

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF ISLAMIC STUDIES**

PH.D. THESIS

**THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ETHICS
IN 'AḌUḌ AL-DĪN AL-ĪJĪ'S WORKS:
A COMPARATIVE AND ANALYTICAL STUDY OF
AL-ĪJĪ'S AND MU'TAZILITES' ARGUMENTS**

MOHAMMAD MAKDOD

**THESIS SUPERVISOR
PROF. AHMET SÜRURİ**

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APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Islamic Studies.

Thesis Jury Members

Title – Name Surname

Opinion

Signatur

This is to confirm that this thesis complies with all the standards set by the School of Graduate Studies of Ibn Haldun University.

Date of Submission

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name Surname: Mohammad Makdod

Signature:



ÖZ

ADUDÜDDİN EL-İCÎ'NİN ESERLERİNDE AHLÂKIN TEOLOJİK TEMELLERİ:
EL-İCÎ VE MU'TEZİLE'NİN ARGÜMANLARINDA KARŞILAŞTIRMALI VE
ANALİTİK BİR ÇALIŞMA

Makdod, Mohammad

Temel İslam Bilimleri Doktora Programı

Öğrenci Numarası: 194001002

Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORC-ID): 0000-0002-4029-861X

Ulusal Tez Merkezi Referans Numarası: 10500934

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi: Ahmet Sürusi

Ekim 2022, 211 sayfa

Kelâm, ahlâkî sorgulamalarda göz ardı edilmiş veya yeterince çalışılmamıştır; bu nedenle bu çalışma, kelâmî argümanların İslâm Ahlâkına sağlam bir teorik zemin oluşturabileceğini kanıtlamak için İcî'nin ahlâk ile ilgili kelâm argümanlarını sunmayı ve tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. İcî'nin argümanları, İcî'nin görüşünü netleştirmek ve ortaya koymak için Mu'tezile'nin argümanları ile derinlemesine ve diyalektik bir şekilde sunulacaktır. Çalışma, ahlâkî değerlerin özü ve kaynağı, insanî ve ilahî etkinliği ile insanî ve ilahî eylemlerdeki ahlâkî değerlerin anlaşılması konularını tartışmak üzere üç bölüme ayrılacaktır. Sonuç olarak çalışma, İcî'nin kelâmî ahlâk anlayışını tanımlayacak ve daha sonraki ahlâkî çalışmalara temel teşkil edebilecek kapsamlı kelâmî tartışmalar sunacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hüsün ve Kubuh, İcî, Kelâm, Mu'tezile, Teolojik ahlak.

ABSTRACT

THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ETHICS IN ‘AḌUḌ AL-DĪN AL-ĪJĪ’S WORKS: A COMPARATIVE AND ANALYTICAL STUDY OF AL-ĪJĪ’S AND MU‘TAZILITES’ ARGUMENTS

Mohammad Makdod

Ph.D. in Islamic Studies

Student ID: 194001002

Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORC-ID): 0000-0002-4029-861X

National Thesis Center Reference Number: 10500934

Thesis Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Ahmet Süruri

October 2022, 211 Pages

Theology has been ignored or poorly studied in ethical inquiries; therefore, this study intends to present and discuss al-Ījī’s arguments on theological ethics to prove that theological arguments can form a solid theoretical ground for Islamic ethics. Al-Ījī’s arguments will be presented thoroughly and dialectically with the Mu‘tazilites’ arguments in order to sharpen and manifest al-Ījī’s position. The study is divided into three chapters to discuss the nature and the source of ethical value, human and divine agencies, as well as the comprehension of the ethical value in human and divine actions. As a result, the study will define al-Ījī’s position of theological ethics and provide thorough theological discussions that could be the foundations for further ethical inquiries.

Keywords: Husn and qubḥ, Ījī, Kalam, Mu‘tazilite, Theological ethics.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

The following transliteration style has been utilized throughout the dissertation:

Romanization	Arabic Character
‘	ء
Ā	ا
B	ب
T	ت
TH	ث
J	ج
H	ح
KH	خ
D	د
DH	ذ
R	ر
Z	ز
S	س
SH	ش
Ṣ	ص
Ḍ	ض
Ṭ	ط
Ẓ	ظ
‘	ع
GH	غ
F	ف
Q	ق
K	ك
L	ل
M	م
N	ن
H	ه
W, Ū	و

Y, Ī	ي
A	Short Opener
Ā	Long Opener
Ā	Maddah
Ā	Alif Maqsourah
U	Short Closer
Ū	Long Closer
i	Short Breaker
Ī	Long Breaker
Doubling the letter	شدة



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Theological debates between the Ash‘arites and the Mu‘tazilites played a significant role in improving Islamic theology and developing its arguments. In particular, one theological argument in Islamic history took the lion’s share in forming the distinct character of the Ash‘arite and the Mu‘tazilite schools. It is the argument of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* (good and bad)¹, which defines the nature of the ethical value, its source, and epistemic approach. Furthermore, the argument encapsulates more than thirteen theological arguments that deal with human and divine agencies. The Mu‘tazilites took the initiative by starting the ethical argument in theology and provoking their Ash‘arite counterparts to respond to them with multiple theological arguments, that eventually formed and shaped the Ash‘arites’ ethical stance in theology.

The Mu‘tazilites maintained that ethical values are real properties that either exist intrinsically in actions or appear as necessary aspects that form the real value judgements of certain actions. This form of ethical realism let the Mu‘tazilites argue that human reason without the aid of divine revelation can discover the ethical properties of certain actions and assert their goodness or badness. Thus, the Mu‘tazilites became known in Islamic intellectual history as rationalist ethicists or partisans of the rational *ḥusn* and *qubḥ*. The Ash‘arites, on the other hand, looked at the ethical question from a different angle and concluded—with the aid of their rational methodology—that God is the only necessary being and everything apart from Him is contingent, changeable, and rationally open to different possibilities. God has the necessary faculty of freewill which determines the existence of the contingent beings and all their attributes and values. Thus, the Ash‘arites maintained that ethical values are dependent on God’s free choice and that the only way to know about the divine choices is through revelation, not through mental speculation. The Ash‘arites with this

¹ The Arabic meaning of these terms will be fully explained in the first chapter.

revelation-based ethical understanding became known as the partisans of legal ḥusn and qubḥ or what is called theistic voluntarism.

The main goal of our study is to manifest the importance of theological arguments in the field of theoretical ethics. The study delves into the Ash‘arite arguments that are presented by ‘Aḍuḍ al-Dīn al-Ījī who presents the final and the mature state of the school of Ash‘arsim. Our interest is to present the Ash‘arite ethical stance in the way that it deserves by explaining their argument of ḥusn and qubḥ along with other theological arguments that are related to human and divine agencies. This endeavor will contribute to showing the strength of the Ash‘arite ethical stance, clearing misconceptions about their position, and affirming the importance of theological arguments in forming the foundations of Islamic ethics.

In Islamic theological ethics, ignoring the Mu‘tazilite arguments presents an incomplete image of the ethical argument in theology. . Therefore, the Mu‘tazilite ethical position will be discussed through al-Ījī’s arguments against them and verified from their own books. The position of the Mu‘tazilite school of Basra will be given slightly greater attention due to its expansion and relevance to al-Ījī’s arguments. Other Ash‘arites’ arguments will be discussed in order to compare and find out the source of al-Ījī’s arguments.

1.1. The Importance of al-Ījī

‘Aḍuḍ al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥman b. Aḥmad, known as al-Ījī, was born in Ījī, a town in Shirāz, after 680/1281 and died in a prison in 756/1355. Al-Ījī was a polymath Muslim scholar who left many significant works in different Islamic disciplines and was the teacher of many notable theologians, such as Al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/ 1413), Sa‘ad al-Dīn al-Taftazānī (d. 792/1390), Shams al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. 786/1384), and Sayf al-Dīn al-Abḥarī (d. 800/1397).²

² For a complete biography of al-Ījī see Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Tabakāt al-Shafi‘īa al-Kubrā*, 10/42; Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Qāḍī shubha, *Tabakāt al-Shafi‘īa*, 3/27; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Al-Durar al-Kāmina fi ‘Ayan al-Mi‘a al-Thāmina*, 3/110; Muḥammad bin Alī al-Shukānī, *al-Badr al-Ṭali‘ min Ba‘id al-Qarn al-Sabi‘*, 1/326; Khaīr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lam*, 3/295.

Al-Ījī presents the last significant link in the school of Ash‘arism, and his book *al-Mawāqif fi ‘Ilm al-Kalām* (The Stations in the Discipline of Kalām; hereinafter *al-Mawāqif*) (1999) presents the authentic versions of the Ash‘arite arguments. The book was initially the focus of many prominent students of al-Ījī, such as al-Jurjānī, al-Kirmānī, and Sayf al-Dīn al-Abḥārī who enriched the contents of the book with their sophisticated commentaries. Later on, *al-Mawāqif* with its commentaries became the main *kalām* textbook in the madrasas for many centuries until our modern times. Since the argument of ḥusn and qubḥ is discussed in two Islamic disciplines, *kalām* and *usul al-fiqh*, al-Ījī’s book *Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Muntaha* [An Explanation of the Summary of al-Muntaha] (2004) is another important source that will help us in our inquiry.

Al-Ījī’s importance dwells in presenting the final stage of theology in Ash‘arism. He tried to present all the different opinions in the school, and then choose and support the strongest one. Al-Ījī, unlike other later Ash‘arites, kept his arguments concise and away from philosophical intricacy; nevertheless, he sometimes presents polemic arguments to weaken the opponent’s position. Al-Ījī in general used to present the opponents’ arguments and then respond to them and in the argument of ḥusn and qubḥ, he tried to give a sufficient account of the Mu‘tazilites’ arguments and dedicated numerous arguments to refute their positions. Thus, al-Ījī’s works give us a strong ground to observe the ethical arguments from two main perspectives, the Ash‘arites’ and the Mu‘tazilites’.

The commentaries on al-Ījī’s book, *al-Mawāqif*, are indispensable for unpacking and cultivating al-Ījī’s and the opponents’ arguments. Al-Jurjānī’s commentary is considered the most sophisticated commentary on *al-Mawāqif*; nevertheless, our study will add to it two other important commentaries which are al-Kirmānī’s and Sayf al-Dīn al-Abḥārī’s commentaries. These two commentaries are still in manuscript form, and this is why many studies have ignored them and relied only on al-Jurjānī’s commentary. We see that these two commentaries, mainly al-Kirmānī’s commentaries, have considerable significance in understanding al-Ījī’s arguments of theological ethics.

1.2. Methodology

The study will be conducted through a qualitative research method in analyzing classical kalām books in print and manuscript. Theological arguments will be mainly presented dialectically in order to manifest their weak and strong points. The study will primarily focus on al-Ījī's arguments and counterarguments, examining and comparing them with the Mu'tazilites' arguments, and thus determine the main position of either of them. Furthermore, other Ash'arites' arguments will be scrutinized in order to affirm or deny the authenticity of al-Ījī's arguments.

The study is divided into three chapters. The first one is dedicated to understanding the main ethical argument in theology: The argument of ḥusn and qubḥ. Breaking down the argument into its ethical terminologies, and then defining and analyzing them will give us a solid ground before embarking on the theological arguments. Moreover, the discussion about the definitions will enable us to determine the focus of controversy between al-Ījī and the Mu'tazilites. Al-Ījī's main argument will be explained and traced back to its roots. Through analyzing and comparing al-Ījī's counterarguments with the Mu'tazilites' arguments, we will understand the nature of the ethical values, the tenability of objective and subjective arguments in ethics, and the theological ground that each group's contention is based on.

In the second chapter, we will connect the ethical values with their divine source by drawing a complete conception of God and then discussing the application of our ethical understandings to divine actions. For this endeavor, we will analyze and compare several important arguments in divine ethics, such as the possibility of lying, guiding and misguiding human beings. Furthermore, essential concepts, such as divine justice (*'adl*), divine wisdom (*hikma*), and kingship (*mulk*) will be clarified in the discussion of divine purposiveness.

The third chapter will be the last and the longest chapter in our inquiry. Its main focus will be human actions, the nature of the contingent power, and the freedom of choice. The chapter will not be restricted to human actions, but it will also extend to cover some arguments that intersect divine and human actions, such as the doctrine of *al-ṣalāḥ wa al-aṣlah*, or prophecy and its necessity, and reward and punishment. Thus,

ethical questions about human actions will be discussed within a broad scheme that shows divine intervention and the consequences of our actions.

1.3. Literature Review

An inquiry into theological arguments from an ethical perspective is not very common in the literature. Furthermore, dedicating the study to al-Ījī's theological works makes the inquiry even less common. That does mean that we are not going to scrutinize some works that are either related al-Ījī or to the subject that we are studying. We can start by mentioning some important works that focused on al-Ījī from different aspects and then mentioning the studies that tackled the theological arguments from an ethical perspective.

Al-Ījī's ethical treatise, *al-Akhlāq al-ʿAḍdiyya* (2016), gained significant attention from contemporary scholars, chiefly in Turkey. Mustakim Arıcı (2016) in his works dealt with different questions regarding the ethical treatise; some of his papers are “the Question of Disposition and Virtue in ‘Aḍḍ al-Dīn al-Ījī” and “Īcī’de ahlāk felsefesinin temel meseleleri” (2017). Another work that focused on al-Ījī's ethical treatise is Feryal Salem's paper, “Theory and Praxis of Muslims Philosophical Ethics in the Sixteenth Century”(2021). However, al-Ījī's ethical treatise belongs to the field of philosophical ethics and has no real relationship with theological arguments.

Al-Ījī, as a prolific writer, left many significant works in different disciplines, such as rhetoric (*balāga*), the science of coinage (*ʿilm al-waḍʿ*), the Science of Argumentations (*adāb al-baḥth wa al-munazāra*), and quranic exegesis (*tafsir*). Some of al-Ījī's works in these disciplines became the subject of many commentaries in the past and found some interest in modern academia as well. Mehmet Özturan in his paper, “Neyi, nasıl tartışabilirim? Īcī’de tartışma mantığı” (2017), evaluated al-Ījī's treatise on argumentation (*adāb al-baḥth wa al-munazāra*) and gave a sufficient account of the concept of contradiction and its application. Hasan Haliloğlu in his paper, “‘Aḍḍuddīn Īcī’nin tefsirdeki metodu ve tefsirinin kaynakları” (Haliloğlu 2018), tried to explain al-Ījī's method and sources in his *tafsir*. Other works expounded on al-Ījī's books of rhetoric and the science of coinage, but these will not be salutary to our purpose.

There are also some recent works that focused on al-Ījī's theological books, but they did not deal with the same questions that we are dealing with. For example, S. H. Nasr and M. Aminrazavi in their book, *Philosophical Theology in the Middle Ages and Beyond*,” (Nasr and Aminrazavi 2010), provided us with two chapters that deal with al-Ījī's book, *al-Mawāqif*, and its commentaries. The two chapters that they provided are mere translations of some parts of the book with brief introductions by al-Ījī and his commentator, al-Jurjānī. Another contemporary work that deals with al-Ījī as a theologian, can be found in the Turkish academy. Ömer Türker, in his paper, “Kelâm Geleneğinde ‘Aḍuḍüddin el-Īcî: Kelâmın Bilimsel Kimliği Sorunu,” (2017) expounds on a few issues that are related to the scientific identity of the discipline of kalām, such as defining the subject matter of kalām, whether it is God and his attributes, the existent (*al-Mawjud*) or the non-existent (*al-Ma'dūm*). Türker, in his paper, states that al-Ījī attempted to change the identity of kalām by taking out what is related to physics and turning the discipline of kalām into a purely metaphysical discipline. Moreover, Türker gives a sufficient account of some concepts that belong to theological identity, and he probes into the theory of the soul (*Nefis teorisi*) where he points out the peripatetic traces and their application inside the theory. Among the French academia, Daniel Gimaret (1980), in his book, *Théories de l'Act Humain en Théologie Musulmane* dedicated a small part to explore al-Ījī's argument about human actions. He affirms that al-Ījī has a radical position on human actions and he negates the freedom of choice and the efficacy of human power. Al-Ījī's position of human actions is significant to our enquiry; therefore, Gimaret's claim will be tested and proved or disproved in the last chapter of our study.

As I stated at the outset of the literature review, modern and contemporary studies about Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī are, in general, scarce and they may be considered even more scarce when they deal with his theological writings. Nevertheless, we tried to review some works that focused on al-Ījī, whether as a theologian, logician or philosophical ethicist. Now we need to explore the works that focus on the theological arguments from an ethical perspective.

The most similar work that we could find is the work of Zübeyir Bulut. In his paper, “Hüsün ve kubuh meselesinin ahlâk teorilerine temel oluşturması bakımından analizi” (2015), Bulut argues that the argument of ḥusn and qubḥ could be the foundation of an

ethical theory. He explored the argument the writings of three groups of theologians: The Ash‘arites, the Maturidites, and the Mu‘tazilites, and provided a general understanding of each of these groups. Bulut came to the conclusion that the argument of ḥusn and qubḥ cannot, on its own, be a complete foundation for an ethical theory, but it could be the basis for some ethical questions, such as ethical responsibility and obligation. Ayman Shihadeh in his paper, “Psychology and Ethical Epistemology: An Ash‘arī Debate with Mu‘tazilī Ethical Realism, 11th-12th C” (2021), focused on the epistemology of value judgements between the Ash‘arites and the Mu‘tazilites and challenged the common division of rationalist (the Mu‘tazilites) and anti-rationalists (the Ash‘arites). Shihadeh brilliantly showed that the Ash‘arites are only ethical rationalists, but they also were the more innovative side in the debate. Nevertheless, Shihadeh’s paper did not present the Ash‘arite ethical argument in a complete form and was devoted to al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī without mentioning ‘Aḍuḍ al-Dīn al-Ījī.

There are some ethical studies that dedicated some sections to elaborating on ethics from a theological perspective. Majid Fakhri, in his book, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (1991), discussed a few theological arguments that are related to ethics under the chapter of “Theological Ethics.” Fakhri explored two different approaches to ethics in kalām; he called the first one “ethical rationalism” under which he studied the Mu‘tazilites’ ethical understanding. He argues that the Mu‘tazilites’ ethical theory is similar to deontological ethics where the human mind can discover right and wrong without the need for religious law. Fakhri concluded that the Mu‘tazilites’ ethical theory is based on human free will, divine justice, and divine wisdom. Fakhri considers the Mu‘tazilites to be the first genuine moralists in Islam who provided answers to the main ethical questions and laid down the ground for theological ethics. For explaining the Mu‘tazilites’ ideas, Fakhri depends mainly on Qāḍī Abdul Jabbar’s book, *al-Mughnī*; though, he quoted many of their opinions from al-Shahrastānī’s books.

