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's theory are normative and intended to guide human conduct. They are based upon reason and grounded in value judgments. It will be argued here that one of the most important features, which seems to have been first articulated by ʿAbd al-Jabbār and his immediate Muʿtazilite masters, is the distinction between normative judgments and value judgments. Normative

judgments include judgments of actions performed by a fully responsible human being, whereas value judgments refer to the value of an action in light of its consequences, and they are independent of the status of their agents. The distinction between moral values and ethical judgments is clearly implied in different arguments presented in various contexts in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's works. It will be shown that according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār an action ought to be done because it is good or should not be done because it is evil. It is not good because it ought to be done nor evil because it ought not be done. Of course this is a position that clearly distinguishes teleological ethics from deontological ones.

Any action that has a moral value is considered either good (*ḥasan*) or evil (*qabīh*). Whether an action is to be considered good or evil is ultimately determined by the beneficial or harmful consequences that it brings about. ʿAbd al-Jabbār contends that what is *ḥasan* is ultimately beneficial and what is *qabīh* is ultimately harmful.

Normative judgments, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, are classified into four different categories. These categories have been recognized by George Hourani.[1] They are defined in terms of deserving blame or praise (*istiḥqāq al-dhamm aw al-madḥ*). The permissible act (*mubāḥ*) is an act where its agent deserves no blame or praise,[2] the recommended act (*Mandūb*) is the act where its agent deserves praise for performing it, but deserves no blame for omitting it,[3] the obligatory (*wājib*) is the act where its agent deserves to be blamed for omitting it,[4] the forbidden (*maḥẓūr* – which he also calls "*qabīḥ*") is the act where its agent deserves blame for performing it.[5] He introduces these definitions at the beginning of the sixth volume of *al-Mughnī* in a chapter entitled "Concerning the division of acts and their judgments" and ascribes them to his masters Abū ʿAlī and Abū Hāshim.[6] In general, the Muʿtazilites related ethical judgments of actions to their consequences and defined them in terms of their consequences, rather than in terms of blame or praise. Al-Tahānawī (d. after 1158/1745) stated that the Muʿtazila in general agreed on the following definitions of normative judgments of actions:

> *Wājib*: is an act or the judgment (*ḥukm*) of an act which, if not performed, entails or leads to corruption or harm (*mafsada*).
>
> *Ḥarām*: is the judgment of an act which, if performed, entails corruption.
>
> *Mandūb*: is the judgment of an act, which, if performed, entails some benefit (*maṣlaḥa*).
>
> *Makrūh*: is the judgment of an act, which, if not performed, entails benefit.
>
> *Mubāh*: is the judgment of an act, which does not entail any corruption or benefit.[7]

The above definitions, which are ascribed to the Muʿtazilites clearly demonstrate that the criteria of normative judgment were taken to be benefit or harm, which conforms to the teleological aspect of Muʿtazilite ethics. It will be demonstrated that ʿAbd al-Jabbār also maintained the same line of thought, although the formal definitions of the categories of normative judgments, which he adopted from his masters Abū ʿAlī and Abū Hāshim, were different from the abovementioned Muʿtazilite definitions. ʿAbd al-Jabbār defines those judgments in terms of praise and blame, and in his definitions "deserving blame" replaces "what leads to corruption" and deserving praise replaces "what leads to benefit." However, the grounds of normative judgment are not blame or praise as will soon be argued, and it is these grounds of normative judgments that are fundamentally important.

It is important to recall that the presuppositions stated in the previous chapter are properly the conditions of normative judgments, not of value judgments. The value of an action is distinct from the judgment of its agent, as the performance of evil or wrongdoing is judged evil only by virtue of its harmful consequences, regardless of whether the agent knows what he/she is doing or not, and regardless of the agent's intentions. An act might be good or evil, although the agent might not deserve blame or praise. ʿAbd al-Jabbār says:

> We do not make knowledge of wrongdoing a condition of its being evil; it is evil whether the agent knows it or is ignorant of it. We only make knowledge of that or the power to know it, a condition for deserving blame for it.[8]

And elsewhere he says:

> The rightness of blaming (*ḥusn al-dhamm*) does not follow the occurrence of the evil; it only follows its occurrence from someone who knows it is evil, or is able to know that, in order to be able to avoid it.[9]

He holds that even when a wrong act is done unconsciously by a sleeping person or a person who is absent-minded (*sāhī*), it is still considered wrong, although the sleeper or the absent-minded one is not to be blamed.[10] The distinction between the value of acts (value judgments) and normative judgments might be ascribed to ʿAbd al-Jabbār's immediate masters, Abū ʿAbdullah al-Baṣrī (d.369/979) and Abū Isḥāq b. ʿAyyāsh (d. unknown). They explicitly held that the evilness of wrongdoing is independent of the agent's state, which is contrary to the position held by the prominent Muʿtazilite masters, Abū ʿAlī and his son Abū Hāshim. The latter held that an unintended action could not be judged as good or evil because they believed that the value of the action depends on the state of the agent.[11] According to Abū ʿAlī and Abū Hāshim the absentminded does not deserve blame, not only because its agent cannot be considered responsible for such an unintended action, but "because what occurs is basically (*aṣlan*) ʿnot evil.'"[12] Whereas ʿAbd al-Jabbār maintained that "if somebody, while asleep, strikes a man or injures him, then his

act should be considered *qabīḥ*."[13] Thus Abū ʿAlī and Abū Hāshim believed that actions have no moral value and are not to be called good or evil unless their agent is a person of sound mind (*kāmil al-ʿaql*) and intentionally performs the action. However, considering actions good or evil (by ʿAbd al-Jabbār) even when not performed intentionally certainly does not entail that such unintended evil is forbidden (*maḥẓūr*), or that its agent deserves blame. It is true that the evil action might occur unintentionally from a sleeper, a child or an absent-minded person, but of course, its agent in such cases does not deserve blame. The action is evil because of its harmful effects not because of its agent's intention. Intention and knowledge, as already shown, are presuppositions of normative judgments not of value judgments.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār believed that value judgments (good and evil) are objective, in the sense that value judgments are related to some aspects of the action itself, whereas the views of the two Jubbā'ī masters imply that there is no sufficient reason for considering an action evil for some aspects related to the action itself. According to them the evil quality of an action is not independent from the state of the agent. Thus, the position of the two Jubbā'īs implies that the value of the action is not different from the normative judgment which presupposes certain conditions on the part of the agent. Whereas evil, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār is a property of the action itself, due to the harmful consequences that it brings about and is completely independent from the state of the agent:

> The state of an agent has no effect on the evilness of an action, as an action is evil or good for its particular characteristic. Thus, when injury (*ḍarar*) is performed for no greater benefit, or not to repel greater injury, or if not deserved [in case of punishment], it is evil, yet when it is performed for some of the reasons mentioned above, it is good.[14]

From the above stated quotations it is evident that ʿAbd al-Jabbār clearly distinguished between value judgments that have objective standards and are fully related to harmful or beneficial consequences on one hand and the normative judgments of responsible agents on the other.

Al-Ijī (d.756/1355) stated that the two Muʿtazilite masters Abū ʿAlī and Abū Hāshim did not acknowledge objective characteristics of value judgments. His view supports what has been said above and further explains the difference between the position of ʿAbd al-Jabbār and that of the two Jubbā'īs:

> The early Muʿtazilites affirmed an attribute (*ṣifa*) which necessitates that [value: good or bad], whereas Abū al-Ḥusayn [al-Baṣrī] among the late Muʿtazila affirmed an attribute in what is evil only, while al-Jabbā'ī denied it completely.[15]

The above quotation also indicates that objective properties of good and evil were acknowledged by the early Muʿtazila. The Jubbā'ī masters are considered to

have denied any objective attribute that qualified an action as good or evil, which seems to oppose the general Mu'tazilite trend.[16] Al-Ijī does not mention ʿAbd al-Jabbār, although he mentions one of his prominent pupils, Abū al-Ḥusayn. The latter affirmed the objective property of what is evil, which entails that the absence of the ground of evil is a necessary condition for considering an action a good one. For ʿAbd al-Jabbār value judgments are objective, as there are certain objective grounds for considering an act good or evil, although he more strongly emphasizes the grounds of evil. Sometimes he seems to have held the same position ascribed by Al-Ijī to Abū al-Ḥusayn. In fact, evil is emphasized by him rather than good, because if anything is to be considered good it needs first to be void of any aspect of evil.[17] ʿAbd al-Jabbār held that pain became good when void of any aspect of evil. He indicates that when some of his masters say that something is good from some aspects (*wujūh*), one should only understand it to be void of evil aspects. There are certain easily reasoned aspects of evil which if present necessitate the evilness of the evil act.[18] The existence of any aspect of evil makes an action evil.

Normative judgments (*wājib*, *maḥẓūr*, *mandūb*, and *mubāḥ*) entail value judgments (*ḥasan* and *qabīḥ*), whereas value judgments certainly do not entail normative judgments. For example, every obligatory judgment *wājib* entails it being good (*wujūb al-fi'l yataḍamman ḥusnahu*)[19] and thus by analogy, every forbidden judgment or *maḥẓūr* entails it being evil. Not everything that is good ought to be done, it might be recommended (*mandūb*) or simply permissible (*mubāḥ*). Moreover, it might be unachievable due to lack of knowledge or ability. In the same way, not everything that is evil or "bad" ought to be forbidden, in a sense that its agent always deserves blame for performing it, regardless of his state, as he might do it unintentionally. Forbidden judgments or negative ought judgments also include minor offences (*al-ṣaghīr min al-qabā'iḥ*), and the agent who performs them is blamed, unless there are extenuating circumstances.[20]

Moreover, not all human actions are classified into the categories of normative judgments. ʿAbd al-Jabbār recognizes that some actions have no moral value and are considered neutral, that is, neither good nor evil, such as simple movement or talking.[21] These acts have no attribute other than mere existence. "We have to consider acts which have no attribute other than mere existence as neither good nor evil."[22] By having no attribute above mere existence ʿAbd al-Jabbār means that they are neither beneficial nor harmful, and thus, neither good nor evil. It is important to note that he excludes such acts from normative judgments. Normative judgments are grounded in value judgments, and it is significant that value judgments include only acts that are either beneficial or harmful. Following the view of his immediate teacher Abū ʿAbdallāh, he considered any act that caused harm to be evil and any act that caused pure benefit as good.[23]

After what has been said above about ʿAbd al-Jabbār's disagreement with the two Jubbā'īs concerning the independence of moral values from the state of the agent, it is legitimate to expect him to provide us with definitions of normative judgments which are more comprehensive than those he took from his two distinctive

Baṣran masters. He could have articulated definitions that would comprise the true objective reasons behind each judgment, as was the case, for example, with the definitions ascribed to the Muʿtazila by al-Tahānawī,[24] where these judgments were primarily defined in terms of benefit (*maṣlaḥa*) and harm (*mafsada*).

The definitions accepted by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, if taken at face value, would certainly agree with a kind of subjective moral theory. Defining normative judgments as deserving praise or blame suggests that they are mainly related to social approval or disapproval. What is approved is good and what is disapproved is evil. If a forbidden act, for example, is defined as deserving blame, and an obligatory act as deserving praise, then morality will depend on attitudes of different societies towards different practices. What is considered as deserving blame in a certain culture might be acceptable or even praised in other cultures. Accepting such a view complies with a communal subjectivist theory in ethics not with a universal rational theory.[25] Thus it seems to contradict the most salient features that the Muʿtazila struggled to affirm. However, it has already been indicated that ʿAbd al-Jabbār defines values in terms of harm and benefit, and it has already been indicated above that, in his theory, normative judgments entail value judgments. Thus the truth of any ethical judgment can be determined by examining the value judgments it entails and not by considering people's attitudes. If the ultimate criterion is harm and benefit, then the rightness or wrongness of any normative judgment is determined accordingly. ʿAbd al-Jabbār's formal definitions of the four categories of normative judgments, which he accepted from the Al-Jubbā'ī masters, if taken literally, might misrepresent the nature of his theory. These definitions, if removed from their wider context and their relation to other definitions of value judgments might imply that normative judgments are merely expressions of emotional and psychological truths about people's attitudes. Although it is possible to analyze normative judgment in such a way as to include in them factual assertions of people's attitudes, the essentially normative element will still be left out.[26]

In ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethical theory one clearly recognizes that a conviction of something being objectively good or bad, right or wrong is normally prior to the more practical or emotional side expressed in terms of praising and blaming, or at least is intimately linked with it, and that without this conviction the attitude is not really ethical but a matter of taste or preference. Behind the concept of blame and praise used by ʿAbd al-Jabbār to define judgments lie the reasons for apportioning blame or praise, which provides the true basis for normative judgments. He does not believe that an obligation ought to be done to avoid blame, nor that what is recommended is done for the sake of praise.[27] So according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār one has to do what is right and avoid what is wrong regardless of blame and praise. He also denies that obligation is performed to obtain reward, and even refutes the view that what is obligatory would cease to be so, if God told us that He is not rewarding those who do what is obligatory.[28]

Blame and praise in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethical theory should be interpreted only as an indication of true ethical judgments. But it is appropriate to enquire as to the reasons that lead ʿAbd al-Jabbār to accept the definitions of ethical judgments

in terms of deserving blame and deserving praise. The reason for articulating the definitions of normative judgments in such terms might be understood if one keeps in mind what has already been indicated in the previous chapter, that ʿAbd al-Jabbār and his masters applied linguistic analysis in analyzing different terms and concepts. Accordingly, the meaning of a term is determined by examining how it is used in ordinary language and by observing how people use language one can define the meanings of the terms they use. They might have realized that people praise the person who does gracious or recommended acts and performs his duties, and blame the one who does what is evil or the one who fails to perform his duties. Yet, one might assume that they have also noticed that people sometimes praise and blame a person, not because he deserves so, but out of hypocrisy or selfish interests. That is why the definition of moral judgments used the term "deserves praise" not "is praised." So obligatory (*wājib*), for example, is the judgment of an action for which a person deserves blame for not performing it; not the action whose agent is actually blamed if he does not perform it. Similarly, the definition of *maḥẓūr* is the action where the agent deserves blame for performing it, not the action where the agent is actually blamed. In fact, by introducing the term "deserves" they have partially guarded their definitions of normative judgments against the charge of subjectivism, but still did not include the essentially normative elements of ethical judgments.

In a revealing passage that deserves to be quoted ʿAbd al-Jabbār proves to be well aware of the deficiency entailed in his adopted, formal definition of normative judgments. He says:

> It is wrong to say: the term *qabīḥ* stands for nothing but that the performer of it [the action] should not do it if he knows it as such [as *qabīḥ*], or that if he does it he will deserve blame. The judgment [deserving blame] is correct because it is *qabīḥ* (*ṣaḥa fīhi min ḥaythu kāna qabīḥan*). Thus if this is what is intended by saying that something is *qabīḥ*; then the result will be explaining something by the same thing (*taʿlīl al-shay' bi-nafsihi*) [i.e. circular definition]. This indicates that what we have previously mentioned is correct, which is that evil is distinguished from good by a fact that separates it from good.[29]

Thus according to the above quotation, defining evil as the action where, if performed, its agent deserves blame is a circular definition; it means nothing more than that one deserves blame for doing what one deserves blame for doing. Deserving blame is a judgment of the agent who performs an evil act. Evil is a real attribute or a fact that still needs to be defined. Therefore, neither praise and blame nor commands and prohibitions can establish the grounds for normative judgments according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār. Neither people's approval and disapproval, nor even divine commands can establish the moral value of an action, as also agreed by most of the Muʿtazilites. One can analyze normative judgments in such a way as to include factual assertions about what God commands or prohibits, or

what people approve or disapprove. But these do not substitute the need for moral grounds that justify normative judgments. One is still required to find moral justifications for those commands and prohibitions or blame and praise if it is to be argued that they are moral and not merely arbitrary commands or subjective and relative preferences.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār also clearly distinguishes between what is right and what is good. What is right, and thus commanded and praised, is established upon what is good. Not everything that is good is right, yet everything which is right is ultimately good. In other words, he did not confuse normative judgments with value judgments. Judgments of obligation necessarily entail what is good. He says "What is obliged is good and has an attribute above its mere goodness, so as to be obligatory."[30] Any obligatory action is good, but "every good action is not obligatory"[31] and "obligation is not really obligation unless it is good."[32] ʿAbd al-Jabbār's moral theory clearly satisfies the primary conditions of a genuinely ethical theory. According to a contemporary moral philosopher: "the primary conditions a judgment must satisfy in order to be genuinely ethical are that it be normative and that it be grounded."[33] Also, "any adequate moral theory must require that moral judgments logically entail supporting reasons."[34]

It has been demonstrated, so far, that the categories of normative judgments in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethics are based upon specific grounds, which are the objective good and evil of different actions. It is appropriate therefore, to first investigate the grounds of normative judgments, as the criteria of these grounds are in fact the meaning criteria of normative judgments. It comprises the ultimate foundations of any ethical theory. By investigating ʿAbd al-Jabbār's analysis of the meaning of good and evil, it will provide us with a clearer insight into the ultimate nature of his ethical theory.

But before going into the details of value judgments in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's theory, it is important to clarify his arguments against two different theories of value:

1 Values are determined by human attitudes and preferences. Thus they are subjective and relative.
2 Values are determined by God's commands and prohibitions. Thus they are rooted in divine commands, and have no other reason.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār's arguments against each of these theories of values will be investigated in what follows, and some salient features of his ethical thought will be highlighted.

Arguments against subjective theories of value

ʿAbd al-Jabbār's argument against the subjective theory of value is most strongly represented in his careful distinction between ethical and aesthetical values. He stood for the objectivity of ethical values against those who held that ethical values were just like aesthetical values. He considers the latter subjective and relative.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār's convention that moral values are independent of the state of the agent, contrary to what was held by Abū Hāshim, is further supported by his argument against Abū Hāshim's assertion that moral and aesthetical values are similar. It is important to realize that his distinction between ethical and aesthetical values is clearly established against the views of his early masters. Indeed ʿAbd al-Jabbār did not accept the view that good and evil are inherent in things and actions in the sense that they are a part of the ontological composite that constitutes the nature of the act.[35] However, he also did not accept al-Jubbāʾī's view that the value of an action is dependent on the state of the agent, as it could have had unwanted connotations. According to them, goodness and badness depend on the person just as the beauty or ugliness of a piece of art depends on the taste of the viewer. ʿAbd al-Jabbār said: "Some people say that the evilness (*qubḥ*) of wrongdoing is just like the ugliness (*qubḥ*) of ugly pictures and there is no difference between the two cases."[36] He considers those who held such views to be mistaken, as rational people who look at a picture disagree among themselves, some might see it as beautiful, and others might see it as ugly. Thus beauty or ugliness depends on the state of the person, his desire (*al-shahwa*), or aversion (*al-nufūr*). Even the same person might view something differently at different times. This is not the case with moral values, such as wrongdoing or injustice, as all rational people agree on the evilness of such acts.[37] Moreover, he believes that the term *qubḥ*, when used to describe aesthetical values that are related to appearance, is only metaphorical (*majāzi*). It only describes our attitude towards it (repulsion or attraction) and does not describe fact. Whereas what is morally bad is related to the action itself and all rational people agree, for example, that lying and wrongdoing are *qabīḥ*.[38]

But it should be noted that when Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī compared ethical and aesthetical values he certainly did not intend to prove that moral and aesthetical values are both subjective, as he explicitly asserted the contrary. His view was fairly represented by ʿAbd al-Jabbār in the following paragraph:

> The ugly countenance (*al-khilqa al-qabīḥa*) is distinct from the beautiful one, by virtue of its characteristics. This is why it is repulsive in contrast to the other [the beautiful one]. Thus the case of [beautiful and ugly], according to the above assertion, is the same as the case of rational evil that is distinct from good.[39]

From the above quotation Abū Hāshim seems to promote an objectivistic theory in aesthetics rather than a subjective theory in ethics. His assertion that what is ugly is considered so by virtue of some property or characteristic means that he believes that the ugliness and beauty of objects are defined in terms of some objective properties that make the object repulsive or attractive. Thus, he seems to think that there exist objective criteria for aesthetical judgments. But any objective theory in aesthetics is difficult to defend and as stated by a contemporary philosopher: "the great difficulty with objectivistic theories is their inability to fix upon some property or properties of which beauty can be said to consist."[40] This

difficulty might explain the reason behind ʿAbd al-Jabbār's disagreement with his master on comparing aesthetic values with ethical ones. He must have been aware of the fact that the opponents of the Muʿtazila might take advantage of the views of Abū Hāshim. He assumed an objection against the necessary moral knowledge. Similar objections might actually have been raised against Abū Hāshim's perception of moral values. If the *qubḥ* of wrongdoing is the same as the *qubḥ* of ugly pictures, then the evil of wrongdoing is not necessarily known, as the ugliness of some pictures is not necessarily known. In other words, good and evil would be relative as beauty and ugliness are relative and would depend on the state of the observer:

> Some people say that the *qubḥ* of the wrongdoing (*ẓulm*) is like the *qubḥ* of ugly pictures, and they do not separate between the two things. And this denies your claim about the necessary knowledge.[41]

ʿAbd al-Jabbār, taking into consideration such objections that can be raised against his master's view, clearly distinguished between the nature of ethical values and aesthetical ones. He acknowledged that beauty and ugliness depend on the state of the observer, yet it is not the same with good and evil:

> The countenance must have a certain property that allows or validates its being considered as beautiful sometimes and ugly other times, and validates its being considered neither beautiful nor ugly. But it is invalid to say that it is considered beautiful or ugly by virtue of a certain property.[42]

Thus, it is by virtue of aesthetic nature that the same thing might be considered ugly or beautiful, and there is no way to examine the truth or the falsity of either description. Of course, this is not the case with good or evil, because an aspect that necessitates it being good or evil must be affirmed, and it is impossible to be both good and evil at the same time.

For example, it is impossible to consider wrongdoing to be good for the same reason that it is considered evil, or to consider it neither good nor evil. "Thus the distinction between the two issues is established in all aspects."[43] ʿAbd al-Jabbār preferred to distinguish between the nature of ethical values and aesthetical ones, considering the former objective and the latter subjective, as is evident from the above quotations. The object considered beautiful or ugly has a certain property, but that property is such that it can be described as beautiful or ugly, depending on the different observers or the state of the observers. There is no definite criteria by which value judgments of aesthetical objects can be established, so if you describe a certain object as beautiful or ugly you could be right in both cases.[44] It is clear that ʿAbd al-Jabbār's disagreement with his master is not only with regard to aesthetics, but also on the nature of moral values. However, he was not eager to emphasize his disagreement with his master, and continued by saying: "anything that was said in that matter [the relationship between ethical and aesthetical

values] does not affect what we have said, and that is why we did not pursue further discussion."[45] Thus aesthetic values are subjective as they depend on the state and taste of the observer, whereas moral values are objective as the evilness of wrongdoing, for example, is known to be so by virtue of certain properties that are verifiable.

Arguments against Divine Command Theory

Human subjectivism was clearly refuted by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, as seen in his arguments against those who held that ethical values were like aesthetic ones and that they depend on the state of the person who evaluates them. Acts are good or evil for some aspect related to the acts, and their objective value can be known by reason. What is evil is evil regardless of anyone's opinion, and what is good is good regardless of the fact that people do differ in their attitudes and opinions. Some people believe that whatever God commands becomes good by virtue of it being commanded; as if morality is totally dependent on divine commands and prohibition. According to this view of morality, no good or evil really exist apart from what was commanded and what was prohibited. Such a position is usually referred to as Divine Command Theory or ethical voluntarism. The extreme logical consequence of this position is this: if God commanded something that is thought to be immoral, such as killing or lying, then whatever He commanded would become good and obligatory by virtue of it being commanded by God. It is important to notice from the beginning that the assignment of obligation according to a consistent classical Divine Command Theory does not presuppose any condition, because complete freedom and omnipotence of God are its foremost assumptions.[46]

In Islam the question that is intimately related to Divine Command Theory is whether Islamic law clarifies or determines morality (*al-shar' mubayyin am muthabbit*), in other words: is God the promulgator or the creator of morality? In this work Divine Command Theory is considered to be identical to what is sometimes called the extreme version of ethical voluntarism. It implies that good and evil have no meaning before the advent of revelation, and thus no morality is ever possible apart from what is religiously prescribed or forbidden.[47] Such a theory necessarily implies that God's commands are arbitrary, as He could have had no more reason for commanding honesty, for example, than commanding its opposite. Thus the doctrine of the goodness of God, according to the above theory is rendered meaningless. This theory was articulated by theologians in different religious traditions to safeguard divine omnipotence just as the doctrine of predetermination of human actions was articulated to safeguard divine omniscience. It has recently been held that "the view that God's will is subject to independent standards of right and wrong, good and evil, appears to compromise His omnipotence."[48] However neither the doctrine of human free will, nor the doctrine of universal objective moral values necessarily contradict divine omnipotence and omniscience, when the latter are appropriately defined. Being omnipotent does

not mean that He can make a square triangle, make 1+1≠2, or change the facts of things including moral facts. Nor does omniscience necessarily means that He knows in advance all individuals' conduct and thus their final destinies. It has also been proved, in the second chapter of this book, that the Qur'ān itself does not deny human free will or objective moral values.

Divine Command Theory has its proponents in all religious traditions. In Christianity, for example, it had and still has many faithful adherents, especially among Protestants. However, some contemporary philosophers have maintained that in the history of Christian thought, "the dominant theory of ethics is not Divine Command Theory. That honor goes to the Theory of Natural Law."[49] But others (including some contemporary philosophers who consider themselves divine command theorists) tended to interpret most of the Christian thought, including that of Thomas Aquinas (the greatest of the natural law theorists), as endorsing Divine Command Theory.[50] Certainly it is not difficult to find some statements in the works of various religious scholars that can be interpreted as conforming with ethical voluntarism, especially when these statements are separated from their wider contextual framework. Obeying God cannot be denied by any religious person, and obedience to divine commands can easily be interpreted as endorsing ethical voluntarism. A contemporary scholar, Daniel Brown,[51] went so far as to consider Islam a defining case of ethical voluntarism.[52] Such reductionistic assertions misrepresent the diversity of Islamic culture. The place of Divine Command Theory in Christian thought is beyond the scope of this study, but its relevance or irrelevance to Islamic ethics will be briefly investigated.