The second approach to ethics that Fakhri provided is called “ethical voluntarism” under which he studied the determinists (*jabrīyya*) and the Ash‘arites. Fakhri claimed that Ash‘arism is a continuation of the early determinists, and their ethical theory is based on divine commands. He briefly explored the opinions of al-Shahrastānī, al-Baqillānī and al-Juwaynī and tried to present the Ash‘arites’ theory of human actions, divine wisdom, and divine justice. Fakhri said that the Ash‘arites are unanimous in

terms of affirming that all God's actions are just, whether the actions constituted punishment or reward, imposing obligation (*taklīf*) on His servants or leaving them without obligations. It is clear that Fakhrī was not in favor of the Ash'arites' theological ethics; he considered them a continuation of the early determinists and did not present their theological arguments sufficiently. Furthermore, He was quite judgmental in discussing the Ash'arites' position; he used the words, "dramatic," "rigid," and other similar words.

George F. Hourani in his books, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* (1985) and *Islamic Rationalism* (1971), dealt with some theological arguments related to ethics. He did not mention 'Aḍḍ al-Dīn al-Ījī's in his works, but he elaborated on similar topics as al-Ījī. In his book, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* (1985), he focused on the ontological nature of ethical value, its existence and epistemic use. He discussed the objectivity and the subjectivity of the ethical value and the role of the human intellect in determining that value. Hourani narrows down the theological ethical arguments into two main arguments: Ethical rationalism and theistic subjectivism. The former is related to the Mu'tazilites, though it can be traced back to earlier sources, such as Greek philosophy and Christian theology. The latter is adopted mainly by jurists and theologians, i.e. the Ash'arites. According to Hourani, the theologians' discussions of the source of right probably arose out of the jurists' discussions.

Hourani uses the term *traditionlists* to mean Muslim scholars from all disciplines who consider revelation and prophetic tradition as the sole source of ethical knowledge and *rationalists* for those who depend mainly on reason to know what is right and obligatory. The Mu'tazilites's ethical rationalism was the main focus of Hourani. Like other orientalist, he tried to determine the Islamic and non-Islamic sources of some theological arguments. He claimed that Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Christianity and Greek Philosophy could be the potential sources of the Mu'tazilites' ethics. Hourani only provided potential hypotheses, and in the end, he himself admitted that none of these sources can be pinned down to definite evidence. His second important focus in ethical rationalism is al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār and his ethical theory. According to Hourani, Abd al-Jabbār's ethical principles are similar to those of the British intuitionism. Prima facie, he resembled Abd al-Jabbār's theory of ethical aspects to W. D. Ross's. Hourani dedicated another chapter to comparing the concept of deliberation

in Aristotle and ‘Abd al-Jabbār. He concluded that the concept has a different focus in both Aristotle and Abd al-Jabbār. According to the former, the concept of deliberation is tied to teleological systems of ends and actions, while the latter focuses on what is obligatory and what is evil, i.e., Abd al-Jabbār’s concept of deliberation is related to the realm of moral concepts.

It is clear that the Ash‘arites’ theological ethics was not al-Ījī’s favorite ethical approach. Nevertheless, he says that the Ash‘arites, with their conservative ethical theory, can provide an answer to the problem of theodicy and, with their theory of knowledge and causation, support their conception of divine omnipotence. Hourani provided us with an Ash‘arite argument against the Mu‘tazilites. It is a short argument of al-Juwaynī whereby he tries to refute the Mu‘tazilites’ concept of the obligations of God towards humans. In the chapter, “Ghazālī on the Ethics of Action,” Hourani briefly discussed some important Ash‘arite topics, such as the meaning of ḥusn and qubḥ, wrongdoing, justice, and obligations beyond capacity. Hourani’s second book, *Islamic Rationalism* (1971) is not quite related to our ethical enquiry. He examined the ethics theory of al-Qāḍī Abd al-Jabbār, the Mu‘tazilite. Hourani elaborated on different aspects of al-Qāḍī’s works and very often tried to resemble al-Qāḍī’s theory to modern British intuitionism.

The most recent work that followed the same path as Hourani and Fakhrī, is John E. Hare’s, *God’s Command* (2015). Hare dedicated one chapter under the title of *Divine Command in Some Medieval Islamic Thinkers*, wherein he discussed three important concepts that are related to our topic. The value of good and bad (ḥusn and qubḥ), free will, and revelation versus reason. These three concepts were scrutinized according to three theologian schools presented by Abd al-Jabbār, Imām al-Ash‘arī, and Imām al-Māturīdī. Hare depends as well on other secondary sources, such as Houranī’s previous books. Since Hare’s main focus was not specifically Islamic theology, we can say that his arguments are sketchy and more general than the ones that we find in Hourani’s books. Nevertheless, he included al-Māturīdī’s position of ḥusn and qubḥ and said that al-Māturīdī’s concept of ḥusn and qubḥ is quite similar to the position of al-Qāḍī Abd al-Jabbār. Hare argues that, according to al-Māturīdī, reason has a subordinate role to the religious law in regard to discovering and determining the ethical value. The rest

of Hare's arguments are similar to Fakhri's and Hourani's arguments, but less sophisticated.

There are a few other works that entertained the ethical arguments in theology that we are not going to mention here because our study is concentrated on analyzing the theological arguments from their original sources in print form and in manuscripts.



CHAPTER II

ḤUSN AND QUBḤ: THE MAIN ETHICAL ARGUMENT IN THEOLOGY

As we stated in the introduction, the argument of ḥusn and qubḥ is the backbone of ethical arguments in theology. In order to have a thorough understanding of the argument, we will start defining the linguistic and theological ethical terms, associating them with their English counterparts, and then discussing some objections in modern literature. After explaining the legal and rational meaning of ḥusn and qubḥ, we be able determine the focus of controversy in the argument.

Al-Ījī's argument of ḥusn and qubḥ is consisted of his main argument and a series of counterarguments against different groups of Mu'tazilites. We will elaborate on his argument and evaluate its weak and strong points. His arguments with the Mu'tazilites will be divided broadly into two groups: The partisans of the intrinsic ethical value and the partisans of the ethical aspects. We will not only mention the Mu'tazilites' arguments from al-Ījī's books, but we will also present their arguments from their own books. Since the second group of Mu'tazilites represents the main opponent in the Ash'arite late kalām literature, their arguments will be given more attention.

The final part of this chapter will be dedicated to studying the human intellect, its nature, function and role in determining the ethical value. Thus, the chapter at the end will give us a clear image of the two ethical theories: the rational and the legal ones, their epistemic approaches, and the point of dispute between them.

2.1. Definitions

Before delving into the theological argument of *tahseen wa al-taqbeeh*, it is necessary to break down the argument into simple words to be easily understood by English language readers. *Tahseen* means determining something to be good while *taqbeeh*

means determining something something is bad or repellent (*munaḡir*). From this simple translation, we can see that the argument is related to determining or considering something to be good or bad. In other words, it is the argument about giving the value of good and bad to human and divine actions, on one side, and determining the nature of good (ḡusn) and bad (qubḡ), on the other side.

For the sake of accuracy, we will adhere to the Arabic terms of ḡusn and qubḡ, *or* ḡasan and qabiḡ instead of goodness and badness, or good and bad, and we will use words ḡusn and qubḡ instead of *taḡseen wa al-taqbeeh*.

First of all, we need to see how the Arabic dictionaries define and elaborate on these words. For the same purpose that we stated above, we will suffice with the definition of ḡusn, since dictionaries are unanimous that wherever the word ḡusn is used, the word qubḡ can be the best antonym for it. However, to summarize what is mentioned in the dictionaries we can say that in the Arabic language, the word *ḡasan* which is an attributive of ḡusn is used to describe a few meanings. The first one of them is used to describe physical beauty, namely, it is used in this context as a synonym of beautiful (*jameel*); more specifically, the adjective is used to describe the beauty of the eyes. The second usage of *ḡasan* is to describe things that are done perfectly since the verb (*aḡsana*) means ‘he mastered doing something’, i.e., *ḡasan*, in this case, is equivalent to perfect (*mutqan*). The third meaning is to describe the act which is the opposite of the sin (*say’a*), namely, the good or the charitable deed. The fourth and final meaning that the dictionaries mention is the desired or the wanted. Al-Asfahānī elaborates on this usage by saying, “al-ḡasan is the desired [thing], which could be desired by virtue of the mind, the virtue of hawa or the virtue of senses.”³ We can see that the adjective ḡasan is used in four different contexts to talk about physical beauty, mastered or perfectly done actions or things, charitable deeds, and desired things.

Since part of our inquiry is to show how the theological argument of ḡusn and qubḡ and its implications can form—or contain in their folds—the theological foundations of ethics, we can say that the previously mentioned meanings of ḡusn and qubḡ are

³ See the dictionaries, Murtaḡā al-Zubīdī, *Tāj al- ‘Arūs*, (Kuwait: Dar al-Hidāiyā, 2009). 34/418. Ahmad bin Fāris, *Makayīs al-Luḡa*, (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1979), 2/57. The quote is taken from the dictionary of *Tāj al- ‘Arūs*.

somehow equivalent to what David Ross calls “the fundamental three conceptions in ethics” which are “right, good in general, and morally good.”⁴ Ross, in his book, *The Right and the Good* (1930), expounds on the nature, the relations, and the implications of these threebook concepts. He also admits the difficulty of defining these ambiguous concepts. Nevertheless, he elaborates on the attributive use of the word “right” and the word “good” and their predicative uses as well.⁵ The concept of “right” is, according to Ross, mainly applied to acts, i.e., we can still consider it as the equivalent of the word “ḥasan” when it is used in the context of a good or a charitable deed; while the word “good” as Ross states, has three meanings: one of them is the meaning that contributes to the satisfaction of any of our desires, it is both used for desired things in general and for something that arouses aesthetic pleasure in us.⁶ For these two meanings, i.e., the ones in the context of physical beauty and desired things, the word ḥasan can be the right synonym. Regarding the second meaning, Ross says that the word “good” is used to describe a skill or the mastery of something. For example, the “good” in the ‘good liar’ means being successful in what he does, i.e., it is the same as the Arabic word “hasan” in its second meaning, which is mastering something or doing it perfectly. The third meaning of “good” that Ross emphasizes can be conducive to the theological use of the word “hasan.” Ross says that what we mean by word “good” in the first place is “ministering to some particular human interest.”⁷ It means, the “good” is what serves human interest.

With this linguistic introduction to the attributive use of the word “ḥusn” and how it can be the equivalent to the English words “right” and “good,” we are now ready to delve into the theological meaning of ḥusn and qubḥ.

In theological terminology (*istilah al-mutakallmin*), ḥusn and qubḥ have quite different meanings. Our theologian in question, Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī, defines these concepts succinctly by saying, *al-qabiḥ* is what is prohibited in the religious law (*sharʿ*) while ḥasan is its opposite.⁸ It is very important to know that the scope of ḥusn and qubḥ in

⁴ W.D. Ross, *The Right and the Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), 1-3.

⁵ Ibid, p.65.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Adud al-Dīn Al-Ījī, *AlMawāqif fi ilmi al-Kalām*, (Beirut: ‘Alām al-Kitab, 1999), 323.

the theological arguments is restricted to actions, human actions in this respect.⁹ In other words, the argument of *tahseen* and *taqbeeh* is merely determining or describing the actions with one of these two values, *ḥusn* or *qubḥ*. Therefore, when al-Ījī or any other theologian defines *ḥusn* and *qubḥ*, he is defining the *ḥasan*¹⁰ act, not the abstract concept. Human actions, according to al-Ījī, can be described with *ḥusn* when God, the legislator (*al-shariʿ*) deems them to be so, and when He deems them the opposite, they become *qabiḥ*. The *ḥasan act* in this regard can include three categories, the obligatory (*al-wajib*), the recommended (*al-mandūb*), and the permissible (*al-mubah*), as al-Jurjānī commented on al-Ījī's words.¹¹ *Al-qabiḥ*, in contrast to *al-ḥasan*, includes two categories of human actions, the prohibited (*al-muḥarām*), and the disliked (*al-makrūh*).¹² As I noted before, the definition of *ḥusn* in this context is related only to human actions, more specifically, to actions of those who are legally incumbent (*al-mukallaḥin*). According to all Ashʿarites, divine actions can be only described by one of these two values, namely *ḥusn*, while the actions of non-rational creatures, such as animals, cannot be labelled with either of these values.¹³

Al-Ījī continues this definition in another book by saying, “The act has no intrinsic or real property whereby it becomes *ḥasan* or *qabiḥ*.”¹⁴ This is the second aspect of the definition of the value of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ*; it is only determined by the divine fiat, or what Hourani might call theistic subjectivism,¹⁵ or what is known in ethics in general as ethical voluntarism, which is a form of subjectivism.¹⁶ Al-Ījī affirms this position by saying that it would have been completely possible for God to have reversed the ethical issues, i.e., if He had made what we call “good” bad or made what we call “bad” good. In this case, the *ḥasan* would become *qabiḥ* and the *qabiḥ* would become *ḥasan*.¹⁷

⁹ The argument in a broad sense is related to both human and divine actions, but the actions in question in this part are human actions. Discussion on divine actions is related to the second chapter in our inquiry where we deal with the extension of the *tahseen* and *taqbeeh* argument to divine actions.

¹⁰ As I stated in the beginning, I will adhere to the use of Arabic terms of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* or other derivative forms related to them.

¹¹ Al-Jurjānī, Alī bin Muḥamad, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Beirut: Darul Kutub, 1998), 8/201.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid. 8/202.

¹⁴ Ḥassan bin Shihab al-Kaylanī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqaid al-Aḍuddiya*, (Beirut: Dar al-Maʿarif, 2011), 18.

¹⁵ More elaboration on this term will come when we explain the argument as a whole. For Hourani's usage of this term, see George F. Hourani, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics*, (London: Cambridge University press 1985), 17.

¹⁶ Hourani, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics*, 112.

¹⁷ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 232.

In short, al-Ījī's theological definition consists of two essential elements, ḥusn and qubḥ, which are determined by God, and they are not intrinsic to human actions. After presenting al-Ījī's brief definition of ḥusn and qubḥ, we need to expand the inquiry to find out whether this definition is unanimous by the Ash'arite scholars, or if it was particularly coined by al-Ījī himself.

2.1.1. The Definition According to Other Ash'arites

In exploring the positions of al-Ījī's Ash'arite ancestors, we will restrict ourselves to the most prominent ones¹⁸ starting from the latest to the earliest. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī dedicated a considerable part of his book to defining the Ash'arites' argument of ḥusn and qubḥ and refuting the Mu'tazilites' position. In his book, *al-Isharā*, al-Rāzī elaborates on the general use of ḥusn and qubḥ, and when he comes to the theological meanings of the terms, he negates any other explanation except the divine fiat. He says, "Husn and qubḥ cannot be defined [described] by the previously mentioned explanations, it is [the definition] solely the attachment (ta'luk) of the legislator's (al-shari') speech, and thus when the act is allowed¹⁹ it can be called ḥasan, and when it is prohibited it can be called qabih."²⁰ Al-Rāzī's in his other books repeats the same meaning of this definition and argues that ḥusn and qubḥ are only affirmed by the religious law (*shari'*).²¹ We see that al-Ījī's theological definition of ḥusn and qubḥ has the same meaning as al-Rāzī's, though al-Ījī's more concise.

The second Ash'arite whose definition we are going to explore is Imām al-Juwaynī. His argument of ḥusn and qubḥ is considered a watershed by some modern scholars because of the significant elaborations that he added to the argument.²² However, al-Juwaynī, after arguing that *al-ḥusn* and *al-qubḥ* cannot be related to the genus or to an intrinsic attribute, (*sifatu nafs*) of the act, says, "Indeed, the source of taḥseen and

¹⁸ Such as al-Ash'arī, al-Bāqillānī, al-Juwaynī, al-Ghazālī, and al-Rāzī. It is not necessary to mention the opinions of all of them, but sometimes, it might be enough to mention three or four positions of each of them.

¹⁹ Allowed or permissible in this context includes the three categories of actions: obligatory, recommended and permissible.

²⁰ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Al-Isharā fi ilm al-Kalām*, (Cairo: al-Turath Library publications, 2007), 227.

²¹ See Al-Rāzī, *al-Arba'im fi Uṣūl al-Dīn*, (Beirut: Darul Khaīl, 2004) 346; Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib al-'Aliya*, (Beirut: Darul Kutub al-Arabia, 1987) 3/21,253.

²² See Hānī Muhammad's commentary on *al-Rāzī's Isharā fi Ilm al-Kalām*, where he states that al-Juwaynī is a turning point in expanding the argument of *ḥusn and qubḥ*; see Al-Rāzī, *Al-Isharā fi ilm al-Kalām*, 225.

taqbeeh is what the religious law (*sharʿ*) came with and what is affirmed by revelation (*samʿ*).²³ Al-Juwaynī's definition of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* affirms the same meaning that al-Ījī asserted before; nevertheless, his next important clarification on these concepts gives us a lucid understanding of the definition. He says,

The thing that must be known before embarking on this argument is to know that our colleagues (*ashāb*) were imprecise (*tajawazu*) with their words when they said that *al-ḥusn* and *al-qubḥ* cannot be recognized except by religious law (*sharʿ*). Since [this statement] could be misunderstood (*yuhim*) as if *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* have separate existence from the religious law since they [*ḥusn* and *qubḥ*] are recognized by *sharʿ*. And this is not true, but it [*ḥusn*] is the same as what the religious law praised its doer, and the same argument is applied for *qabiḥ*.²⁴

Al-Juwaynī, in this passage, states explicitly that *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* cannot have a separate existence from the religious law, i.e., *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* and the religious law are identical in reality, though, they can be conceived separately. Al-Juwaynī elaborates more by saying that the obligatory action does not have an attribute that distinguishes it from the non-obligatory one. What is meant by the obligatory is what is mentioned in the religious law (*sharʿ*) in an affirmative way. In other words, it is the thing that the religious law demands as incumbent upon the religiously inclined to perform.²⁵

In the light of this explanation, we can clearly understand from al-Ījī's statement that "The act has no intrinsic or real property whereby it becomes *ḥasan* or *qabiḥ*." Thus, the act in itself cannot be called *ḥasan* or *qubḥ*, but it is religious law that gives us the value of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ*, and thus, we say something is *ḥasan* when it is an obligatory, recommended, or permissible act, and similarly we say something is *qabiḥ* when it is prohibited or disliked by the religious law.