Muʿtazilite ethical theory as articulated by ʿAbd al-Jabbār is an option available for theistic morality in Islam. But divine command ethics and Muʿtazilite ethics do not exhaust all the ethical theories in Islamic thought. It will be argued that an alternative theory was necessarily implied by the majority of Muslim scholars who acknowledged the place of reason in deriving ethical judgments. This theory that prevailed in Islam assumed purposeful divine commands. The concept of "purposeful commands" contradicts the basic assumption of any consistent classical Divine Command Theory. Ethical voluntarism is arbitrary by definition, while any command that is based on good purposes, or guided by reason, is by definition not arbitrary. A morality that demands people to adhere to God's requirements, when these are understood to be purposeful and reasonable, cannot be described as ethical voluntarism.

Daniel Brown noticed the purposeful nature of divine commands assumed by Muslim scholars, yet still called it voluntarism! He claimed that "Islamic voluntarism is not arbitrary."[53] He also noticed that "*Qiyās* reflects the assumptions that God's commands are purposeful."[54] Moreover, he noticed that "the voluntarist position seems to have only weak support in the Qur'ān."[55] Obviously, these remarks contradict his previously quoted assertion that "Islam might be considered the defining case of ethical voluntarism."[56] If the above three quotations by Brown are true, and they are true, then his view about Islam being the defining case of ethical voluntarism would be completely out of place. A theory that acknowledges divine

good intentions and purposeful will cannot properly be described as a defining case of ethical voluntarism. One might be justified in calling such a theory "ethical intentionalism" rather than "voluntarism" or better "Divine Purpose Theory" rather than "Divine Command Theory." The latter emphasizes divine arbitrary will, and no reason is sought beyond divine commands, as the commands constitute the ultimate reasons. The former assumes that divine prescriptions are not arbitrary, but purposeful. Therefore, there must always be a reason behind what God commands or prohibits. When such commands or prohibitions are related to morality, the reasons behind them must be intelligible and related to human morals. God in Islam, as in most religious traditions, is believed to be good and thus he does not command what is considered morally wrong. Moreover, it is important to notice that his commands or assignments of obligations do presuppose the conditions of moral judgments that were discussed in the previous chapter. The necessary conditions for the validity of moral judgments were also discussed and acknowledged by most of the *uṣūl al-fiqh* scholars.[57]

It has already been mentioned that the founders of the Muʿtazilite movement were actively involved in issues related to *Uṣūl al-fiqh* besides *Uṣūl al-dīn or al- kalām*. The role of the Muʿtazila in establishing *uṣūl al-fiqh* must have been significant. It has been mentioned that ʿAbd al-Jabbār might have been the first to introduce the categories of judgments to the *sharīʿa*, since his immediate pupil Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d.436/1044) was the first jurist known to set the five categories of judgments.[58] He must have learned a great deal from his master, as his work *al-Muʿtamad* is believed to have borrowed a great deal from ʿAbd al-Jabbār's lost book *al-ʿUmad*. That there are reasons beyond divine commands was clearly presupposed by the scholars who established the principles of law (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). Otherwise no rule could have been derived from another, and no derived judgment could have been considered a valid judgment. Thus it is justifiable to hold that the ultimate ground for any normative judgment in *uṣūl al-fiqh* does not lie in the divine commands themselves but in the purposes and reasons behind the divine commands. Moral values are not established by what is commanded or prohibited by God. By His commands and prohibitions He merely indicates normative judgments which are themselves ultimately grounded in moral values. Divine commands are not issued to change the facts of good and evil but to guide human conduct. Law (*al-sharʿ*) as asserted by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, "does not change the facts,"[59] as "will or intention also has no effect upon the truth of things."[60] Thus obligations (*al-takālīf*) imposed by Allah presuppose moral truth and do not create morality. In other words divine prescriptions provide the epistemological aspect of morality and do not change the ontological aspect of good and evil: "*al-sharʿ* discloses what is already established in the intellect (*al-ʿaql*)."[61]

The implied position of most of *uṣūl al-fiqh* scholars is analogous to ʿAbd al-Jabbār's position in maintaining that "God is promulgator and not creator of morality." This is clear from their practical legislations, regardless of the fact that some of them who adhered to the school of al-Ashʿarī sometimes advocated the opposite.[62] Ethical voluntarism, advocated by al-Ashʿarī, implies that "it is

fundamentally and ultimately impossible to explain God's commands in terms of any purpose or end."[63] Whereas, in *uṣūl al-fiqh* "rationalization in terms of reasons (*ʾilal*) and ends is demanded in order that one possesses the rules of the *sharīʿa* in their generality and knows how to apply them."[64] Hence, rationalization in terms of reasons and ends contradicts ethical voluntarism.

Before proceeding to investigate ʿAbd al-Jabbār's analysis of moral judgments it is appropriate to clarify three possible different positions that might describe the relationship between religion and morality in Islam:

1 The position of those who held that moral values were objective attributes of actions. They acknowledged ontological aspect of morality. These objective values are expressed in common language and are known by human reason. They also held that ethical judgments were based upon the objective values, and could be known through reason. That divine law (*al-sharʿ*) discloses and does not establish morality was their explicitly announced position. These were mainly the Muʿtazila, among others.
2 The position that acknowledged the ontological aspect of good and evil, yet still considered that what is obligatory or forbidden is to be derived from divine prescriptions and commands. They believed that God knows better the circumstances and the needs of human beings and what is better for them to pursue. According to this position divine commands are believed to be intentional and purposeful. The purpose (*gharaḍ*) or the intent (*maqṣūd*) or even *murād* which literally means "wanted" or "willed" is not suggestive of voluntarist outlook.[65] Divine Command is grounded in what is intended, in a purposeful will, not in arbitrary will, and if it is grounded in a purposeful will, then it is ultimately grounded in the purposes themselves which are the ontological aspects of morality. Voluntarism suggests arbitrary will, whereas purposefulness suggests morally informed divine will. Thus, one might call such a position Divine Purpose Theory rather than ethical voluntarism or Divine Command Theory. In a certain aspect, this position implies that firstly religion is based on morality and secondly that law is based on religion.[66]
3 The final position is that explicitly advocated by al-Ashʿarī, which might properly be called Divine Command Theory. ʿAbd al-Jabbār formulates this theory saying: "The fatalists (*al-Mujbira*) believe in the goodness of wrongdoing and lying if they occur from God. There are also rational people who say that wrongdoing and lying are evil just because they are prohibited, otherwise they would be considered good, even if they were known to be wrongdoing or lying, without any benefit or repulsion of harm."[67]

However, ethical voluntarism remained a theological position, and was not implemented in *uṣūl al-fiqh*, where jurists from all schools continued to use reason and derive ethical judgments through different methodologies which could not have been used without acknowledging the reasons behind divine commands. The reason for a certain judgment was the *ʾilla* used in deriving judgments for similar actions.

It has been hinted by some scholars that Al-Shāfiʿī (d.204/820), who is usually considered the founder of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, is also a proponent of Divine Command Theory.[68] This interpretation of al-Shāfiʿī's thought was held by Hourani and also indicated by Kevin Reinhart, who provided a different interpretation of al-Shāfiʿī's position. Hourani infers that al-Shāfiʿī' held that God commanded good and that good was understood to be nothing but what God commanded. If this reading is correct then al- Shāfiʿī, as pointed out by Reinhart, would be the earliest of those whom Hourani calls "theistic subjectivists."[69]

But Reinhart believed that al-Shāfiʿī's thought ran contrary to what has been mentioned by Hourani, because al-Shāfiʿī seems to have held that actions had certain values even before revelation,[70] and that anyone who acknowledged the value of actions before revelation could not be considered a strict adherent to Divine Command Theory. Only those who held that acts cannot be assessed before the advent of revelation are strict adherents of Divine Command Theory. This theory was first articulated in Islam by Al-Ashʿarī. For him actions had no value before the advent of revelation. This was also asserted by Reinhart, who said: "The first person to whom something like the ʿno assessment' position can be reliably attributed is Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d.324/935)."[71] The moral values of actions before the arrival of revelation were affirmed, according to Reinhart's approach to the subject, by most of the *uṣūl al-fiqh* scholars before al-Ashʿarī.[72] In fact, the moral value of actions was implicitly acknowledged by most of the *uṣūl al-fiqh* scholars before and also after al-Ashʿarī, as will be demonstrated later in this chapter.

Al-Shāfiʾī's thought seems to be open to various interpretations. This is evident from what has been said about his position concerning ethical judgments entailed by divine commands. Different questions were raised concerning divine commands such as: is a divine command expressed only in imperative form, *ṣīghat amr*, or is it sometimes expressed in other possible forms of speech? Do divine commands entail obligations or are they only recommendations to do certain acts? It seems that the focus of Al-Shāfiʾī's discussion was the different modes of speech and the meaning of divine commands. Commands were treated by al-Shāfiʾī as ambiguous modes of speech.[73] Some claimed that by default he interpreted them as obligations, some said that he interpreted them as recommendations, and yet others said that he suspended judgment on their legal force.[74] Al-Ghazālī, for example, said that al-Shāfiʿī stated in *Kitāb Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* that imperative form is sometimes used for obligations and other times for recommendations (*taraddud al-amr bayn al-nadb wa'l-wujūb*), and that the form of negative ought judgment is used for prohibition (*al-nahī lil-taḥrīm*).[75]

However it might not be al-Shāfiʿī, but one of his pupils, al-Muzanī (d.264/877) who explicitly posed the question of the legal force of imperatives, and broadened it to include commands alongside prohibitions.[76] Al-Muzanī was also considered to be among the pupils who attributed to al-Shāfiʿī positions which were not explicitly articulated in his own work.[77] Later, a distinguished Shāfiʿite scholar, Ibn Surayj (d.306/918) asserted that thanking the benefactor is obligatory, and

that unaided reason can discern the good and the bad of some things.[78] His views clearly contradict with the assumptions of ethical voluntarism, and thus, he might have had a different interpretation of al-Shāfiʿī's views concerning the legal force of the imperatives. A significant anecdote is narrated by al-Subkī (d.771/1330) and alleged to be narrated by Ibn Surayj:

> On the day of resurrection al-Shāfiʿī came to me, accompanied by al-Muzanī, saying: "Lord, this one [i.e. al-Muzanī] corrupted my learning" (*afsada 'ulūmī*). I said: "Go easy on Abū Ibrāhīm [al-Muzanī]! I have continued to correct what he corrupted."[79]

The debate over whether commands entail absolute obligations and whether a command to perform an act constitutes a prohibition against omitting it was also reported by al-Ashʿarī.[80] Another argument was related to the grammatical mode of the sentence in which obligatory judgments can be communicated. Analyzing the modes of sentences in which moral judgments are communicated belongs to linguistic analysis. The analysis of these forms was the concern of linguistics scholars and of *uṣūli*[81] scholars in general.

A semantic argument

Any scholar of the linguistic structure of Arabic language would first come across its grammatical forms which are classified into two essential forms of sentences: indicative or assertive sentences (*al-khabar*), and emotive or non-assertive sentences (*al-inshā'*). The former includes all assertive sentences that can be considered true or false. The latter includes the imperative mode of language (*ṣīghat al-amr*), questions, exclamations, and other non-assertive sentences.[82] The analysis of these two modes in which ethical judgments are expressed might be correlated in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethics to the analysis of the "formal" aspects of ethical judgments.[83] Understanding the logic of these forms unveils the meaning of ethical judgments expressed in each of them. *Al-inshā'*, according to Arabic language scholars, is the utterance whose truth value is not related to any external correspondence, and is contrasted to *al-khabar*.[84] *Al-inshā'* includes imperatives (*al-ṭalab*) and milder imperatives which are not commands but rather suggestions, or permissions, such as "eat whatever you like." *Al-Inshā'* also includes the mood that is used to express a wish, a question, a command, etc.[85] Although *al-inshā'* includes different modes of speech, it is the imperative mode that is related to the language of morals and according to Arabic grammarians, this includes commands, prohibitions, and prescriptions.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār held, as will be shown, that the basic mood of speech that is used to express a moral judgment is the indicative mood (*al-khabar*). Nevertheless, ʿAbd al-Jabbār did not exclude imperative expressions altogether from the realm of morality. The purpose of ethical judgments expressed in imperative form is to get people to do what one wants them to do, and the purpose of ethical judgment

expressed in the indicative form is to refer to a moral standard. Moral judgments, when expressed in indicative mode, are not really about the issuing of commands as to the making of statements and the application of criteria. However, ʿAbd al-Jabbār, just as any rational user of moral judgment, certainly cared about the effects of moral judgments on human behavior. This effect lies in the prescriptive force of moral judgments which is implied in the ultimate meaning of imperatives. A morality which satisfies one of these purposes (i.e. application of criteria and influencing human conduct) to the exclusion of the other would no longer be a morality any more or at best would be radically defective.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār's views concerning the meaning of the two different modes of speech in which a moral judgment can be expressed established a hermeneutics that provided a linguistic basis for an objective foundation of morality. He defined the meaning of the imperative mode used to express command and prohibition:

> The Imperative sentence is a command (*amr*) only by virtue of the speaker willing a certain action, and a prohibition (*nahī*) is a prohibition only by virtue of the speaker not willing or hating a certain action.[86]

Thus commands and prohibitions are essentially non-assertive utterances in a sense that they do not explicitly convey any information about the facts of things or actions. They only convey something about the speaker's will. For a command saying: "do a certain thing" is equivalent to saying: "I want, or I like that you do a certain thing," and a prohibition saying: "don't do a certain thing" is equivalent to a statement saying: "I hate (*akrahu*) that you do a certain thing." Thus the imperative mood by itself is related to the attitude of the speaker.

Yet, ʿAbd al-Jabbār believed that any meaningful utterance including commands and prohibitions must have certain grounds or reasons; as any rational being does not like or dislike something without reason: "One does not command anything unless he wants it … thus an utterance is not a command unless what is commanded is wanted,"[87] and what is wanted must be wanted for a reason: "It is impossible to say that a command is a command for no reason (*lā li'illa*)."[88] The reason for a command or a prohibition should be entailed in the command or the prohibition just as the moral value is entailed in normative judgments. The reason provides clarifying evidence that exempts an imperative from being arbitrary or futile. However, the imperative form itself means nothing more than that somebody wants something. So, it is only the substance of the utterance that provides a reason supported by a clarifying evidence that something is good or bad. ʿAbd al-Jabbār held that it is the content of the sentence, not its form that indicates what is good or bad and that the content provides the addressee with a clarifying evidence,[89] and only such evidence (*bayān*) exempts a discourse from being futile (*ʿabath*).[90]

Thus the ultimate meaning of commands including divine commands lies in what the imperative has in common with indicative statements. They have in common everything to do with their reference to actual or possible states of

affairs. The goodness or badness of the actual state of affairs is established by reason. Both imperatives and indicatives have to refer to the state of affairs which they are about:

> A command from God indicates the goodness of what is commanded, not because of its being a command [because anything can be expressed in imperative form] … it indicates what is good by virtue of the nature of the discourse, and its established reason (*thubūta ḥikmatihi*).[91]

That God commands only what is really good was never questioned by the Muʿtazila, as it is evident that assigning obligations is for the sake of humankind.[92] "The command of the Exalted is discerned from any other command; because by virtue of His modesty He does not command what is evil to command."[93] Yet what the Muʿtazila were anxious to prove is that divine commands merely indicate and clarify what is good and what is bad, and do not establish moral value.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār also argued that a command indicates that a certain action is prescribed, without specifying whether it is an obligation or recommendation.[94] There must be some reason other than the form of a command to consider if what is commanded is obligatory or recommended. Moreover "the imperative form can be used for commands and for other things."[95] The imperative form, which is the form used to express a command, might also indicate what is merely permissible. Yet in that case he did not really consider it a command:

> What is written in a form of a command (*ṣīghat al-amr*) might not be a command, as when God says: eat and drink, and similar things, these are not really considered commands. For it is proved by evidence that it deals with permissible acts (*mubāh*), which are initially not related to the assignments of obligations.[96]

ʿAbd al-Jabbār insisted that commands should be taken to mean nothing more than what the definition of an imperative form entails, unless there is specific evidence that something more is intended. For example, he held that a command does not in and of itself constitute prohibition against opposite acts.[97] A command does not in and of itself constitute evidence that if one fails to obey it he will have to make up the duty later.[98] Moreover, if a command necessitates the goodness of our actions, then an act might be considered obligatory or just permissible, as whether a command is a recommendation or obligation cannot be known from the command itself. There is nothing in the form of a command that necessitates initially the division between recommended and obligatory judgments.[99]

On each of the above issues he was willing to give commands no more meaning than what was implied by the speaker willing the commanded act.[100] Yet, the speaker wanting the commanded act does not make the act an obligation, regardless of the speaker's status.[101] This applies to divine and human commands, because it is the content not the form that makes a command an obligation. The

content of a command is verifiable as it refers to actual states of affairs, and thus it is more appropriately expressed in indicative mode. This might explain why ʿAbd al-Jabbār considered the indicative mode the basis for all useful speech including commands. He agreed with linguistic scholars in defining indicative statements, considering them "the speech that can be true or false (*yaṣuḥu fīhi al-ṣidq wa'l-kadhib*)."[102] Whereas, when someone uses the imperative form of speech, it is invalid to say that his speech is either true or false, as he is merely expressing his subjective preferences. Nevertheless, the meaning of a command, even in this case, can also be reduced to indicative statements, but in such cases it indicates nothing more than the state of the speaker who utters the command; his being desiring or not desiring something.

> *Al-khabar* is the basis of all useful speech (*kalām*) … The command can replace a statement saying: "I want you to do" and a prohibition can replace a statement saying "I hate you to do" [I don't want you to do] and a question replaces "I want you to tell."[103]

Yet, if a command only means that somebody wants something done, then such a command will have nothing to do with morality unless one holds a non-cognitive moral theory. Although ʿAbd al-Jabbār did not exclude commands from the realm of morality he did not hold a non-cognitive moral theory. If a command is considered to express a moral judgment it must indicate the real state of what is commanded and a prohibition must indicate the real state of the prohibited conduct, in the sense that its truth or falsity is verifiable as in the case of indicative statements. Ethical judgments, therefore, can be expressed in imperative or indicative form. The form in which one chooses to express ethical judgments depends on the situation. For example, both forms: "you have to help your friend" and "helping your friend is an obligation" are rightly used to express ethical judgments. Using either of the two forms is completely permissible.[104] However, if one is engaged in a debate over whether a certain action is obligatory or not, the indicative form is the proper one to be used. In such a situation, it is not helpful to say "you have to do X," as it would not end the argument. The addressee in this situation does not deny that he has to do what is obligatory, but disagrees that X is an obligation. So using the indicative "X is an obligation" indicates that the action X has certain properties and actual consequences that can be empirically verified. It also indicates that these properties and consequences match the conditions that constitute the obligatory action according to moral criteria. Thus performing the action X is obligatory.[105]

The significance of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's convention concerning the basic form in which ethical judgments are expressed is evident. Expressing ethical judgment in imperative form does not help to solve any moral debate. While using the indicative form makes resolving moral disputes something attainable, since the indicative form indicates moral criteria, properties, and consequences of the disputed action.

In an important paragraph ʿAbd al-Jabbār explains that a moral command, "don't do a certain action," can be reduced to the statement, "this action is evil," consequently he understands divine commands as entailing assertive phrases indicating what is good or evil:

> Prohibition from the Exalted is an indication (*dalāla*) that something is evil (*qabīḥ*), and the indicator (*al-dalīl*) indicates the thing as it is (*yadullu ʿalā al-shayʾ ʿalā mā huwa bihi*), not that it becomes what it is by indication. The prohibition that comes from Him is analogous to His saying that a certain action is evil, and the command is analogous to His saying that a certain action is obligatory (*wājib*) or recommended (*nadb*). The indicative statement (*al-khabar*) indicates what its subject is [and therefore communicates a certain knowledge]. It is the same with a command or a prohibition. Don't you see that there is no difference in this world (*fi al-shāhid*) between saying: "A certain act is evil," and saying: "don't do it"? How then could anyone say that prohibition necessitates the evilness of what is prohibited, after what has been described.[106]

There are various reasons for considering an action good or evil, and it is the state (*ḥāl*) of an action that necessitates its being considered good or evil.[107] It is not the state of the speaker, intent, or will that determines whether it is good or evil. For ʿAbd al-Jabbār, "any form of speech, whether a command or a statement, does not change the moral quality of the act."[108] Just as knowledge does not change the nature of what is known: "what is known (*al-maʿlūm*) does not obtain any characteristic from the one who knows it because he knows it, but the one who knows it (*al-ʿālim*) knows it as it is."[109]

It is important to notice that ʿAbd al-Jabbār was willing to reduce all imperatives to indicatives by representing them as expressing statements about the will of the speaker or expressing statements of facts. Yet, what is significant and has to be underscored is that he considered that only the imperatives that can be reduced to "indicatives expressing statements of facts" can properly express ethical judgments. Thus, one can summarize the meaning of the imperatives, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, as follows:

1 Some imperatives can be reduced to indicatives expressing statements about the will of the speaker. For example, "The command might replace a statement saying: ʿI want you to do' and a prohibition can replace a statement saying ʿI hate you to do.'"[110]
2 Some imperatives can be reduced to indicatives by representing them as expressing statements of fact. For example, ʿAbd al-Jabbār wrote that: "There is no difference in this world (*fi al-shāhid*) between saying: ʿA certain act is evil', and saying: ʿdon't do it.'"[111]

Thus a command is first analyzed as conveying information that someone wishes some other person to perform an act. The consequence is that if someone

utters a command and someone else utters a contradicting command, there will actually be no contradiction but merely differences in will. Thus, if someone says "I want you to return the money" and someone else says "I do not want you to return the money"; the two statements, if considered merely as expressing the will of the speakers, are considered not to contradict each other. They simply express different wishes. But this seems odd because if you borrowed money from someone and promised to pay it back then it is your obligation to return the money. So the command "I want you to return the money" actually refers to a certain state of affairs, and it is by virtue of this fact that the command becomes an obligation and not merely an expression of the will of the speaker. It is by virtue of facts implied in the command that makes it either true or false. It is to be pointed out that such an analysis of the meaning of a command that emphasizes its similarity to indicative statements is denied by the proponents of Divine Command Theory who believed that divine commands created obligations. Indeed, they would be ready to consider anything that could possibly be commanded as obligatory. ʿAbd al-Jabbār, discloses the contradictory result of their arguments as it leads to accepting that "what is prohibited by someone and commanded by another or [both] prohibited and commanded by God would result in it being both obligatory and evil. The falsity of this [result] necessitates the falsity of what leads to it [i.e. that commands establish obligation]."[112]

Although the ultimate meaning of the imperative mode according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār' means nothing but the fact that the speaker wills or hates a certain thing to be done, yet every command has also a definite content that can be expressed in the form of indicative statement. In the example used above the command saying "return the money" and the other saying "do not return the money" seems to be about returning the money and not only about the speaker's will. The content of the command or the prohibition is a certain act that is the subject of the command or the prohibition. So when a command or a prohibition expresses an ethical judgment the action commanded is assumed to be good or obligatory and the action prohibited is assumed to be evil. Thus the command, "I want you to return the money," implies that "It is an obligation that you return the money" and when God commands something it is because it is obligatory or recommended. It is so prior to His command, and its being obligatory is presupposed by God. Also if He prohibits something it is because it is evil. He commands what is good because He wills only what is good and He prohibits what is evil because He hates what is evil. God does not will or hate things for no reason. ʿAbd al-Jabbār said:

> Prohibitions indicate the depravation or corruption (*fasād*) of what is prohibited and His commands indicate the righteousness (*ṣalāḥ*) of what He commands. Both [command and prohibition] indicate the states of actions, not that they necessitate (*yūjibān*) the evilness of an action and the goodness of another.[113]

He also said:

> A command only indicates the necessity of the obligatory act. It is not obligatory because of the command, as it is the function of indication to disclose the condition of the object indicated, not to put it in that condition.[114]

ʿAbd al-Jabbār reduced imperatives to indicatives by representing them as expressing statements of fact. Thus, the statement about something being evil entails the prescription against doing it. Just as the prohibition against doing something necessarily entails that it is evil. He maintained that "It is necessary to show the properties of the acts which the Exalted has imposed, such that it is good for Him to have imposed some of them and avoided others."[115] He quotes the Qur'ān in support of his argument:

> The book [Qur'ān] testifies to the soundness of what we have mentioned, because the Exalted said: "God commands justice and the doing of good." As such He affirmed the two (*athbatahuma*) before the command. The Sublime said: "He prohibited indecency, impropriety, and injustice." As such He necessarily recognizes them as such before the prohibition.[116]

The semantic argument against ethical voluntarism was not the only argument offered by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, although it is the strongest and most genuine. Other arguments included the following:

1 If good and evil are determined by commands and prohibitions, then God's actions are neither good nor evil because he is neither commanded nor prohibited. Those who say that good and evil are determined by commands and prohibitions would be bound to say that "the acts of God are neither good nor evil because He is neither commanded nor prohibited, which is contrary to what is anonymously accepted, and contradicts the religion."[117] According to religion, God deserves thanks and worship because of His goodness "for how could He deserve thanks and worship for what is not good?"[118] But it necessarily follows from the divine command argument that "God does not have good acts. If good acts are realized by us only through commands, these [commands] are not applicable to Him. This is similar to their saying that he does not do evil because prohibition is not applicable to Him."[119] Thus if our acts are good because they are obedience to a command, then God's acts cannot be good because they are not obedience to any command, since there is no god above Allah who can command him.
2 If good and evil were established and known only through divine commands, then the unbelievers would not know good and evil. But they know that wrongdoing is evil, as they know all necessarily known things.[120] "There is no difference between the one who denies their [the atheists'] knowledge of good and evil, and the one who denies that [the believer] knows the truth (*ṣidq*) of divine prohibition and commands … If this [denying unbelievers knowledge

> of good and evil] is possible, then it would be possible to deny it for all rational people (*ʾuqalāʾ*), and if so then we would follow the Sophists."[121] If good and evil are known only through divine commands then "it would necessarily follow that the materialists (*al-dahriyya*) and others who believe in the pre-eternity of the world would not know or doubt, given their state [as atheists], the evil of injustice and other such evils. This is wrong because it is based on the view that they, despite their maturity of the intellect (*kamāl ʾuqūlihim*), do not know that which is clearly observed (*al-mudrakāt*)."[122]

The story of Ibrāhīm

It has previously been mentioned that according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār "*al-Sharʿ* or divine law does not change the facts of what is true or false."[123] Thus divine law does not make what is evil good and what is good evil – it does not change the facts. Allah would not impose an evil obligation, nor would He ever impose what is normally regarded as morally wrong. However, one might wonder how the Muʿtazila and especially ʿAbd al-Jabbār understood the story of Ibrāhīm, mentioned in the Qurʾān (37:101–110). According to this story, Ibrāhīm was ready to slaughter his own son, at God's command.[124] Before investigating ʿAbd al-Jabbār's interpretation of the story it is appropriate to quote the story as narrated in the Qurʾān in full. It says:

> So We gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear. Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said: "O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: Now see what is thy view!" (The son) said: "O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, if Allah so wills one practicing Patience and Constancy!" So when they had both submitted their wills (to Allah), and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice), We called out to him "O Abraham! Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!" – thus indeed do We reward those who do right. For this was obviously a trial – And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice: And We left (this blessing) for him among generations (to come) in later times: "Peace and salutation to Abraham!" Thus indeed do We reward those who do right.[125]

In the above Qurʾānic verses the following should be highlighted which throws some light on the story of Ibrāhīm and Ismāʿīl in the Qurʾān, and which might explain the reason why it was not quoted (as far as I know), by someone such as al-Ashʿarī in support of ethical voluntarism:[126]

1 It was a dream, interpreted by Ibrāhīm as a divine command.
2 He tells his son that it was a command from God to slaughter him, and his son agrees.
3 It was harmful and painful for both of them to obey such a command, contrary to the other two commands, invoked by modern ethical voluntarists in support

of their theory, where the illicit and immoral action, such as slaughtering another nation and committing adultery might have had no painful consequences for the one who is ordered to commit them. That is why it is emphasized that the command itself, if it really is a command, was intended to test Ibrāhīm's and Ismāʿīl's obedience, it was a "manifest trial" to test their faith and obedience, not a moral command.