Finally, in order to be certain that al-Ījī's theological definition of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* present the school of Ashʿarism and not his own words, we need to go back to al-Ashʿarī's books to see how he elaborated on these concepts. Al-Ashʿarī did not expound much on the argument of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ*. What we can see in his books is that in some places he gives short responses mentioned in a form of a dialogue with an opponent, and in other places, he affirms the consensus (*ijmaʿ*) upon some issues that

²³ Abū al-Maʿalī Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Irshād ilā Qawaṭiʿ al-Adillah fi Usūl al-ʿItiqād*, (Cairo: al-Khaniji Publication, 1950), 258.

²⁴ Ibid, 259.

²⁵ Ibid.

are related to the argument of ḥusn and qubḥ. In his book, *Risālā ilā ahal al-thugr*, he says, “They all agreed (ahlu al-sunnah) that the qabiḥ, among his servants’ actions, is what He prohibited or discouraged (zajara) them from doing, and the ḥasan is what He commanded, encouraged or made it permissible for them.”²⁶ These words mean exactly what al-Ījī stated when he said “the qabiḥ is what is prohibited in the religious law and the ḥasan is its opposite”. The second striking similarity between al-Ījī and his master is found in the following response of al-Ash‘arī to one of the opponents. He says, “If someone said, [you claim] that lying is qabiḥ because He [God] made it qabiḥ, we [al-Ash‘arī] would respond to him as follows: this is true, and had He made it ḥasan it would have been so.”²⁷ This is the exact point that al-Ījī emphasized in his definition: Actions in themselves have no intrinsic value, God can change what is ḥasan into qabiḥ and vice versa.

To sum up al-Ījī’s theological definition of ḥusn and qubḥ, we can say that he repeated the same meaning that Imām Ash‘arī and other Ash‘arites stated before him, that there is no existence of the ethical value in itself, namely, there is no theological definition of ḥusn and qubḥ before the advent of the religious law (*shar‘*).

2.1.2. The Outcome of the Definition

Ḥusn and qubḥ, according to al-Ījī and his Ash‘arite ancestors, have no existence before the advent of the religious law (*shar‘*). Therefore, without revelation, humans are incapable of knowing what is ḥasan and what is qabiḥ. In other words, the man, who is a rational animal, cannot determine what is ḥasan or qabiḥ by virtue of his reason.²⁸

The understanding that pure reason without revelation cannot determine the value of ḥusn and qubḥ is very often repeated in the Western academy and even in some Arabic-language studies. Majid Fakhri oftentimes brings this understanding by saying, “Ash‘arites claimed that goodness and badness are determined by, respectively, the

²⁶ Abū al-Hassan al-Ash‘arī, *Risala ila’ Al-hal al-Thugur*, 2.ed. (KSA: Library of science and wisdom, 2002), 243.

²⁷ Abū al-Hassan al-Ash‘arī, *Al-Luma’*, 2.ed. (Beirut: Darul Kutub al-Ilmiya, 2012), 74.

²⁸ The Ash‘arites are not denying the intellect’s role completely in this regard, but they are denying its role in the disputed area, which will be clarified in the following parts.

divine command (amr) and prohibition.”²⁹ Moreover, he vigorously criticizes the Ash‘arites ethical understanding and calls their theory, rigid voluntarism.³⁰ We find the same approach in Houranī’s *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics*, while he shows his high admiration of what he calls “rationalist theologians” (the Mu‘tazilites). He affirms that the Ash‘arites are solely dependent on revelation in order to know the ḥusn and qubḥ of things.³¹ Eric Ormsby shares the same understanding as well. After blaming the Ash‘arites for the stagnation and petrification of the dogma, the ethical dogma, he follows the same absolutism by affirming that the Ash‘arites are dependent completely on the divine fiat to know the ḥusn and qubḥ.³²

The intellect³³ in the school of Ash‘arism, as many theologians affirmed, has no rule in determining the ḥusn and qubḥ in human actions, so let us see how they define the intellect and present its ethical functionality. Al-Ījī, before defining the intellect, asserted that the intellect is unanimously accepted to be the prerequisite condition for religious obligation (*taklif*), and then he mentioned two famous definitions. The first is al-Ash‘arī’s definition which says that the intellect is a type of knowledge which is the necessary knowledge.³⁴ It means that the intellect is merely the primary information that is found in our mind. Nevertheless, al-Ash‘arī’s definition does not seem to be accepted by al-Ījī who raised a few objections in order to show the shortcomings of the definition. Al-Ījī’s objections could be summarized as: if the intellect is the necessary knowledge, it will be identical with knowledge or part of it, and in both cases it will not have its own reality.³⁵ The second definition that al-Ījī mentioned is al-Rāzī’s definition, which is, “Apparently, it [the intellect] is an innate property (*garīza*) that is followed by the knowledge of necessary [things] when the instruments of perceptions are sound.”³⁶ This innate or instinct property does not have any type of knowledge by itself, but later on, it becomes equipped by necessary knowledge, and when the instruments of perceptions are developed enough, it will be

²⁹ Majid Fakhri, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 33.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

³¹ George F. Hourani, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* (London: Cambridge University press 1985), 17.

³² Eric Linn Ormsby, *Theodicy is Islamic Thought*, (New Jersey: Princeton Uni. Press, 1984), 17, 24.

³³ I use the words, ‘Reason,’ ‘Intellect,’ and ‘Rational faculty’ interchangeably to mean the same thing, *akīl*. More elaboration on the slight differences between these terms will come in the final part of this chapter.

³⁴ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 146.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

equipped by other types of knowledge.³⁷ Al-Ījī seems to be accepting al-Rāzī's definition to be the most accurate definition, and we can say, as well, that defining 'aql as an instinct is the most celebrated definition among the Ash'arites. To briefly chase down the root of this definition, we see that it goes back to al-Harith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 857/243) who is one of the *sifatiyā* theologians who defended the Islamic orthodox creed before the school of Ash'arism.³⁸

Regarding the ethical functionality of the intellect, al-Ījī says, "Reason has no ruling (ḥukum) in determining the ḥusn of things or their qubḥ."³⁹ He justifies his opinion by saying that deciding whether the act is ḥasan or qabiḥ is not related to a real property of the action and the revelation only unveils it, but the revelation (*shar'*), in the first place, is the one that gives the value of ḥusn and qubḥ.⁴⁰ Al-Jurjānī briefly commented on al-Ījī's words by saying there is no ḥusn or qubḥ before the advent of the religious law (*shar'*).⁴¹ However, this affirmation that al-Ījī stated, and many other Ash'arites did before, lured numerous scholars in modernity and old-time and encouraged them to assert that Ash'arite scholars are completely dependent on revelation to determine the ethical values of actions. However, before plunging into the focus of the controversy and asking whether Ash'arites give some credit to human reason in determining the ethical value (ḥusn and qubḥ) or not, let us make sure the al-Ījī is leaning to solid ancestors in negating the ethical functionality of reason in the argument of ḥusn and qubḥ.

If we go to Imām al-Ash'arī's books,⁴² we do not find an exact negation of the role of reason in determining ḥusn and qubḥ; however, as we stated before, he confirms that ḥusn and qubḥ are concomitant to the religious law. That can only be interpreted as no ḥusn and qubḥ before the revelation; therefore, the human intellect cannot detect ethical value by itself. The second theologian in the school of Ash'arism, namely Abū

³⁷ This position might be similar to John Locke's tabula rasa. See Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia. "tabula rasa." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, May 21, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/tabula-rasa>.

³⁸ The Main Sīfatiyah theologians are Abdallah b. Kullab (d. 240), Abū Al-'Abāth al-Kālansi (d.?), and al-Harith al-Muḥāsibī (d.243). Al-Shahrastānī described them as follows, "al-Sīfāṭiāh are Muslim scholars who present the Orthodox creed." See al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, 1/80.

³⁹ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 323.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/202.

⁴² I explored the three available books of al-Ash'arī, *al-Ibana*, (2003) *al-Luma'* (2012), and *Risala ilā al-Hil al-Thugur* (2002).

Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/ 1013), explicitly based the knowledge of ḥusn and qubḥ on the revelation alone by saying, “The intellect cannot deem anything ḥasan because of an attribute or an aspect (wajh) [that is related to the act] and [similarly] cannot deem anything qabiḥ.”⁴³ Therefore, the intellect by itself, according to al-Bāqillānī, cannot determine the ethical value of things. He says that describing the act of ḥusn and qubḥ means that we mention what God made ḥasan or qabiḥ.⁴⁴ Al-Juwaynī made a similar argument, but he put more emphasis on the ethical dysfunctionality of reason (*akīl*) without aid of religious law (*sharʿ*). He says that reason does not point to the ḥusn or qubḥ of anything.⁴⁵ Does al-Juwaynī mean that reason cannot indicate ḥusn and qubḥ absolutely or only in certain contexts? The question is similarly applied to al-Ījī in his negation of the role of reason in the argument of *tahṣeen* and *taqbeeh*. The answers to these questions will be sought in the following part because stopping at this point would make the whole argument counter-intuitive and against reality. Therefore, we need to present the other half of the argument to know whether there is a different type of ḥusn and qubḥ that could be conceived by human intellect without the aid of religious law.

2.1.3. Rational and Legal Meanings of Ḥusn and Qubḥ

After discussing the theological definition of ḥusn and qubḥ and how al-Ījī affirmed what was already affirmed by his Ashʿarite ancestors—namely that there is no existence of ḥusn and qubḥ before the advent of the religious law (*sharʿ*), and therefore, the intellect has no role in distinguishing ḥusn and qubḥ in human actions—we need to know whether al-Ījī is excluding the role of reason in determining the legal (*sharī*) ḥusn and qubḥ in particular, or is denying its role in general.⁴⁶ Al-Ījī, after bringing up the Muʿtazilites’ opinion that the reason’s judgement is a trustworthy judgement in the area of ḥusn and qubḥ, says that it is significantly important to specify the area of dispute between us and the Muʿtazilites. For this purpose, i.e., specifying

⁴³ Al-Bāqillānī, *Takrib wal Irshād*, 1/279.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Irshād ilā Qawaṭiʿ al-Adillah fi Usūl al-ʿItiqād*, 258.

⁴⁶ Clarifying the focus of controversy in this argument is very important because many Western scholars found it enough to say that the Ashʿarites do not prove *ḥusn and qubḥ* before the advent of the religious law, without explaining which type of *ḥusn and qubḥ* is in question. Moreover, some Arabic studies affirmed that the ḥusn and qubḥ that the Ashʿarites talking about is the absolute one, not the legal. More elaboration on these studies will come during our discussion.

the exact point of dispute, al-Ījī gives us three meanings of ḥusn and qubḥ. The first meaning is when ḥusn means an attribute of perfection (*ṣifatu kamāl*) and qubḥ means an attribute of imperfection (*ṣifatu naqs*). In this meaning, we say that knowledge is ḥasan and ignorance is qabīḥ. Human reason in this respect plays a role in determining the ethical value, and there is no dispute between al-Ījī and the Mu‘tazilites regarding the functionality of the reason. The second meaning of ḥusn and qubḥ is the suitability (*mulā’amah*) and the unsuitability (*munafarah*) of the interest. This meaning, as al-Ījī states, could be expressed as well in the terms of benefit and harm, such as killing Zaid is a benefit for his enemies and a harm to his friends. He says that this meaning is rational, namely, it could be known by pure reason, although it might be different based on different interests. The third meaning of ḥusn and qubḥ is when we say that an action is ḥasan in the sense that it deserves praise and reward, and the action is *qabīḥ* when it deserves blame and punishment. Al-Ījī says, “This is the point of dispute [between us and the Mu‘tazilites], according to us [the Ash‘arites], it [ḥusn and qubḥ] is legal (*shar‘ī*), and for the Mu‘tazilites, it is rational (*aklī*).”⁴⁷

Let us first explain these three regards of ḥusn and qubḥ and see whether al-Ījī is consistent with this division or not. There are two meanings of ḥusn and qubḥ which are recognized by pure reason. The first one is perfection (*kamāl*) and imperfection (*naqs*), which all rational beings know by virtue of their intellect, such as justice, generosity, bravery, which all belong to the category of ḥusn. Similarly, the concepts of injustice, stinginess, and cowardice, which belong to the category of qabīḥ.⁴⁸ The second rational meaning of ḥusn and qubḥ is what is suitable or unsuitable to our interest (*garad*). The thing that is suitable or unsuitable to our interest is more general than the material benefit or harm, i.e., it would include anything that is loved or hated by our nature (*tab‘*). Al-Ījī expressed this meaning of ḥusn and qubḥ in terms of interest (*garad*) and benefit (*manfa‘a*), namely, ḥusn is what is suitable to our interest or our benefit. While the third meaning I added here, i.e., the one that is suitable to human nature (*tab‘*), is emphasized by other Ash‘arites⁴⁹ and by al-Ījī himself in the book of

⁴⁷ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawaqīf*, 323,4.

⁴⁸ Najm al-Dīn al-Tūfī, *Dar’ al-Kawl al-Qabīḥ fi al-Tahseen wal Takbeeh* (Rihad: King Fahid publication, 2005), 82. This could be studied as well in the light Ross’s seven prima facie duties that are known by intuition, see Ross, *The Right and the Good*, 19-33.

⁴⁹ The opinions of other Ash‘arites will be mentioned in the next part when we try to trace al-Ījī’s division of *ḥusn and qubḥ*.

Jawahir al-I'tikād.⁵⁰ However, we posit that the three meanings, interest, benefit and nature, are intended to mean the same thing, namely that what is suitable to the benefit or interest is suitable to the nature as well. This contention is affirmed by a late Ash'arite scholar, al-Khatīb al-Sharbīnī, when he commented on the three meanings of the second division of ḥusn and qubḥ. He says, “The three meanings have the same focus since what is suitable to the interest has a benefit to the man and suitable to his nature at the same time ... and what is tab' here [the meaning of it] is the human nature which is inclined to seek benefits and avoid harm.”⁵¹ The examples for this part could be the ḥusn of joy (*farah*), pleasure, sweetness (*ḥalawa*) and the qubḥ of sadness, pain and bitterness.⁵²

These two categories of ḥusn and qubḥ that al-Ījī stated here could be reduced to one category, since what is perfect is loved to our nature and vice versa. This meaning is highlighted by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya in his book, *Miftāḥ al-Sa'adah*. He says,

When the act has an attribute of perfection (*kamāl*) or imperfection (*naqṣ*) that would entail the attachment of suitability (*mulā'maha*) and unsuitability (*munāfara*) because what is perfect would be loved to the one who recognizes it [its perfection], and [by the same token] imperfect would be hated by him.⁵³

However, what is important to our inquiry is to know that al-Ījī affirmed two types of ḥusn and qubḥ which are known by human reason and not dependent on revelation. Moreover, he agrees with the Mu'tazilites that these two types are known by reason intuitively⁵⁴ (*zarura*) and through speculation (*nazar*). He says, “The Mu'tazilites said that the ḥusn and qubḥ of an act are recognized by [reason] intuitively or through speculation and [we say] no dispute [between us] in regard to the attributes of perfection and imperfection or suitability and unsuitability.”⁵⁵ Thus, we see that the assertion of some Western scholars that the Ash'arites absolutely deny the role of the intellect is incorrect.

⁵⁰ Ḥassan Chalabī, *Sharḥ Jawahir al-I'tikād* (Istanbul: Raḡīp Paşa Kütüphanesi, Ka, 767), 72b.

⁵¹ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥalī, *Jam' al-Jawami'*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Darul Kutub al-Ilmiya, 2013), 96. Other scholars affirmed the same thing as well, see Ibn al-Qayyim, *Muḥtār dar al-Sa'ada*, 970.

⁵² *Jawahir al-I'tikād*, Vol.72; Najim al-Dīn al-Tufī, *Dar' al-Kawl al-Qabīḥ fi al-Tahseen wal Takbeeh*. 82.

⁵³ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Muḥtār dar al-Sa'ada*, (Mecca: Darul Fawaid, 2008), 969.

⁵⁴ By intuitive knowledge, I mean the necessary one which is known equally by all rational beings.

⁵⁵ Ḥassan Chalabī, *Sharḥ Jawahir al-I'tikād*, (Ka, 767), 72a.

Now, let us move to the third signification of ḥusn and qubḥ, which is the focus of controversy between al-Ījī and his Ash‘arite colleagues, on one side, and the Mu‘tazilites, on the other. Al-Ījī states that in this regard, human actions by themselves cannot be described by any of these two vales, ḥusn or qubḥ. It is only the religious law (*shar‘*) that makes the action either ḥasan or qabiḥ. Therefore, the action that is commanded by the legislator (*shari‘*) deserves praise in this world and reward in the hereafter while what is prohibited by the legislator deserves blame in this world and punishment in the hereafter.⁵⁶ It is worth noting that the action that is commanded includes the three categories of actions (obligatory, recommended, and permissible), while the prohibited one includes both the prohibited (*ḥaram*) as well as the disliked (*makruh*). Therefore, no act performed by the legally incumbent (*mukallaf*) would be outside of these categories, which means all human actions are subjected to ḥusn and qubḥ in this regard, and reason has no ability to determine their ethical values. However, some old and contemporary scholars argue that the Ash‘arites do not accept the mind’s judgment about the intuitive (*zarurī*) ḥusn and qubḥ of things. And thus, the point of dispute is not only about legal ḥusn and qubḥ, but it is also related to the intuitive ethical knowledge.⁵⁷ Therefore, we need to explore other Ash‘arite books to know whether al-Ījī is the first one who divided the meanings of ḥusn and qubḥ into three categories, or whether he took this division from other Ash‘arite scholars.

In al-Ash‘arī’s books, there is a paucity of information about this topic, although we find Al-Ash‘arī assertive in a few places about the non-existence of ethical value outside of the religious law. He says, “Evil is created by God as evil to others.”⁵⁸ This statement could be interpreted as asserting that there is nothing in the world that has the intrinsic value of qubḥ; it is all by the decree of God. In other places, as we already mentioned, he says that had God made lying ḥasan, it would have been so.⁵⁹ Although al-Ash‘arī did mention other meanings of ḥusn and qubḥ, we still cannot be sure whether he excludes the role of pure reason in recognizing any ethical value before the advent of *shar‘* or not. Al-Bāqillānī, as well, does not unpack the argument of ḥusn

⁵⁶ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawaqīf*, 324; Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawaqīf*, 8/204.

⁵⁷ ‘Aīḍ al-Shahrānī, *Al-Taḥseen wal Taqbeeh and their Influence in Usūl al-Fiqh*, (Riāḍ: Ishbilīa publication, 2008)1/308. The author of this book attributes a similar opinion to Ibn Taymiyya as well, see Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmu‘ al-Fatawī*, (Al-Medina, King Fahid Publication, 1995), 8/309.