4 The slaughtering did not actually happen, God the Almighty would not have allowed it to happen.

5 Ibrāhīm was praised for his obedience, his "trust" in God, not for approving the rightness of killing his own son because it was commanded by God.

The story of Ibrāhīm was mentioned by Abd al-Jabbār in *al-Mughnī*, while discussing the relationship between will and command. Thus emphasizing his above stated convention that a command should be willed or intended, and because such a command does not reflect the will of God it could not be considered a command. It is nowhere mentioned that he is trying to give an interpretation which would serve his arguments against the Ashʿarites' ethical voluntarism, nor is it mentioned that anyone has interpreted the story in a way that it could have been interpreted, that is, in support of ethical voluntarism.[127] Upon Abd al-Jabbār's interpretation of the story, the command to slaughter Ismāʿīl was not really a command at all.

For ʿAbd al-Jabbār "A command becomes a command when a speaker wants a certain thing from the addressee."[128] He holds that God has commanded Ibrāhīm to carry out the preparations (*muqaddimāt*) for the slaughter (*al-dhabḥ*), not the slaughter itself.

> We have demonstrated in *uṣūl al-fiqh* that the Exalted did command the preparations for the slaughter, not the slaughter itself … We have demonstrated that the meaning of: "You have shown the truth of the vision" indicates that he [Ibrāhīm] was not ordered to slaughter, otherwise he would not have shown the truth of the vision. We have also shown [in *uṣūl al-fiqh*] that His statement: "surely thus do We reward the doers of good" indicates that he had performed what he was really commanded to do, otherwise he might have been considered akin to the evil doers (*al-musīʾīn*).[129]

The above quotation shows that the command was not to slaughter, and if Ibrāhīm had really slaughtered his son he would have been better considered by God as a wrongdoer and would have been blamed not praised. ʿAbd al-Jabbār continues:

> We have shown that the sacrifice (*al-fidāʾ*) does not indicate that slaughter had been commanded … but when Ibrāhīm strongly suspected that he would be ordered to slaughter, and felt what all fathers would feel, God

> provided a substitute for what he expected would be a command. If God had really commanded him [to slaughter his son] He would not have eliminated the command, either by prevention, or by prohibition or by sacrifice.[130]

ʿAbd al-Jabbār mentioned that the issue had already been examined in *uṣūl al-fiqh*. His own book is lost; however one of his immediate pupils Abū al-Ḥusayn, who was the author of *Kitāb al-Muʿtamad fī uṣūl al-fiqh* has the following to add: "It is not plausible that he had really been commanded to slaughter, because this would be assigning unbearable obligation (I*taklīf mā lā yuṭāq*)."[131] Abū al-Ḥusayn agrees with his master's interpretation and reminds the reader that "assigning unbearable obligation" is evil and irrational. It was already mentioned that in addition to the fact that this principle was mentioned in the Qur'ān, it was also considered by the Muʿtazila a necessary condition for ethical judgments. Thus, any obligation that would request from an agent an unbearable act is not really an obligation, and according to their interpretation the command to slaughter is not really a command.[132] Moreover, ʿAbd al-Jabbār in *Mutashābih al-Qur'ān*, explains that "the literal meaning of the text entails that he [Ibrāhīm] had seen in a dream that he is slaughtering [his son]. Thus, how can it be a command from Allah? He could see anything in his dreams."[133] This interpretation of the story is reasonable and does not contradict the literal meaning of the Qur'ānic verses analyzed above. Thus Allah could not have ordered Ibrāhīm to slaughter his own son, not even according to the Ashʿarite interpretation of the story.

God, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, does not determine what is right but only commands us to do what would be right regardless of God's command. Social and individual approval or disapproval also does not determine what is right either – but what is it then that determines what is right? Well, this question takes us beyond revelation to discover a criterium of righteousness in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's thought that is independent of arbitrary will and independent of human subjective preferences. It leads us to investigate the grounds of ethical judgments, indicated at the beginning of this chapter, that lie in what is objectively good or evil.

Grounds of normative judgments: good and evil

After investigating ʿAbd al-Jabbār's arguments against subjective ethical theories, it is time to investigate the grounds of normative judgments according to his own theory. It has been demonstrated that ʿAbd al-Jabbār's moral theory satisfies the primary conditions of a genuinely ethical theory which is that it is grounded and that it is normative.[134] So, as already mentioned, investigating ʿAbd al-Jabbār's analysis of the meaning of good and evil (*al-ḥusn wa'l-qubḥ*), which constitutes the grounds of normative judgments, will provide us with a better insight into the ultimate nature of his ethical theory.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār based his ethical theory on an objective perception of good and evil. But this does not mean that he perceived good and evil as intrinsic qualities

that constitute a part of an action, or as a determinant cause that necessitates the value of the action. ʿAbd al-Jabbār, as will be shown, believed that an action was neither good nor evil for an intrinsic causal determinant (*maʿnā*), which resides in actions and necessitates them being good or evil, just as a certain property can reside in objects and necessitates them being, for example, black or white. Such a perception of good and evil is ascribed to the Baghdādian school of the Muʿtazilites, as will be shown below. Grounds of evil, mentioned by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, such as wrongdoing, not returning a deposit, and lying are states of actions (*aḥwāl*). The state of an action is determined by its circumstances and consequences. For example, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār the ground of evil "*wajh qubḥ*" of the action of "inflicting pain" is it being wrongdoing (*ẓulm*). "Inflicting pain" is a perceived entity or a physical description of the action, thus an intrinsic causal determinant, a "*maʿnā*," that determines the genus (*jins*) of an action. Whereas *ẓulm*, which is the ground of the action's evil, is an attribute of the action of inflicting pain necessitated by the state (*ḥāl*) of the action. The state of the action is determined by certain conditions and by the consequences that the action brings about or is thought to bring about. Grounds of evil (*wujūh al-qubḥ*) are different as are grounds of goodness,[135] however, it is important to note that any state of action that constitutes grounds of good or evil is determined by different circumstances and consequences. In the example of inflicting pain, it is described as evil when recognized as having the state of *ẓulm*, and it is called *ẓulm* if it does not entail a benefit that outweighs the pain, if not done to avert greater pain, or if it is not carried out as a punishment. Therefore, what determines the ground of evil is the consequences of an action in terms of harm and benefit, and the circumstances of an action, which comprises different factors that can affect the value of the action. In the case of inflicting pain, one needs to know the circumstances of it; thus if that was deserved as a punishment for a crime, it is not considered evil according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār. Because the same genus of actions, such as inflicting pain, is sometimes good and sometimes evil, it is not an intrinsic property of an action that qualifies it as good or evil, but the aspects of an action that provide good reasons for certain judgments, expressed by ʿAbd al-Jabbār as *wajh al-qubḥ* and *wajh al-ḥusn*. Thus, values are not really considered intrinsic to moral acts as suggested by a contemporary scholar,[136] and *wajh*, when mentioned by the Muʿtazilites in the context of values and judgments can hardly be considered part of the ontological composite that constitutes the nature of the act, as argued by another scholar,[137] unless one assumes that the conditions and the consequences of the act are also parts of the ontological composite that constitute the nature of the act. Also, there is no point in looking for a technical meaning for the term "*wajh*."[138] The term "*wajh*" is a multi-purpose word. To ask about "*wajh qubḥ*" of a certain action is tantamount to asking about the reason for considering it evil. Whereas asking about the *maʿnā* that necessitates the evilness of an action is tantamount to asking about a certain intrinsic quality that resides in the action and makes it evil. It seems reasonable to talk about *wajh al-qubḥ*, which necessitates the evilness of a certain action, while it is not reasonable to talk about a *maʿnā*

which necessitate the moral value of an action. Because the latter is considered to reside in things or actions and to contribute to the qualities that make a thing or an action what it is. Just as yellowness or redness are qualities that make things red or yellow. The same *maʿnā* can be good or evil, according to the circumstances and consequences that give the same *maʿnā* an added value. For example, pain is considered a *maʿnā* by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, yet it does not determine the moral value of a painful action, while the state (*ḥāl*) of the action of inflicting pain determines the moral value. The circumstances and the consequences of inflicting pain determine its state. It might be wrongdoing (*ẓulm*) or not. It is the state of an action that necessitates a certain value, and when an action is wrongdoing it must be evil.

In a chapter entitled "Revealing What Makes an Action Evil or Good and Obligatory and What is Related to it" ʿAbd al-Jabbār says:

> Know that if it is true that acts known by reason to be evil (*al-qabīḥ al ʿaqlī*) such as "wrongdoing" and "lying" have to be discerned from other things by something characteristic to it (*li-amr yakhtaṣu bihi*), then there must be something that necessitates (*yaqtaḍī*) its being [evil], otherwise it might be good rather than evil, or other acts might be better qualified to have this attribute (*ṣifa*) [i.e. evil]. The reason for their being evil must be intelligible such as having a peculiar state (*ḥāl*), or a determinant cause (*maʿnā*) or due to the state of their agent. For there is no difference between saying that they are evil for an unintelligible reason, and saying that they are evil for no reason at all.[139]

In the quotation above three different grounds of evil were considered by ʿAbd al-Jabbār and it is evident that they correspond with different Muʿtazilite conceptions of moral value. Thus, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, one of the following would necessitate a moral attribute to an action:

1 The state (*hāl*) of the agent;
2 A determinant cause *maʿnā*, that inheres in things or actions;
3 A peculiar state (*hāl*) of the action itself;

So, an action described as "evil" must be considered evil according to one of the above mentioned qualifiers.

The state of the agent

It is the Baghdādi Muʿtazilites who seem to have perceived moral qualities as *maʿānī* that reside in actions, that is why they could not perceive a certain action occurring as evil to occur differently and be good. For example, if pain is considered evil it cannot ever be considered good. The masters of the Baṣran Muʿtazilites, mainly Abū Hāshim introduced the concept of *ḥāl*, and related good and evil to the state of the agent. The Baṣrans must have developed their conception of moral

values, taking into account the objections that might have been raised against their earlier masters and the Muʿtazilites of Baghdād, especially Abū al-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī al-Balkhī (d.319/931). For the Baṣran, pain and pleasure were not distinctive entities; what was painful to some might be pleasant to the others and what is painful sometimes might become pleasant other times. Abū Hāshim maintained that the same "genus" of actions, if associated with desire (*idha qāranathu al-shahwa*), would be called pleasure and if associated with aversion, would be called pain. Thus the same *ma'nā* stands for pleasure and pain. For Abū Hāshim, if neither of the two states accompanies it then there is no pain or pleasure. Nothing exists that can be called pleasure or pain; perceiving something with attraction is pleasure and perceiving it with repulsion is pain.[140] It is important to recall what has been said above regarding Abū Hāshim's comparison between ethical and aesthetical values and why ʿAbd al-Jabbār disagreed with him. ʿAbd al-Jabbār completely denied that moral values are related to the states of the agent, that is, desire and aversion (*al-shahwa wa'l-nufūr*). He believed, as did Abū Hāshim that it is the state of the agent that determines whether the genus of an action is pain or pleasure. However, good and evil in contrast to Abū Hāshim's view are not related to the state of the agent.[141] ʿAbd al-Jabbār criticized Abū Hāshim's comparison between ethical and aesthetical values, which made both good and evil as ugly and beautiful depending on the state of the individual. Abū Rashīd[142] (d.419/1028), although a companion and a pupil of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, also confirms Abū Hāshim's view that the state of the agent can affect the value of an act,[143] contrary to what ʿAbd al-Jabbār maintained.

According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, the state of the agent had nothing to do with determining the evil of a certain action such as wrongdoing and lying. This has already been investigated above when it was shown that ʿAbd al-Jabbār differentiated between ethical judgments and value judgments. Ethical judgments entail value judgments and depend on the state of the agent, but value judgments depend on the harmful or beneficial consequences and have nothing to do with the state of the agent. It has also been shown that ʿAbd al-Jabbār disagreed with Abū Hāshim on the relationship of desire and aversion to good and evil. ʿAbd al-Jabbār agreed with Abū Hāshim in holding that an action is not considered wrongdoing or lying for a *ma'nā* that inheres in actions. "Evil is not discerned from good for the existence of a *ma'nā*."[144] However, he denied that the state of the agent had any effect in determining good or evil because, as has already been indicated, an action is considered evil for a peculiar state of the action itself (*lā budda min ikhtiṣāṣihi bi-ḥāl*, *li-kawnihi 'alayha ṣāra qabīḥan*).[145] By analogy one might assume that he also believed that an action was considered good for a peculiar state of the action itself. Moreover, a good action becomes a recommended action (*yaḥṣulu nadban*) for an additional state (*li-ḥāl zā'ida*), or obligatory also for an additional state.[146] The additional state that makes a good action recommended is it being beneficial to others (*kawnuhu iḥsānan*),[147] and the additional state that makes an action obligatory is it being an action that observes the rights of others, their right not to be harmed.[148]

A determinant cause (*maʿnā*)

The view that good and evil are qualities of things and actions, in a sense that there is a certain causal determinant that resides in an action necessitating its being good or evil, is a position held not only by Abū al-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī the contemporary of the Jubbāʾīs, but also by all the Muʿtazilites who are called Asḥāb al-Ṭabāʾiʿ due to certain ontological beliefs,[149] on one hand, and those called the dualists on the other.[150] Abū al-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī held that for every accident (*ʿarāḍ*),[151] "if it exists and is detestable [evil or *qabīḥ*], it is inconceivable that it should come to exist and be good"[152] and that an evil act is evil "by what this specific thing is, as itself and as a genus."[153] Thus, according to Abū al-Qāsim pain must be a genus that can either be good or evil, it cannot be sometimes good and sometimes evil. The Baṣran and the Baghdādian Muʿtazilites disagreed upon different ontological, epistemological, and theological issues. The Baghdādian conception of moral value was vehemently criticized by the late Baṣrans. For example, Abū Rashīd al-Nīsābūrī (d.419/1028) reported the views of Abū al-Qāsim and the objections raised against them by the Baṣrans. The difference between the Baṣran and Baghdādian conception of moral value was well recognized. Different criticisms seem to have been raised against the Baghdādian and the early Muʿtazilite perception of moral values.

The late Islamic scholar al-Muqbilī (d.1108/1696) also recognized the difference between the Baṣran and the Baghdādian theory of value. He mentioned that it was the Baghdadian Muʿtazilites who believed that the value of an action resides in the action whereas the Baṣran Muʿtazilites maintained that it was determined by certain aspects and considerations (*li-wujūh wa-iʿtibārāt*).[154] It is obvious, therefore, that the criticism of the Baghdādian Muʿtazilites by ʿAbd al-Jabbār and his school arose from discontent with the static quality of early attempts at moral ontology.[155] According to the Baghdādian theory, inflicting pain and injury must be evil by species, and correspondingly pleasure and benefit must be good by species. Whereas ʿAbd al-Jabbār, like his masters, maintained that "acts of wrongdoing are not evil by species (*liʿaynihi*)."[156] Species refers to the kinds of pain, injury, etc. which have a common character that can be described in natural terms.[157] But for the Baṣrans, and especially for ʿAbd al-Jabbār, an action has certain aspects (*wujūh*) and these were related to the consequences and the circumstances of the evaluated action. Good and evil are necessitated by certain states (*aḥwāl*) of the action that were determined by certain aspects and considerations (*wujūh*). They are not natural properties, but they refer to factual circumstances and consequences of the action in consideration. According to al-Shahrastānī, "*wujūh*" are unanimously not considered properties.[158] Thus *wujūh* simply provide us with good reasons for considering the action good or evil.

It is worth mentioning that the Baṣran Muʿtazilites were not the first to criticize some of the views of their predecessors and compare them to the views of the dualists. Ibn al-Rawandī (d.250/864) might have been one of the first. His arguments against the Muʿtazila seem to have been assimilated, not only by al-Ashʿarī,

but also by Abū Hāshim and his Baṣran branch of the Muʿtazila. Al-Khayyaṭ reports that Ibn al-Rawandī described Ibrāhīm al-Naẓām's (d.231/845) doctrines as those of al-Manāniyya.[159] Al-Manāniyya was a dualist group who, according to al-Khayyaṭ, claimed that lying and truth-telling (*al-ṣidq*) are distinguished from each other and contradict each other [they are different kinds of action]. They believe that truth-telling is good (*khayr*) and comes from light, and that lying is evil and comes from darkness. A similar view was ascribed by Ibn al-Rawandī to al-Naẓām. Al-Khayyaṭ takes it upon himself to defend the Muʿtazilite doctrines and to show that they are different from the doctrines of the dualists.[160]

ʿAbd al-Jabbār states that one of the main principles of the dualists is their belief concerning the nature of pain.[161] At the beginning of a section devoted to surveying different views regarding the nature of pain ʿAbd al-Jabbār says:

> Know that some people held that pains and sorrows were considered evil for themselves and what they were, and that they can not exist without being evil. This is the doctrine of the dualists and those who followed them.[162]

Abd al-Jabbār did not mention the names of those "who followed them," however, one is justified in assuming that he meant certain Muʿtazilite figures, particularly those known as *Aṣḥāb al-Ṭabā'i'* including Abū al-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī. The latter held that if a certain action occurs and is evil it cannot occur and be good. Al-Ashʿarī also reported that according to the Baghdādians, the same genus of actions cannot be sometimes good and sometimes evil, as good actions are discerned from evil by genus. The Baghdādian Muʿtazilites believed that obedience could not belong to the same genus as disobedience,[163] whereas the Baṣrans held that both belonged to the same genus of actions.[164] The position of the Baghdādian Muʿtazilites mentioned by al-Ashʿarī corresponds to what has been said about Abū al-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī who maintained that "If an action is good and another is evil, then they must be different."[165] ʿAbd al-Jabbār, like his Muʿtazilite masters held that the same act might occur in a certain way and be evil and occur in another way and be good.[166] Criticizing the doctrine of the dualists, ʿAbd al-Jabbār hints at the similarities that they have to the doctrines of the Mujbira on one hand and to Aṣḥāb al-Ṭabā'iʿ on the other. He says:

> When they say that the action occurs through nature, we show them that some actions occur according to the agent's choice, and we argue with them in the way we argued with Asḥāb al-Ṭabā'iʿ, which has already been mentioned. One of us might prefer an action to the contrary, and leave an action to its alternative. This annuls the doctrine of *al-ṭab'* [that the action is causally produced by the nature of its cause.][167]

The dualists claimed that everything in this world has two origins: light and darkness. This is compared by ʿAbd al-Jabbār to the claim of Asḥāb al-Ṭabā'iʿ that

there are four origins to everything.[168] The similarity lies in the doctrine of *al-ṭab'*, and the belief that everything happens according to its natural quality, *bil-ṭab'*. The dualists held that everything good, pleasant, and beneficial comes from light and that all evil, harm, and sorrow comes from darkness.[169] The Baghdādians, or those of them who believed in the doctrine of *al-ṭab'*, linked what is pleasant and beneficial to a certain genus of actions that is discerned from the genus of actions that produces pain and evil. According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār it is contradictory to hold that something might occur by nature and by choice (*wuqū' al-shay' bil-ṭab' wa'l-ikhtiyār yatanāqaḍ*), unless we refer by *al-ṭab'* to the quality that distinguishes the autonomous being as being capable of choosing.[170] From this it is obvious that ʿAbd al-Jabbār knew that Aṣḥāb al-Ṭabā'iʿ were not determinists, as they also believed that man chose his acts. However, he believed that their views concerning human free will or the ability to determine their own actions contradicted the doctrine of natural quality (*al-ṭab'*).[171] Unfortunately, the volume of *al-Mughnī* in which ʿAbd al-Jabbār displayed and criticized the views of Aṣḥāb al-Ṭabā'i including Abū al-Qāsim is missing.[172] However it is their moral views that concern this study. He criticized their conception of good and evil emphasizing that an action is not considered good or evil because of what it is, for a certain *ma'nā* or *ṭab'*, as the same action might occur under certain conditions and be good and in different conditions and be evil, which is contrary to what was held by Abū al-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī. He says:

> The same action might occur as evil, when occurring in a certain way (*wajh*) [and as good] when it occurs in a different way (*'alā khilāf dhālika al-wajh*). Don't you see that [for example], entering a house, although being one thing might be evil, when done without permission, and good when done with permission. In the same manner, bowing might be good when done for God and evil when done for Satan. Thus what Abū al-Qāsim said is invalid.[173]

From the above quotation it is clear that entering a house is not considered evil because it is entered slowly or quickly or through the door or through the window, nor was it considered good for similar reasons. If *wajh* is a part of the ontological composite that constituted the nature of the act, then how can having permission or not having it constitute part of the ontological composite of the action? According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, an action has certain aspects (*wujūh*), and these are related to the consequences and the circumstances of the action. They are not characteristics that can be described in narrow natural terms, but might be properly considered the "reasons" for considering the action good or evil.

Abū Rashīd al-Nīsābūrī, the most outstanding Muʿtazilite figure after the death of ʿAbd al-Jabbār explained the Baṣran Muʿtazilite conception of moral value:

> If it is possible to account for the "good" of a body by [reference to] its coming to be in a certain way (*'alā wajh*) then it is not permissible

> to [account for its goodness by reference to] the existence of a causal determinant (*maʿnā*). In other words: the manifestation in-a-certain-way (*wajh*) is what brings about the attribute (*ṣifa*) [goodness], if it acquires sufficient effect. Therefore it is not permissible to locate [the attribute goodness] in a compelling causal determinant. If you [did so] then the assigning of a cause would not be defined with sufficient precision.[174]

Here the manifestation of an action in a certain way is said to bring about the moral attribute. Thus it is a peculiar state of the action itself that brings about a moral attribute, not what the action really is in itself as a physical action. Physical actions themselves such as inflicting pain, entering someone's house, enduring harm, or bowing cannot have any moral value. It is only the circumstances and consequences of these and other actions that can determine their moral values.

From what was written by ʿAbd al-Jabbār against the dualists' perception of moral values and his arguments against them, and ʿAbū al-Qāsim's beliefs that represent the views of the Baghdadi Muʿtazilites in his day, one can conclude the following: good and evil were considered properties that form a part of an object or act. Thus, a value is a property that qualifies the act and makes it what it is, in the same manner that a color of an object is a property that qualifies the object and makes it red rather than yellow, or in the same manner as the duration of a movement, its strength, and its direction are all properties that describe the essence of the movement. Good and evil are also such properties. Most probably, every instance of harm, pain, and injury were properties that were directly perceived as evil, and benefit was a property that was directly perceived as good. Recognizing that some benefits are not good and some harms are not evil, and that the same act that is deemed beneficial might in different circumstances be harmful, the Jubbāʾīs and especially Abū Hāshim abandoned the naturalistic conception of the theory of value, held by the early Muʿtazilites and the Baghdādians. Abū Hāshim's views concerning the nature of moral values seem to correspond with his doctrine of *aḥwāl* which was provided by him "to replace the doctrine of *maʿānī* that was introduced by Muʿammar b. ʿAbbād."[175] It is difficult to determine exactly the nature of Abū Hāshim's moral theory, however, it is clear that ʿAbd al-Jabbār held different views from his master, although he agrees with him in many other issues and is considered to belong to the Bahshamiyya[176] branch of the Muʿtazila. It has already been shown that for him, in contrast to what has been held by Abū Hāshim, good and evil are independent of the state of the agent. Also, in contrast to what has been held by the early Muʿtazilites and the Baghdādian Muʿtazilites, good and evil are not qualities that inhere in things or actions. Thus, the second and the third conceptions of moral values listed above are excluded by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, and what is left is that evil is a peculiar state of the action itself.

To sum up the issue, one might say that ʿAbd al-Jabbār denied and criticized two moral aspects that are related to the doctrines of Aṣḥāb al-Ṭabāʾiʿ:

First, that if an object or an act is beneficial (good) or harmful (evil) because of its intrinsic qualities, then the same type or genus of actions cannot be considered

otherwise. But what is beneficial is that which produces pleasure (*lidha*) and joy (*surūr*) and what is harmful is that which produces pain (*alam*) and sorrow (*ghamm*). There are a lot of things that might be the source of joy and pleasure to someone whilst being the source of pain and sorrow to someone else. He says that one can give many examples to support this argument. Stealing someone's money may be pleasant for the thief, whilst being painful for the robbed man. Telling the truth to someone asking about a man hiding in your house may be pleasant for the one who is seeking the fugitive, while it is painful for the one hiding. He also mentions heat, which might be pleasant for the one who feels cold while being unpleasant for the one who already feels warm.[177] What made bowing good is the intention to worship God, and what makes the same action evil is the intention to worship Satan.[178] Harm and pain are evil if not deserved, if not done to avert greater harm or not thought to have outweighing benefit. The pains of hard study are therefore good. Moreover, the reason for considering some actions evil or good is not only the guaranteed result. Just thinking that an action will, most probably, have harmful consequences is enough to consider it evil, and thinking that it is beneficial is enough to consider it good. ʿAbd al-Jabbār explains that this includes medical treatment, when we take what is detestable and avoid some tasty food and also when we endure hardship and tolerate pain to advance the fields of the sciences or literature or to carry out noble tasks, "all this shows that enduring harm is good when thought to [bring about] benefit or repel harm."[179] There is nothing in the nature of acts or things that is absolutely beneficial and good or absolutely harmful and evil. Good and evil cannot be thus considered intrinsic qualities of things and actions.