⁵⁸ Abū al-Ḥassan al-Ash‘arī, *Al-Luma‘*, 52.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 74.

and qubḥ, but from his argument, we can be more certain that he means the legal ḥusn and qubḥ, not the absolute one. He says, “By describing the action of the legally incumbent of ḥusn and qubḥ, there is no attribute related to the action itself or its genus or a meaning subsisting on it or even to an aspect (wajh) in the mind.”⁶⁰ It is clear that al-Bāqillānī is talking about the legal ḥusn and qubḥ, since in many places he puts an emphasis on the term “legally incumbent” (*mukallaf*). Nevertheless, al-Bāqillānī did not elaborate on other types of ḥusn and qubḥ.

Without a doubt, the early Ash‘arites did not pay attention to defining the area of dispute, and therefore, some scholars attributed to them the opinion of negating the ability of human reason in recognizing any type of ḥusn and qubḥ before the advent of the religious law. In addition, the work of the first Ash‘arite who came up with the division of ḥusn and qubḥ is still disputed in the literature; some⁶¹ accredited al-Juwaynī for this division, while others⁶² attributed it to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. To resolve this question, first, we need to explore al-Juwaynī’s books to see whether his division is similar to al-Ījī’s division or not.

Al-Juwaynī in his kalām books was very assertive saying that human reason cannot determine the value of ḥusn and qubḥ in human actions, and thus, deciding what is ḥasan or qabiḥ is related to God and reason has no role to play in this regard.⁶³ In his Usul books, we see al-Juwaynī elaborating on this issue in more detail. He says, “We do not deny that the intellects entail from those who have them to avoid destructions (mahāllik) and gain possible benefits... and denying this [the role of the intellect] would be irrational.”⁶⁴ Here, al-Juwaynī certainly is giving us a meaning of ḥusn and qubḥ that is not dependent on the religious law. He affirms that it is solely by virtue of the mind that we know the ḥusn of avoiding harm and gaining benefits, and similarly, we know the qubḥ of their opposite. Moreover, this knowledge is an intuitive knowledge, and the mind alone is considered an authority in this regard.⁶⁵ Al-Juwaynī

⁶⁰ Abū Bakr Al-Bāqillānī, *Al-Takrib wa al-Irsha*, 2ed. (Caire: Al-Risala publication. Year??), 1/278.

⁶¹ Ḥanī Muhammad in his comment on al-Rāzī’s book, “*al-Isharā*” attributed this elaboration on the area of dispute to al-Juwaynī and those who came after him. See Al-Rāzī, *al-Isharā*. 225.

⁶² AL-Tūfī attributed this division to al-Rāzī, see *Dar’ al-Kawl al-Qabīḥ fi al-Tahseen wal Takbeeh*, 81.

⁶³ Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Irshād ilā Qawaṭi’ al-Adillah fi Usūl al-’Itiqād*, 260-265.

⁶⁴ Abū al-Ma’alī l-Juwaynī, *Al-Burhan fi Usūl al-Fiqh*, (Qatar: Qatar University publication, 1978), 1/91.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

explicitly expanded the meaning of ḥusn and qubḥ beyond the legal realm; however, he very often affirms that the focus of controversy is the legal ḥusn and qubḥ. Therefore, pure reason cannot detect the ethical value before the advent of the religious law. After affirming that the ethical values of benefit and harm are outside the focus of controversy, al-Juwaynī denied the dispute about the ethical values that are related to human nature. He says, if you mean by ḥusn and qubḥ the thing that our nature is inclined to or repelled from, such as pleasure, joy, pain and harm, then we do not argue with you about this one, but if you mean the ethical value that is related to the legal obligation (*taklif*), then we say that you cannot know it by pure reason.⁶⁶

We already affirmed that what is beneficial or harmful to us is the same as what is suitable or unsuitable to our nature. Therefore, these two rational meanings of ḥusn and qubḥ that al-Juwaynī conceded belong to the second category of ḥusn and qubḥ that al-Ījī clearly affirmed. Thus, we admit that al-Juwaynī emphasized that the area of dispute is the legal ḥusn and qubḥ, and gave another interpretation of ḥusn and qubḥ, i.e., the one that can be known by human reason. However, we can still say that al-Juwaynī is not the first Ash‘arite who came up with the three categories of ḥusn and qubḥ that al-Ījī stated in the argument. We might need to extend our inquiry to late Ash‘arite scholars.

Before testing Najim al-Dīn al-Tufī’s (716/1316) claim that al-Rāzī is the first one who elaborated on the division of ḥusn and qubḥ, it would be salutary to our purpose to look at al-Juwaynī’s prominent student, al-Ghazālī and see whether he approved al-Ījī’s opinion about the focus of the controversy or not. Al-Ghazālī, in *al-Ikṭiṣād fī al-‘Itikād*, follows his teacher in emphasizing that the ethical value about what is suitable to our interest can be known rationally, although he was different from his teacher in dividing human actions into three regards: the first one is what is suitable to the doer (*fa‘il*), the second is what is unsuitable to the doer, while the third is the action which is neither suitable nor unsuitable to the doer. These three categories, as he affirms, are known by human reason. However, al-Ghazālī states that the action in these three regards has no intrinsic ethical value, namely, its ḥusn and qubḥ is relative to the doer. In other words, some actions could be both ḥasan and qabiḥ at the same

⁶⁶Abū al-Ma‘ālī l-Juwaynī, *Al-Talkhiṣ fī Usūl al-Fiqh*, (Beirut: Darul Basha‘ir, 2000), 1/159.

time, ḥasan for Zayd and *qabīh* for ‘Amr for example.⁶⁷ Al-Ghazālī also did not mention al-Ījī’s three divisions of ḥusn and qubḥ, but he confirmed that the Ash‘arites, in general, deny the legal ḥusn and qubḥ before the advent of the religious law (*shar‘*). He said, “It is [the ḥasan] what the shar‘ deemed as ḥasan.... And this meaning (*iṣtilāḥ*) is given by our colleagues (*aṣḥābuna*) [the Ashar‘ites].”⁶⁸

2.1.4. Al-Rāzī’s Division and His Rational Ḥusn and Qubḥ

Now, the last theologian whose ideas we are going to explore is Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. He is significantly important when we talk about the late theologian Ash‘arites (*muta’akhhirīn*), and furthermore, he has a specific significance to our inquiry since many scholars claimed that al-Ījī was ostensibly influenced by al-Rāzī.⁶⁹ We are going to test this claim through our endeavor here, i.e., determining the focus of controversy, and exploring al-Ījī’s other theological opinions during our inquiry.

Al-Rāzī’s argument seems different from al-Ījī’s and other Ash‘arites that we mentioned before. He appears to affirm that ḥusn and qubḥ in human actions, in a general way, are known by the intellect, without the aid of the religious law. This position could be considered an unorthodox position in the school of Ash‘arism. He argues that if everything is loved or hated because of something else that would lead to an ad infinitum position since that thing would be loved or hated for something else and so on endlessly. Therefore, al-Rāzī affirms that there must be something loved for itself, not for something else, or hated for itself, not for something else, and this thing (i.e., the loved or hated) per se is outside the disputed area. However, it is worth mentioning that al-Rāzī seems here to be following the Aristotelian reasoning in affirming the ethical value.⁷⁰ Al-Rāzī, with this argument, namely, the instrumental and intrinsic value, is trying to prove the ability of pure reason to determine the ḥusn and qubḥ in human actions. He says that pleasure (*liḥā*) and felicity (*surūr*) are desired

⁶⁷ Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iktisād fī al-‘Itiqād*, (Beirut: Darul Minhaj, 2016), 304.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 306.

⁶⁹ Ömer Türker, “Kelâm Geleneğinde Adudüddin El-İcî: Kelâmın Bilimsel Kimliği Sorunu,” In *İslam İlim Ve Düşünce Geleneğinde: Adudüddin El-İcî*, ed. Eşraf Altaş, (Türkiye: İsam Yayınları, 2017), 300.

⁷⁰ Al-Rāzī with this method tries to prove that there are some things desired for themselves is similar to the method that Aristotle followed to prove that Happiness is the human good that is desired for itself, not for something else. See Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. David Ross (Oxford: university press, 1980),10.

per se; while pain and sadness (*gham*) are hated per se, and this judgement, as he argues, is known by all human intellects alike, regardless of whether the religious law is there or not.⁷¹ Despite being very assertive about the rational ḥusn and qubḥ in human action, al-Rāzī still agrees with al-Ījī that the religious law (*sharʿ*) is the one that decides what is ḥasan and what is qabiḥ. This passage from al-Rāzī is a demonstrative proof that he is the first one who is accredited for the division that al-Ījī asserted later. Al-Rāzī says,

The most important thing regarding this question is to define the focus of controversy; therefore, we say that there is no dispute that we know by virtue of our minds that some things are suitable to our nature and others are unsuitable.... No need for religious law to gain this knowledge. [Moreover] we know by virtue of our minds that knowledge is an attribute of perfection while ignorance is an attribute of imperfection. Nevertheless, the focus of controversy is that some actions deserve blame (*zamm*) in this world and punishment is the hereafter, and other actions deserve praise in this world and reward in the hereafter... Our opinion (*mazhabuna*) is that it is merely the ruling of the religious law (*sharʿ*).⁷²

Al-Rāzī, similar to al-Ījī, affirms two rational meanings of ḥusn and qubḥ, suitability and unsuitability, and perfection and imperfection. Both categories are known by pure reason while the third one is related to the religious law. However, with this quotation, we can be sure that al-Ījī is neither the first one who expanded the meaning of ḥusn and qubḥ nor the first one who defined the focus of controversy. Notwithstanding, al-Ījī did not follow al-Rāzī in all the details about this argument, and to prove this contention we say that al-Rāzī, after affirming that the third meaning of ḥusn and qubḥ is the one that is taken from the religious law, he still allows some functionality of reason in this regard, i.e., in the legal ḥusn and qubḥ. He argues that by saying that we would ask those who said ḥusn is the action that entails reward and qubḥ is the action that entails punishment, do you agree that the mind necessitates that we avoid the punishment or not? If they said no, that would mean that the necessity of avoiding punishment depends on another necessity that is taken from the religious law, and each necessity needs another necessity, and infinite regress would follow. Therefore, the necessity of avoiding punishment must be taken from the intellect.⁷³

It seems that al-Rāzī is objecting to the Ashʿarites' contention that ḥusn and qubḥ are only known by the religious law, and he is trying to prove the role of reason in determining this ethical value, i.e., the legal one. Nevertheless, this apparent

⁷¹ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Maʿālib*, (Beirut: Darul Kutub al-Arabia, 1987), 3/279.

⁷² Al-Rāzī, *al-Arbaʿin fi Uṣūl al-Dīn*, (Beirut: Darul Khaīl, 2004), 237.

⁷³ Al-Rāzī, *Maʿālim Uṣūl al-Dīn*, 108.

understanding cannot be accepted because Al-Rāzī is only proving the role of reason in avoiding qubḥ, not affirming the value of qubḥ, namely the role of reason starts after the values being determined by the religious law⁷⁴. In other words, only the religious law can determine what is ḥasan and what is qabīḥ, although the mind can affirm the concomitance between the ḥasan act and doing it and the qabīḥ act and avoiding it. This is what al-Rāzī calls ‘the rational ḥusn and qubḥ’ and he affirms its existence in the legal ḥusn and qubḥ.

Al-Ījī, in excluding any role of reason in the category of legal ḥusn and qubḥ, seems to be adhering more to the orthodox opinion of the school of Ash‘arism. Therefore, we can say that al-Ījī benefited from al-Rāzī’s division of ḥusn and qubḥ; nevertheless, he did not follow all the details that al-Rāzī mentioned. He kept the division within the spirit of the school of Ash‘arism.

In sum, we traced back al-Ījī’s division of the meaning of ḥusn and qubḥ to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and pinned down the focus of the controversy to the legal ḥusn and qubḥ. This focus of controversy expresses ḥusn as the thing that deserves praise in this world and reward in the hereafter and qubḥ as the thing that deserves blame in this world and punishment in the hereafter. Nevertheless, we still have some ambiguity to clarify. The ambiguity that we are talking about lies in the definition itself since the definition tells us that ḥusn and qubḥ entail two things in two specific orders. The first thing is praise and blame in this world, and the second one is reward and punishment in the hereafter. In other words, there must be four essential components in two specific orders, and this is not the case.

For this reason, al-Qarāfī’s elaboration on this definition would be essential to understand the concomitance between ḥusn and qubḥ and their four components in this specific order. Al-Qarāfī says,

Defining the focus of controversy as the act [the *qabīḥ* one] that entails blame in this world (*‘ajilan*) and punishment in the hereafter (*ajlan*) could be understood as if this order [in this world and hereafter] is the focus of controversy, and [indeed] it is not the case, neither for us [the Ash‘arites] nor for them [the Mu‘tazilites]. Since it is possible that God could prohibit [something] and make it necessary [*wajīb*]; although, not precipitate blame in this world at all, but the intended [retribution] would happen by merely the threat (*wa‘id*) without the blame. It is possible as well that He obligates (*yukalif*) and not postpones the punishment, i.e., He would

⁷⁴This interpretation of al-Rāzī’s rational *ḥusn and qubḥ* is expressed by al-Khawajī in his commentary on *Ma‘ālim Usūl al-Dīn*.

precipitate the punishment straight after the offence [in this world] Therefore, the focus of controversy is related to legal accountability (*mū'khaza shar'īya*) regardless of the existence of blame or something else, or in this world or in thereafter.⁷⁵

We understand from this quotation that praise or blame in this world is not a necessary concomitant of ḥusn and qubḥ, and at the same time, punishment or reward is not always restricted to the hereafter, but they can happen in this world as well. Due to this elaboration, we can understand that the exact focus of controversy in the argument of ḥusn and qubḥ in human actions is legal accountability (*mu'khaza shar'īa*).

If we are going to put the core of the argument simply, we can say that ḥusn and qubḥ that is related to legal accountability cannot be determined or perceived by pure reason because human actions have no intrinsic ethical value by themselves according to al-Ījī and his Ash'arite colleagues. Furthermore, if we want to unveil the simplicity of the argument to show its real face, we say that although the core of the argument is about the *shar'ī* ḥusn and qubḥ—you can also call it, the legal-ethical value—eventually, this legal ethical value is the only real ethical value of human actions. Al-Ījī held the position that revelation came to give ethical values to human actions: ḥusn is what is deemed ḥasan by the religious law, i.e., there is no real ethical value that human actions can have by themselves. The Mu'tazilites, on the other hand, argued that actions by themselves have ethical values, and the rule of the religious law is to affirm what is already known as ḥasan or qabīḥ⁷⁶. Therefore, they put the reason in the position of the *shar'ī* in some places and gave it the authority to determine the ethical values of human actions.

Al-Ījī's argument, at its core, is a refutation of the Mu'tazilites' position about the rational ethical value. Therefore, we will try to clarify the Mu'tazilites position while discussing al-Ījī's argument. But before presenting the Mu'tazilites versus al-Ījī's arguments, we need to focus on an argument that al-Ījī primarily depends on to prove that ḥusn and qubḥ are known through the religious law.

⁷⁵ Al-Tūfī, *Dar' al-Kawl al-Qabīḥ fi al-Tahseen wal Takbeeh* 82. See as well, al-Qarafī, *Naf'is al-Usūl fi Sharḥ al-Mahsul*. 1st ed., (Cairo: al-Baz publication, 1995), 1/351.

⁷⁶ According to the Mu'tazilites not every ethical value is known before the advent of the religious law; however, more elaboration on their position will come in the following parts.

2.2. The Theological Arguments

In this part we are going to explore the theological arguments that al-Ījī used to refute the Mu‘tazilite rational ethical theory. For this endeavor, we will present al-Ījī’s main argument: strength and authenticity. Since the Mu‘tazilites are the main opponent and their arguments were the main focus of al-Ījī’s refutations, we will present al-Ījī’s arguments against them along with their authentic positions from their own books. Evaluation and comparison are going to be involved in the inquiry. Some Mu‘tazilites’ positions will be subject of further elaboration due to their importance in the argument of ḥusn and qubḥ in a general way.

2.2.1. Al-Ījī’s Main Argument

Al-Ījī’s main contention is that pure reason per se cannot ascribe any ethical value to human actions before the advent of the religious law. In other words, divine injunctions are the value-granter of our actions and before them the intellect cannot perceive any intrinsic property or aspect that belongs to the actions themselves. Furthermore, al-Ījī provided several arguments to debunk the Mu‘tazilites rational ḥusn and qubḥ. As a result, most of his arguments are discussions with the Mu‘tazilites. In the next part, we will expound on these arguments from both al-Ījī’s and the Mū‘tazilites’ books. However, in this part, we will tackle al-Ījī’s main argument, which could be considered as the mainstay of his position because he depended on it to define other ethical arguments that are related to the argument of ḥusn and qubḥ, such as human actions. For the sake of understanding his argument correctly, we will provide the argument and the discussions along with the objections, and at the end we will try to discover the roots of al-Ījī’s argument.

Al-Ījī’s initial thesis affirms that humans are compelled in their actions, and if this is the case, reason cannot give any ethical value to their actions⁷⁷. The reason for this assertion is that both the Mu‘tazilites and the Ash‘arites agree that compelled actions cannot hold ethical values. Nevertheless, the Mu‘tazilites concede this contention only in some parts of human actions and affirm the freedom of human actions in a general

⁷⁷ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 324; Al-Ījī, *‘Uyun al-Kalām*, (Istanbul: Millet Genel Kutupanesi, Carullah, 1259), 28; Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/205.

sense; while al-Ījī, with this contention, argues that all human actions are compelled in reality. However, this contention is only the tip of the iceberg, and for unpacking al-Ījī's argument, we need first to present the form of it. Al-Ījī says,

If the servant is unable to omit [the action] then he is compelled, and if he were able to omit his action without depending on a preponderating factor, i.e., [the action] comes forth from him sometimes and does not come forth at other times then [the action] is arbitrary. However, if [the action] were depended on a preponderating factor, it [the preponderating factor] cannot be from the servant himself because that would lead to an infinite regress. Therefore, [the action] is necessary as far as the determining factor is concerned. Otherwise [if the factor does not necessitate the action] performing and omitting the action would be possible and there will be a need for another preponderating factor [if it does not necessitate the action as well] it will go ad infinitum. Therefore, [the action] will be necessary [when it comes to exist along with the determining factor] in all cases [the action being arbitrary or necessary] the servant has no choice in his actions, and thus he will be compelled.⁷⁸

The thrust of this argument is that human actions in themselves are either compelled or arbitrary. In both cases, they cannot be characterized by ḥusn or qubḥ. However, in order to explicate this argument, we will depend on the commentaries of three main students of al-Ījī: al-Jurjānī, al-Kirmānī⁷⁹ and al-Abharī.⁸⁰ The argument could be simply explained as follows: only human actions that are based on free choice can be the subject of ḥusn and qubḥ. Therefore, proving that the choice is completely or partially not there—meaning that we are not free to choose—would negate the existence of the ethical value in human actions themselves. For this purpose, al-Ījī argues that we are not completely free since our actions are based on a determining factor that along with its existence the action will be necessarily preponderated, and thus man will not have freedom in performing his actions or omitting them. Nevertheless, actions must be based on determining factors; otherwise, they will be arbitrary, and the arbitrary actions as well cannot be described as ḥasan or qabīḥ. However, this determining factor—or if you call it a desire or a will—cannot be from the man; otherwise, it will require another desire or will in order to generate its existence, and each one will require another one ad infinitum. Therefore, the will that man performs his actions with must be based on an eternal will, which is the divine will. In other words, God creates the will or the factor in the agent's heart whereby the

⁷⁸ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 324.

⁷⁹ Shams al-Dīn al-Karmanī, Muḥammad bin Yusuf (d.786H) studied with al-Ījī for twelve years and wrote commentaries on most of his books. For more information see 'Adil Nuayhid, *Mu'jam al-Mufasireen*. 3rd ed. (Beirut: Nuayhid Publication, 1988), 2/565.

⁸⁰ Sayf al-Dīn al-Abharī is scarcely mentioned in the Arabic bibliographies; though, the fact that he studied with al-Ījī and commented on many of his books is far from being questionable. For more information about al-Abharī, see the introduction of Seyfuddīn Ahmed El-Ebherī, *Ṣerhu'l Ahlākī'l-'Adudiyye* (Istanbul: Nobel Yayınları, 2016).

action become necessary. This factor, as al-Ījī argues, must be determining; otherwise, neither performing nor omitting of the action will be preponderated, and therefore, the action will not come to exist because it will need another factor, and each one will need another factor, and so on endlessly. As a result, human actions are compelled since they are based on an external factor, i.e., the factor that is not from the man himself. Therefore, man is compelled in his actions and no ethical value can be ascribed to his actions before the advent of the religious law.⁸¹

Whether al-Ījī agrees with this argument or only uses it to refute the Mu‘tazilites’ position does not negate the fact that the argument was al-Ījī’s primary focus in the chapter of ḥusn and qubḥ. However, responding to actual or potential objections is a common practice in the school of Ash‘arism in general. Therefore, we can see that al-Ījī adheres to this practice when he presents his main arguments. He brought up four objections that seemed to question the validity of his argument, and then he responded to them. We will discuss each objection with its response along with more clarifications from other commentaries. The first objection that al-Ījī brought is that the argument that negates human free will is contrary to the intuitive knowledge that we have, i.e., everyone knows from himself that he has a choice in his actions and can distinguish between voluntary and compulsory actions.⁸² Actually, this objection seems like a *petitio principii*⁸³ fallacy because the existence of free will is a disputable premise; therefore, it cannot be assumed to be intuitive. However, al-Ījī responds succinctly by saying, “The necessary is the existence of power, not the existing of the action by his [the servant’s] power.”⁸⁴ What is intuitively known, al-Ījī argues, is the existence of the power of a certain action, and that does not mean that the action is coming to exist with that power. However, the word ‘power’ in this context does not mean only human capacity, but it includes the choice as well. Al-Jurjānī unpacked this word by saying that the necessary knowledge is the existence of power and choice, and that does not mean that the action exists due to these two elements. He says, “Our

⁸¹ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/205-206; Shams al-Dīn al-Karamanī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hussain Paşa, 317), 349a; Sayf al-Dīn al-Abharī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Isnabul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Lalali, 2372), 239a, 240b.

⁸² Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 324; Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/206.

⁸³ *Petitio principii* or begging the question is a type of informal fallacy that assume the conclusion is true instead of trying to prove it. See Peter Kreeft, *Socratic Logic*, ed. 3.1. (USA: ST. Augustine’s Press, 2010), 99.

⁸⁴ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 325.

argument is to negate the second [the existence of the action with the servant's power and choice] not the first [the servant does not have power and choice]. Therefore [our argument] cannot be contrary to intuitive knowledge.”⁸⁵

The statement that action does come to exist with human power and choice seems like the stance of acquisition (*kasb*); however, we cannot be sure whether this is the meaning of compulsion that al-Ījī tries to prove here or not. His student, al-Abharī gives us some enlightening glimpses on this statement by saying, “The response [to this objection] that the servant's power is not generated for creating the action, and thus [the knowledge of this] it is not necessary, but disputable.”⁸⁶ The word ‘generated’ (*mutawalida*) means the actions that are generated from our direct actions, and they are the servant's actions and created by his power. Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, the Mu‘tazilite, says, “According to our masters that everything that is generated from the servant's action is considered as his own action, whether it was generated from his direct action or from the one that is generated from the generated one.”⁸⁷ We can say that al-Abharī usage of the word ‘*mutawalidah*’ does not mean the servant's secondary actions that the Mu‘tazilites ascribe to the man, but it means the direct actions, which is the immediate focus of our argument. However, we can only know that al-Ījī affirms the existence of human power, and al-Jurjānī explains this power as power and choice, and he adds that their existence is known necessarily, but not their efficacy (*ta'thīr*) in bringing actions to exist.

The second objection that al-Ījī raised gives us more details about his own position on the preponderating factor. However, the objection says that assuming the truth of this argument, namely that human actions cannot come to exist without a determining factor, would lead us to accept the same conclusion about the divine actions.⁸⁸ Al-Ījī did not show us how the same argument is applied to divine actions, but he briefly said, “The premises are the premises and affirmation is the affirmation.”⁸⁹ Nevertheless, we can benefit from other commentaries and say that the application of this proof to divine actions is to say that the action needs a preponderating factor to

⁸⁵ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/207.

⁸⁶ Al-Abharī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, fol.240.

⁸⁷ Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, *Al-Faiḳ fi Usūl al-Dīn*, (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub, 2010), 189.

⁸⁸ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 324.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

come to exist, and this factor should necessitate the action; otherwise, it will need another preponderating factor endlessly, and thus the action will not exist. However, the action existed, then it means that the preponderating factor necessitated the action.⁹⁰ It is clear that neither the Ash‘arites nor the Mu‘tazilites maintain this conclusion in regard to divine actions because that would lead to negate the freedom of God’s actions and advocate the theory of emanation,⁹¹ which both the Ash‘arites and the Mu‘tazilites argue against in reality. However, al-Ījī gives two different responses to this objection. The first one is as follows:

The premise that says that the action that came to exist without a preponderating factor is a compelling premise (*ilzamiyya*) as far as the Mu‘tazilites are concerned. We do not accept this [premise]. Preponderating by virtue of choice alone is possible according to us. Such action [without a preponderating factor] is still considered voluntary, as we affirmed in the case of the one who runs away from a lion, and that of a thirsty man choosing between two equal cups [of water].⁹²

Al-Ījī explicitly admitted that the premise of the necessary preponderating factor is a compelling premise, namely, it is not necessary to be true in itself, but it is enough that it refutes the opponent’s argument. Therefore, al-Ījī renounced the necessary need for a preponderating factor in order to determine the action and said that the premise is intended against those Mu‘tazilites who require a necessary preponderating factor to determine the action. Al-Abharī states this premise against those who claim that human power is not efficient without being associated by with another determinant called the motive (al-dā‘ī).⁹³ To find out about those Mu‘tazilites who claimed the necessity of a determinant motive, we go back to al-Rāzī’s books where he states that Abū al-Ḥussain al-Baṣrī says that the action cannot come to exist without a preponderating motive, al-Rāzī says, “From his position that actions are based on motives. If the motive is positively equal, then the action is impossible to exist, and in case the motive is negative, it is a fortiori impossible. Therefore, when the motive is positive it is necessary.”⁹⁴ We know that al-Ījī used that compelling premise against Abū al-Ḥussain al-Baṣrī and his followers who hold that the preponderating motive is necessary for actions to come to exist. Nevertheless, casting doubt on this premise would not invalidate the whole argument since there might be other demonstrative

⁹⁰ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/206.

⁹¹ For more information about emanation theory and its holders, see Majid Fakhary, *Al-Fārābi: Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism*, (England: One world Publication, 2002), 77-88.

⁹² Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 325.

⁹³ Al-Abharī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Hussain paṣa, 317), 240b.

⁹⁴ Al-Rāzī, *al-‘Arba‘īn fī Usūl al-Dīn*, 319.

premises to prove the same conclusion, i.e., the servant is compelled in his actions. However, al-Ījī tries to assume the validity of the premise and responds to the objection differently.

The second response that al-Ījī gives to this objection is based on differentiating between the nature of the divine and human actions. He says, “The determinant of His activity [the exalted] is eternal and does not need a preponderating factor; hence the need for a determining factor, according to us, is due to the contingency rather than the possibility.”⁹⁵ The motive (*al-dāʿī*) in regard to human actions must be determinant; furthermore, it cannot be from the man himself. Man is contingent, and in case the factor is not determinant, the action would be arbitrary, i.e., involuntary. Whereas God is eternal, and the determinant of His action is His eternal power and will. Therefore, the determinant of His actions is from Himself, and there will not be a possibility of an infinite regress. Nevertheless, al-Jurjānī tries to respond to a more serious objection, which says, “With that eternal preponderating factor, the action is either necessary, then the choice will be negated, or the action will emanate sometimes and not emanate at other times, then it would be arbitrary, as it is the case in respect to the servant.”⁹⁶ It seems that the arbitrariness of actions cannot be avoided, unless the preponderating factor necessitates the action. Therefore, al-Jurjānī opted for the necessity of the preponderating factor and said that there will not be any impossibility since the preponderating factor is His will that is substantiated in His entity, unlike the servant’s will.⁹⁷ In other words, God’s eternal will necessitates His actions, and this necessitation does not negate that God is a free agent since the necessitation of His action comes from His will, which is His own attribute. Unlike the servant whose actions are necessitated by a determinant factor that is not from the servant himself.

The third important objection is another rebutting argument that says that denying the rational ḥusn and qubḥ would entail the negation of the legal ḥusn and qubḥ as well.⁹⁸ Put it simply, claiming that the servant is compelled would entail the negation of any

⁹⁵ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 325.

⁹⁶ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/208.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 8/209.

⁹⁸ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 325.

type of ethical value, whether rational or legal. The implication between the rational and the legal value is lucidly expressed by al-Jurjānī. He says,

This argument disproves the legal ḥusn and qubḥ that stems from the religious obligation (*taklīf*). If the servant is compelled, then he is not religiously responsible because that would be a form of obligation beyond capacity (*taklīf mala yutaq*), which we do not allow, and you deem it possible; though, you do not say that it actually happens.⁹⁹

Religious obligation entails the freedom of choice, and when the servant is compelled in all his actions, he cannot be legally incumbent (*mukallaf*). Put it different, the Ash‘arites’ famous statement: “*al-ḥasan what is the legislation deems ḥasan*”¹⁰⁰ cannot be true when the religious obligation is not there. When the legislation (*shar‘*) itself is not established, the ḥusn and qubḥ of anything else cannot be established as well. Nonetheless, the Ash‘arites might resort to obligation beyond capacity¹⁰¹, which is still ḥasan in spite of the absence of the servant's free will. However, the second part of the objection tries to determine the focus of the dispute about obligation beyond capacity, which is not the possibility but the actual existence of that obligation, and neither the Mu‘tazilites nor the Ash‘arites maintain the actual existence of obligation beyond capacity.¹⁰² However, this objection—that negating the rational ethical value would negate the legal one as well—seems to be very common among the opponents of the Ash‘arites, not only the Mu‘tazilites, but also theologians from different stripes. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya objected to al-Ījī’s argument similarly by saying, “If it were true [this argument], it would disprove the legal ḥusn and qubḥ because if we say that the servant’s action is either necessary or arbitrary, the legislation will not consider it [the action] as ḥasan or qubḥ since it would not be related to the religious obligation.”¹⁰³

However, the response to this objection dwells in the Ash‘arites’ understanding of human power. Al-Ījī says, “It is not necessary, according to us, that the power of the agent affects the religious obligation, but rather the action should be from the type of

⁹⁹ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/206.

¹⁰⁰ This statement summarizes all Ash‘arites’ position about *ḥusn and qubḥ*. The root of this statement could go back to Abū Bakr al-Baqallanī. See Abū Bakr al-Baqallanī, *al-Insāf*, 2ed ed., (Cairo: al-Azhariā, 2000), 47.

¹⁰¹ Obligation beyond capacity will be discussed in detail when we talk in the third chapter of this inquiry.

¹⁰² Actually, the Ash‘arites do not negate the existence of certain types of obligation beyond capacity. These types will be discussed in detail in the third chapter of this inquiry.

¹⁰³ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Muftāḥ dar al-Sa‘ada*, 919.

actions that are within the power of the agent.”¹⁰⁴ Al-Jurjānī insists again on explaining the word “power” as power and choice. He says that the efficacy of the action is not necessary, but rather the action should be accompanied by the power and choice in general.¹⁰⁵ According to this defense, the efficacy of power is a prerequisite condition to consider the servant as a free agent, that is, legally incumbent, while the Ash‘arites do not acknowledge this efficacy at all. Al-Abharī again affirms that the efficacy of the power is not necessary for the religious obligation, but its existence is necessary. He says, “It is enough for the religious obligation to have the generated (ḥaditha) power.”¹⁰⁶ In short, the discrepancy between the two positions could be simplified as follows: according to the Mu‘tazilites, the legal ḥusn and qubḥ must be preceded by the religious obligation that requires the freedom of the agent, which means the efficacy of the agent’s power. Therefore, the absence of the agent’s power means the negation of the legal ethical value. Whereas al-Ījī, as an Ash‘arite theologian, in spite of claiming that the agent is not free, can still maintain that the legal ḥusn and qubḥ is legitimate. The reason for this is that the Ash‘arites do not require the efficacy of the contingent power neither for the validity of religious obligation nor for the freedom of choice. It is only the existence of the contingent power that is required. However, we will suffice with this explanation for now, and try to elaborate more on the nature of human power and free will in the last chapter of our inquiry.

The fourth and last objection to this argument seems to unveil the mystery of the argument on one side and takes us deep into the intricacy of freewill on the other side. Al-Ījī tries to vindicate his argument from compulsion despite insisting that the servant is not free in his actions. He says, “Our purpose [to prove] that the servant is not independent in performing his actions without a motive, which is created [for the servant] by God.... This is sufficient for disproving the rational judgement [in respect to ḥusn and qubḥ].”¹⁰⁷ It seems that al-Ījī wants to say that the servant’s dependency on the motive to perform his action does not exactly mean that the servant is compelled in his actions. Nevertheless, this dependency is enough to prevent the intellect from giving ethical judgments about our actions. Al-Ījī continues his defense by saying,

¹⁰⁴ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 325.

¹⁰⁵ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/208.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Abharī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Lalali, 2372), 240b.

¹⁰⁷ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 325.

“There no difference between God creating the action in man, as al-Shaykh¹⁰⁸ said, and creating that which necessarily brings the action into existence, as some of his followers assert, for disproving the role of the reason in determining the ethical value as the opponent maintains.”¹⁰⁹ This would let us think that al-Ījī is talking about the contingent power and its efficacy in creating our actions. Saying that God creates the action directly in the servant is the stance of al-Ash‘arī, and creating that which necessitates the existence of the action is the position of Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, as al-Jurjānī elucidates.¹¹⁰ However, in my opinion the second position cannot be ascribed to al-Juwaynī because al-Ījī intends to show us that creating the action directly by God is similar to the position that says that God creates something that necessitates the action, i.e., the motive. Furthermore, al-Juwaynī does not hold that the motive is determinant and must be from God, but on contrary, he tries to prove some efficacy for the contingent power. Al-Juwaynī explicitly affirms his position as follow, “The servant’s power is created by God. Though, its object [the action] absolutely comes to exist by this power. Nevertheless, the action itself is attributed to God since He created and ordained it. Therefore, we say that God created the act since God created the power for it.”¹¹¹ Therefore, we say that the position that affirms some kind of efficacy to human power is far from proving the thing that necessitates the action, i.e., the motive. For this reason, I claim that al-Ījī’s statement “as some of his followers assert” does not refer to al-Juwaynī, but to another Ash‘arite who maintains the same argument that al-Ījī used in negating the rational ḥusn and qubḥ. That scholar and his position will come at the end of this part; for now, let us go back to understanding al-Ījī’s conciliation between the determinant motive and free will. Al-Kirmānī gives us a precious explanation by saying,

The preponderating factor (*murajih*) is something that urges the servant to choose the action, and that does not disprove the fact that the action is chosen per se. Though, it is true that the action becomes necessary at it [the preponderating factor]. Nevertheless, this is a conditional necessity that does not negate the essential (*ḥaqīqī*) choice.¹¹²

According to this explanation, we can say that al-Ījī’s maneuver to avoid the charge of compulsion dwells in his affirming the servant’s choice despite maintaining the determinant motive. Put it simply, the servant is not compelled, but his choice is.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Shaykh in the books of Ash‘arites always indicate to Imam al-Ash‘arī.

¹⁰⁹ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 325.

¹¹⁰ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/208.

¹¹¹ Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, *Al-Nizzamiya creed*, (Beirut: Daru al-Nafis, 2013), 192.

¹¹² Al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Hussain Paşa, 317), 349a.

However, al-Abharī, based on his teacher’s defense, gives us two interpretations. The first one is similar to that which al-Kirmānī stated above, but al-Abharī was more assertive in denying that the servant is compelled and he maintained the existence of the preponderating factor. He says, “It is possible that the preponderating factor with which the action becomes necessary at its [time] to be the same as the motive which God creates in the servant’s [heart] and which necessitates the action that entails his choice. Thereby, the action becomes voluntary.”¹¹³ It means that the agent’s action entails the existence of his choice and that does not contradict with the possibility of the necessary motive. We can say that the consequence of al-Kirmānī’s and al-Abharī’s commentaries are not quite different, namely, they all affirm the existence of human choice together without denying the determinant factor, which is created by God.

However, al-Abharī’s second interpretation focuses more on the meaning of choice and voluntary actions, he says, “There no meaning of voluntary [action] except what is the choice preponderates, even it is necessarily [preponderated].”¹¹⁴ Simply, as long as man chooses his actions, he cannot be called compelled, regardless of whether the choice is necessitated by something else or not.