Second, if good and evil are qualities determined by nature, then it is also the nature of the person that determines the value of the acts. But good acts are not performed by the agent because he has a good quality by nature, nor are the evil acts performed by a person in accordance with his evil nature. If this was so then one would not be able to imagine that the same person might choose to do something evil sometimes and something good at others. A person chooses his/her acts and there is nothing in his/her nature that necessitates performing good or evil. Of course the Muʿtazilites and especially the Baghdādis did not hold such a deterministic view of human conduct.[180] But according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, holding the doctrine of *al-ṭab'* as shown above contradicts the doctrine of human free will.

The state of action

In an important passage ʿAbd al-Jabbār reveals the ultimate ground for establishing obligation, and this is so as to guard against harm. He says:

> It has been proven by reason that guarding against harm, in a way that is known or believed to guard against it is obligatory. And this is the ground for establishing the origin or the root (*aṣl*) of *taklīf* the (obligation) and its branches.[181]

Pain according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār is a perceived entity (*maʿnā mudrak*).[182] He said that we feel pain just as we feel cold or hot, and we even perceive pain more clearly than heat or cold, thus we have to affirm a perceived entity (*maʿnā mudrak*), which is pain.[183]

The importance of the notion of pain in the ethical theory of ʿAbd al-Jabbār is confirmed by him saying that it is not proper to talk about the good or evil of a certain action before revealing the truth of pains and what is related to pain.[184] What is related to pain is harm (*ḍarar*) and sorrow (*ghamm*) on one side, and benefit, pleasure, and joy on the other. But for ʿAbd al-Jabbār, pain and injury can be good and pleasure and joy can be evil. It is not the state of the agent, such as the wanting or desiring or a state of aversion that determines the moral value of good and evil, although pain is averted and joy is desired. It is rather the actual consequences and circumstances that determine the value of a certain perceived entity as pain, pleasure, harm, or benefit. If pain is deserved as a punishment then it is considered good, and it is also good if it entails an outweighing profit or if done to avert greater harm.[185] The view that pain is evil when it occurs in a certain way that causes wrongdoing is ascribed to Abū ʿAlī:

> Our master Abū ʿAlī used to say that pains (*al-ālām*) are considered evil for being wrongdoing (*ẓulm*) [when they are unjustly inflicted]. They are considered wrongdoing when they are not the cause of benefit, repulsion of greater injury or when they are not deserved punishment.[186]

Abū Hāshim agreed and believed that pain, like injury (*ḍarar*), is said to be evil only through not being a cause of benefit, repulsion of greater injury or deserved punishment, or thought to be one of these.[187] ʿAbd al-Jabbār says that the opinion of most of his masters was that inflicting pain was evil only when it was wrongdoing or when it was useless not whenever it was an injury or harm (*ḍarar*). But there are some conflicting reports concerning Abū Hāshim's moral views. In some of his books he is said to have held that pain is considered evil only because it is harmful,[188] and we have seen above that evil for him is what is perceived with aversion, just as ugly is considered so because it is perceived with aversion. However, ʿAbd al-Jabbār states that Abū Hāshim also said that pain is evil when it is wrongdoing and when it is futile (*ʿabath*). He adopts the last view and says that this view is more frequently mentioned in Abū Hāshim's books and is also the correct view.[189] Therefore, ʿAbd al-Jabbār actually chooses from his master's different views the views that conforms to his own moral theory and rejects the views that do not fit his theory.

According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, actions such as "inflicting pain" or things such as "pain" itself are sometimes good and sometimes evil. Their value is determined by taking into consideration the circumstances and consequences related to them. ʿAbd al-Jabbār talked about *wajh al-qubḥ and wajh al-ḥusn*, which might be translated as the "aspect," "ground" or "reason" that make a certain action good or evil. He says that wrongdoing is evil because it is wrongdoing (*wajha*

qubḥ al-ẓulm kawnuhu ẓulman). This sounds like a deontological rule. However, the definition of wrongdoing itself as "every harm that is done for no benefit that exceeds it, nor for repelling a greater harm, nor for being deserved, and is not thought to have some of these aspects,"[190] sets this rule "wrongdoing is evil" on a teleological ground. Abd al-Jabbār clearly refrains from defining evil in terms of harm, injury, and pain, although these are implied or explicitly stated in all the definitions of grounds of evil (*wujūh al-qubḥ*) that he mentions. The ground of evil is the state of a certain action (that can be in itself good or evil). The action is said to be in a certain state or condition when it happens in a certain way, that is, under certain conditions and for certain consequences. His ethical theory was often considered deontological on account of his continuous assertion that "the evilness of the wrongdoing is necessarily known,"[191] and that "it is evil because it is wrongdoing",[192] and on account of other moral principles that were asserted in the same manner. Yet, from the stated example in which he defines wrongdoing, one notices that it is related to pain and harm, and the absence of any benefit. This implies that the evilness of wrongdoing is ultimately based on its being painful and harmful; so his deontological rule is ultimately rooted in a teleological ground or, in other words it is maintained within a teleological framework. However, the reasons for considering a certain action evil, that is, the grounds of evil,[193] are considered by ʿAbd al-Jabbār to be: wrongdoing, lying, imposing unbearable obligations, and ingratitude for a favor.[194] When he says "lying is considered evil (*yaqbuḥu*) because it is lying, and wrongdoing is evil because it is wrongdoing, and ingratitude for a favor is evil because it is ingratitude for a favor"[195] One might interpret his ethics, then, to be a defining case of deontological morality, as it seems as if he is just stating what he intuitively believes to be right or wrong. But if what is wrong and prohibited is the ground of evil, and what is obligatory is the ground of good, then good and evil would entail moral judgments and not the opposite. This is contrary to what has been said above, that ethical judgments entail moral values in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethics. If moral values have grounds, and those grounds are moral rules, then good and evil are defined by what is right and what is wrong. It is true that grounds of evil in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's thought are defined by certain moral rules, yet those moral rules are themselves defined in terms of harmful and beneficial consequences and by various circumstances and conditions. This allows one to assert that his moral theory is primarily a teleological one. ʿAbd al-Jabbār also said: "each of the grounds of evil has a necessary basis … that is why it is right of us to praise lying, which is said to repel harm, or is believed to be so."[196] And "every rational human being (*kul ʾāqil*) knows that wrongdoing is evil when he recognizes it as wrongdoing, and that lying is evil when he recognizes that it is void of any benefit and not done for repelling harm."[197] Indeed, for ʿAbd al-Jabbār "each act that is beneficial to its agent, and is not harmful, and has no aspects of evil, should be considered good."[198]

The good reason that ʿAbd al-Jabbār gives for adopting a certain moral practice is indeed sometimes of the kind the deontologists would suggest, thus when considering how one would justify keeping a promise or returning a trust (*amāna*)

he does not go beyond the principle that one ought to keep the promise and ought to return the trust. For him such principles are essential for morality, and it would be irrational to ask why one should return a trust, or why one should keep the promise. Sometimes it seems as if ʿAbd al-Jabbār does not seek further reasons to justify the universal rules he maintains. But he must have been aware that those rules were formed through ages of human experience and were adopted and justified by human purposes to avoid suffering, which he considers the root of all obligations: "knowing the rights of others is the base of all obligations."[199] That he considers avoiding harm and suffering the root of all obligations is also implied in the fact that he recognizes the rights of others and builds his moral rules on this recognition.[200] Returning a deposit is the right of the owner of the deposit to benefit from it or avert harm,[201] as it is obligatory not to harm other people.[202] This rule is also justified by the obligation to refrain from wrongdoing, as it is considered wrongdoing (*ẓulm*) not to return the deposit or not to pay one's debts. Why is it considered wrongdoing? It is wrongdoing because it entails restraining someone's right to use the deposit in a way that might bring about some benefit or avert harm.[203] Thanking the benefactor is another obligation that is built on the rights of others.[204] It is obvious that not showing appreciation or expressing gratitude for someone who supports or benefits you is a source of harm and sorrow for the benefactor. Thus, thanking the benefactor is also obligatory in order to avoid sorrow. The wrongness of an action that should not be performed is based upon it being evil, and the evilness of an action is based on it being harmful. So it is harm and benefit that constitute the ultimate meaning of good and evil, and the grounds of any normative judgment.

It is useful, in this context to mention that in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's thought, fact and value are not to be separated, as they are not separated in our use of ordinary language, as indicated in the previous chapter. Descriptive and factual utterances sometimes entail value judgments. For example, when we call someone who is not telling the truth a liar we are naming him according to his actual behavior as this name describes a certain action. But it is not just naming, it is also blaming, as the name itself entails a value judgment. The same also applies for the wrongdoer:

> The performer of wrongdoing (*ẓulm*) must be called a wrongdoer (*ẓālim*), according to linguistic convention, and as far as the language is perpetual this name must stand for the performer of the *ẓulm*. The antecedence of language and convention in the existence of this name is considered analogous to the antecedence of reason or the maturity of the intellect (*kamāl al-ʿaql*) in apportioning blame for evil actions. And as it is possible that wrongdoing is performed, without being named as wrongdoing (*ẓulm*), if there is no linguistic convention, so it is possible to do evil (*qabīḥ*) before the maturity of the intellect, and not deserving blame for doing it. Yet this does not mean that one does not deserve blame after the antecedence of the maturity of the intellect, as it does not mean that the name is not deserved after the antecedence of linguistic convention.[205]

In other words the name *ẓālim* is a name given for the wrongdoer, and it has both normative and descriptive meanings, as it is used for condemning and blaming: "Whoever performs wrongdoing, *ẓulm*, is blamed by calling him a wrongdoer, *ẓālim*."[206] At the same time it is used for describing: "it describes the performer of what is harmful, void from any further benefit and not done to repel greater harm, nor it being deserved [deserved as punishment for some evil action]."[207] Therefore, from what has been said, it is clear that obligation not to perform wrongdoing, or a normative ethical judgment which states that you should refrain from wrongdoing clearly implies a value judgment that "wrongdoing is bad or evil," and obligation to perform a certain act obviously entails its goodness "the obligation of an act entails its goodness."[208] Value judgments: good and evil, in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's thought are not detached from descriptive or factual judgments, which is evident from his analysis of the meaning of wrongdoing. Thereupon normative judgments and value judgments are both verifiable and therefore objective. They can be verified as indicated above by appealing to linguistic usage which in turn reflect human experience of what is harmful and ought to be avoided and what is good and beneficial and ought to be pursued.

Therefore, all normative judgments articulated by ʿAbd al-Jabbār in the form of moral rules, such as "wrongdoing is forbidden," "thanking a benefactor is obligatory," "returning a deposit is obligatory," "benefiting others is recommended," all such kinds of rules which can be considered deontological moral rules stand on a teleological conception of moral values. Their final analysis indicates that whatever is beneficial for oneself in the long run, and at the same time not harmful to others is obligatory. Anything that is harmful in the long run is forbidden. While benefiting others is not obligatory but recommended, observing their rights is obligatory. If they have a right to a certain thing that entails some harm or sorrow to you, then you are obliged to do what preserves their rights. Rights of others are also established for their benefit and to avert harm to them. However it is beyond one's duty to benefit them without good reason. This is merely recommended. Obligatory acts and recommended acts deserve praise if performed, whereas omitting recommended acts does not deserve blame. Omitting one's duties or what is obligatory deserves blame and doing what is forbidden deserves blame, provided that the agent fulfills the conditions of being an autonomous moral being, investigated in the previous chapter.

Post-Muʿtazilite moral theory

The subjective implications of defining normative judgments in terms of blame and praise might partially explain the position of the later Ashʿarites such as al-Rāzī (d.606/1209) who seems to have accepted human knowledge of good and evil, harm and benefit, but still rejected the definition of what is obligatory and forbidden in terms of blame and praise.[209] They insisted that the obligatory and the forbidden are what God praises and rewards, and what He blames and punishes, not what humans praise and blame. Of course, if there is no objective reason (*ʾilla*)

for blaming, or if the blamed action has no attribute (*ṣifa*) that necessitates it being considered evil (as implied by Abū ʿAlī and Abū Hāshim), then man would be left with no ground for determining the value of actions. Thus, if human purposes and intentions are not determined by objective reasons then the Ashʿarites could be excused for seeking a superhuman basis for determining right and wrong.

Traditionally, al-Ashʿarī and the Ash'arite scholars favored the definition that "*ḥasan* coincided with the commandments of God, while *qabīḥ* referred to what God forbade."[210] However, the following quotation from a late Ashʿarīte scholar throws some light on the fact that the above stated definition was not really accepted by all the Ashʿarites. It is important to differentiate between those who maintained extreme ethical voluntarism, or Divine Command Theory, and others who adhered to a kind of modified Divine Command Theory or what we called Divine Purpose Theory. The former held that Divine Command determines axiological statuses such as moral goodness and badness, besides epistemological moral statuses such as obligation and prohibition. The latter distinguished between what one might call the ontological aspect of the problem and the epistemological aspects of it.[211] Extreme voluntarism was held by al-Ashʿarī and by Dā'ūd al-Ẓāhirī (d.270/882)[212] who were ready to accept the most extreme consequences of voluntarism: that if God had commanded theft and idolatry it would then be right for humans to commit them. The latter position, which we called Divine Purpose Theory was the position of the late Ashʿarite scholars. Al-Rāzī, is the chief representative of the later Ashʿarite school.[213] He and other Ashʿarites realized that there were three commonly recognized ways of defining *ḥasan* and *qabīḥ*. They agreed with the Muʿtazila on the first two meanings and disagreed on the third. They agreed that good and evil can be rationally known, but disagreed on considering these good and evil the basis for blaming and praising. In other words they denied that divine reward and punishment is based on what is rationally good or evil:

> The first definition denotes what is appealing or repulsive to one's natural disposition (*mulā'mat al-ṭab' wa munāfaratuhu*); the second, that something has a property of excellence or perfection (*ṣifat kamāl*) or deficiency and imperfection (*naqṣ*). These two meanings [of good and evil] are both rational (*'aqliyyān*). Yet these terms are sometimes said to indicate that a certain action necessitates punishment or reward, and praise or blame. If this is meant then it is for us [the Ashʿarites] a matter of law (*sharī'a*,) in contrast to the Muʿtazila.[214]

Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī maintained that the grounds for divine judgments cannot be human purposes and reasons, and he states that this is contrary to what was maintained by the Muʿtazila and most of the jurists (*fuqahā'*).[215] However, this does not mean that divine judgments or the laws laid down by God are arbitrary, as they are said to serve some larger purpose. "Al-Rāzī did concede though that whenever we consider the laws [of God] and the interests of man, we find them lying side by side or existing together, yet we cannot establish a causal relationship between

them, that is, the laws are laid down because of the interests of man."[216] However, it is significant that he mentions, in the above quotation, that the position of most of the jurists complies with the Muʿtazila in holding that human purposes and reasons are the basis of divine judgments. This means that al-Rāzī admitted that most of the *fuqahā* relied on reason and on their understanding of human purposes and benefits when explaining divine judgments and when deriving new judgments through *ijtihād*. This is based upon their belief that divine judgments were based on purposes and reasons that conform to human welfare.

Al-Ijī (d.756/1355), who is also considered a late Ashʿarite, discussed the disagreement between the Ashʿarites and the Muʿtazilites concerning good and evil. Describing the position of the extreme ethical voluntarists, he says that for them:

> Evil (*qabīh*) is that forbidden by law (*shar'*), and good is the opposite. Reason does not decide what is good or evil. This is not because of any real property that is merely revealed by law, but because the law establishes and discloses [the moral truth] (*al-shar' muthabbit wa mubayyin*), and if it swapped the subjects, so that good became evil and evil good, then things would become reversed.[217]

He compares the view of those who held the position described in the above quotation to the Muʿtazilites' position. He says that for the Muʿtazilites:

> Reason judges whether something is good or evil, and an action is intrinsically good or evil. *Al-shar'* reveals and discloses [the truth]. It can never reverse the subject.[218]

He then proceeds by saying that it is essential to detect the specific issue behind the above conflict. He mentions the three meanings of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ*, stating that he agrees with the Muʿtazila on the first two, which are first, that it indicates a property of "perfection and deficiency, as it is said knowledge is *ḥasan* and ignorance is *qabīḥ*."[219] He confirms that this is known by reason. The second meaning refers to benefit and harm (*maṣlaḥa wa mafsada*), and this is also rational (*'aqlī*).[220] The third meaning which relates *ḥusn* and *qubh* to praise and reward or blame and punishment is the main issue of disagreement, as this is arrived at by law for the Ashʿarites (among them al-Iji himself), whereas it is a rational issue for the Muʿtazilites.[221]

However, one might notice that the position of the late Ashʿarite scholars is inconsistent; because they seem to deny divine wisdom (*ḥikma*) when they deny that divine judgments are based on comprehensible reasons, while they still use reasoning (*ta'līl*) when they need to derive a certain judgment. Ibn Taymiyya, criticizing their position rightly identifies the contradiction in their moral thought, noticing that they used reason, when they were concerned in deriving moral and legal judgments, which implies that they affirmed reason and wisdom in divine judgments. Yet they still denied reasoning in *kalām*:

> Those who argue against the affirmation of wisdom (*ḥikma*), in the acts of Allah the Exalted, their *fiqh* contradicts the principles of their *kalām*; since they certainly affirm the opposite in the issues of *fiqh*, exegesis and *Ḥadīth*. Al-Rāzī denied reasoning in *kalām*, because his master is al-Ashʿarī, while he accepted reasoning [when investigating an issue related to *fiqh*], because his master, in that field, was al-Shāfiʿī.[222]

The inconsistency of the later Ashʿarites when they considered value judgments as objective and known by Man, while considering that obligations were based on divine prescriptions, was also pointed out by al-Muqbilī (d.1108/1696). He considered their doctrine concerning *qubḥ* and *ḥusn* contradictory. As they accepted to define them in terms of usefulness and harmfulness, excellence and deficiency, and denied that good deserves praise and evil deserves blame. He wondered how anything could have such properties and not deserve to be judged accordingly.[223]

Therefore, the late Ashʿarite scholars, such as al-Rāzī and even al-Ghazālī, cannot be considered the representatives of extreme ethical voluntarism. It is also wrong to consider that most of the *fuqahā'* were faithful adherents to Divine Command Theory, especially as Ashʿarism did not become a powerful movement until the late eleventh century.[224] Also ethical voluntarism as articulated by al-Ashʿarī could not have provided the basis for practicing *ijtihād*. This is because if divine command is the ultimate basis for morality, and if (theoretically) God could have commanded anything, and whatever he commands would be good by virtue of its being commanded, then there would be neither reason nor purpose behind his commands. Thus no ground (*'illa*) could be derived from His scriptures and no judgment could be derived by analogy (*qiyās*). If there is no reason or purpose, one might expect His judgments to be different from whatever human reason thinks to be good, even if it is derived by analogy from other commands or instructions. Moreover, the majority of Muslim jurists agreed that the Lawgiver lays down laws in the interests of Man.[225] Therefore they agreed that *maṣlaḥa* or the interests of Man may be employed for the derivation of new laws.[226] However "this in no case means that the Muslims are free to make laws in accordance with whatever they deem to be their interests. The interests of Man are determined by the Lawgiver Himself, and there is a determined methodology for this. The jurists have taken great pains to lay down this methodology in a way that the laws derived through it may still be termed as the *aḥkām* of Allah."[227]

The extreme version of ethical voluntarism was encapsulated in the Euthyphro dilemma, analyzed in the first chapter of this work. Socrates' famous question was: "Is the pious and holy beloved by the gods because it is holy, or holy because it is beloved by the gods?"[228] If a parallel question was to be addressed to any "consistent" Muslim jurists, it would become: Is what is good commanded by God because it is good, or is it good because it is commanded by God? Certainly the answer would be that what is good is commanded by God because it is good, especially when we take into consideration that they considered *maṣlaḥa* and the welfare of human beings the ultimate purpose of revelation.[229]

Al-Ghazālī has often been stated as representative of extreme divine voluntarism.[230] However, some important aspects of his ethical or legal reasoning have been neglected by those who classified him as being among the adherents of extreme voluntarism. Al-Ghazālī admits that *maṣlaḥa* essentially consists of pursuing benefit (*manfa'a*) and repelling harm; although later he says

> It is not what we mean, because pursuing benefit and repelling harm are human purposes, and the well-being of people resides in achieving their purposes. But what we mean by *maṣlaḥa* is maintaining the purposes of the law (*shar'*). The purposes of law concerning human beings are five: preservation of their religion, life, mind, progeny, and property. Thus whatever entails preserving these principles (*uṣūl*) is *maṣlaḥa* and whatever destroys them is corruption (*mafsada*), and repelling it is *maṣlaḥa*.[231]

It is clear that there is no big difference between what he considers to be the original meaning of *maṣlaḥa* and the meaning he gives to it. The purposes of the *sharī'a*, as perceived by al-Ghazālī entail the essential purposes of human beings and set the priorities of human purposes. These are certainly not derived from divine commands, they are derived from the reasons behind divine commands, the reasons that make divine commands purposeful rather than arbitrary – reasons that are stated or implied in the Qur'ān, and well articulated by human intellect.

It has been proven so far that not all Muslim jurist and not even all the Ashʿarites were adherents of Divine Command Theory. The late Ashʿarites agreed with the Muʿtazila on two definitions of "good and evil" stated above. Their agreement on "good" being a property ascribed to what is beneficial, and "evil" being a property ascribed to what is harmful indicates that they acknowledged objective values. Their disagreement with the Muʿtazilites was on the third definition, which stated that good is what deserves praise and evil is what deserves blame, insisting that it is not human praise or blame that makes an action obligatory or forbidden, but God's praise and reward and His blame and punishment. Also, most of the jurists believed that the main purpose of sending prophets was the welfare of human beings. To sum up, one can state their argument in three predicates and a conclusion.

1 Good and evil are objective, all humans know what is good and what is bad;
2 The ultimate purpose of revelation is human welfare;
3 What ought to be done and what ought not to be done is determined by God;
4 Therefore, ought judgments are divine judgments, based upon objective value judgments.[232]

They insisted that all normative judgments come from God, although value judgments are objective and known to man. Thus even if the "declared" Ashʿarite position conforms with ethical voluntarism which emphasizes divine arbitrary will,

because normative judgments are said to be determined by God's will, their position is not an extreme version of ethical voluntarism because, firstly they believe that divine prescriptions are based on human welfare; and secondly because they acknowledge the objectivity of what is good and what is bad.

In order to clarify how Muʿtazilite ethics represented by ʿAbd al-Jabbār differed from the above stated theory it would be useful to sum up his position in the following points:

1 Good and evil are objective, all people know what is good and what is bad;
2 Normative judgments are based on what is objectively known to be good or evil, thus they can also be known by human beings;
3 Divine normative judgments entail objective value judgments;
4 Divinely prescribed judgments comprise both ethical obligations *taklīf ʿaqlī*[233] and religious obligations *taklīf sharʿī*;
5 Religious obligations are known only from God, they support human welfare, and strengthen ethical obligations;
6 Normative ethical judgments belong to what is considered *taklīf ʿaqlī*. An act is considered *qabīḥ* or *maḥẓūr* by reason, and for the same reason it is considered to be *ḥarām* or forbidden by God. An act is considered to be obligatory by reason, and for that same reason it is considered to be required by God.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār emphasizes the last point and insists on considering normative ethical judgments (forbidden, ought, recommended, and good) as derivable by human reason, and based on objective grounds, which is what is good or bad for human beings. Whereas the Ashʿarites insist that the source of ethical judgments is God, although divinely ordained ethical judgments are also based on objective grounds.

Although this study is about Muʿtazilite rather than Ashʿarite ethics it was appropriate to highlight some differences and some similarities between the two as Ashʿarite ethics were usually contrasted with Muʿtazilite ethics. Differences were emphasized, and similarities were disregarded. The teleological aspect of Muʿtazilite ethics, regardless of its being established by the Ashʿarites within the framework of the *sharīʿa*, was further refined in what was called *maqāṣid al-sharīʿa*, where the purposes of morality, be they rational or divine were most notably articulated. Conservation of life, mind, progeny, and property are the first priorities and the ultimate purposes of morality and religion.

CONCLUSION

According to the Muʿtazilite ethical theory that has been studied in this book one can affirm that moral values can be transferred across cultural, ideological, or civilizational boundaries. This is opposite to what has been argued by a contemporary scholar who compared Ashʿarite tendency to Unger's modern liberalism. The latter claimed that "values lie essentially beyond the pale of reason."[1]

It is true that there is growing resignation to the idea that some values cannot be transferred across cultural, ideological, or civilizational boundaries and that this explains the proliferation in modern times of ideologies as diverse as Molefi Asante's Afro-centricism to Samuel P. Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*. However, the values that cannot be transferred across cultural, ideological, and civilizational boundaries are not moral values. Those values, which cannot be transferred, are only the values that fail to fulfill the conditions of universality, impartiality, rationality, or objectivity, that is, they fail to fulfill all, or some of the conditions of moral judgments. These conditions were first articulated by the Muʿtazilites as shown in the fifth chapter of this book. Certainly one cannot deny that there are things that have a certain value to some individuals but not to all, to some nations but not to others, yet such values cannot pass the test of universality and are therefore not moral values. The significance of moral values lies in the fact that they override other values including cultural and ideological ones. Thus, in times of disputations, people should appeal to moral values such as justice to solve their problems. Moral values should have the final verdict in the court of reason.