In short, the goal of this argument is not negating or affirming freewill¹¹⁵, but rather proving that man is not independent in his action; therefore, the intellect cannot give an ethical value to his actions. Al-Kirmānī is the best among the commentators who summarized the thrust of the argument by saying that the opponent maintains that actions cannot be described as ḥasan *or* qabiḥ when we have two essential impediments: the necessity of performing or omitting the action and the inefficacy of the agent’s power over his actions (*tamakun*). Therefore, the argument of the determinant motive proves the existence of these two impediments, and thus we prevent the opponent from proving the rational ḥusn and qubḥ. Nevertheless, at the same time, the argument does not negate completely the faculty of choice. Al-Kirmānī says that what the argument proves does not negate the inherent (*zatī*) choice, which

¹¹³ Al-Abharī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Lalali, 2372), 240a.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ As I stated before, al-Ījī’s position of freewill will be discussed separately in the last chapter of this study

is needed to avoid compulsion, but it negates the choice in a broad sense, and that is enough for disproving the rational ḥusn and qubḥ.¹¹⁶

In this argument, al-Ījī does not clearly express his own opinion about compulsion (*jabr*), although he uses the argument of the determinant factor (*dā'ir*) in order to prove that the servant is not completely independent in his actions. Nevertheless, al-Ījī, in some points of his argument, claims that the premise of the determinant factor is a compelling premise, namely, he does not assert its truth per se. Despite that, he continued defending the preponderating factor in order to prove some kind of compulsion that negates the rational ethical value. Finally, the last thing we need to investigate in this argument is whether al-Ījī is the first one who came up with this argument or he took it from another scholar.

None of the early Ash'arites maintains that the servant is compelled in his action; moreover, some of them explicitly renounced the charge of compulsion. Al-Bāqillānī states this fact as follows, “It is necessary to be known that the servant has acquisition (*kasb*), and he is not compelled (*majbūr*), but he acquires his actions, whether they are obedience or disobedience.”¹¹⁷ Imām al-Juywanī, contrary to what al-Jurjānī stated, cannot be a partisan of compulsion; namely, he is not the one who says that actions become necessary because of something that God creates in the servant's heart, i.e., the motive. Al-Kawtharī vindicated the early Ash'arites from the charge of compulsion and declared that Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī is the first one who came up with such idea. Al-Kawtharī commented on al-Bāqillānī's quotation saying, “It is clear that saying that the servant is compelled is not the position of al-Ash'arī, and the first one who attributed this position to him is Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.”¹¹⁸

Al-Rāzī emphatically used the idea of al-dā'ir in the argument of free will. He based his argument on an authentic Ash'arī's principle: ‘God is the only efficient agent,’ and then moved with this argument to the realm of volitional faculty, confiscated free will and fastened it to the same principle. Al-Rāzī's multifunctional argument held a significant role in disproving the rational ḥusn and qubḥ. He stated his argument as

¹¹⁶ Al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Ḥussān Paşai 317), 350b.

¹¹⁷ Al-Bāqillānī, *Al-Insāf*, 43.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

follows, “Servants’ actions are either compelled or arbitrary. Therefore, the position of rational ḥusn and qubḥ, either way, is invalid.”¹¹⁹ He continued with the same reasoning that al-Ījī mentioned in our argument that is the contingent power and the preponderating factor cannot be from the servant himself, namely, they are from God, and they necessitate the servant’s action.

Finally, we can say that al-Ījī’s main argument against rational ḥusn and qubḥ is a shortened version of al-Rāzī’s argument. However, while al-Rāzī assertively adopted the idea of the preponderating factor and used it in many of his arguments, al-Ījī does seem to embrace the idea full-heartedly. Moreover, he admitted sometimes that it is merely a compelling premise against some of the Mu‘tazilites.

As a result, we have explained al-Ījī’s argument in detail, with all its objections and responses. It is important to note that this is not the only argument that al-Ījī used against the Mu‘tazilites, but the one that he gave the most attention to in refuting the rational ḥusn and qubḥ. The rest of al-Ījī’s arguments will come next part where we explore the Mu‘tazilites’ positions and al-Ījī’s responses to them.

2.2.2. Al-Ījī vs. the Mu‘tazilites

Al-Ījī’s argument against the Mu‘tazilites’ rational ḥusn and qubḥ is based mainly on the way that al-Ījī stated their arguments and responded to them. Therefore, before presenting al-Ījī’s argument, we need to explore the Mu‘tazilites’ arguments as al-Ījī expressed them, and then discuss them in the light of the authentic books of the Mu‘tazilites.

Al-Ījī expresses the Mu‘tazilites’ position in two different ways: general and detailed. The General position that he attributes to them seems different in two places of his books. In *al-mawaqīf*, he says that ḥusn and qubḥ according to the Mu‘tazilites is known rationally, and they say that human action has an aspect whereby it becomes ḥasan or qabīḥ.¹²⁰ This aspect is known in three different ways. The first one is the intuitive (*ḍarura*), such as the ḥusn of truth-telling, and the qubḥ of harmful lying. The

¹¹⁹ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Al-‘Arba’in fi Usūl al-Dīn*, 1/346-347.

¹²⁰ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawaqīf*, 324.

second way is speculation (*nazar*), such as the ḥusn of harmful truth-telling and the qubḥ of beneficial lying. And the third one might not be perceived by pure reason, i.e., the knowledge of this aspect (*wajh*) of ḥusn and qubḥ is provided by the religious law, such as the ḥusn of fasting the last day of *Ramadan* and the qubḥ of fasting the first day of *Shawal*.¹²¹

The second general position is found in his commentary on the *Mukhtaṣar*. He says that actions, according to the Mu‘tazilites, are ḥasan or qabiḥ by themselves (*lizatiha*).¹²² In other words, the ethical value of human actions is intrinsically found in them, not because of different aspects or considerations. However, the knowledge of this intrinsic value is known similarly, intuitively, by speculation, or by the religious law.¹²³

It is true that the Mu‘tazilites themselves have more than one position about the reality of ḥusn and qubḥ, as al-Ījī himself stated when he elaborated on their positions. In spite of some differences in the Mu‘tazilites’ position, al-Ījī sometimes ascribes only one position in a general way to the whole school of Mu‘tazilites. This ascribing of one position to all the Mu‘tazilites is a common practice by most of the Ash‘arite scholars. For example, al-Āmidī ascribes to them the position of the intrinsic value,¹²⁴ while al-Rāzī affirms that the Mu‘tazilites based their theory of ḥusn and qubḥ on different aspects (*wujh*).¹²⁵

After explaining the position that is attributed to the Mu‘tazilites in a general way, we need to plunge into al-Ījī’s elaboration on the Mu‘tazilites’ different positions in order to understand his own counterarguments. We say that al-Ījī divides the Mu‘tazilites regarding the argument of ḥusn and qubḥ into three positions. The first one is related to the early Mu‘tazilites who argue that ḥusn and qubḥ are intrinsic to human actions. The second position is attributed to Abū al-Ḥussain al-Baṣrī¹²⁶ who ascribes an

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ Muhtaṣar al-Muntahā al-Usūlī*, (Beirut: Darul Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 2004), 2/35.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, *Gayit al-Maram fi Ilim al-Kalām*, (Cairo: Ihya al-Turath, 1971), 233.

¹²⁵ Al-Rāzī, *Al-Matālib*, 3/338.

¹²⁶ Abū Al-Ḥussain Al-Baṣrī, Muhammad bin Alī is considered by Ibn al-Murtaḍa to be among the 12th *tabaka* of the Mu‘tazilites. See Ahmad Ibn al-Murtaḍa, *Tabakat al-Mu‘tazilia*. 2nd ed., (Beirut: Franz Shitaynar, 1987), 118-119.

inherent attribute only to the qabiḥ without the ḥasan. While the third position is related to al-Jubbāi¹²⁷ who denies the intrinsic value in human actions and affirms that ḥusn and qubḥ is based on different aspects and considerations.¹²⁸

2.2.2.1. Intrinsic Ḥusn and Qubḥ

Al-Ījī stated that the early Mu‘tazilites believe in intrinsic ethical value in actions in general and then he launched a series of arguments to refute their objective ethical value. Nevertheless, he did not define who are the early Mu‘tazilites who adopted this position. Therefore, we need to scrutinize the Mu‘tazilites’ books to find out about their early ancestors, but before that, it is necessary to admit that there is a paucity of information about the early scholars of Mu‘tazilites. Moreover, their opinions are mainly taken from the heresiography books and from their opponents’ books as well.¹²⁹ The charge of the objective ethical value is directed in many studies to the Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad.¹³⁰ Abū al-Qāsim al-Ka‘bī¹³¹ seems to be the prominent character among those who affirmed an objective value of ḥusn and qubḥ in human actions. His position is not only mentioned in modern studies, but also in the Mu‘tazilites’ books themselves. Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār dedicated a considerable part of his writings to refute this position. He says, “According to us [the Mu‘tazilites of Basra] the qabiḥ is qabiḥ because of an aspect, such as being injustice; while according to Abū al-Qasīm, the qabiḥ [act] is qabiḥ because of its intrinsic attribute and because of itself.”¹³² Some modern scholars ascribed this position to other early Mu‘tazilites, such as Abū al-Huzail al-Allaf, al-Nazzām and Muhammad al-Iskafī.¹³³ We notice here that the first two Mu‘tazilites, namely Abū al-Huzail and his student, al-Nazzam are among the early Mu‘tazilites of Basra, while Muhammad al-Iskafī, who is known

¹²⁷ Abū Alī al-Jubbāi is one of the prominent scholars among the Mu‘tazilites. He is considered in the 8th *Tabaka* by Ibn al-Murtaḍa; see *Tabakat al-Mu‘tazilia*, 80-81.

¹²⁸ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 324; Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/35-36.

¹²⁹ Muhammad Salīḥ Al-Sayyid, *Abū Ja‘far al-Iskafī and his theological and philosophical opinions*, (Cairo: Dar kuba’, 1998), 9.

¹³⁰ The Mu‘tazilites school of Baghdad was established in the third Islamic century by Bishr bin Al-Mu‘tamir, see Ibn al-Murtaḍa, *Tabakāt*. 52; Abdul Sattar al-Rawī, *The Rational Revolution*, (Bagdad: Culture Ministry, 1986), 79-89.

¹³¹ The head of the Mu‘tazilites of the Bagdadī school in his time. Ibn al-Murtaḍa considers him from the 8th *tabakā* of the Mu‘tazilites, see Ibn al-Murtaḍa. *Tabakat*. 88; Abdulkarim al-Sharhrastānī, *Al-Milal wa niḥal*. 2nd ed., (Beirut: Darul Kutub, 1992), 1/66.

¹³² Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, (Cairo: Wahba publication, 1996), 309-310.

¹³³ Ali Bardakoğlu, *Hüsn ve Kubh Konusunda Aklın Rolü ve İmam Maturidî*, (Erciyes Üniversitesi: İlihyat Fakültesi Dergesi, 4. Sayısı, 1987).

as Abū Ja‘far al-Iskāfī is from the Baghdadian school.¹³⁴ Therefore, we can say that al-Ījī’s argument is not directed per se to the Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad, but to a few Mu‘tazilites scholars from both schools, Basra and Baghdad.

Apparently, the position of the intrinsic value in actions stayed restricted to individual scholars in the early period and did not become a hallmark of the school of Mu‘tazilites as a whole. Moreover, the position being criticized by Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār who is the head of the Basran school, indicates the unpopularity of this opinion among the scholars of his school. While in the school of Baghdad, the opinion was adopted by the last scholar of the school, Abū al-Qasīm al-Ka‘bī, who marked the end of the Baghdadi School by his death in 319H.¹³⁵ Therefore, the very-often practice of ascribing the position to the short-lived school of Baghdad cannot be considered inaccurate. However, after spotting the ‘early scholars’ of Mu‘tazilites that al-Ījī classified as intrinsic ethical value proponents, now we need to go back to our theologian in question to present his arguments against this opinion.

Al-Ījī adopted two main arguments himself and presented a few other arguments given by his Ash‘arite colleagues as well. The first argument that al-Ījī adopted shows the inconsistency of the opponents’ argument by posing an example of good lying, which contradicts that lying is categorically bad. Al-Ījī argues, “Were the qubḥ of lying intrinsic because of itself (bizat) or an essential property, its [qubḥ] would not be conceived separated from it [lying]. Since what is essential for something cannot be separate from it, and thus the consequence is false.”¹³⁶ If an action is essentially qabiḥ or ḥasan, it cannot be conceived at any assumed moment or place differently, that is, it must always have the same ethical value regardless of the different circumstances. Al-Ījī argues that if lying has an inherent property of qubḥ, it cannot be conceived of as ḥasan in any imagined case. Although, in the example of lying in order to save the life of a prophet, lying would become obligatory for both of us, the Ash‘arites and the Mu‘tazilites.¹³⁷ The Mu‘tazilites admit that doing the obligatory is *ḥasan*, and thus

¹³⁴ According to Ibn al-Murtaḍa, Abū al-Huzail and al-Nazzām are from the 6th *tabaka*, while al-Iskāfī from the 7th one. See Ibn al-Murtaḍa. *Tabakat*. 44-49; Rashid al-Khaiun, *The Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad and Basra*, (London: Darul Hikma, 1997), 98,112,268.

¹³⁵ Abdul Sattar al-Rawī, *The Rational Revolution*, 86.

¹³⁶ Al-Ījī. *Al-Mawāqif*, 325.

¹³⁷ Al-Ījī. *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/36.

they fall into contradiction according to al-Ījī's argument. Put it logically, the argument could be formed in two premises,

- Lying is always qabiḥ (p. I)
- Lying in the case of sparing a prophet's life is ḥasan (p. II)

In order not to fall into contradiction, the Mu'tazilites need to concede that p. I is wrong because truth-telling in this case means helping the aggressor to kill an innocent person,¹³⁸ which is in itself an intrinsically qabiḥ act. The Mu'tazilites might still insist that lying is categorically qabiḥ, and in this case, the obligatory or the ḥasan is to save the life of the prophet by other means, such as seeking recourse to innuendo¹³⁹ (*ta'riḍ*), or allusion. Therefore, the intrinsic value of lying would be saved from the change.¹⁴⁰ However, al-Jurjānī, after bringing up the Mu'tazilites objection, responded succinctly by saying that our argument is assumed when the questioner makes his question very precise, and then the questioned person cannot find a way to resort to innuendo or to any other mean.¹⁴¹ Al-Ījī does not restrict his example to only 'lying to save a prophet' but he also includes other similar acts that could be conceived ḥasan *or* qabiḥ in different circumstances. Nevertheless, it would be salutary to our inquiry to mention that this argument that al-Ījī adopted is the main traditional argument of the school of Ash'arism. Moreover, it could be described as the mainstay argument that the Ash'arites used to prove that the value of ḥusn and qubḥ is not intrinsic to human actions.

Ibn al-Qayyīm, a proponent of the rational ḥusn and qubḥ, ascribes this position to most of the Ash'arites as follows,

Regarding the contention (*maslak*) that most of them [the Ash'arites] depended on, such as al-Qāḍī [al-Bāqillānī], Abūal-Ma'alī [al-Juwaynī], and Abū Amr bin al-Khatīb¹⁴² from the late Ash'arites. [they say] were [the value of] ḥusn and qubḥ intrinsic, it would not be changed according to different circumstances, attachment (*muta'alaq*) and time; moreover, the abrogation of action would be impossible since what is essential to the entity [*zat*] will stay as long as the entity stays, and it cannot be removed while it [*zat*] is fixed.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ The prophet is always conceived innocent because the infallibility is essential to prophecy according to both schools, the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites.

¹³⁹ The Mu'tazilites base their objection on the famous dictum: "innuendo is a means to escape from lying"

¹⁴⁰ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ Mawāqif*, 8/209.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² He means Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī whose second title is Ibn al-Khatīb.

¹⁴³ Ibn Qayyīm al-Jawziyya, *Miftaḥ Dari al-Sa'ada*, (Jadda: Darul Fawaid, 2010), 2/926.

It is true that the argument against intrinsic ethical value goes back to Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī as Ibn al-Qayyīm stated above, but in the available copies of al-Bāqillānī's books, we only find arguments that are differently formed, although they have the same content. For example, when al-Bāqillānī in *al-Tamhīd* argues against the intrinsic harm (*ḍarar*), he says if the case were like this, i.e., the action has an intrinsic value, then it would be necessary to consider this harm as qabiḥ from everyone does it, and it would be the same according to all doers and places.¹⁴⁴ The word “harm” that al-Bāqillānī used in this context means pure harm.¹⁴⁵ It is a synonym of injustice (*zulm*), namely, it is qabīḥ because actions are *qabīḥ* when they have the intrinsic attribute of *zulm*.

However, it is sufficient of us to know that al-Ījī's adopted and defended the main traditional argument that his Ash'arites ancestors used against the Mu'tazilites. This would be considered as another proof that al-Ījī tries to present the authentic face of the school of Ash'arism, at least in regard to the argument of *tahseen* and *taqbeeh*.

Al-Ījī's second argument is a type of a liar paradox¹⁴⁶ that shows that the position of intrinsic value would lead to contradiction. Let us put the argument in al-Ījī's words and then try to elaborate on it. He says,

If intrinsic value were true, it would lead to two contradictions both being true together. The consequence is false [the consequence: having two contradictions both of which are true]. The clarification of the implication is if someone said: 'I will lie tomorrow' then this report cannot be devoid of truth and falsity, and in all cases, two contradictory values will be together [truth and falsity]. The truth of his report entails lying at the end [fulfilling his first statement], and thus both essential attributes, ḥusn and qubḥ would be true together, and there are contradictories [values]. On the other hand, the falsity of his [first] report entails the negation of not lying [telling-truth tomorrow], and thus the same impossibility will be implied.¹⁴⁷

Put simply, the man who said 'I will lie tomorrow' cannot escape from having two contradictory values together, whether he lies or tells the truth the next day. In case he tells the truth on the second day, he will be belying his first statement [I will lie

¹⁴⁴ Al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd al-Awail wa Trakhīṣ al-Darla'il*, 3rd ed., (Beirut: Al-Kitab publication, 1993), 385.

¹⁴⁵ The Mu'tazilites define injustice as: “every harm that has no benefit and does not prevent other harm, and it should not be deserved as well. In other words, injustice is equal to pure harm.” See Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 347.

¹⁴⁶ The paradox is defined by Martin Pleitz as, “an argument that appears to be valid from premises that appear to be true to a conclusion that appears to be unacceptable” see, Martin Pleitz, *Logic, Language, and the Liar Paradox*. (Münster: Mentis, 2018), 18.