In our times, and in the wake of religious fundamentalism, it became clear that it is only through rational ethical theories that recognize the place of reason in ethics and acknowledge rational, universal obligations, that dialogue between people can be achieved and understanding and peace between nations can become attainable. It has been mentioned in the introduction of this work that it will be goal oriented. Consequently, its focus was to investigate some important aspects of an ethical theory that can be recognized as a definite alternative of the Divine Command Theory. Nevertheless, it has been found that Divine Command Theory is not prominent in Islamic ethical thought. It was pointed out that Divine Command Theory has a prominent place in contemporary philosophical American literature. From the 1970s an increasing interest in Divine Command Theory in the United

States led many philosophers to define themselves as Divine Command Theorists. This theory, consciously or unconsciously, provided the philosophical basis for religious fundamentalism.

This study has tried to prove that ethical voluntarism, or Divine Command Theory is not the prevailing theory in Islamic thought as claimed by some writers mentioned in the context of the book. Moreover, it has no special place in Arabo-Islamic cultural heritage, nor could it be supported by Qur'ānic evidence. It has been demonstrated, that even the position of late Ashʿarite scholars cannot be properly described as ethical voluntarism.

Ashʿarite ethics were usually compared and contrasted to Muʿtazilite ethics; differences were emphasized, and similarities were disregarded. In this work it was argued that the teleological aspects of Muʿtazilite ethics, were further refined and articulated by late Ashʿarite scholars in what they called *maqāṣid al-sharīʿa*, or the purposes of law. Muʿtazilite ethics seem to have had profound influence on the development of ethical thought.

Finally, I hope to have been able to show the development of Arabic-Islamic ethics, and to shed new light on a rational and objective moral theory provided by a great Islamic scholar of the eleventh/twelfth century. This theory remains a vitally important contribution to the current debate over ethics.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 Ministry of Education (1993b: 98).
2 Ibid., "The advantage of the five prayers" or (*Fadl al-ṣalawat al-khamsa*), p. 55, and "The wisdom of alms-giving" (*Ḥikmat al-Zakā*), p. 80. "The wisdom of pilgrimage" (*Ḥikmat al-Ḥajj*), p. 88, in Ministry of Education (1993a).
3 Ḥanafī (1981: 108–9).
4 Arkoun (1987), cited in Netton (1994: x).
5 Arkoun (2002: 7).
6 Ibid., p. 30.
7 Ibid., p. 318.
8 For example, see Abul Fadl (2001) and Ajlouni (2004).
9 Donaldson (1953: 280).
10 Different names were given to emphasize different aspects of the theory. Those who emphasized God's commands will prefer to call it ethical voluntarism or theological voluntarism, implying that God's commands should be interpreted according to His will. Their implied assumption is that His will or intention is not explicitly known from His commands.
11 Helm (1981: 2). This book comprises a collection of essays written by William K. Frankena, Philip L. Quinn, R. G. Swinburne, and others. The essays reflect the authors' philosophical approaches to the problem of the relationship between religion and morality.
12 Analytical proposition is one in which the concept of the subject contains the concept of the predicate. For example: "All brothers are males." Whereas, a synthetic proposition provides substantial information (see Blackburn 1996: 15).
13 Helm (1981: 2).
14 Hourani (1985: 17).
15 Ibid., p. 58–9.
16 Al-Nīsabūrī (261/875[1954–1956], Book 23, p. 1233). For the translation of these Ḥadīth reports the following website was frequently consulted: DEED Society at IIUM, Translation of Sahih Muslim, Translator Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, 2005, Available from: http://www.iiu.edu.my/deed/hadith/muslim/index.html, last accessed August 2009.
17 Ibid., Book 25, p. 1250.
18 Kamali (1999: 111–12).
19 These were people of influence, not necessarily devout Muslims, whose cooperation was important for the victory of Islam (see Kamali 1999: 139).
20 Ibid.
21 Coulson (1964: 21).
22 Macdonald (1965: 83).
23 Fakhry (1997: 13–14).
24 Kamali (1999: 113).

25 Fakhry (1997: 16–18).
26 Watt (1968: 162).
27 Fakhry (1991: 31).
28 Ibid.
29 Martin *et al*. (1997: 10).
30 Fakhry (1991: 33).
31 ʿAmāra (1972: 34).
32 For the Muʿtazilite arguments against the theory of *al-kasb* see, for example, Mānkdīm (d.425/1034[1965]: 363–79).
33 Ḥourani (1985: 57) referring to G. Makdisi, "Ash'arī and Ash'arites in Islamic Religious History," *Studia Islamica*, 17 (1962), pp. 37–80 and 18 (1963), pp. 19–39.
34 Ibid.
35 Fākhūṛī and al-Jurr (1982: 176).
36 Hourani (1985: 20).
37 Ibid., p. 21.
38 Ibid., p. 20.
39 Ḥanafī (1981: 7).
40 Hallaq (1997: 256).
41 Reinhart (1983).
42 Ibid.
43 Wolfson (1976: 1).
44 Watt (1994: 3).
45 Goldziher (1981: 86).
46 Seale (1980). See also Nanji (2004: 120).
47 Ṣubḥi (1969: 14) referring to the views of Aḥmad Amīn.
48 Ibid.
49 Professor of Ethics at the Department of Philosophy, University of Jordan.
50 See Khalifat (2004: vol. 1, pp. 61–47).
51 Logical Empiricism is a philosophical movement that flourished in the early twentieth century. Their most characteristic doctrine was the "verification principle," according to which the meaning of a statement is its method of verification. Sentences apparently expressing propositions that admit of no verification are meaningless, that is, cannot be considered true or false (see Blackburn 1996: 392). According to this movement moral and religious propositions are meaningless.
52 Khalifat (2004: vol. 1, p. 30).
53 Nielsen (1972a: 121).
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., p. 118.
56 Palmer (1991: 9).
57 Ibid.
58 Nielsen (1972a: 118).
59 Palmer (1991: 9).
60 Audi (1996: 247).
61 Nielsen (1972a: 118).
62 Ibid., p. 127.
63 Donaldson (1953).
64 Fakhry (1991).
65 Donaldson (1953: ix).
66 Ibid., p. 3–4.
67 Fakhry (1991: 8).
68 Ṣubḥī (1969).
69 Ibid., p. 128.
70 Khalifat (2004).

71 Hourani (1971).
72 Miskawayh (1968) and al-Ṭūsī (1964).
73 Hourani (1971: 2).
74 Ibid., p. 21.
75 Cook (2000).
76 Heemskerk (2000).
77 Leaman (2002).
78 Vasalou (2008).
79 Sajoo (2009).
80 Ibid., p. 60.
81 *Al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wa'l-ʿAdl*, several editors, Cairo 1960–1974. The book consists of twenty volumes, dictated by ʿAbd al-Jabbār. Yet only fourteen volumes have been discovered. The sixth and the twentieth volumes are in two parts. The volumes missing are the first three, the tenth, the eighteenth, and the nineteenth. For the titles of the extant volumes used in this study see primary references in the bibliography.
82 Two works were ascribed by their editors to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, but later proved to be commentaries on ʿAbd al-Jabbār's works. It was Gimaret who convincingly argued that *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa* edited by ʿUthmān was not a work by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, but a commentary on a work by him. It is a commentary made by Mānkdīm, a disciple of ʿAbd al-Jabbār. Gimaret also proved that *al-Majmūʿ fī'l Muḥīṭ bi'l Taklīf* is a paraphrase written by Ibn Mattawayh, another disciple of ʿAbd al-Jabbār. Therefore, these texts, if used, should be used with caution as not all the opinions that are found in them could be attributed to ʿAbd al-Jabbār. For more on these Muʿtazilite texts, see Heemskerk (2000: 2–9).

1 THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1 Larue (1993: 30).
2 Ibid., p. 32.
3 Ibid., p. 33.
4 Ibid., p. 34.
5 Al-Suwwāḥ (1987: 121–9).
6 Larue (1993: 36).
7 Kellner (1993: 84).
8 Fakhūrī and al-Jurr (1982: 41).
9 Ibid., p. 44.
10 Nielsen (1972b: vol. 3, p. 82).
11 Ibid., p. 83.
12 Ibid., p. 85.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., p. 84.
15 Ibid.
16 Plato, "Euthyphro's Dialogue," (1952: 192).
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., p. 193.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., p. 195.
21 Ibid., p. 198.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., p. 198–9.
24 Nielsen (1972b: 85).
25 Ibid.
26 Qadir (1963: 111).
27 Nielsen (1972b: 85–6).

28 Qadir (1963: 111).
29 Ibid.
30 Fakhūrī and al-Jurr (1982: 101–2).
31 Qadir (1963: 111).
32 Fakhūrī and al-Jurr (1982: 104).
33 Blackburn (1996: 13).
34 Inge (1956: 312).
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., p. 310.
37 Ibid., p. 315.
38 Ibid., p. 316. Quoting Origen, (*de Princ*. IV. 18).
39 Seale (1980: 19) quoting Origen (*Romans* 2:15).
40 Ibid., p. 20, quoting Origen (*Contra Celsum* 3:47, 6:3, 4).
41 Ibid., p. 21, quoting Clement, (*Stromata*, bk. II, ch. iv and bk. VI, ch. xviii).
42 Nielsen (1972b: 88).
43 Ibid., p. 73.
44 Ibid., p. 87.
45 Leff (1958: 20).
46 Seale (1980).
47 Ibid., p. 12.
48 Inge (1956: 318).
49 Hourani (1985: 70n).
50 Seale (1980: 10).
51 Ibid.
52 See, for example, Seale (1980: 27–8, 55). In addition, at the end of his book, Seale gives a full translation of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's discussion about Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 123/740) and the claimed Christian origins of his thought.
53 Ceric´ (1995: 7).
54 For the similarities between Zoroastrian and Manichean moral doctrines and the Muʿtazilite moral doctrines see: Hourani (1985: 72–85).
55 Hourani (1985: 85).
56 Maurice de Wolf (1909: 2–3), quoting from Adam Tribbechovious, *De doctoribus humanarumque rerum scientia*, Giessa, 1665, and Jena, 1719, pp. 58, 46, 126.
57 Hourani (1985: 85).

2 ETHICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS OF THE QUR'ĀN AND THE ḤADĪTH

1 Hourani (1985: 23–48). Dividing the problem of moral values into ontological and epistemological is adopted from Hourani, although they are closely related.
2 Hourani (1985: 58).
3 The name given to ethical voluntarism by Hourani. It is used in this context as it allows for a kind of comparison with other types of subjectivism (see Hourani 1985: 24).
4 The Holy Qur'ān, translated by M. H. Shakir and published by Tahrike Tarsile Qur'ān, Inc. in 1983. All translations are from this source unless otherwise specified.
5 ʿAfīfi (1988: 132).
6 Ibid., p. 133 (quoting Ibn Taymiya, *Fatāwī al-Riyāḍ*, vol. 11, p. 682).
7 Ibid., p. 83–4.
8 Reinhart (2002: 62).
9 The above conclusion regarding the ontological status of moral values agrees with George Hourani's conclusion. Hourani remarked that it also agrees with that of the classical Muʿtazilites (see Hourani 1985: 37). It will be argued in the last part of the final chapter that it also agrees with most of Islamic scholars, even the Ashʿarites.
10 Reinhart (2002: 67).

11 Ṭabarī (1997: 71).
12 Ibn Kathīr (2000: 497).
13 Ibid., p. 484.
14 Reinhart (2002: 69).
15 Ibid.
16 Hourani (1985: 45).
17 Ibid., p. 43.
18 Fakhry (1991: 14).
19 Ibid., p. 17.
20 See also Macdonald (1974: 199).
21 Seale (1980: 37).
22 Inayatullah (1963: 133).
23 Al-Nīsābūrī (1954–1956: vol. 4, p. 1762).
24 Rodwell (1861).
25 Arberry (1955).
26 ʿAlī (1938: 926).
27 Reinhart (2002: 59).
28 ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mutashābih al- Qur'ān* (1969: 54).
29 Al-Ṭabarī (1997: vol. 1, p. 260).
30 Ibid.
31 Ibn Kathīr (2000: 122).
32 Al-Zamakhsharī (2001).
33 ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mutashābih al- Qur'ān* (1969: 451).
34 Izustu (1980: 142).
35 Al-Nīsābūrī (1954: vol. 1, p. 15).
36 Ibid., vol. 4, p. 2298, n3004.
37 Ibid., vol. 4, p. 1835, n2362.
38 Al-Bukhārī (2002: vol. 1, Book 2, p. 21, n52. For the translation of the Ḥadīth reports compiled by Bukhārī the following Website was frequently consulted: DEED Society at IIUM, Translation of Sahih Bukhari, Translator M. Muhsin Khan, 2005, Available from: http://www.iiu.edu.my/deed/hadith/bukhari/index.html.
39 Fakhry (1991: 24).
40 The Muʿtazilite questioned the accuracy of the reports narrated by Abū Hurayra. See, for example, ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-I'tizāl wa Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazila* (1974: 193).
41 Al-Nīsābūrī (1954–1956: vol. 3, Book 33, p. 1476, n1848).
42 Ibid., p. 1476.
43 Watt (1990: 181–2).
44 Hodgson (1974: vol. 1, p. 386).
45 Al-Nīsābūrī **(**1954–1956: vol. 3, book 33, p. 1481, n1855**).**
46 Cook (2000). Cook quotes many sources of such Ḥadīth, including Abū Dawūd al-Sijistānī (d.275/889), Tirmidhī (d.279/892), and Nasā'i (d.303/915), and pointing out that neither Bukhāri nor Muslim include the tradition (p. 6).
47 Al-Bukhārī (2002: vol. 4, book 94, p. 374, n7139).
48 Ibid., p. 374, n7140; *and* Al-Nīsābūrī **(**1954–1956: vol. 3, book 33, p. 1452, n1820**).**
49 Djaʿīt (1989: 225).
50 Ibn Anas (1981: v).
51 Hodgson (1974: vol. 1, p. 387).
52 Arkoun (1994: 45).
53 Al-Nīsābūrī **(**1954–1956: vol. 4, book 46, p. 2037, n2644**).**
54 Ibid., p. 2039, n2647.
55 Ibid., p. 2040.
56 Ibid.
57 Fakhry (1991: 26).

3 PRE-MUʿTAZILITE ETHICAL DOCTRINES

1 Watt (1948).
2 Khalifat (2004: vol. 1, p. 48).
3 Al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal (n.d.: 94).
4 For example see: Qur'ān 7:29; 16:90.
5 Hodgson (1974: vol. 1, p. 217).
6 The *anṣār* were the original inhabitants of al-Medina who supported the Prophet and the *muhājirīn*, (the early Muslim immigrants from Mecca). The *ansār* thereby actively participated in establishing the first Muslim state in al-Madina.
7 Macdonald (1965: 12).
8 Hodgson (1974: vol. 1, p. 211).
9 Ibid., p. 208.
10 Ibid., p. 211.
11 Ibid., p. 213.
12 Ibid.
13 Djaʿīṭ (1989: 60–74).
14 Djaʿīṭ (1989: 118; citing al-Ṭabarī, vol. 4, p. 376).
15 Ibid., p. 117.
16 Shaban (1971: 20).
17 Ibid., p. 23.
18 Watt (1998: 54).
19 Macdonald (1965: 29).
20 Ibid., p. 125.
21 Watt (1998: 54).
22 Macdonald (1965: 123).
23 Hodgson (1974:vol. 1, p. 265).
24 Ḥasan al-Baṣri was a prominent and pious figure who was considered the founder of rival groups, since each group tried to strengthen its position by claiming his legacy. This was the attitude of both the Muʿtazila and their opponents. A letter prescribed to him is considered to reveal his Qadarite leanings. This letter clearly condemns the Umayyads' aggressions, considering them responsible for their deeds and strongly denying their claim that their deeds are whatever God decreed as mentioned in Al-Shahrastānī's book *al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 68) and *The section on Muslim sects in Kitāb al-Milal* (1984: 44).
25 Fakhry (1994: 2).
26 Ibid., p. 17.
27 Nagel (2000: 42).
28 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 131). For English translation see: *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, *The section on Muslim sects in Kitāb al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (1984: 100).
29 Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal* (p. 135) and *The section on Muslim sects in Kitāb al-Milal* (1984: 103).
30 Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal* (p. 150) and *The section on Muslim sects in Kitāb al-Milal* (1984: 120).
31 Ibid.
32 Della Vida (1978: 1076).
33 Ibid., p. 1077.
34 Ibid.
35 Al-Ashʿarī (1996: 140).
36 Abū Tammām (1998: 36).
37 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (pp. 140–1), *The section on Muslim sects in Kitāb al-Milal* (1984: 109–10), and al-Ashʿarī (1996: vol. 1, p. 177).

38 Watt (1948: 35).
39 Ibid., p. 38.
40 Ibid., pp. 53–4.
41 Al-Shahrastānī *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 129) and *The section on Muslim sects in Kitāb al-Milal* (1984: p. 98).
42 Al-Ashʿarī (1996: vol. 1, p. 204).
43 Ibid., p. 185.
44 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 146) and *The section on Muslim sects in Kitāb al-Milal* (1984: 115.
45 See the article: "Was Wāṣil a Khārijite?" in Watt (1990: 129–34).
46 Al-Murtaḍā (n.d.: 30).
47 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 152) and *The section on Muslim sects in Kitāb al-Milal* (1984: 121).
48 Al-Ashʿarī (19996: vol. 1, p 185).
49 Ibid., p. 189.
50 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 146) and *The section on Muslim sects in Kitāb al-Milal* (1984: 115).
51 Al-Ashʿarī (1996: vol. 1, p. 187).
52 Ibid., p. 203.
53 The group of Abū Bayhas al-Hayṣam b. Jābir, (d.94 /713) was active during the reign of al-Walīd (86/705–95/714), which means that his ethical views emerged before the Muʿtazilite system of ethical doctrines became well-established, and even before Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (d.123/748), who might have met him, and might have learned something from him, as Abū Bayhas seems to have been much older.
54 Necessary moral knowledge will be studied later in Chapter five.
55 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 138) and *The section on Muslim sects in Kitāb al-Milal* (1984: 107).
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 The people who lived far away, or remote from the centers of teaching the Islam. Those who had no opportunity of knowing about faith.
62 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 142) and *The section on Muslim sects in Kitāb al-Milal* (1984: 110).
63 ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-I'tizāl wa Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazila* (1974: 235).
64 Al-Ashʿari (1996: vol. 1, p. 88). See footnote, where the poetry of some unknown poet is explained, indicating that Wāṣil was a Khārijite.
65 Al-Nashshār (1995: 346).
66 Al-Ashʿari (1996: vol. 1, p. 206).
67 Goldziher (1981: 74).
68 Abū Zayd (2003: 17).
69 Tritton (1947: 43).
70 *Encyclopaedia of Islam and Muslim World*, vol. 2, Editor in chief Richard C. Martin, USA, Macmillan Reference-GALE, 2004, p. 492, This view was also held by ʿAlī Sāmī al-Nashshār, *Nash'at al-Fikr al-Falsafī fil-Islām*, vol. 1, Cairo, Dār al-Maʿārif, 9th edition 1995, p. 242–3, where he explicitly rejects Goldziher's views.
71 Madelung (1993: 605).
72 Ibid., referring to Cook's view in *Early Muslim Dogma* (1981).
73 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 152) and *The section on Muslim sects in Kitāb al-Milal* (1984: 122).

74 Madelung (1993: 605).
75 Ibid., p. 119. See also al-Ashʿari (1996: vol. 1, p. 213).
76 Ibid., p. 121.
77 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 155) and *The section on Muslim sects in Kitāb al-Milal* (1984: 124).
78 Ibid.
79 Khalifat (2004: vol. 2, p. 724).
80 Ibid., p. 724–5.
81 Watt (1994: 21).
82 Ibid.
83 Watt (1988: 54).
84 Nagel (2000: 64).
85 See ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-I'tizāl* (1974: 187).
86 Khalifat (2004: vol. 2, pp. 791–806).
87 Ethical voluntarism is also used to describe the position of the Murji'a by Pessagno (1975: 392, 393).
88 Watt (1973: 15).
89 Izustu (1965: 94).
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid., p. 95.
92 Pessagno (1975: 393).
93 Tritton (1947: 43) referring to Ibn. Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (1904: 68).
94 Watt (1948: 46).
95 Ibid.
96 Madelung (1993: 605).
97 Watt (1948: 46).
98 Ibid.
99 Cook (1981: 31).
100 ʿAli al-Nashshār considered that the first schools of thought in Islamic history have emerged from *al-maktab*, literally the office of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya. See his book *Nash'at al-fikr* (1995: 229).
101 Givoni (1977: 95).
102 ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazila* (1974: 229).
103 Al-Nashshar (1995: 232).
104 Ibid., pp. 317–18.
105 Izustu (1965: 210).
106 Agha (1997: 4).
107 Ibid., p. 3.
108 Givoni (1977: 109).
109 Ibid., pp. 96–7.
110 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 152) and *The section on Muslim sects in Kitāb al-Milal* (1984: 122).
111 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 155) and *The section on Muslim sects in Kitāb al-Milal* (1984: 124).
112 See: Chapter two, the section about the ethical presuppositions of Ḥadīth reports.
113 Al-Ashʿarī (1996: vol. 1, p. 233).
114 Ibid., pp. 233–4.
115 Ibid., pp. 213–33.
116 Khalīfat (2004: vol. 2, p. 723).
117 Ibid., p. 724.
118 Madelung (1993: 605).
119 Khalifat (2004: vol. 2, p. 729).

4 MUʿTAZILITE ETHICS: MORAL INTERPRETATION OF THE FIVE PRINCIPLES

1 See, for example, Al-Nashshār (1995: 373–80) and Watt (1973: 209–17).
2 Ibn ʿAsākir al-Dimashqī (d.571/1176), *Tabyīn kadhb al-Muftarī fīma nusiba ilā al-imām Abi al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī*, n.d.
3 Ibid., p. 10 and al-Nashshar (1995: 378), quoting al-Malaṭi, *Al-tanbīh wa'l-rad 'ala ahl al-ahwā' wa'l-bida'*, p. 40.
4 Ibid.
5 Abd al-Jabbār *Faḍl al-I'tizāl wa Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazila* (1974: 215), Aḥmad b. Yaḥya al-Murtaḍa, *Al-Munya wa'l-Amal* (n.d.: 24).
6 Al-Nashshār, *Nash'at al-fikr*, vol. 1 (1995: 232).
7 Abd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-I'tizāl* (1974: 229) and al-Murtaḍa (n.d.: 30).
8 This might be due to what was regarded as extreme *qadarite* position, held by some early Qadarites like Maʿbad al-Juhanī who went to the extent of denying the pre-existent knowledge of God in order to remove any compulsion, saying that people perform all their actions without divine assistance. Those early Qadarites, as we are told by ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm, should not be confused with the Muʿtazilites who recognized the pre-existent divine knowledge, even though they affirmed people's freedom and responsibility for their action (ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm 1996: 79).
9 Al-Nashshār (1995: 232).
10 Gimaret (1993: 792).
11 Al-Khayyāt (1957: 93).
12 See, for example, ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-I'tizāl wa Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazila* (1974: 164) and al-Murtaḍa (n.d.: 12).
13 Al-Nashshār (1995: 395).
14 Ibid., p. 396; and Khalifat (2004: vol. 1, p. 271).
15 Reinhart (1983: 187).
16 Ibid., p. 186.
17 Makdisi (1991a).
18 Ibid., p. 49.
19 See al-ʿAskarī (1987: 255), also cited in Khalifat (2004: 272) and in al-Nashshār (1995: 395).
20 ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-I'tizāl* (1974: 253).
21 Makdisi (1991a: 63).
22 Ibid.
23 Schacht (1974: 611).
24 ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm (1996: 85).
25 Khalifat (2004: 274).
26 For a detailed description of the difference between the books of *uṣūl al fiqh* with rational tendencies and their authors, and others with traditional tendencies, see al-Khuḍarī (1969: 8–12).
27 Makdisi (1991b: 16).
28 Ibid.
29 Khalifat (2004: 276). It should be mentioned that Khalifat proved that the methodology of linguistic and logical analysis is the methodology followed by those who wrote on *uṣūl*.
30 More will be said about this methodology at the beginning of the next chapter.
31 Goldziher (1974: 103).
32 Al-Shāfiʿī's refutation of the principle of *istiḥsān* was essentially meant to discredit personal opinions based on individual preferences. See the chapter on "refutation of *al-Istiḥsān*" (Al-Shāfiʿī n.d.: 400–12).
33 Makdisi (1991b: 44).

34 Ibid., p. 33, and al-Khuḍarī (1969: 8).
35 According to Fu'ād al-Sayyid, Nābita or Nawābit was most probably applied to a group of *Ḥadīth* scholars, (*aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth*), who were also called Umawiya, ʿUthmāniya, Mushabbiha, and Ḥashawiya (see ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *faḍl al-I'tizāl* 1974: 292n604).
36 The term transcendence is used here to indicate that the doctrine of unity implies that besides the uniqueness of His essence, He does not interfere with human's affairs in terms of guiding them and deciding their choices and acts, He therefore would not endow some people with divine qualities. In other words, transcendence here is only used to indicate a certain aspect of divine justice, and does not have any associated philosophical implications.
37 Al-Ashʿarī (1969: vol. 1, p. 235–6).
38 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 181) and *Muslim sects and Divisions* (1984: 150).
39 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p.156) and *The section on Muslim sect* (1984: 125).
40 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p.156) and *The section on Muslim sect* (1984: 126).
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 157) and *The section on Muslim sect* (1984: 128).
44 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 180) and *The section on Muslim sect* (1984: 149–50).
45 Abu Zayd (2003: 42).
46 Madelung (1985: 121).
47 *Badā'* is derived from *badā* meaning to appear or seem. *Badā'* in God means change in opinion and knowledge. See Al-Shahrastānī (Glossary) in *Muslim Sects and Division: The Section on Muslim Sects* (1984: 179).
48 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 157) and *The section on Muslim sect* (1984: 127).
49 Al-Ashʿarī (1969: vol. 1, p. 182–3).
50 According to Josef Van Ess, the Rāfiḍa were so called because they refused *imāmat al-mafḍūl* or "the legitimation, of any candidate who was inferior in rank, to govern as caliph," which clearly meant that they did not accept the compromising position advocated by the Zaydites, who were influenced by the Muʿtazila and accepted the legitimacy of Abu Bakr and ʿUmar as Muslim caliphs. Therefore they were called Rāfiḍa at that time and became the nucleus of those known as Ithnāʿashriyya (see Van Ess 2001: 157).
51 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 157) and *The section on Muslim sect* (1984: 126).
52 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 180) and *The section on Muslim sect* (1984: 149).
53 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 157) and *The section on Muslim sect* (1984: 127).
54 Al-ʿAskarī, *al-Awā'il* (1987: 255), also cited in Khalifat (2004: vol. 1, p. 272).
55 ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm (1996: 79).
56 Al-Ashʿarī (1969: vol. 1, p. 279–80).
57 Al-Khayyāt (1957: 86–7).
58 Denial of eternal qualities like knowledge and speech has been the doctrine of some early Qadarites which goes well with the doctrine of rejecting predestination. Same doctrine was also held by Hisham al-Fuṭi (d. between 227/842 and 232/847) among the Muʿtazila. See Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 90) and later by Abu al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣri, who opposed Abū Hāshim and was inclined to the view of Hishām

b. al-Ḥakam that things are not known before they exist. See: Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 98).

59 See the problem of three brothers and divine knowledge of their destinies with which al-Ashʿari challenged his teacher al-Jabbā'ī (for example, in Ibn Ḥazm 1996: vol. 2, p. 148).

60 Ibn Ḥazm (1996: vol. 2, p. 143).

61 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 157) and *The section on Muslim sect* (1984: 126).

62 Watt (1973: 84).

63 Goldziher (1981: 42).

64 Watt (1998: 244).

65 Watt (1998: 242).

66 Refering to Carl Heinrich Becker's argument that Muslims began debating the createdness of the Qur'ān after Christians had argued with them about Christ as the word of God (Watt 1998: 243). The argument is quoted as follows: "Since Christ is called the word of God in the Qur'ān, the Christian could ask the Muslim to say whether he was created or uncreated; the first horn of the dilemma implies that God was for a time without a word, and the second that Christ is God." Watt partially accepts Becker's view saying that "Becker is probably right in thinking that Muslim got the idea of using the distinction of created and uncreated from the fact that it had been used against them by Christians." Yet he adds that "the distinction was only incorporated into Islamic thinking when it was found that it fitted into an intra-Islamic argument" suggesting that the intra-Islamic argument into which the distinction fitted was that about the doctrine of *al-qadar* (Watt 1998: 243).

67 This does not mean that the proponents of the doctrine of creation of the Qur'ān were always against the ruling authority nor that the proponents of the opposite were always on the side of the ruling authority. Yet it only highlights the origin of the idea and not the later developments and the sophisticated relationships. This is said taking in account the position of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and some Ḥadīth scholars who were not Muʿtazila, but had serious problems with the ruling authority of the time.

68 Nagel (2000: 100).

69 Hourani (1985: 75).

70 Ibid., p. 71.

71 Ibid., p. 81.

72 Seale (1980: 73).

73 Seale (1980: 27).

74 ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-I'tizāl* (1974: 348).

75 Ibid., p. 177.

76 Mānkdīm (1965: 301).

77 ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī, al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, part 1, p. 22).

78 Ibid., p. 23.

79 Donaldson (1953: 97).

80 Ibid.

81 ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Al-Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, part 1, p. 48).

82 Ibid.

83 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 63) and *The section on Muslim sect* (1984: 39).

84 Ibn Ḥazm (1996: vol. 2, p. 139).

85 ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazila* (1974: 348).

86 ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazila* (1974: 349).

87 Mānkdīm Shāshdīw (1965: 123). This book was attributed to ʿAbd al-Jabbār by the editor ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān, thus the name ʿAbd al-Jabbār is wrongly mentioned as the author of the book.

88 Watt (1973: 229).
89 Abd al-Jabbār, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazila* (1974: 284).
90 Mānkdīm (1965: 124).
91 Watt (1973: 229).
92 This is because most of the intellectual life of Baṣra in the early eighth century was centred in al-Ḥasan and his disciples (see Watt 1973: 212).
93 Mānkdīm (1965: 138).
94 Ibid., p. 140.
95 Mānkdīm (1965: 742).
96 Ibid.
97 Cook (2000: 226).
98 Ibid.

5 ETHICS OF ʿABD AL-JABBĀR: PRESUPPOSITIONS OF ETHICAL JUDGMENTS

1 For his biography see GhaneaBassiri (2003: 30–5) and Martin *et al*. (1997: 46–58). For a detailed account of his predecessors and pupils, see Chapter one "The Bahshamiyya" in Heemskerk (2000) and for his political position see Reynolds (2005)
2 See al-Mūsawī (1976), Elkaisy-Freimut (unpublished 2002/2006), Abdalla Mohammed (1983).
3 For a detailed account of his works see ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān (1971: 245–7).
4 The approach followed in studying ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethics was inspired by Sahban Khalifat's book *The Logical and Linguistic Analysis Methodology in the Arab Islamic Thought* (*Theory and Application*), *Manhaj al-taḥlīl al-lughawī al-manṭiqī fī al-fikr al-'Arabi al-Islāmī* (*al-naẓariya wa al-taṭbīq*), 3 volumes (2004), especially the third volume, where he designates a chapter for discussing the presuppositions of ethical judgments in Islamic thought, and a chapter for analysing normative ethical judgments. However, the problems and arguments treated in this study are distinct from those treated by Khalifat.
5 Carney (1983: 159).
6 Hourani (1971:p. 144. He maintained that ʿAbd al-Jabbār thinks in the same way as Ross (p. 32) and cites Ross from: W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, Oxford 1930. This view was also adopted by Abdalla Mohammed in his unpublished dissertation *The Notion of Good and Evil,* mentioned in note 2.
7 Hourani (1971: 44n27) referring to Urmson (1958: 198–216).
8 Frank (1982: 324).
9 Van Ess (1970: 21).
10 Ibid., p. 37.
11 Ibid., p. 32.
12 Khalifat (2004: vol. 1, p. 50). For detailed assessment of Stoic influence see Khalifat (2004: vol. 1, A chapter on linguistic and logical analysis and foreign sources pp. 300–36).
13 Khalifat (2004: ch. 4, p. 110).
14 Mahdi (1970: 53).
15 Ibid. p. 54.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., p. 54. Muḥsin Mahdi's article "Language and Logic in Classical Islam" (1970) analyses and comments on the debate itself, with emphasis on its inner articulation. The text of the debate is preserved in different Arabic sources. For a comparative study of different copies of the text, see Khalifat (2004: vol. 1, pp. 344–77). For scrutinized analysis of historical background based on D. S. Margoliouth's analysis (pp. 379–427), and for full analysis of the content of the debate (pp. 428–505).

19 Mahdi (1970: 54).
20 For a detailed study of the influence of the mentioned debate and its significance in Arabic Islamic thought, see Khalifat (2004: vol. 2, pp. 507–806).
21 The later Wittgenstein's thought is revealed in his famous book *Philosophical investigations* (completed in 1945 and translated into English by G. E. M Anscombe in 1953), wherein he announced that "the meaning is the use," and that the function of philosophy is to reveal the meaning through analysis of ordinary language. He was followed by many philosophers who applied linguistic analysis to the language of ethics like Stevenson, Hare, and Toulmin.
22 White (1955: 191).
23 See Khalifat (2004: vol. 1, p 393) and Van Ess (1970: 21) referring to Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Hawāmil wa'l-Shawāmil* (1370/1951: 265).
24 Khalifat (2004: vol.1, p. 393).
25 Mahdi (1970: 73).
26 Ibid., p. 79.
27 Alston (1963: 502).
28 White (1955: 228)
29 Cited above in note 4.
30 Khalifat (2004: vol. 1, p. 47).
31 Ibid.
32 *Al-Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 292–531).
33 *Ḥusn* in Arabic can have various meanings including good, right, valid, and rational. The meaning of *ḥusn* is determined only from the context of the speech. It is asserted by Abū al-Baqā' al-Kafawī (d.1094/1683) in *al-Kulliyyāt* and al-Tahānawī (d. after 1185/1745) in *al-Kashshāf* that *ḥusn* sometimes refers to what is preferred by reason, or what is rationally preferred (*al-mustaḥsan min jihat al-baṣīra*). Both words *ḥusn* and its antonym *qubḥ* are used for three main different meanings. First, as attribute of perfection, (*ṣifat kamāl*) and as attribute of deficiency (*ṣifat naqs*). Second, as being appropriate for a certain purpose and fitting or inappropriate, valid or invalid. The third meaning is related to blaming and praising in this world and reward and punishment in the next. See al-Kafawī (1976: 2nd part, p. 256) and al-Tahānawī (1996: vol. 1, p. 666). Therefore, (*shurūṭ ḥusn al-taklīf*) can be translated to "conditions of valid obligations." The conditions of valid obligations are the conditions that need to be satisfied in order to consider a certain obligation or moral judgment a rational one. These conditions are the presuppositions of moral judgments, which will be dealt with in the context of this chapter.
34 Cooper (1966: 45). The citation of this article in Khalifat (2004: vol. 3, p. 1052) drew my attention to its relevance and importance.
35 Cooper (1966: 46).
36 Ibid., p. 45.
37 In metaethics there are two major orientations: cognitivism maintains that moral claims can be true or false and non-cognitivism which argues that moral beliefs and judgments cannot be true or false, because they have no (descriptive) meaning at all. According to the latter, moral propositions are neither analytical a priori tautologies nor synthetic empirical truths, thus moral discourse is a pseudo-discourse. The function of ethical words is purely emotive, and moral philosophy has to limit itself to metaethics and should not make any normative ethical pronouncement. In the first half of the twentieth century, non-cognitivism was predominant. The non-cognitivists, like A. J. Ayer and Charles Stevensons among many others, believed that their position is superior to another popular option available at the time: intuitionism, whose main representatives were H. A. Prichard and W. D. Ross. The non-cognitive climate changed in the middle of the century with the work of Toulmin and many other authors, who were influenced by later work from Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein's influence contributed to the idea that

ethical discourse can be appropriately "objective" without meeting the standards of objectivity of empirical science. For more details see Loobuyck (2005) and Binkley (1961).

38 For example, Kai Nielsen (1972a: 127) has stated that: "Metaethical theories, where they are not explicitly subjectivistic, attempt to account for four central features of moral discourse: that moral judgments claim universality, autonomy, and objectivity, and that moral discourse is a form of practical discourse – it guides conduct and tends to alter behaviour."

39 Khalifat (2004: vol.3, p. 1079).

40 Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal* (p. 97) and *The section on Muslim sect* (1984: 70).

41 This is the reason why some of the Ashʿrite scholars did not consider ethical knowledge as necessary knowledge, as it contradicts with ethical voluntarism or Divine Command Theory. It is important to realize that any consistent divine command theorist would not acknowledge that what God commands or prohibits presupposes any condition on the side of the addressee or in the content of the command or the prohibition. If one does acknowledge any condition, then he/she must acknowledge that God's commands rest upon other than his volition, or that his volition is guided by conditions and considerations, which will constitute the basis of His commands and prohibitions. If whatever can be theoretically commanded by God is obligatory then it is so, even if it does not fulfil any rational or moral condition. ʿAbd al-Jabbār's refutation of Divine Command Theory will be fully investigated in the next chapter.

42 *Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 515).

43 Ibid., p. 511.

44 *Mughnī*, *al-Aṣlaḥ* (1965: vol. 14, p. 298).

45 *Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p.309).

46 Ibid., p. 367. This is a Qurʾānic principle. It says that God does not assign unbearable obligations (see Qurān 2:233, 2:286, 6:152, 7:42).

47 Mānkdīm (1965: 400)

48 *Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 387).

49 *Mughnī, al-Makhlūq* (n.d.: vol. 8, p. 171).

50 *Mughnī, al-Taklīf*, vol. 11, p. 407 (1965). It should be mentioned that *qabīḥ,* has different meanings when mentioned in different contexts, as already indicated in note 32. Thus, it is sometimes translated as irrational, sometimes as evil or bad and other times as simply wrong or ugly. See note 33, about the meaning of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ*.

51 Mānkdīm (1965: 309).

52 Ibid., p. 311.

53 *Mughnī, al-Taklīf*, (1965: vol. 11, p. 489).

54 *Mughnī*, *al-Taʿdīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, part 1, p. 103). Imperative and indicative forms of speech, and the form of ought judgment will be related to ʿAbd al-Jabbār's refutation of ethical voluntarism in the next chapter, when analyzing ought judgment and disclosing their entailed meanings.

55 *Mughnī, al-taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 205).

56 See Abrahamov (1993: 21), *Mughnī*, *al-Naẓar* (n.d.: vol. 12, p. 65) and Mānkdīm (1965: 48).

57 *Mughnī*, *al-Naẓar* (n.d.: vol. 12, p. 63), *Al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 382). ʿAbd al-Jabbār's understanding of the biological and mental processes involved in perception by sense organs was, of course, limited by the scientific knowledge of his time. However, he recognized that the data attained by sense organs cannot be trusted alone due to sense delusion. For example, he mentions that a mirage could wrongly be considered water. See: *Mughnī*, *al-Naẓar* (n.d.: vol. 12, p. 65). Consequently, he considered that sense data should be mentally processed. He also pondered whether it was the reason (*al-ʿaql*) or the sense perception that has the priority in the process of perceiving. He

stated that without sense perception, it would not be possible to know anything. Yet this does not mean that one can dispense with reason or intellect, as "knowledge attained by senses (*ʾulūm al-ḥawās*) [sense data] is the basis of knowledge attained by reason (*ʾulūm al-ʾaql*,)" and "by reason we know the truth of sense perception." Thus "reason judges the validity of what is attained through senses." For the three last quotations, see *Mughnī*, *al-Naẓar* (n.d.: vol. 12, p. 58).

58 *Mughnī*, *Ruʾyat al-Bārī* (n.d.: vol. 4, p. 47).

59 *Mughnī*, *Ruʾyat al-Bārī* (n.d.: vol. 4, p.66), *al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 383).

60 *Mughnī*, *al-Irāda*, (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 8), *al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11; p. 382). *al-Makhlūq* (n.d.: vol. 8, p. 6).

61 *Mughnī*, *al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 386).

62 *Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 384).

63 *Mughnī*, *al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11); *Al-Naẓar* (n.d.: vol. 12, p. 357).

64 Ibid., p. 382–3.

65 *Mughnī*, *al-Irāda* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 331).

66 *Mughnī*, *Al-Firaq ghayr al-Islāmīyah* (1958: vol. 5, p. 166).

67 *Al-ʾilm* and *al-maʾrifa*, are used synonymously by ʿAbd al-Jabbār. The former literally means science and the later knowledge.

68 See Abrahamov (1993: 20–32).

69 For the definition of analytical and synthetic propositions, see the Introduction, note 12.

70 Aṣḥāb al-Maʿārif were those who followed al-Jāḥiẓ and believed that all knowledge was necessary knowledge and that it occured by nature (*ṭibāʾan*) without choice. See Mānkdim (1965: 55n) and al-Shahrastānī (n.d.: 91).

71 Al-Khayyūn (1997: 142), referring to Abū al-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī (1974: 73).

72 Al-Jāḥiẓ was not a Baghdādian Muʿtazilite. The Baghdādi branch is usually associated with Bishr b. al-Muʿtamir (d.210/825), who was a contemporary of Abū Hudhayl, al-Naẓẓām and Muʿammar b. ʿAbbād. It seems that al-Jāḥiẓ, who was closer to the early Baṣrans like Muʿammar b. ʿAbbād, held views about knowledge that are consistent with the latter's view of nature. However, the view of what occurs by nature (*bil-ṭabʾ*) will be studied in some detail in the next chapter. Yet it is important to notice that the late Baṣrans, the followers of Abū Hāshim, like al-Nīṣābūrī tended to ascribe most of the views that they denied to the Baghdādians, and especially to Abū al-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī, (d.319/931), the late Baghdādian and the contemporary of al-Jubbāʾī. They ignored the fact that most of the doctrines held by al-Kaʿbī, and specially the doctrine of *al-ṭabʾ* were originally introduced to the Muʿtazilite thought by the early Baṣran masters. For more on the Baṣran and the Baghdādian Muʿtazilites, see al-Khayyūn (1997).

73 Al-Nīsābūrī (1979: 345).

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid., p. 349–50. It should be mentioned that Arab, and Muslim scholars developed some aspects of Aristotelian logic. The development of logic in Arabic Islamic culture is beyond the interest of this work. For more on this issue see Rescher (1964).

76 Mānkdīm (1965: 54).

77 *Mughnī*, *al-Naẓar waʾl-Maʾārif* (n.d.: vol. 12, p. 235).

78 Ibid., p. 319.

79 Ibid., p. 331.

80 *Mughnī*, *al-Naẓar* (n.d.: vol. 12, p. 356). One might improve this argument by taking into consideration what all the Muʿtazilites agreed upon, which is that people's welfare is the ultimate purpose of obligation. Also "The Muʿtazilites unanimously held that Allah created human beings to benefit them." See: Al-Ashʿarī (1996: vol. 1, p. 317). Maybe such a belief could serve as a basis for prohibiting killing for any reason, not even for religious reasons, because law (*al-sharʿ*) was revealed to prevent harm and

serve humans' interests. Thus, religion exists for Man, not Man for religion. Nothing that is against human interests can possibly be the subject of any religious command. Killing therefore should be prohibited as it is against all human interests.

81 *Mughnī*, *al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 235).

82 Al-Bāqillānī (1957: 342) cited in GhaneaBassiri (2003: 131).

83 Al-Bāqillānī (1957:344). Also cited in GhaneaBassiri's dissertation (2003).

84 Al-Ghazālī (1997: 71).

85 Ibid., p. 72.

86 Ibid. Al-Ghazālī states three possible reasons for a human being's wrongful appreciation of purposes. The first is that human beings tend to name whatever is contrary to their purposes as evil, even if the same thing might fit someone else's purpose. The source of this is not paying attention to the state of others and for not paying attention to one's own state, which leads oneself to consider the same thing sometimes good and at other times evil. The second source of human error in determining the right purpose is that what is contrary to our purpose (*mukhālif lil-gharad*) in most of the situations except in one rare situation. In such a case, one might not consider the rare situation, as it might not even appear to one's mind. This happens when one judges lying to be absolute evil, not taking into consideration that lying is sometimes useful, for instance to save the life of a prophet. The third source of error is psychological. It is the precedence of previous experiences, or the illusionary experience of the contrary (*sibq al-wahm ilā al-'aks*). For example, someone might refrain from eating honey because he associates its appearance with something wet, yellow, and dirty. Al-Ghazālī considers that most of people's preferences and choices are due to such illusions. See *al-Mustaṣfā* (1997: vol. 1, p. 72–3). It might be noticed that the Baṣran Muʿtazilites in holding the doctrine of rational obligation have taken account of the knowledge of one's own state and the state of others. They have also taken in consideration the rare occasions in which lying are useful. This is why they did not consider the evilness of lies a necessary known principle, as it is necessarily known to be evil only when not said to bring about outweighing benefit or prevention of evil. Thus, it seems that they took in consideration all the sources of error mentioned by al-Ghazālī, and could thus be considered among those who had scrutinized and investigated the purposes mentioned by al-Ghazālī. They envisaged the necessary human purposes and based on them what is necessary known to fit and be good and obligatory and what is necessarily known to be evil. However al-Ghazālī articulated the essential purposes which are said to be the purposes of law (*al-shar'*), and which indeed reflected the ultimate purposes of human beings.

87 Al-Ghazālī (1997: vol. 1, p. 75).

88 Al-Shahrastānī (n.d.: 370–96).

89 Ibid., p. 371.

90 Ibid.

91 The distinction between value judgments and ethical judgments will be investigated in the next chapter. It will be argued that according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār ethical judgments are based upon reason and grounded in value judgments.

92 *Mughnī ī*, *al-Naẓar* (n.d.: vol. 12, p. 356).

93 Ibid., p. 383.

94 Ibid., p.13.

95 Ibid., p. 37.

96 *Mughnī*, *al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 298). For the definition of obligation see Heemskerk (2000: 142–5), ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān (1971), and *Mughnī*, *al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, pp. 293–300). It must be noted that he bases his definitions on Abū Hāshim's definition. The latter seems to have held two different definitions of *taklīf*. In some of the definitions he emphasizes that *taklīf* is to make someone know that a certain action is to be performed, thus emphasizing that *taklīf* is *ta'rīf*. Elsewhere

he seems to emphasize that *taklīf* is will *irāda* that an action be performed. Thus the pupils of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, namely Mānkdīm and Ibn Mattawayh, did not get the idea from any other master as proposed by Heemskerk (2000: 144–5n). In fact they emphasized a possible interpretation of Abū Hāshim's thought. However, ʿAbd al-Jabbār clearly considers assigning obligation as *irāda*, (willing that some action is done), but assigning obligation according to him presupposes or entails knowledge (*al-taklīf yashtariṭ al-taʿrīf*, p. 294). Nowhere does ʿAbd al-Jabbār or his pupils mention that the knowledge of reward and punishment is a presupposition for *taklīf*, although assigning obligations from God is not without reason, otherwise His assignment of obligation would be futile, and a futile act is evil according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār. God assigns obligations for the welfare of humans (*maṣlaḥa*).

97 It was also indicated that obedience not directed towards God was held by some Khārijites. See Chapter three.

98 *Mughnī*, *Ruʾyat al-Bārī* (n.d.: vol. 4, p. 329).

99 *Mughnī*, *al-Naẓar* (n.d.: vol. 12, p. 277–8) and *Mughnī*, *al-Taʿdīl waʾl-Tajwīr* (n.d. vol. 6, p. 40).

100 Al-Mūsawī (1976: 149). In support of this view, Al-Mūsawī refers to *al-Muḥīt biʾtaklīf* (p. 24), which is written by Ibn Mattawayh, one of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's pupils. However, this view is attributed by Ibn Mattawayh to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, but it is not consistent with his ethical theory. ʿAbd al-Jabbār might have expressed such a view, although it contradicts his moral conventions, or perhaps Ibn Mattawayh wrongly ascribed it to ʿAbd al-Jabbār. It is ʿAbd al-Jabbār's immediate teacher Abū Abdullah who believed that some acts that deserve praise do not deserve rewards. Thus, Ibn Mattawayh might have adopted the latter's view.

101 *Mughnī*, *al-Naẓar* (n.d.: vol. 12, p. 447).

102 Ibid., p. 445–6.

103 *Mughnī*, *al-Naẓar* (n.d.: vol. 12, p. 447).

104 *Al-Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 405). It should be recalled that he distinguishes between moral obligations that he calls rational obligations (*taklīf ʾaqlī*) and the religious obligations (*taklīf sharʿī*). The first is the obligation to adhere to moral principles known to all rational beings, and the second includes the obligations that one cannot know without revelation like obligations to perform religious rituals and worship.

105 See Chapter three.

106 *Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 324).

107 *Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 299).

108 *Mughnī*, *al-Irāda* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 331).

109 *Mughnī, al-Taʿdīl waʾl-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 119).

110 *Mughnī, al-Taʿdīl waʾl-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, pp. 64, 119).

111 *Mughnī*, *al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 34).

112 *Mughnī*, *al-Naẓar* (n.d.: vol. 12, p. 151).

113 *Mughnī*, *al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 416).

114 It is appropriate to mention that in his time slavery was accepted by almost all nations. This makes his assertion that according to reason slavery is evil an extraordinary position, regardless of the fact that he deviated from his rational moral conclusion to conform to the prevalent tradition. It also needs to be mentioned that slavery was discouraged in the Qurʾān, and different rulings were introduced in order to free the slaves and gradually abolish slavery.

115 Abrahamov (1993: 24).

116 Al-Bāqillānī (1957: 10–11) cited in GhaneaBassiri (2003: 111).

117 GhaneaBassiri (2003: 111).

118 *Mughnī*, *al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 385).

119 Ibid.

120 *Mughnī*, *al-Tanabu'āt wa'l-Mu'jizāt* (n.d.: vol. 15, p. 349).
121 *Mughnī*, *I'jāz al-Qur'ān* (n.d.: vol. 16, pp. 27–38) and *Mughnī*, *al-Tanabu'āt wa'l-Mu'jizāt* (n.d.: vol. 15, pp. 349–408).
122 Ibid., p. 153.
123 Al-Baṣrī, *al-Mu'tamad fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (n.d.: 81).
124 Ibid., p. 82.
125 Ibid., pp. 81–2.
126 Ibn Mattawayh (1975: 396) and Al-Nīsābūrī (1979: 158).
127 Al-Khayyūn (1997: 294).
128 Ibid., p. 296.
129 Al-Nīsābūrī (1979: 161–2).
130 Ibn Mattawayh (1975: 181) and Al-Nīsābūrī (1979: 161).
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid. and ʿAbd al-Jabbār *Mughnī*, *Al-Firaq ghayr al-Islāmīyah* (1958: vol. 5, p. 175).
133 Al-Khayyūn (1997: 294).
134 *Mughnī, al-Firaq ghayr al-Islāmīyah* (1958: vol. 5, pp. 160–71).
135 Ibid., p. 160.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid., p. 161.
138 Ibid., p. 163. It should be mentioned that ʿAbd al-Jabbār often uses purposes (*al-aghrāḍ*) and intentions (*al-maqāṣid*) synonymously.
139 *Mughnī, al-Naẓar wa'l-Ma'ārif* (n.d.: vol. 12, p. 5) and *Al-Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 382).
140 *Mughnī, al-Naẓar wa'l-Ma'ārif* (n.d.: vol. 12, p. 63).
141 *Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 383).
142 *Mughnī, al-Irāda* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 382).
143 Ibid., p. 384.
144 *Mughnī, al-Makhlūq* (n.d.: vol. 8, p. 229).
145 Ibid., p. 228.
146 Ibid., p. 227.
147 *Mughnī, al-Naẓar wa'l-Ma'ārif* (n.d.: vol. 12, p. 47).
148 Ibid., pp. 47–53.
149 Ibid., p. 66.
150 We might define a proposition to be analytical if it has the form of a tautology, therefore their truth can be known a priori, without an appeal to empirical evidence. Synthetic propositions, if not empirically verified, were held to be meaningless or ultimately analytical, as held mainly by logical positivists. See, for example, Blackburn (1996: 15). Intuitionists held that the truth of moral synthetic propositions could be known by intuition, and Toulmin in his article, "A defence of synthetic necessary truth" (1949), argued that synthetic necessary truth could be verified by appeal to the nature of the subject matter. Therefore, ethical judgments might be true, real, objective, and rational.
151 *Mughnī, al-Naẓar wa'l-Ma'ārif* (n.d.: vol. 12, p. 66).
152 Ibid.
153 This will be further investigated in Chapter six, where it will be argued that it is the state of the action, its circumstances and consequences that necessitate a moral attribute.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid.
156 Mānkdīm (1965: 51), see note 1 for the editor's correction of the term *khabar (*which means statement and indicates revealed information) to *khibra* (experience).
157 *Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 372).