¹⁴⁷ Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/36.

tomorrow], and thus both values of truth and falsity will be attributed to his act. By the same token, if he lies the next day, he will be telling the truth, i.e., fulfilling his first statement, ‘I will lie tomorrow.’ Al-Ījī wants to show by this paradox that telling the truth is not intrinsically ḥasan, and the same, lying is not always qabiḥ. If the values of ḥusn and qubḥ were intrinsic to man’s act—which in this case is lying or telling the truth—it must be categorically described with one of these two values, but since his act on the day after will always entail the opposite value; therefore, the act in itself, whether lying or telling the truth, cannot have an intrinsic value of ḥusn and qubḥ. Al-Ījī adopted this argument in his commentary on *al-muntaha*, while in *al-Mawāqif*, he tried to ascribe this argument to his Ash‘arite colleagues in general. However, the argument does not seem to be al-Ījī’s mainstay in refuting the intrinsic value. Al-Fanārī¹⁴⁸ criticized this argument by saying that those who adopt the position of intrinsic values do not deem it impossible to have the ḥusn and qubḥ together in one action because, according to them, the act could have two inherent attributes that belong to the same act as genus or a personal attribute.¹⁴⁹ Al-Fanārī, in his objection to al-Ījī’s argument, argues that in spite of the fact that qubḥ entails blame and ḥusn does not entail it, it is still possible to have both ḥusn and qubḥ attributed to one action from two different perspectives.¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, al-Jurjānī insists on the validity of this proof against the early Mu‘tazilites, since considering something ḥasan and *qubīḥ* at the same time is possible according to *al-Jubbāiyah*,¹⁵¹ namely, this argument cannot be used to refute the position of al-Jubbāiyah, but it is still valid against the early Mu‘tazilites. He says, “You know that turning the ḥasan [act] into qabiḥ is possible according to those who adopt the position of aspects and considerations; therefore, this argument (maslak) becomes weak if it is intended to stand against all the Mu‘tazilites.”¹⁵²

Al-Ījī follows an eclectic approach in presenting the arguments against the Mu‘tazilites. He rejects several arguments provided by his Ash‘arites’ ancestors and

¹⁴⁸ This Fanārī is Ḥasan al-Harawī al-Fanārī (d.887H) who is different from the famous logician Muhammad bin Ḥamza al-Fanārī (d.835H) See the introduction of *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 1/7.

¹⁴⁹ Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/44-45.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Al-Jubbā’īya means Abū Ali al-Jubā’ā’ and those who adopted his position. The discussion of their position will forthcoming.

¹⁵² Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/210.

tries to point out the faults in them. However, for the sake of brevity, we will suffice by mentioning the most tenable ones among their arguments.

‘An accident cannot subsist on another accident’ is a very common and multifunctional statement in the Ash‘arite literature. However, the statement, in our argument, is used to prove that ḥusn and qubḥ are accidents or meanings¹⁵³, and thus they cannot subsist on actions, which are also accidents themselves. In order to prove this argument, al-Ījī tries to prove the truth of three propositions. The first one is to prove that ḥusn and qubḥ are additional to actions, that is, they do not have an identical nature. The second proposition proves the ontological existence of ḥusn and qubḥ. The third one argues that the existential ḥusn and qubḥ cannot subsist on other accidents, namely on actions.¹⁵⁴ Initially, let us write all the propositions that al-Ījī use in this argument:

- Ḥusn and qubḥ are additional to the reality of actions (p. I)
- This additional value (ḥusn *or* qubḥ) has an ontological existence (p. II)
- This additional existential meaning belongs to the category of accidents (p. III)
- Human actions are accidents (p. IV)
- Accidents cannot subsist on other accidents (p. V)
- Ḥusn and qubḥ cannot subsist on actions (p. VI)
- Ḥusn and qubḥ are additional, not intrinsic (conclusion)

For the first premise, al-Ījī argues that an action being ḥasan entails an additional meaning to that action; otherwise, conceptualizing the action will entail the conceptualization of its ḥusn. Yet this is not the case since we can still conceive the action without conceiving its ethical value.¹⁵⁵ The second premise seems like a many-folded theological argument, though we can try to put it simply by saying that ḥusn¹⁵⁶ must be existential since its contrary (*naqid*) is *non-ḥusn*, which is negation. If its contrary were not negation, as al-Ījī argues, it would require an existential locus to subsist on, and therefore, it would not be true to attribute it (the contrary of ḥusn) to the non-existent (*al-Ma‘dūm*). It follows, by necessity that the contrary of ḥusn is

¹⁵³ Accidents and meanings are used as synonyms in this context. For more elaboration on the meaning of accidents see, Muhammad bin Alī al-Tahanawī, *Kashāf Istilahāt al-Funūn wa-al-'Ulūm*, 1st ed., (Beirut: Nashrun Publication, 1996), 2/1175.

¹⁵⁴ Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/50.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ The argument is valid of *qubḥ* as well.

negation since it can be attributed to the non-existent, which has no existential locus for sure. Therefore, the contrary of ḥusn is negation, i.e., ḥusn has an ontological existence; otherwise, two contraries would be negated, which is impossible.¹⁵⁷

Proving the truth of premise I and II would entail the truth of premise III since proving that ḥusn has additional ontological existence means it is a meaning (accident) and this is the meaning of the accident, as al-Ījī states.¹⁵⁸ Proving the truth of premises I, II and III is sufficient for al-Ījī to move to the conclusion because premise IV is a postulate (*musallamah*),¹⁵⁹ while the fifth premise is only assumed true in this argument, although it cannot be free from objections. However, as we mentioned before, al-Ījī presents this argument as an Ash‘arite argument in general; namely, he does not rely on it as a main argument to refute the position of intrinsic ḥusn and qubḥ. Moreover, he points out its faults by saying, “The critique [of this argument] could happen by applying the same proof to the affirmed (thābit) contingency of the action, which would entail that contingency is not inherent to the action, and thus the action will not be contingent by itself.”¹⁶⁰ The defection of the argument, as al-Ījī says, is related to the second premise, namely, the ontological existence of ḥusn and qubḥ since for something to be inherent to something does not entail its existentialism; otherwise, the opponent will ask us to apply the same argument to contingency or occurrence (*ḥuduth*), although we consider them as considerations (*i‘tibarat*) in spite of being essentials. Another objection to this argument is coming from al-Jurjānī who holds that accidents could subsist on other accidents since the demonstrative proof of the impossibility of this has not been established yet.¹⁶¹

In spite of saying that the argument is still questionable by the Ash‘arites themselves, we need to admit that this argument has been adopted by a prominent late Ash‘arite scholar, Sayf al-Dīn al-, who ardently used and defended this proof in spite of the potential objections that are directed to it. Al-Āmidī applied the same method that al-Ījī applied by presenting other Ash‘arite arguments and then choosing the most tenable one, which is according to him that ḥusn and qubḥ are accidents and cannot

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Postulate (*Musallamā*) is the proposition that agreed to be true.

¹⁶⁰ Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/50-51; Al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 326; al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/211.

¹⁶¹ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/212.

subsist on other accidents.¹⁶² Al-Āmidī does not consider the fault that al-Ījī mentioned as a serious objection to his argument because he distinguishes between considerations (*I'tibarāt*) and existential attributes; the former is related to contingency and occurrence, while the latter is related to ḥusn and qubḥ. Furthermore, al-Āmidī argues that deeming ḥusn and qubḥ as considerations (*i'tibarāt*) would negate their intrinsic ethical value, i.e., the Mu'tazilites' position will be refuted in both cases.¹⁶³ However, the argument that 'accidents cannot subsist on other accidents' attracted many objections from inside and outside the school of Ash'arism and generated many responses as well, Yet, will suffice with the amount that we mentioned because the rest is not salutary to our purpose.

Finally, we can say that in order to refute the position of the early Mu'tazilites, al-Ījī counted mainly on the first argument that says that if ḥusn and qubḥ were intrinsic to human actions, they would have the same ethical value in all circumstances. This is the main traditional argument in the school of Ash'arism. The second strong argument is the liar paradox, which al-Ījī depended on in some of his books and tried to cast doubts on it in other books. Regarding al-Āmidī's argument of the accidental nature of ḥusn and qubḥ, al-Ījī insisted on calling it weak in many places of his books.

2.2.2.2. The Position of Abu al-Ḥussain al-Baṣrī

The second position that al-Ījī ascribed to the Mu'tazilites is that of Abū al-Ḥussain al-Baṣrī who apparently had a position similar to that of the early Mu'tazilites. The difference between him and the early Mu'tazilites is that the early ones affirmed inherent attributes for both ḥusn and qubḥ, while Abū al-Ḥussain al-Baṣrī affirmed the existence of inherent attributes only for *qabīh*, without ḥasan. Al-Kirmānī argues that as long as ḥusn and qubḥ or one of them is understood from the entity (*zāt*), we are still talking about the intrinsic ethical value of actions. Therefore, al-Kirmānī affirms that this position goes back to the first category, that is, to the early Mu'tazilites.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, *Al-Iḥkam fī Usūl al-'Aḥkām*, (Beirut: Islamic Office for Publication, 1982), 1/84.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 1/85.

¹⁶⁴ Shams al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Hussain paṣa, 317), 348b.

However, this position that al-Ījī ascribed to Abū al-Ḥussān al-Baṣrī could lead us to the belief that actions, in general, are good in their default situation and only some actions have real properties that make them qabiḥ. Al-Jurjānī elaborates on this position by saying, “[the act] does not need an attribute to become ḥasan; the negation of the attribute of qubḥ is enough to consider it as ḥasan.”¹⁶⁵ Before exploring Abū al-Ḥussān al-Baṣrī’s books, it would be worth noting that Abū al-Ḥussān was a prominent student of al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār¹⁶⁶ who himself repudiates the position of intrinsic ḥusn or qubḥ. In other words, it is more possible that Abū al-Ḥussān al-Baṣrī followed his teacher in adopting the theory of aspects (*al-wjuh*) than the position of the intrinsic value. Nevertheless, we cannot give any judgement before exploring Abū al-Ḥussān al-Baṣrī’s books in order to see his real position. In his main book, *al-Mu’tamad*, he gives more than one definition of ḥusn and qubḥ, the most famous one, which al-Ījī also mentioned is “Al-qabiḥ is [the act] that the one [the agent] has no right¹⁶⁷ to perform it as long as he has power and knowledge over it”¹⁶⁸

Al-Ījī shows his admiration for this definition by saying that it is the best among what has been narrated from the Mu’tazilites’ statements.¹⁶⁹ However, al-Ījī linked this definition to the first position that he ascribed to Abū al-Ḥussān by saying, “It follows [from this definition] that its doer deserves blame, and [it follows] that it [the action] has a property that makes it blameworthy.”¹⁷⁰ Deserving blame is based on doing an action that has qabiḥ property, but there are two pre-conditions for that, the knowledge of its qubḥ and the intention of performing it. In other words, performing qabiḥ does not deserve blame when it is done out of ignorance or coercion.

Abū al-Ḥussān al-Baṣrī himself, when he elaborates on qabiḥ, affirms that its qubḥ is because of a property that makes it blameful, while in defining ḥasan he gives a

¹⁶⁵ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/204.

¹⁶⁶ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār’s position will be explained in detail in the following part. For more information about the relationships between the Mu’tazilites of Basra see Mahmud bin Muhammad al-Malāḥīmī, *Al-Fa’iq fi Usūl al-Dīn*, (Cairo: Darul Kutub, 2010), 6-10.

¹⁶⁷ Abū al-Ḥussān used the word ‘*mutamakin*’ which literary means fixed in a place (*mekan*), though in this context it means that the doer has a power over the action he is doing. Al-Jurjānī elaborates on this word by saying it is a condition to exclude the badness of the coerced action, which means that the doer does not have power over it. See al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/205.

¹⁶⁸ Abū al-Ḥussān al-Baṣrī, *Al-Mu’tamad*, (Damascus: The French Institute of High Education, 1964), 1/365.

¹⁶⁹ Al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 324.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

privative definition by saying, “[*asan*] that has no property that causes blameworthiness.”¹⁷¹ We can say that the position that al-Ījī ascribed to Abū al-Ḥussain al-Baṣrī seems accurate and taken exactly from his book, *al-Mu‘tamad*. However, by taking Abū al-Ḥussain al-Baṣrī’s definitions in their context, we find that he is talking about the actions of the legally incumbent. In other words, the *ḥasan* that has no extra property is the permissible, i.e., the plain good, while the other type of *ḥasan* that has a *ḥusn* property is the necessary (*wajib*)¹⁷². Furthermore, in order to have a complete comprehension of Abū al-Ḥussain’s position we need to respond to two crucial questions: the first one is whether the knowledge of the properties of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* are related only to the religious law or are known by the intellect. The second question is whether the property of *qubḥ* is inherent in some actions or not.

To respond to the first question, we say that Abū al-Ḥussain al-Baṣrī explicitly declares that actions in respect to the intellect are *ḥasan* or *qabiḥ*. The latter include actions such as injustice, ignorance, lying, and disbelief, while the former is divided into two types. The first one contains the action that its performance is rationally preponderated over its omission, namely, it has a property of *ḥusn*. The second one is that its performance is not rationally preponderated over its omission, i.e., it is *ḥasan* only in respect to being devoid of the property of *qubḥ*: it is the permissible one.¹⁷³ The definitions that Abū al-Ḥussain used when he talked about the legally incumbent’s actions could be exactly applied to the rationally *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* that he mentioned here. Therefore, the legal or the rational *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* have the same definitions according to Abū al-Ḥussain al-Baṣrī, although he does not restrict the knowledge of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* absolutely to one of them, i.e., reason discovers by its own the *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* of some actions and depends on revelation to know the value of other actions.

The second question that we need to answer is whether the ethical value is inherent in some actions or not. As al-Ījī alluded and his student al-Kirmānī affirmed, Abū al-Ḥussain al-Baṣrī’s position is similar to the one of the early Mu‘tazilites, that is, they believe in the intrinsic *ḥusn* and *qubḥ*. However, regarding the contention that we raised earlier that Abū al-Ḥussain al-Baṣrī could be following his teacher, al-Qāḍī

¹⁷¹ Abū al-Ḥussain al-Baṣrī, *Al-Mu‘tamad*, 1/365.

¹⁷² *Ibid.* 1/365-71.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1/868.

Abdul Jabbar, in affirming aspects (*wujuh*) of ḥusn or qubḥ, we see that the word ‘*wajh*’ is used in a few places in his book. For example, when he argues that benefiting from the provisions on earth is permissible and rationally ḥasan, he says, “We could say that the existence of benefit (*naḥ*) calls to perform the action and entails its ḥusn if it is devoid of the aspects of qubḥ and the signs of harm and corruption; therefore, benefiting from food has this status in the intellect.”¹⁷⁴

The Aspects of qubḥ are causative regarding changing the permissible action from its pure status of ḥusn to qubḥ. In this case, we might argue that nothing is ḥasan or qabīḥ per se, i.e., the existence or the absence of certain aspects could change the ethical value of human actions. However, the evidence for this position is not enough since Abū al-Ḥussān does not give us sufficient details about the nature of the ethical aspects of ḥusn and qubḥ. On the contrary, we find something that affirms the position that is ascribed to him by al-Ījī, namely, the statement that proves that the ethical values according to Abū al-Ḥussān are inherent in some actions and cannot be changed due to different circumstances. Abū al-Ḥussān argues that lying is always qabīḥ, that is, its qubḥ is an inherent property, which cannot be changed. He says, “lying is qabīḥ regardless of the aspect it has and in spite of being related to benefits or preventing harm.”¹⁷⁵ Based on these pieces of evidence, we can say that the position that al-Ījī ascribed to Abū al-Ḥussān al-Baṣrī has some supporting evidence in *al-Mu‘tamad*, although there are still some statements that hold us back from ascribing this position categorically to Abū al-Ḥussān al-Baṣrī. However, it is not essential to our inquiry to find out the exact position of Abū al-Ḥussān al-Baṣrī, so it is enough to show that al-Ījī is apparently accurate about stating Abū al-Ḥussān’s position. In spite of this, al-Ījī did not direct any specific argument to Abū al-Ḥussān al-Baṣrī since refuting the argument of the early Mu‘tazilites entails disproving the existence of any inherent property of qabīḥ actions in general. The second important position of the Mu‘tazilites is al-Jubbā’īyah’s position, or we can call it the main position of the Mu‘tazilite school of Basra.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 1/870.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 1/869-870.

2.2.2.3. Al-Jubbā'īyah's Position

We will follow the same method by presenting al-Ījī's explanation of this position and his arguments first, and then we will explore the argument in the Mu'tazilites' books and compare it with what al-Ījī said. Al-Ījī declares that according to al-Jubbā'ī and his followers, ḥusn and qubḥ are not related to intrinsic properties, but they are due to aspects and considerations. He says, "Al- Jubbā'īyah said that it [ḥusn and qubḥ] happens because of a property that necessitates it [its ḥusn and qubḥ]; although, this attribute is not a real property, only aspects and considerations."¹⁷⁶ The word considerations (*i'tibarāt*) does not mean that ḥusn and qubḥ are relative or changeable according to different doers, but, as al-Ījī states, there is a necessary determination of the ethical value by a property (*ṣifā*). The property determines, by necessity, whether the action is ḥasan or qabiḥ, but it is still not a real property; it is merely aspects and considerations. Put simply, real property means a property that is inherent to certain actions and would entail the same ethical value to these actions regardless of circumstances. For example, lying has an inherent property of qubḥ and it will always be qabiḥ because of this inherent property, regardless of the situation. On the other hand, the unreal property will necessitate the ethical value only in certain aspects and considerations. Al-Ījī explains this position by saying, "Slapping (*laṭīm*) an orphan boy could be either to reform him [then it would be ḥasan] or to torture him [then it would be qabiḥ]."¹⁷⁷ Slapping is the action and the aspect that determines its ḥusn or qubḥ is either reforming or torturing, namely, slapping plus the aspect of reforming makes the action ḥasan, while slapping plus the aspect of torturing makes the action qabiḥ. Based on this elaboration, we understand that ḥusn and qubḥ are determined by different aspects, while according to al-Ījī's position, ḥusn and qubḥ are determined only by divine injunctions.

Al-Ījī gives this position more attention because it is the main position of the Mu'tazilite school of Basra. He elaborates on their position saying that the Mu'tazilites assert that the aspect of ḥusn and qubḥ is known by the intellect either specifically or in a general way. Therefore, the mind, according to the Mu'tazilites, can conceive the ethical value of human actions before the advent of the religious law. In respect to this

¹⁷⁶ Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/36; Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 324; al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/218.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

reasoning, human actions are divided into two different regards based on the rational conception of their ethical value. If the aspects of certain actions are known particularly, then we have five categories of actions, which are: necessity, prohibition, recommendation, detestation, and permissibility. Each one of these categories can be determined rationally according to the aspect¹⁷⁸ of ḥusn and qubḥ. The second regard, namely, when the intellect is unable to detect the ethical aspect of specific actions, then the intellect can divide actions in a general way into three categories, either prohibition, permissibility, or suspension (*tawaquf*).¹⁷⁹ These two regards of human actions are based on the knowledge of the aspect of ḥusn and qubḥ. The first division is similar to the division of the legal rulings, although the rulings here are rational and the legal rulings must come accordingly. In this division the Mu‘tazilites do not mean that the intellect alone can discover the ethical aspects of all human actions, but its realm is restricted to certain actions where the ḥusn and qubḥ can be discovered exactly. Whereas, for the actions in which the intellect is unable to discover their ethical value, the religious law plays a complementary role in indicating the ethical value.