158 Al-Nīsābūrī (1979: 158).
159 *Mughnī, al-Firaq ghayr al-Islāmiyah* (1958: vol. 5, p. 183).
160 Ibid., p. 166.
161 Ibid., pp. 166–7.
162 Ibid., p. 384.
163 *Mughnī*, *al-Naẓar wa'l-Ma'ārif* (n.d.: vol. 12, p. 297) and *Mughnī*, *al-Aṣlaḥ* (1965: vol. 14, p. 298).
164 For example, see Abdalla (1983: 43). He holds that ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethical theory is a version of ethical intuitionism. He is not the first one to indicate similarities between Ross and ʿAbd al-Jabbār, as this seems to have been first recognized and elaborated by George Hourani (1971: 22, 32, 122). Hourani maintained that "the most striking of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethical theory is without doubt the resemblances to British intuitionism" (1971: 144).
165 Toulmin (1949). Toulmin gives examples of such propositions that are synthetic and necessarily true. These examples are similar to those given by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, and which he considers necessarily known.
166 It will be shown in the next chapter that moral value depends on the state of the action described. By the state of the action, ʿAbd al-Jabbār meant the circumstances and consequences of the action. These are related to human and social needs, purposes, rights, and deserts.
167 See note 150.
168 Toulmin also believed that in whatever language moral propositions are expressed, they must always remain logically unaffected, "It must be as true or as false in Chinese, Afghan or Malay as it is in languages we understand" (see his above cited article, p. 166).
169 The same view was expressed by Toulmin (1949: 170).
170 Toulmin, in his book *The Place of Reason in Ethics*, maintained that moral concepts are "inextricable from the ʿmechanics' of social life, and from the practices adopted by different communities in order to make living together in proximity tolerable or even possible" (see Toulmin 1953: 136).
171 In the next chapter and under the title "Grounds of Normative Judgments" it will be clarified that a meaningful and verifiable basis of morality are related to some aspects of the action itself.
172 Earlier jurists who articulated the principle of *istiḥsan* (preference by opinion), as one of the bases of law were criticized, especially by al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/819) because "he regarded it as based merely on free human reasoning guided by personal interests and whims." See Hallaq (1997: 23). In his encyclopaedic work *Kitāb al-Umm,* Shāfiʿī devotes a section for refuting *istiḥsan.* He says that "if someone says I prefer (*astaḥsinu*), then he should assert that it is acceptable for others also to prefer different thing, and so every ruler and every judge will stick to what he prefers." See Al-Shāfiʿī, *Kitāb al-Umm* (n.d.: 407). Therefore, it was actually personal opinion based on whims which was not subjected to any rational criteria that was attacked by Shāfiʿī. What is considered good (*ḥasan*) to a person might not be so according to a different opinion. However, some prominent Ḥanafite scholars held the principle of *istiḥsān* and revealed its true meaning. They held that *istiḥsān* is a form of *qiyās* saying: *istiḥsān* is *qiyās* but its reason (*'illa*) is concealed, whereas in *qiyās* the *'illa* is explicit and clear (see al-Khuḍarī 1969: 43).
173 More will be said about this in the following chapter.
174 Ayer (1935: 106).
175 Toulmin (1949: 169).
176 Hourani (1971: 32; 1985: 104).
177 Abdalla (1983: 43).
178 Toulmin (1953: 143).

179 See Khalifat (2004: vol. 1, pp. 28–9).
180 Vasalou (2003: 247).
181 Ibid., p. 259.
182 Toulmin (1953: 137).
183 It can be defined as "the capacity for self government," and "agents are autonomous if their actions are truly their own" (see Blackburn 1996: 31).
184 *Mughnī*, *al-Taklīf*, (1965: vol. 11, p. 382).
185 Ibid., p. 295.
186 Ibid., p. 294.
187 Ibid., p. 309.
188 Ibid., p. 163.
189 Al-Baṣrī (1964: vol. 1, p. 164).
190 Ibid., p. 367.
191 *Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 168).
192 Al-Ashʿarī (1996: 220).
193 ʿAbd al-Jabbār does not mention al-Ashʿarī. He ascribes the view that humans are only metaphorically said to act to Jahm b. Ṣafwān. He was followed by Ḍirār, although the latter introduced the doctrine of acquisition (*al-kasb*). This doctrine allowed for ascribing the action to Man, by holding that Man acquires (*yaktasib*) an action that is originally created by God. Moreover, ʿAbd al-Jabbār reports that Abū ʿAlī mentioned that the first one to announce the doctrine of fatalism (*al-jabr*) was Muʿāwiya b. Sufyān to make it an excuse for his actions (see *Mughnī*, *al-Makhlūq* n.d.: vol. 8, p. 3–4).
194 *Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 367).
195 Ibid., p. 371.
196 Mānkdīm (1965: 411).
197 Ibid., p 408.
198 Ibid., p. 405.
199 Ibid., p. 294.
200 Ibid., p. 294.
201 Cooper (1966: 49).
202 Ibid.
203 *Mughnī-al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, pp. 129, 367, 391).
204 *Mughnī*, *al-Makhlūq* (n.d.: vol. 8, p. 6).
205 *Mughnī-al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 400). Purposefulness of moral judgment will be treated in a separate section in this chapter. The presupposition of morality that requires moral agents to have purposes and motivation also contributes to the necessity of moral judgments to be purposeful and not arbitrary, or vain.
206 For a complete account of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's theory of action, see Frank (1982).
207 Some scholars prefer to translate "*al-irāda*" to "volition" instead of "will." Frank indicates that will has commonly been understood, in one way or another, as an appetitive power. It should be mentioned therefore that ʿAbd al-Jabbār posits no such power or faculty. For the Baṣran Muʿtazilite being willing to do an act or having the will (*al-irāda*) to do it, is located in the agent's being able to act (*kawnuhu qādiran*). See Frank (1982: 332). "*Al-irāda*" is translated here as "will" for convenience. However, it should be clear that it only means the ability to choose and intend to do or not to do. ʿAbd al-Jabbār explicitly states that willing is choosing, (*al-ikhtiyār huwa al-irāda*). See *Mughnī al-Irāda* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 56). Elsewhere, he also says that will is love (*al-irāda hiya al-maḥabba*), contentment, and choice (ibid., p. 241). That will is love is further explained by ʿAbd al-Jabbār. If someone loves Zayd, for example. he then wants his best interest, and if one says: "I love Zayd" it means "I want what is beneficial for him, (*urīdu manāfiʿuhu*)." As "it is impossible to love someone without wanting to benefit him," *Mughnī*, *al-Irāda* (n.d. vol. 6, p. 53).
208 *Mughnī*, *al-Irāda* (n.d.: vol. 6, pp. 35–6).

209 Ibid., p. 36.
210 Ibid., p. 35.
211 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, part 1, p. 196).
212 *Mughnī-al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 393).
213 Frank (1982). This article investigates the nature and character of the voluntary actions of human agents in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's thought. Frank opposes Gimaret's claims in *Théories de l'acte humain en théologie musulmane* (1980: 3–60, 237–304) who maintained that the Muʿtazilite doctrine is one of psychological determinism and that since the Baṣran teaching requires that God be ultimately responsible for the psychological states of His creatures, all humans actions are deterministically caused by God.
214 Frank (1982: 337).
215 *Mughnī*, *al-Irāda* (n.d. vol. 6, p. 58).
216 Frank (1982: 337).
217 *Mughnī-al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 98) also cited in Frank (1982: 348).
218 Frank (1982: 348).
219 *Mughnī,al-Ta'dīl wa'l Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, Part 1, p. 12). It is clear that an agent's responsibility, in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethics can be defined in terms of deserving praise or blame, because it is only the morally responsible agent who might deserve praise or blame.
220 *Mughnī*, *al-Makhlūq* (n.d.: vol. 8, p.166).
221 Ibid., p. 165.
222 *Mughnī-al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 397).
223 *Mughnī*, *al-Makhlūq* (n.d. vol. 8, p. 167).
224 Ibid., p. 165.
225 Ibid., p. 165.
226 Ibid., p. 166
227 *Mughnī-al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 492).
228 Categories of value judgment will be treated in the next chapter. See also Hourani (1971: 39).
229 *Mughnī-al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 394).
230 Ibid., p. 493.
231 Ibid., p. 395.
232 Ibid.
233 Ibid.
234 Ibid. He might be referring to an old Indian custom, which required from the wife to burn herself after the death of her husband (funeral pyre).
235 Harry Frankfurt, a contemporary prominent moral philosopher has discussed similar issues in an article entitled "Alternate possibilities and moral responsibility," where he stated that the principle of alternate possibilities states that a person is morally responsible for what he has done only if he could have done otherwise. Frankfurt considers a situation similar to what ʿAbd al-Jabbār would consider *iljā*' or compulsory motivation and argued that such situations do not actually impel a person to act. The arguments raised above against ʿAbd al-Jabbār's exclusion of the compelled person from moral responsibility were partly compiled from Harry Frankfurt's arguments against "the principle of alternate possibilities" (see Frankfurt 1969).
236 *Mughnī, al-Makhlūq* (n.d.: vol. 8, p. 166).
237 *Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 395).
238 Ibid., p.395.
239 *Mughnī,al-Ta'dīl wa'l Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, part 1, pp. 16–17).
240 Frank (1971: 10).
241 *Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 400).
242 *Mughnī, al-Makhlūq* (n.d.: vol. 8, p. 21).

243 Ibid., p. 171.
244 Cooper (1966: 48).
245 *Mughnī, al-Aṣlaḥ* (1965: vol. 14, p. 44).
246 Ibid.
247 *Mughnī*, *al-Luṭf* (1962: vol. 13, p. 228).
248 *Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 407). It should be mentioned that *qabīḥ* in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's thought has different meanings when mentioned in different contexts. Thus, it is appropriate to translate it according to the meaning understood from the context in which it is used. Therefore, it is sometimes translated as irrational and other times as evil or bad and other times as simply wrong or ugly.
249 Ibid., p. 409.
250 Ibid., p. 410.
251 Hare (1992: 1258).
252 Ibid., p. 1259.
253 *Mughnī*, *al-Aṣlaḥ* (1965: vol. 14, p. 149).
254 Hare (1992: 1260).
255 *Mughnī*, *al-Tad'īl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 89).
256 Ibid., p.120.
257 Ibid., p.125.
258 *Mughnī*, *al-Irāda* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 244).
259 See below, Chapter Six.
260 Ibid.
261 *Mughnī*, *al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 177).
262 Ibid.
263 Ibid., p. 375
264 Ibid., pp. 375–9.
265 Reinhart (1995: 152).
266 GhaneaBassiri (2003: 41). He also says that while in most Arabic texts *'aql* signifies what is meant by "the intellect" or "reason" in modern English, in context of Muʿtazili theology, this translation is inadequate. However, he finds it adequate to translate its active participle (*ʾāqil*) as "a compos mentis" or "a rational being" (see p. 42).
267 Soanes (2002).
268 Pei (1977).
269 Soanes (2002).
270 Ibid.
271 *Al-Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 379).
272 Reinhart (1995: 152).
273 Al-Tahānawī (1996: 1201).

6 ANALYSIS OF NORMATIVE ETHICAL JUDGMENTS

1 Hourani (1971: 39).
2 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 7).
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., p. 8.
5 Ibid., p. 7.
6 Ibid., pp. 7–8.
7 Al-Tahānawī (1996: 668).
8 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 82).
9 *Mughnī*, *al-Luṭf* (1962: vol. 13, p. 311).
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.

12 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 83).
13 Ibid., p. 12. Translating "*qabīḥ*" as evil seems too strong in some contexts, it might be translated here as "bad" rather than "evil," or just left as it is without translation.
14 Ibid., p. 90.
15 Al-Īījī (n.d.: 324). It must be noticed that Al-Īījī might be referring to the disagreement between the Baghdādian and Baṣran Muʿtazila discussed below. In this case denying the attributes does not mean denying the objective perception of morality. It only means denying a certain perception of moral values that regards them as properties inherent in things or actions and makes those things good or evil. However, in light of what has been said above, and due to the fact that Al-Īījī explicitly prescribes the position of denying moral attributes to al-Jubbā'ī, one is justified in assuming that ʿAbd al-Jabbār held a different perception of moral values than the two prominent masters.
16 What the Jubbā'īs and especially Abū Hāshim denied is the theory of moral value held by the Baghdādian Muʿtazila, which stated that an action is good or evil due to a determinant cause inherent in it and makes it what it is. This conception of moral values was also rejected by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, who held that it is the state of the action, not the state of the agent nor a determinant cause that determines the value of an action (see this chapter, pp. 131–5).
17 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, pp. 71–2).
18 *Mughnī*, *al-luṭf* (1962: vol. 13, p. 229).
19 Ibid., p. 219.
20 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 26).
21 Mānkdīm (1965: 326).
22 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 9).
23 *Mughnī*, *al-Luṭf* (1962: vol. 13, p. 311).
24 See above, page 100.
25 For the definition of communal subjectivism, see Chapter 2, p. 12.
26 The necessary connection between "ought" and blameworthiness has also been indicated by some contemporary philosophers. For example, see Dahl (1967: 418–28).
27 *Mughnī, al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, pp. 201, 224, 227) and Mānkdīm (1965: 308).
28 *Mughnī*, *al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 503).
29 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 56).
30 *Mughnī, al-taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 511).
31 Ibid., p. 504.
32 Mānkdīm (1965: 76).
33 Cavell and Sesonske (1952: 544).
34 Ibid., p. 553.
35 Such a view might be ascribed to some earlier Muʿtazilite masters and some of the Baghdādian Muʿtazilites, as will be shown later in this chapter.
36 *Mughnī, al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 19).
37 Ibid., p. 20.
38 Ibid., p. 21.
39 Ibid., p. 55.
40 Hospers (1957: 501).
41 *Mughnī, al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 19).
42 Ibid., p. 55. In an unpublished dissertation the statement of ʿAbd al-Jabbār that "it is invalid to say that it is considered beautiful or ugly by virtue of a certain property" was wrongly translated to: "Thus it is not correct to say that only the state of the viewer affects its approval or disapproval." Such a translation would alter the meaning of the text. As it is clear that ʿAbd al-Jabbār maintains a subjectivist position in aesthetics, and holds that the ugliness or beauty of a countenance is fully related to the state of the

viewer, and the property of the countenance is such that it merely admits this subjective view (see Abdalla 1983: 164).

43 *Mughnī, al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 55).

44 It is evident that ʿAbd al-Jabbār is not particularly interested in developing any argument related to aesthetical issues, although it would be interesting to have a full account of Abū Hāshim's argument about the objectivity of aesthetical values, and its resemblance to the ethical ones. There are some naturalistic and non-naturalistic theories of aesthetical values, and it would be valuable to know what kind of theory Abū Hāshim introduced, especially as this could illuminate some aspects of his ethical theory.

45 *Mughnī, al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 55).

46 What is usually called modified Divine Command Theory which presupposes goodness, love or purposefulness of God is not really a Divine Command Theory, as the ultimate basis of morality will then lie in the purposes or in a certain conception of good and bad. A Divine Command Theory, which supports its argument by claiming that God is identical to the property of goodness or rightness, is unintelligible. "A Divine Command Theory worthy of the name says that to be right is to be commanded by God, and to be wrong is to be forbidden by God" (see Tuggy 2005: 53).

47 It is important to emphasize the fact that "the Divine Command Theory has traditionally been associated with a particular conception of God's nature, one which emphasizes his absolute power and freedom, and consequently the unknowability of His will by human reason" (see Chandler 1985: 238).

48 Wainwright (2005: 74).

49 Rachels (2003: 53).

50 Quinn (1990: 357–8). He believes that Thomas Aquinas shares with Augustine the view that divine commands can determine the moral status of actions. He quotes the following passage from Aquinas, *Summa* I–II, q. 100, a. 8, ad. 3, in support of his view: "Consequently when the Children of Israel, by God's command, took away the spoils of the Egyptians, this was not theft; since it was due to them by the sentence of God. Likewise when Abraham consented to slay his son, he did not consent to murder, because his son was due to be slain by the command of God, Who is Lord of life and death: for He it is Who inflicts the punishment of death on all men, both godly and ungodly, on account of the sin of our first parent, and if man be the executor of that sentence by divine authority, he would be no murderer any more than God would be. Again Osee, by taking unto himself a wife of fornications, or an adulterous woman, was not guilty either of adultery or of fornication: because he took unto himself one who was his by command of God, Who was the author of the institution of marriage." Quinn comments on the three cases mentioned in the above quotations, known in Christianity as "The Immorality of the Patriarchs": "I think there would be enough agreement about some such cases among reflective Christians who consider them carefully to make it a common opinion within Christian traditions of moral inquiry that God is the source of moral obligation" (ibid., p. 359).

51 Daniel Brown is an Islamic scholar and the pastor of Stony Brook Community Church in South Hadley, Massachusetts. This church belongs to The United Methodist Church and is the second-largest Protestant denomination in the United States.

52 Brown (1999: 183). It seems that such interpretation of the nature of religious thought goes hand in hand with the rise of fundamentalism, in both Islam and Christianity. Divine Command Theory is a metaethical theory that interprets morality as obedience to commands, and alienates reason from the realm of morality. The basis of morality then would be different in different religions. Divine Command Theory implies that there is no moral basis upon which people from different religions and cultures can agree upon. So for divine command theorists there seems no objective basis for any rational debate, and consequently there would be no basis for establishing and defending any international law that would protect different nations. Divine Command

Theory is the most dangerous theory anyone can defend, because of its possible harmful consequences. It has adherents in Islam, yet it is clearly unfair to consider Islam a defining case of ethical voluntarism. Especially as it never lacked adherences in Christianity, starting with Augustine (d. 430), William of Ockham (d. 1348), John Scotus (d. 1308), and other prominent figures, and ending with the Protestant reformers Martin Luther (d. 1546), Karl Barth (d. 1968), Emile Brunner (d. 1966), and finally the contemporary Divine Command Theorists who became active during the 1970s such as Philip Quinn (d. 2004). A contemporary professor of the Hebrew Bible has noticed the dangerous consequences of this theory that exclusively links morality to religion. John Collins (2003) noticed that when religious texts are interpreted as commands which can override morality, some most violent actions become sacred and thereby legitimized: "Palestine is legitimately given to Israel by its God, by a command to slaughter the Canaanites" (p. 9). He also says: "Most obviously, biblical narratives have been a factor in the Zionist movement in Israel, shaping the imagination even of secular, socialist Zionists and providing powerful precedence for right-wing militants … Biblical analogy also provided the underpinnings for support of Israel among conservative Christians" (p. 14). Thus, what is called Islamic fundamentalism or contemporary militant Islamic movements appealed to divine commands in justifying their grievances, just as Christian fundamentalism and "secular Zionism" appealed to divine commands in shaping their antagonistic policies. Collins also realized that "when it became clear that the terrorists of September 11, 2001, saw or imagined their grievances in religious terms, any reader of the Bible should have had a flash of recognition" (Collins 2003: 3). However those people imagined their grievances in religious terms, because in the absence of any effective political channels for dealing with injustice, some movements which identified themselves as Islamic adopted extreme interpretations of Islam and violence as a means of political activism (see United Nations Development Programme 2003: 121). Thus it is political not religious motivation that lies beyond any appeal to divine commands which are not based on reason.

53 Brown (1999: 187).
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., p. 182.
56 Ibid., p. 183
57 To examine how the conditions of moral judgments were implemented in the works of *uṣūl al-fiqh* is beyond the limited scope of this book. However, even a prominent Ashʿarite scholar like al-Ghazālī, affirmed the necessary conditions of obligation by not accepting the assignment of unbearable obligation, (*Taklīf mā lā yuṭāq*). Thus ability to perform the obligation is a presupposition of a valid obligation (see Al-Ghazālī 1995: 102).
58 Abdalla (1983: 58) referring to Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (1964: 8).
59 *Mughnī*, *al-Irāda* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 323).
60 Ibid., p. 348.
61 Ibid., p. 23
62 The declared Ashʿarīte's position is that God establishes good and evil. For example, al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1012) says: "Reason (*al-ʿaql*) does not make anything good in itself for a certain property and aspect … all that is invalid and has no basis. The action of a responsible person (*mukallaf*) should be described as good or evil only according to what Allah has judged to be good or evil" (see Al-Bāqillānī 1993: 279). Al-Ghazālī says: "It is proven that the command (*al-amr al-sharʿī*) does not indicate goodness nor does the prohibition indicate evil. There is no meaning for good and evil related to the entity of things (*bil-iḍāfa ilā dhawāt al-ashyāʾ*). The good is what He [Allah] commanded and the evil is what He prohibited" (see Al-Ghazālī 1995: 10). For a comprehensive account of the Ashʿarite announced position see Frank 1983: 204–23).

63 Frank (1983: 214–15).
64 Ibid., p. 214.
65 Weiss (1998) held that "voluntarism is a way of looking at the nature of law. Intentionalism is an approach to the interpretation of the texts upon which the law is based" (p. 56), and that "to say that law is determined by divine will is to say that law is determined by divine intent, and vice versa" (p. 56).
66 More will be said about this position and those who held such a position at the end of this chapter.
67 *Mughnī, al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 21).
68 Hourani (1985: 33). Hourani credits al-Shāfiʿī's definition of justice, "justice is that one should act in obedience to God," by stating that it is one of the most successful stipulated definitions in history. However, it must be noted that the context in which this statement was mentioned (in *al-Risāla*, p. 25) does not indicate that it was meant to be a definition of justice, nor was it articulated to discredit any other possible definitions. It will be shown that al-Shāfiʿī could not have provided the basis for ethical voluntarism as implied by Hourani. Interpreting the thought of al-Shāfiʿī in a way that allows for considering him a divine command theorist is misleading. It will be proved in the context of this chapter that ascribing ethical voluntarism to al-Shāfiʿī and some Ashʿarite scholars does not rest on firm evidence. The insistence on interpreting all religious thought as endorsing Divine Command Theory is quite dubious, especially as it is accompanied by the rise of religious fundamentalism in both Islam and Christianity. Divine voluntarism, which excludes reason from the realm of ethics, might provide theoretical basis for all the violence, discrimination, and injustice. One might question the reason behind the contemporary enthusiasm in reviving ethical voluntarism in the US since the 1970s and the insistence on interpreting all religions as essentially endorsing divine voluntarism. It is obvious that voluntarism has unacceptable political implications. Also "the fear that voluntarism had unacceptable political implications was never out of sight" (see Schneewind 1996: 26).
69 Reinhart (1995: 12).
70 Ibid., p. 13. Reinhart considers al-Shāfiʿī among those who most probably held that some acts were proscribed even before revelation. However, in the same book, (pp. 62–3), he seems to have changed his mind as he considers him as among those who held the "no assessment" position. Strangely enough, his second opinion is based on the same quotation from Hourani, which was previously indicated by him and opposed, when he considered al-Shāfiʿī to hold a "proscription" position. However, here we have two different interpretations of al-Shāfiʿī's work, which shows at least, that interpreting his thought as entailing an extreme version of ethical voluntarism lacks decisive evidence.
71 Ibid., p. 25.
72 Ibid.
73 Vishanoff (2004: 42) referring to *al-Risāla* (pp. 302–5).
74 Ibid., p. 184n179. This indicates that divine commands could not have been considered evident, nor could they have provided a reliable basis for morality. They were interpreted and investigated from various aspects.
75 Al-Ghazālī (1997: vol. 1, p. 306).
76 Vishanoff (2004: 42).
77 Ibid.
78 Reinhart (1995: 17) referring to al-Zarkashī, Abū ʿAbdallah Muḥammad, (d. 794/1392), *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, Ms. Paris: Ms. Bibliotheque Nationale, Arabe 811.
79 Quoted from Reinhart (1995: 16) referring to Subkī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 2044 (4): 289–90.
80 Al-Ashʿarī (1996: vol. 2, p. 85).
81 *Uṣūli* scholars or *uṣūliyūn* is a name given to the Muslim scholars who were interested in both fields of knowledge, *uṣūl al-fiqh and uṣūl al-dīn*.

82 The classification of meaningful expressions into different modes of speech, according to their use and function, appeared after the grammarians identified and confined various functions of useful sentences. The classification of different sentences according to their function developed through different stages until most of the scholars agreed upon the two main modes of speech that confine all meaningful sentences: *al-khabar* and *al-inshā'* (see Khalifat 2004: vol. 2, pp. 813–14).
83 Formal aspects of ethical judgments are contrasted to substantive aspects.
84 Al-Tahānawī (1996: vol. 1, p. 282).
85 Ibid.
86 *Mughnī*, *al-Shar'iyyāt* (n.d.: vol. 17, p. 113).
87 *Mughnī*, *al-Irāda* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 224).
88 Ibid., p. 224.
89 Ibid., p. 86.
90 Ibid., p. 78.
91 Ibid., p. 86.
92 See, for example, Al-Baṣrī (1964: vol. 1, p. 73).
93 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 64).
94 *Mughnī*, *al-Shshar'iyyāt* (n.d.: vol. 17, p. 114).
95 *Mughnī*, *al-Irāda* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 224).
96 Ibid., p. 115.
97 Ibid., p. 112. Most scholars who believed that the primary meaning of a divine command was that it makes the commanded act obligatory, believed that a command in and of itself constituted prohibition against opposite acts. For more on this subject see Khalifat (2004: vol. 2, pp. 891–6).
98 Ibid., p. 121.
99 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 109).
100 Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī explains that people have disagreed on considering whether the expression "do a certain thing" (*if'al*) entails obligation or not. Some maintained that it is essentially used for obligation (*wujūb*); others believed that it essentially stood for recommendation (*nadb*); and others held that it is essentially used to indicate that an action is merely permissible. The view held by ʿAbd al-Jabbār goes back to Abū Hāshim. He held that the imperative form entails will (*taqtaḍi al-irāda*). Abū al-Ḥusayn explains that Abū Hāshim said "if someone says to another person "do a certain thing" this means that he wants the act (*al-fi'l*) done by him. Yet, if the speaker was modest (*ḥakīm*) then the required act must have a property (*ṣifa*) above its goodness, so that its agent deserves praise for performing it … The act might be obligatory, and might not be obligatory but only recommended. If there is no indication that the act is obligatory, it should be considered recommended (*nadb*) and its agent would deserve praise for doing it" (*Al-Mu'tamad*, 1964: vol. 1, p. 51). Abū al-Ḥusayn disagrees with his Muʿtazilite masters and considers that the imperative form stands for assigning obligation because the expression "do a certain action" entails that the addressee necessarily performs the action (ibid., pp. 51–2). Abū al-Ḥusayn is an immediate pupil of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, yet his views concerning the meaning of the imperatives, and his analysis differ much from his master's. For him the imperative form entails obligation. However, this does not contradict the view that the imperative sentence contextually entails an indicative statement. Abū al-Ḥusayn states many arguments in support of his view, among these arguments is the argument that it is safer to believe that the imperative form stands for obligation not for recommendations. He says: "if it is recommended it will not harm us to perform it, but will benefit us, and if it is obligatory we will be safe from harm by doing it. But if we consider that it [the imperative form] means that the action requested is merely recommended, and it turns to be obligatory, then we might be harmed for omitting it" (ibid., p. 60). Obviously such a view will result in making no distinction

between obligatory and recommended actions, as everything expressed in the form of a command will be considered obligatory. Although it is clear that what is at stake here is divine commands, yet those are divided by ʿAbd al-Jabbār into obligatory and recommended. Indeed, one has to do all the obligatory and the recommended. However, one will not be punished for omitting the recommended acts, but will be punished for omitting the obligatory.

101 It is significant that ʿAbd al-Jabbār does not consider the rank of the speaker a condition for considering an imperative command. Although, as stated by Abū al-Ḥusayn: "linguistic scholars (*ahl al-lugha*) said: If someone says to another: do a certain thing, it is considered a command when the speaker's rank is higher than the addressee's. Whereas it is considered a request or a demand (*su'āl*) if the speaker has a lower [or the same] status. They did not distinguish between the two [i.e. the command and the request] for any other aspect except the rank of the speaker" (Al-Baṣrī, 1964: vol. 1, p. 69).

102 *Mughnī, al-Tanabu'āt wa'l-Mu'jizāt* (n.d.: vol. 15, p. 319).

103 Ibid., p. 325.

104 Khalifat (2004: vol. 2, p. 916).

105 Ibid.

106 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 105).

107 Ibid., p. 107.

108 Ibid., p. 102.

109 Ibid., p. 114, and Mānkdīm (1965: 438).

110 *Mughnī, al-Tanabu'āt wa'l-Mu'jizāt* (n.d.: vol. 15, p. 325, and already quoted above, p.217).

111 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 105, and already quoted p. 218).

112 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 102). George Hourani believed that such an argument "has no force, since no contradictions can arise in the decrees of God" (Hourani 1971: 59). But theoretically, contradictions can arise. It has been shown that contemporary divine command theorists believed that some commands in the Old Testament like the command given to Abraham to slaughter his own son contradict the divine command not to kill innocents. They argued that killing in such cases would become obligatory as it is commanded by God. Thus, killing in this case would be both obligatory and evil. If one does not use reason in interpreting divine commands, some of them might contradict each other.

113 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 103).

114 *Mughnī*, *al-Aṣlaḥ* (1965: vol. 14, p. 22).

115 *Mughnī*, *al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 292).

116 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 113). Both quotations from the Qur'ān 16:90.

117 Ibid., p. 108.

118 Ibid., p. 108.

119 Ibid., p. 102, and Mānkdīm (1965: 311).

120 Mānkdīm (1965: 311).

121 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p 109). By "Sophists" or "Sufsuṭā'īya," ʿAbd al-Jabbār means those who deny the attainment of knowledge as there were no Sophists around in his time (see vol. 12, p. 41).

122 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 89).

123 *Mughnī*, *al-Irāda* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 323).

124 The importance of this story lies in the fact that it was used by contemporary supporters of Divine Command Theory in the West. Other stories mentioned by ethical voluntarists in support of their position include: The Israelite's plunder of the Egyptians because Yahweh commands them to do so (Exodus 12:35–6); Hosea's illicit sexual relations with a harlot at Yahweh's order (Hosea 1:2–3) alongside with Abraham's

willingness to kill his own son for the "alleged" command (Genesis 22:1–19). For example, see Wainwright (2005: 131). Divine commands in all three cases are considered "to make obligatory patriarchal actions that would have been immoralities in their absence" (Quinn 1990: 359; Copp 2005: 66–7). It has also been wrongly assumed by Quinn that "The Hebrew Bible is authoritative for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam" (in the same article, p. 354). Thus after interpreting Judaism and Christianity as endorsing ethical voluntarism, he adds Islam. Wainwright "hesitantly" approves, saying "Quinn and others have noted that the Old and New Testaments (and I venture to say the Qur'ān) depict a God whose commands are themselves decisive reasons for doing what they prescribe" (Wainwright 2005: 136n25). However, it seems that the revivalists of the Divine Command Theory did not notice that two of the three stories mentioned in support of their theory have absolutely no parallel in Islam, whereas the story of Abraham, is differently narrated in the Qur'ān, and was never evoked to support an alien conception of morality. It is interesting that even Daniel Brown, whose article "Islamic Ethics in Contemporary Perspective" concentrates on showing that the majority of Muslim jurists and theologians have tended to extreme ethical voluntarism, acknowledges that "The voluntarist position seems to have only weak support in the Qur'ān" (Brown 1999: 182).

125 Translation adopted from Abdullah Yusuf ʿAli, Cairo, Dar al-Manar.

126 It seems that in Islam ethical voluntarism was supported only by assumptions which had no textual basis. It was not supported by any alleged stories endorsed in the Qur'ān that would contradict morality. Muslims could have maintained that Allah had never commanded an act which is normally and unanimously considered immoral.

127 The story of Ibrāhim in Islam was not invoked as a proof of ethical voluntarism. In Christianity, it was sometimes considered, as already mentioned in note 124 above, alongside other "immoralities of the patriarchs" as a supporting case of ethical voluntarism (see Wainwright 2005: 130–2 and Quinn 1990: 354–9). The story of Ibrāhim was interpreted by some Ashʿarīte scholars, for example Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, to be a case of abrogation (*naskh*) of divine commands. Some commands are contradictory, but those were intended for different times. So in certain verses God commanded Muslims to fight unbelievers, but in other verses this command was abrogated (*nusikha*) by another. Al-Ghazālī mentions the story of Ibrāhim to support the plausibility of abrogation of divine commands. The command to slaughter his son was abrogated, according to al-Ghazālī, even before the action took place (1995: vol. 1, p. 136).

128 *Mughnī*, *al-Irāda* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 224).

129 Ibid., pp. 320–1.

130 Ibid., p. 321.

131 Al-Baṣrī (1964: 411).

132 It has been mentioned by al-Ghazālī, after presenting his interpretation of the story of Ibrāhīm, that the Muʿtazilites forwarded five different interpretations of the story of Ibrāhīm. The first is that it was only a dream not a command. The second that it was a command intended to test his patience, not to command slaughtering. The third is that the command was not abrogated, but that God had transformed Ismāʿīl's neck to iron or copper so it would become impossible to harm him, thus the obligation was not valid because it was impossible to perform the commanded act. The fourth was that what was commanded was only the prologue of the slaughtering not the slaughtering itself. The fifth interpretation ascribed by al-Ghazālī to the Muʿtazila says that those who denied abrogation held that Ibrāhīm slaughtered his son, yet [it was a miracle] that he was continuously healed and not slaughtered (Al-Ghazālī 1995: vol. 1, p. 136). Al-Ghazālī refutes all the above Muʿtazilite interpretations. The first interpretation is denied because he considers the dreams of the prophets part of revelation, as according to him divine commands were communicated to some prophets in their

dreams! The second interpretation is also refuted because the Omniscient does not need to test anything [because he knows everything]. Yet, their saying that it was the prologue of slaughtering that was commanded and that only the decision or intention (*al-ʿazm*) to slaughter his son was what was obligatory is impossible. Because deciding and intending to do what is not obligatory cannot be obligatory as well. How can the prologue of slaughtering and intending to slaughter be an obligation if slaughtering is believed to be evil. The strongest argument is given against the weakest interpretation ascribed to the Muʿtazila. Because if God knew that he will protect Ismāʿīl's neck by making it iron then how could He have commanded the slaughtering. As according to the Muʿtazilite principle the command has certain conditions [necessary conditions of ethical judgments], they do not affirm conditional command. In other words a command has to fulfil certain conditions to be considered as a command that assigns obligation. God would not command what he knows that he will prevent. The fifth interpretation is easily refuted as if Ibrāhīm really slaughtered his son and the son was healed by fixing his neck continuously then why command the sacrifice (see Al-Ghazālī 1995: vol. 1, p. 137)? According to al-Ghazālī the command to slaughter was abrogated (see note 126).

133 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1969: *Mutashābih al-Qurān*, p. 588).

134 See above, pp. 000–000.

135 The major grounds of evil are investigated by Hourānī, *Islamic Rationalism* (1971), which are: wrongdoing, uselessness, lying, ingratitude for a favour, ignorance, willing evil, commanding evil, and imposing unattainable obligations (pp. 69–70). ʿAbd al-Jabbār mentions these grounds in various volumes of *al-Mughnī*, especially in vol. 6, part 1, *al Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (p. 61). Hourānī also investigates some grounds of good, which are justice, benefit or advantage, truthfulness, and willing good (1971: 104).

136 Marmura (1994: 114). It is important to mention that Marmura supports his contention by investigating only one ethical judgment which is the evilness of lies. This is a particularly problematic issue in Islamic Muʿtazilite thought. ʿAbd al-Jabbār's insistence on considering lies as evil regardless of the consequences, is explained by a contemporary scholar. She says: "in order to accept revelation, one must be capable of knowing in advance that God does not lie, and lies must be known to be unconditionally evil regardless of consequences" (Vasalou 2003: 256–259). Most of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethical judgments are based on benefit and harm, whereas lies are unconditionally evil. This does not seem consistent with the teleological framework of his ethical theory. Therefore, this sole example might well support Marmura's convention that values are intrinsic to acts, however, it will be shown later that it does not fit with the rest of the ethical judgments in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethics. Also, the evilness of lies is not necessary known by ʿAbd al-Jabbār. This rule belongs to the acquired knowledge. We only know necessarily that lying is evil when it is not done to bring about a greater benefit or avert overweighing harm.

137 Reinhart (1995: 146).

138 According to Reinhart *Wajh* is an elusive perhaps vague concept and its difficulty is due partly to the ordinariness of the word (*Wajh* meaning face, aspect, perceptive). He believes that understanding its technical meaning, the literal meaning must be kept in mind. Thus he states that "the *wajh* is that part of an act that presents itself towards us and reflects its real nature including its *maʿnas* or *ʿillahs* or *ṣifahs* of good and detestability" (Reinhart 1995: 148).

139 *Mughnī*, *al-Taʿdīl waʾl-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 57). Translation of the quotation partly adopted from Mohamad Abdullah (p. 165) as he translated the first 12 sections of this volume of *al-Mughnī*.

140 Ibn Mattawayh (1975: 315). However, in the same reference the Jubbāʾī father, Abū ʿAlī is reported to disagree with his son and states that there are certain existing

entities (*ma'āni*) that necessitate attraction or repulsion (*tata'allaq biha al-shahwa wa'l-nafār*). Abū al-Qāsim is reported to have held a similar view.

141 This is also the position of Abū ʿAbdallah al-Baṣrī and Abū Isḥāq b. ʿAyyāsh his immediate masters (*Mughnī*, *al-Luṭf*, 1962: vol. 13, p. 311).

142 He adhered to a Muʿtazilite school of the Baghdādian tradition. When he was already an acknowledged scholar and author of books he went to Rayy to study with ʿAbd al-Jabbār (see Heemskerk 2000: 55).

143 Al-Nīsābūrī (1979: 297).

144 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 54). *Ma'nā* indicates a physical property, the physical property might causally determine the value of an action.

145 Ibid., p. 52.

146 Ibid., p. 59.

147 Ibid., p. 37.

148 *Mughnī*, *al-Aṣlaḥ* (1965: vol. 14, p. 165).

149 They are often mentioned by al-Ashʿarī, in *al-Maqālāt*. He states that Aṣḥāb al-Ṭabā'iʿ are the companions of Muʿammar (1996: vol. 2, p. 69). He must mean Muʿammar b. ʿAbbād (d.215/830). Muʿammar is also the one who articulated the controversial doctrine of *al-ma'ānī* (ibid., p. 59). Those who accepted the doctrine are sometimes referred to as *aṣḥāb al-ma'ānī*. Al-Khayyaṭ (d. 290/903) explains the doctrine of *ma'ānī* which he attributes to Muʿammar. He says: " When Muʿammar found that two unmoving objects that exist close to each other, one of them moves while the other stays; he considered that a *ma'nā* resided in it (*ḥallahu*)" (see *al-Intiṣār*, 1974: 46). *Ma'nā* might be translated as causal determinant, or the entity that necessitates a causal determinant. The doctrine of *aṣḥāb al-ṭabā'i'*, which is also ascribed to Muʿammar is explained by al-Khayyāṭ. He said: "Muʿammar claimed that the appearances of objects *hay'āt al-ajsām* [which includes *ma'ānī* and aʿrāḍ] are the acts of the objects [produced by the objects], according to the objects' own nature (*ṭibā'an*), in a sense that God created them [the objects] in a way that they produce their appearances by their own nature" (1974: 45). Al-Kaʿbī remained faithful to the doctrine of *al-ṭabā'i'*, which was also held by Bishr b. al-Muʿtamir (d.210/825) and Hishām al-Fūṭī (d. 211/826) or somewhere between 221 and 230 AH (see al-Khayyūn 1997: 178), whereas Abū Hāshim introduced the doctrine of *al-aḥwāl* to replace the doctrine of *al-ma'ānī* (ibid., p. 226) and wrote a book against the doctrine of *al-ṭabā'i'* and those who held such a doctrine: *Al-Ṭabā'i' wa al-Naqd 'alā al-Qā'ilīn biha* (ibid., p. 229).

150 In the fifth volume of *al-Mughnī*, ʿAbd al-Jabbār dedicates a long chapter for refuting the views of the dualists (see pp. 23–53). Although those were different religious sects, they shared the belief that everything that exists in this world is from two origins: light and darkness. For the various religious groups who were classified among the dualists and their beliefs, see also al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal* (1984: 251–60). Those included Manichaeism that originated in the third century Persia and combined elements of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Gnosticism. ʿAbd al-Jabbār explicitly argues against the moral view of the dualists who perceived pains and pleasures as distinct entities. They held that everything good, pleasant, and beneficial come from light and every evil, harm, and sorrow come from darkness. In *al-Mughnī*, *al-Firaq* (1958: vol. 5, p. 10) good and evil are produced by light and darkness according to their own nature (*bil-ṭab'*).

151 Accidents (*a'rāḍ*, plural of *a'raḍ*) in Muʿtazilite ontology include colours, tastes, pains, sounds. Even life, desires, aversion, contemplations are considered *a'rāḍ* (see Ibn Mattawayh 1975: 34). To know how they are classified, see pp. 35–46. Accidents are to be contrasted to substances (*jawāhir*) in which, generally speaking, accidents are said to inhere. Accidents determine the qualities of the substance they inhere in. On the definitions of *jawhar* in Muʿtazilite ontology see Mattawayh (1975: 47–8).

152 Al-Nīsābūrī (1979: 354), also cited in Reinhart (1995: 143).
153 Al-Nīsābūrī (1979: 357), also cited in Reinhart (1995: 142).
154 Al-Muqbilī (1985: 131)
155 Reinhart (1995: 139).
156 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 79).
157 Hourani (1971: 64).
158 Al-Shahrastānī (n.d.: 96).
159 Manichaeism: named after Mani. It is a religious doctrine based on the separation of matter and spirit and of good and evil that originated in third-century Persia and combined elements of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Gnosticism.
160 Al-Khayyaṭ (1957: 30–1). Al-Khayyaṭ reports that Ibn al-Rawandī described Ibrāhīm al-Naẓām's doctrines as those of al-Manāniyya or the Manichaeists. Yet, according to al-Khayyat, those dualists claimed that lying and truth telling (*al-ṣidq*) are distinguished from each other and contradict each other [they are different kinds of action]. They consider that truth telling is good (*khayr*) and it comes from light, and lying is evil and comes from darkness. Al-Khayyaṭ takes upon himself to defend the Muʿtazilite doctrines and to show that they are different from the doctrines of the dualists. He explains that Ibrāhīm held that it is the human being who sometimes tells truth and sometimes lies, sometimes does evil and sometimes good. However, it seems that Ibn al-Rawandī's claims rested upon Ibrāhīm's assertion that one genus (*al-jins al-wāḥid*) does not produce two different kinds (*jinsān*) of action. He derived that from observing that fire cannot produce anything except one kind of action (effect) – which is heating, and ice only one genus of action – which is cooling.
161 *Mughnī*, *al-Firaq* (1958: vol. 5, p. 22).
162 *Mughnī*, *al-lutf* (1962: vol. 13, p. 226).
163 Al-Ashʿarī (1996: vol. 2, p. 43).
164 Ibid., pp. 42–3. Al-Ashʿari ascribes this position to Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Jubbā'ī. It has been already mentioned that by acts of obedience the Muʿtazilites meant good actions and by the acts of disobedience they meant bad or evil actions. By considering that good and evil belong to the same genus of actions they meant that values are not qualities that make the action what it is, as the same genus of action, for example, inflicting pain might be good or evil.
165 Al-Nīsābūrī (1979: 210)
166 *Mughnī*, *al-Firaq* (1958: vol. 5, p. 45).
167 Ibid., p. 44.
168 Ibid., p. 59. Al-Ashʿarī mentions that Asḥāb al-Ṭabā'iʿ did not affirm in the world anything except heat, coldness, humidity, and dryness, or rigidity ("*yubūsa*"). Yet, some of them affirmed human soul as a fifth entity. They disagreed upon the acts of the soul. Some affirmed that they occur by nature (*ṭibā'an*), and others affirmed that they happen by choice (see Al-Ashʿarī 1996: 29).
169 *Mughnī*, *al-Firaq* (1958: vol. 5, p. 10).
170 Ibid., p. 61.
171 It needs to be pointed out that the doctrine of *al-ṭab'* is more consistent with the laws of nature than the doctrine held by the late Baṣrans. It means that fire produces heat according to its nature, a human being produces a human being according to its nature ,and that it is not possible for a certain type of seeds to produce a different type of plant. Whereas the late Baṣrans seem to deny this, as according to them there is nothing in the nature of things that necessitates the production of certain type of things. They seem to deny causality in nature (see Abū Rashīd, al-*Masā'il*, p. 133).
172 He mentions that some arguments that were used against the views of *Aṣḥāb al-Ṭabā'i'* are also valid in refuting the view of the dualists, and says that those arguments were previously mentioned. Thus one might conclude that the volume entitled *Al-Firaq Ghayr al-Islamiya*, literally the un-Islamic sects was preceded by a volume on Muslim

sects, which is still missing. In that missing volume he must have argued against the views of *Aṣḥāb al-Ṭabā'i'* and others. (See: *Mughnī*, *al-Firaq*, vol. 5, p. 44).

173 *Sharḥ*, p. 310.

174 Al-Nīsābūrī (1979: 355) also cited in Reinhart (1995: 144).

175 Al-Khayyūn (1997: 226). The initial purpose of the doctrine of *al-ma'ānī* was to establish the relation between the divine essence (*al-dhāt al-ilāhiya*) and its properties as explained by al-Khayyūn. Thus, God is described by a certain property for a *ma'nā*. The doctrine of *ma'nā* was criticized by Ibn al-Rawandī. Al-Khayyāṭ has explained the doctrine, as already mentioned above in naturalistic terms. One must keep in mind that according to the Muʿtazilites' principle of analogy "*qiyās al-ghā'ib 'alā al-Shāhid*," what applies to this world applies to the unseen world. *Al-Ma'āni* are not simply divine properties, they are also related to nature. Al-Khayyāṭ explained that when Muʿammar observed two objects, one stable and another moving he held that it must be moving for a certain thing that inheres in it and called that a *ma'nā*. This explained its movement while the other object is stable. Al-Khayyāṭ mentioned Ibn al-Rawandī's argument against this doctrine. Ibn al-Rawandī said that if the object moved because of a *ma'nā*, then there must be another *ma'nā* that explains why the first *ma'nā* inhered in that object rather than in the other. Otherwise there is no reason why a certain object is better qualified to move than the other. Then also one might inquire of the next *ma'nā*, why was it the cause (*'illa*) for the movement to inhere in a certain object rather than in another. The answer will be that it is for another *ma'nā*. And thus every necessitating cause needs another and it never ends (see Al-Khayyāt 1957: 46).

176 Those who followed the doctrines of Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī.

177 *Mughnī*, *al-Firaq* (1958: vol. 5, p. 40).

178 *Mughnī*, *al-Makhlūq* (n.d.: vol. 8, pp. 104–5).

179 *Mughnī*, *al-Luṭf* (1962: vol. 13, p. 348).

180 Ibn al-Rawandī, before the Baṣrans criticized the Muʿtazilites who held the doctrine of natural qualities (*al-ṭibā'*). However al-Khayyāṭ refuted his criticisms, explaining that acts by nature are only the things that cannot produce more than one genus of things. Such as fire that produces heat by nature, and ice that cools things by its nature. Whereas the one who can do different kinds of things chooses his actions, and his actions do not occur because of his nature, (*huwa al-mukhtār li-af'ālihi lā al-maṭbū' 'alayha*) (see al-Khayyāt 1957: 25).

181 *Mughnī, al-Taklīf* (1965: vol. 11, p. 43).

182 Ibid., p. 230.

183 Ibid. and *Mughnī, al-Tawlīd* (n.d.: vol. 9, p. 59).

184 *Mughnī*, al-*Luṭf* (1962: vol. 13, p. 229).

185 Ibid., p. 314.

186 Ibid., p. 227.

187 Ibid., p. 228.

188 Ibid.

189 Ibid.

190 Ibid., 298.

191 Ibid., p. 301.

192 Ibid., p. 309.

193 Hourani (1971: 63) indicates that ground is expressed by *wajh*, *ma'nā*, *or 'illa*, or what makes evil things evil and good things good (*mā lahu qabuḥa al-qabīḥ*), he also indicates that *'illa* is a term familiar in Islamic jurisprudence in a sense of "ground for a prohibition or a command of the *sharī'a*."

194 *Mughnī*, *al-Ta'dīl wa'l-Tajwīr* (n.d.: vol. 6, p. 58).

195 Ibid., p. 61.

196 Ibid., p. 24.

197 Ibid., pp. 63–4.
198 *Mughnī, al-Ffiraq Ghayr al-Islāmiyya* (1958: vol. 5, p. 174).
199 *Mughnī*, *al-Aṣlaḥ* (1965: vol. 14, p. 165).
200 Ibid., pp. 162–3.
201 Ibid., p. 162.
202 Ibid., p. 165.
203 Ibid., p. 164.
204 Ibid., p. 166.
205 *Mughnī, al-Makhlūq* (n.d.: vol. 8, pp. 227–8).
206 Ibid., p. 174.
207 Ibid., p. 230.
208 *Mughnī*, *al-Luṭf* (1962: vol. 13, p. 219).
209 Al-Rāzī (1991: 479–81). This was also the position of al-Īījī (n.d.: p. 323) and al-Shahrastānī (n.d.: 370).
210 Jackson (1999: 195).
211 See Chapter two (pp. 11–17) where the ontological problem and the epistemological were discussed in relation to the possible presuppositions of the Qur'ān.
212 Dā'ūd al-Ẓāhirī established a school of law "*madhab*" that did not survive. He denied *qiyās* (reasoning by analogy), because for him any valid judgment had to be based on scripture. He might be considered the most consistent scholar in holding an ethical voluntarism.
213 Jackson (1999: 187).
214 Al-Rāzī (1979: 478–9). Al-Tahānawī also states similar definitions for good and bad and explains that the Ashʿarites denied the third definition which is ascribed to the Muʿtazila (see al-Tahānawī 1996: vol. 1, pp. 666–7).
215 Al-Rāzī (1979: 483).
216 Nyazee (1996: 43).
217 Al-Īījī (n.d.: 323).
218 Ibid.
219 Ibid.
220 Ibid., p. 324
221 Ibid.
222 Ibn Taymiyya (*Minhāj al-Sunna*, vol. 1, pp. 34–5) cited in Ṣubḥī (1969: 85–6).
223 Al-Muqbilī (1985: 109–11).
224 See the introduction p. xv.
225 Nyazee (1996: 43).
226 Ibid., p. 44.
227 Ibid., p. 44.
228 Plato (1952: 195), see also Chapter one pp. 3–5.
229 See for example: Zayd (1954) who has surveyed the positions of the Qur'ān, *al-Sunna*, the companions of the prophet, and the four *fiqh* schools: Ḥanafite, Mālikite, Shāfiʿite, and Ḥanbalite. He states that the founders of each of these *fiqh* school agreed upon considering welfare (*al-maṣlaḥa*) the purpose of the *legislator* (*maqṣad al-shāri'*) (p. 60), which is also evident from the Qur'ān and the *sunna*, and the *fatwas* of the companions of the prophet (pp. 23–32).
230 See Hourani (1985: 59) and Brown (1999: 184).
231 Al-Ghazālī (1997: vol. 1, p. 258).
232 If ought judgments are from God and are only obliged because they are from Him, it does not follow necessarily that what is good and evil is not objective, but merely determined by God. That is because the purpose of God's revelation is human benefit. Hourani, in "Two Theories of Value in Classical Islam" (1985: 64), said: "The theory of value is not quite a logical implication of the theory of knowledge, for it is theoretically possible to hold that an objective right exists but that we can know its practical

application only through scripture. However, it is doubtful whether anyone held such a view." The Ash'arite agreement on defining *ḥusn* as a property of excellence and benefit implies considering it right, though what ought to be done is known, according to them, only through scripture. Therefore, it is not doubted whether anyone held such a view, as the late Ashʿarites seem to have held exactly such a perspective.

233 "*Taklīf ʾaqlī*" literally means "rational obligations," or rather, that which is required from every adult with sound mind. It is translated to "ethical obligations" because in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's thought, ethics is dealt with under *taklīf ʾaqlī*, which implies that ethical obligations established by reason are imposed by God on all human beings, before and after revelation.

CONCLUSION

1 Jackson (1999: 195).

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For indexing purposes the prefix Al has been ignored, for example Al-Shahrastani will be found under S.