The majority of human actions before the advent of the religious law are included in the second division, namely, the division of the actions in a general way without giving a particular ruling for particular actions per se. This division became the focus of al-Ījī’s criticism in his argument.

Al-Ījī argues that the intellect is unable to give any general judgement regarding the ethical value of our actions before the advent of the religious law. To prove his contention, he has to argue against the Mu‘tazilites’ general division of actions before the advent of the religious law into prohibition, permissibility, and suspension. He says that regarding the proof of prohibition, the Mu‘tazilites argue that it stems from the rational judgement about disposing of the property of another person. Disposing of the property of someone else is rationally *qabīh* and, thus, it must be prohibited. Al-Ījī says that this argument is wrong since disposing the property of another person may cause harm to him and God the Exalted cannot be a subject of harm. Therefore, the

¹⁷⁸ More elaboration on the nature of these aspects will come when we move to explore the Mu‘tazilites’ books.

¹⁷⁹ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 327-328; al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/215.

argument cannot be analogical to God's ownership because everything on earth belongs to God and using His properties is not the same as using humans' properties. Al-Ījī's objections to rational judgement of permissibility (*ibāḥah*) pivot around affirming that God alone, through His religious law, can make things permissible because He is the real owner of everything and the intellect does have the right to make anything permissible.¹⁸⁰ However, these objections seem to be peripheral to the focus of refuting the position of ethical aspects; they are intended only to cast some doubt about the ability of the intellect to discover the rulings of things before the advent of the religious law.

The main argument that is directed to refute this position is found in al-Ījī's commentary on *al-Muḥtaṣar*. The argument that al-Ījī used seems quite philosophical and difficult to grasp; nevertheless, I will try to render his words accurately in English, and then elaborate on it. He says,

Were the ḥusn and qubḥ of an action due to something apart from the [divine] demand, then the attachment of the demand would not be for itself. The consequence is false [that is the demand's attachment is not per se], and the implication is that its attachment [the demand] would depend on an additional thing, and what is essentially related to something cannot be depended on additional things. However, the untruth of the implication is that we know by rational necessity that the demand is an attribute that has a relation that rationally entails a demanded thing, and the reality of the demand cannot be conceived unless it is attached to a demanded thing (*maṭlūb*).¹⁸¹

Al-Ījī argues that things are either ḥasan or qabīḥ because of the divine demand which must be rationally attached to the things that are demanded and, thus, the demand gives the ethical value to the demanded actions by virtue of its attachment to them. Therefore, the relation must be only between the demand and the demanded action, and thus its ḥusn and qubḥ is entailed. However, claiming the existence of things, which are additional to the reality of the action and necessitate its ethical value is a false claim because the implication of this claim would falsify the nature of the demand. In other words, it would entail the attachment of the demand to something else apart from its demanded thing, which is rationally impossible. Therefore, the existence of efficient aspects that are responsible for the ethical values of human actions is impossible.

¹⁸⁰ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 328.

¹⁸¹ Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/71.

Al-Taftāzānī elaborates on this proof by saying that the argument is not only related to al-Jubbā'īyah, who says that ḥusn and qubḥ are due to aspects and considerations, but it is also valid against all the Mu'tazilites because affirming that ḥusn and qubḥ is a rational entailment of the demand would negate any other possible reason, such as attributes or aspects.¹⁸² However, in case we say that ḥusn and qubḥ are due to intrinsic attributes of actions themselves, al-Taftāzānī's contention will not seem to be free from objections. Therefore, I think that the argument is more likely intended to refute al-Jubbā'īyah's position alone, not the early Mu'tazilites' as well. Nonetheless, al-Taftāzānī brought up some objections against this argument; he says that the attachment is a relationship between the (divine) demand and the demanded action; therefore, the relationship cannot exist without the existence of its two parts, i.e., the demand and the demanded action. Thus, the three parts must exist together, but the divine demand, according to the Ash'arites' reasoning, is eternal and human action is contingent. Therefore, accepting this premise would entail either the occurrence of the divine demand or the eternity of human actions.¹⁸³ However, I do not think that this objection is a serious one because the Ash'arites explicitly say that the divine attributes are eternal; nevertheless, they have two types of attachment (*ta'luq*): eternal and contingent.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, the divine demand, or more accurately, the divine speech is an eternal attribute that has contingent attachments to human actions, which are contingent themselves.

The second objection that al-Taftāzānī brought seems worth its salt; he says that the attachment of the demand to human actions does not take place until the action is qualified with its attributes or aspects.¹⁸⁵ In other words, the action with its attributes or aspects is considered in the extra-mental existence as one entity, i.e., the demanded thing is the qualified action, or you can say, the action that is conditioned by certain attributes or aspects. Therefore, the impossibility of having the demand without its demanded object (with its attributes and aspects) is discarded.

¹⁸² Ibid, 2/73.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ For complete details about the Ash'arites' position about divine attributes and their attachment, see Ahmad al-Sijlmasanī, *An epistle on the attachments of God's attributes*, (Tunis: Ibn 'Arafa Publication, 2019)

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

The second argument that al-Ījī directed to all Mu‘tazilites in general and to al-Jubbā’īyah, in particular, says that if the ḥusn and qubḥ of actions were based on properties or aspects, it would entail the negation of divine freedom in terms of rulings, and then divine rulings would comply with the properties and aspects and would not have the freedom to be different.¹⁸⁶ However, the implication of this argument is explained by al-Ījī as follows:

[In this case] actions in themselves will not be equal regarding the rulings. If one side of the action [performing or omission] is preponderated, then to have the ruling according to the other side is rationally unacceptable, namely, it would be qabiḥ and inconceivable in respect to God. Therefore, ruling according to the preponderated side of the action would be necessary and that negates the [divine] choice.¹⁸⁷

In order to understand al-Ījī’s argument, first, we need to know that the proposition, ‘God does not commit qabiḥ action,’ is unanimously accepted by all Ash‘arites and Mu‘tazilites alike. Nevertheless, the reasoning is different between these two schools. According to the Ash‘arites, the value of qubḥ cannot be rationally conceived in respect to God and His actions. While the Mu‘tazilites said that both values, ḥusn and qubḥ, could be rationally known in both divine and human actions, and God does not do qabiḥ because of His justice and wisdom.¹⁸⁸ However, al-Ījī argues that if the properties or the aspects of ḥusn existed in one action, its performance must be preponderated because, according to the Mu‘tazilites, when the aspects of ḥusn are preponderated, the divine ruling must comply with its ḥusn because God does not command the opposite. In short, al-Ījī wants to say that claiming that the divine judgements must comply with the preponderated side of ḥusn and qubḥ would lead to denying the freedom of divine judgement. However, this argument would be true only if the Mu‘tazilites say that God does not have the power to command the opposite of the preponderated side. Based on a cursory glance in the Mu‘tazilite books, it does not seem that this is the position of the Mu‘tazilite school of Basra, but we can say that the claim that God does have power over *qabīḥ* is often attributed to al-Jaḥiẓ and his student, al-Nazzām. Nevertheless, the fact that al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār criticized this position¹⁸⁹ would convince us that this position is merely an aberration among the Mu‘tazilite ideas. So far we have presented two main arguments of al-Ījī against al-

¹⁸⁶ Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/71.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 315.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. 314.

Jubbā'īyah, or those who hold that ḥusn and qubḥ are due to aspects and considerations. Now we need to discover al- Jubbā'īyah's exact position on this issue.

2.2.2.3.1. Al-Qāḍī: Presenting al- Jubbā'īyah

We have already explained that al- Jubbā'īyah refers to Abū Alī al-Jubbā'ī and his followers. Abū Alī al-Jubbā'ī's ideas have been adopted by his son, Abū Hashim al-Jubbā'ī,¹⁹⁰ except for a few issues. Later on, Abū Hashim's ideas, which are known as *al-bahshamiah*, would become the cornerstone for the later Mu'tazilites, such as Abū Abdullah al-Bassarī and his student al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār.¹⁹¹ Scrutinizing the position of Abū Alī al-Jubbā'ī from his own books seems beyond the means because we only have one book available that is attributed to him (*Kitab al-Maqālāt*)¹⁹² and it does not mention anything related to our argument. Therefore, we will explore al-Jubbā'ī's position through one of his most prominent followers, al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār al-Hamadānī, who studied with the students of Abū Ḥashīm al-Jubbā'ī, such as Abī Ishāq bin 'Ayyash¹⁹³ and Abū Abdullah al-Hussān al-Baṣrī.¹⁹⁴ Al-Sharḥrastānī affirmed that the late Mu'tazilites, such as al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, and other Mu'tazilites followed the school of Abū Ḥashīm al-Jubbā'ī.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, it is evident that al-Qāḍī adopted the same position as Abū Alī al-Jubbā'ī and his son in regard to the argument of ḥusn and qubḥ. In his book, *al-Mugnī*, he elaborates abundantly on the question of ḥusn and qubḥ and ascribes most of his contentions to Al-Jubbā'ī and his son.¹⁹⁶ He explicitly attributes the position of aspects to them when he says, "Know that most of the speech (kalam) of our two shaykhs [May God be pleased with them] indicate that al-ḥasan

¹⁹⁰ Al-Bagdadī mentions that Abū Alī al-Jubbā'ī was the head of the Mu'tazilites of Basra, and after his death, the Mu'tazilites started following his son, Abū Hashim. See Abdul Qahīr al-Bagdadī, *Al-Fark Bina al-Firak*. Second ed., (Beirut: Dar al-Afak, 1977), 167. Al-Shahrastānī talks about the ideas of al-Jubbā'ī and his son under one title, which is al-Jubbā'ī and al-Bahshamīyah. See. Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milāl wa al-Niḥal*, 1/78.

¹⁹¹ Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milāl wa al-Niḥal*, 1/67, 72.

¹⁹² Abū al-Hussān al-Baṣrī mentioned that al-Jubbā'ī wrote one hundred thousand and fifty papers; moreover, Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalanī narrated that al-Jubbā'ī had written seventy books. See Al-Jubbā'ī, Abū alī. *Al-Maqālāt*, (Istanbul: Endülüs Yayınları, 2019), 218.

¹⁹³ Abū Ishāq Ibrahim Ibn 'Aīsh is considered in the tenth *tabakā* of the Mu'tazilites, see Ibn al-Murtaḍa. *Tabakāt al-Mu'tazilites*, 107.

¹⁹⁴ Ibn al-Murtaḍa, *Tabakāt al-Mu'tazila*, 105; See the introduction of Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār bin Aḥmad, *Al-Mugnī*, (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub, 1953), 6/1.

¹⁹⁵ Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milāl wa al-Niḥal*, 1/72.

¹⁹⁶ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbar, *Al-Mugnī*. 6/40, 41, 49, 55, 71, 78, 122, 128.

becomes ḥasan because of aspects; similarly, al-qabiḥ becomes qabīḥ for the same reason.”¹⁹⁷

After proving that al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār’s books are unfailing sources for al-Jubbā’ī’s position, we need to start delineating his understanding of ḥusn and qubḥ. Al-Qāḍī starts his theory by defining the action in a general way. He says, “The action can be only described as an action when it comes into existence by the one who has power over it. The one who recognizes it like this will recognize it as his action, and whoever does not recognize it like this will not recognize it as an action.”¹⁹⁸ The action, according to al-Qāḍī, needs two essential attributes in order to be ascribed to a real agent. These attributes are power over the action and the knowledge of performing it with that power. In other words, actions that do not have these two attributes cannot be real actions and cannot be ascribed to real agents; therefore, they cannot carry the value of ḥusn or qubḥ. The action that is missing these two conditions or one of them has no real property apart from its existence, such as the actions of a sleeping person or a coerced one. We can see in al-Qāḍī’s assertion that the freedom of choice is essential in making human actions recipients of ethical values. Therefore, we can say that the al-Ījī was accurate when he said that negating the freedom of choice is enough to refute the Mu‘tazilites’ position of rational ethical values.

Al-Qāḍī’s purpose of proving the existence of actions that have no ethical values is a preliminary step in order to prove the other type of actions that ethical values can be ascribed to. He argues that if actions were qabiḥ only for their existence, all actions would be qabiḥ, and similarly if actions were ḥusn only for their existence, all actions would be ḥasan. This is definitely not the case; therefore, ḥusn and qubḥ must exist.¹⁹⁹ Al-Ījī, on the other hand, argues that all actions in themselves are neither ḥasan nor qabīḥ, and their ethical values are granted only by the religious law. Therefore, there is no ethical judgement that the intellect can discover before the advent of the religious law.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 6/70. The two “Shaykhs” in Mu‘tazilites literature refers to Abū Alī al-Jubbā’ī and his son Abū Hashīm, see Ibn al-Murtaḍa, *Tabakāt al-Mu‘tazila*, 113.

¹⁹⁸ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *al-Mugnī*, 6/5.

¹⁹⁹ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *al-Mugnī*, 6/9.

²⁰⁰ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 323.

Al-Qāḍī's existential ethical values cover all actions, more precisely, all intentional actions must have the ethical values of ḥusn and qubḥ. He gives simple definitions of ḥusn and then starts counting its types. He says, "al-ḥasan is that which its agent has the right to do it without deserving blame."²⁰¹ Right and blame are not necessary dependent on the religious law, but they can be understood by virtue of pure reason. Al-Ījī only explained their meaning of blame (*zamm*) by saying, "Blame is either performing an action or a saying; or omitting an action or a saying that indicate to the inferior status of someone else."²⁰² This the general meaning of blame, regardless of the source that could cause it.

Going back to al-Qāḍī's division, we see that he divided ḥusn into three categories. The first one is when performing an action or omitting it is the same; it refers to the permissible, which has no additional property apart from its ḥusn.²⁰³ The second category is when performing actions is praiseworthy and omitting them does not deserve blame. This type of action could be called the recommended. Finally, the last category of ḥusn, according to al-Qāḍī, is the obligatory one, when omitting the action deserves blame.²⁰⁴ These three categories of ḥusn have been mentioned by al-Ījī, although it should not be understood that the Mu'tazilites set specific categories for good or bad actions. Put differently, the same action by itself could exist in all of the previous categories according to different aspects and considerations. Al-Qāḍī says, "It should be known that every single action can be associated with an aspect that makes it ḥasan, or an opposite of that aspect, and thus becomes qabīḥ; while judging actions by themselves [without the aspects] is not acceptable."²⁰⁵

We can say broadly that actions are two types: the ones that can be associated with aspects and the ones that cannot be associated with aspects. The former is the subject of our study, namely the actions that can be described as ḥasan or qabīḥ. Therefore, it is essential to know what kind of aspects determine the ethical value in our actions and what are the epistemic tools to detect these aspects.

²⁰¹ Ibid. 6/7; Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 327.

²⁰² Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 324.

²⁰³ The action is simply good because it meets the two essential conditions: power and knowledge.

²⁰⁴ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 327; al-Qāḍī, *al-Mugnī*, 6/7.

²⁰⁵ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 565.

2.2.2.3.2. Determining the Ethical Aspect of Qubḥ

For determining qabiḥ actions, al-Qāḍī defined qabiḥ in a broad sense and then determined the aspects of two main qabiḥ actions: lying and injustice. Analogically, every action that shares the same aspects will be qabiḥ as well. However, the definition of qabiḥ is “that [act] for which its agent who has power over it will deserve blame based on certain aspects.”²⁰⁶ It means that qabiḥ must be from the second type of actions that hold ethical values, and therefore, blame can be due to its volitional agent. Nevertheless, the blame is not concomitant with certain actions by themselves, but it is associated with the existence of certain aspects. After knowing that the aspects are responsible for the ethical value of our actions, we need to know what are the aspects of injustice and lying that al-Qāḍī built his theory on.

The main aspect of injustice is pure harm that has no justification at all. Al-Qāḍī defines injustice²⁰⁷ as follows, “Injustice (ẓulm) is the harm that has no benefit and does not lead to avoiding greater harm. It is [the harm] that is not deserved, and not thought to have the first two aspects [the existence of benefit or avoiding harm].”²⁰⁸

The four aspects of injustice are:

- 1- Pure harm that has no benefit
- 2- Not leading to avoid greater harm than it
- 3- The absence of deserts (*istiḥqaq*)
- 4- It is not thought to have the first two aspects

When these four aspects are found together in any action, the action becomes categorically qabiḥ. In other words, missing any of these aspects would negate the definite qubḥ of the action. For example, if the action is harmful, though it can lead to avoiding greater harm, then the action is no longer injustice, i.e., it is no longer *qabiḥ*. Similarly, if the harm is deserved, it is not injustice. The fourth aspect is merely an affirmation of the first two aspects, namely, injustice could be justified and not called *qabiḥ* if the first and second aspects are thought not to exist. In other words, the conjecture of missing aspect 1 or 2 would prevent us from considering the action qabiḥ.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 41.

²⁰⁷ Houranī translated *ẓulm* as ‘wrongdoing’ and *ḍara* as injury; though, I think, it is more specific to translate *ẓulm* as injustice and *ḍara* as harm. However, for Houranī’s translation see George F. Houranī, *Islamic Rationalism*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 71.

²⁰⁸ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 351.

The second main qabiḥ that al-Qāḍī depends on is ‘lying,’ although lying in itself is not categorically bad according to al-Qāḍī. This means that the statement that is not congruent to reality could be sometimes ḥasan if it is missing the essential qabiḥ aspects of lying. He defines lying as follows, “Lying that has no benefit and does not repulse greater harm than it [lying].”²⁰⁹ We notice that both definitions are quite similar and both of their aspects are based on benefit and harm; therefore, we can say that al-Qāḍī’s rational ethical value is based on benefit and harm.

Having said that, we do not think that al-Ījī would disagree completely with this rational judgement because, as we stated before, al-Ījī agrees that the intellect can conceive of ḥusn and qubḥ in respect to benefit and harm.²¹⁰ In other words, the harm in the action, regardless of calling it injustice, lying or something else, can be conceived as qabiḥ. However, the difference between al-Ījī’s position and that of al-Qāḍī’s is that while al-Ījī would consider it qabiḥ only in regard to the harm that it is associated with it, al-Qāḍī would consider it absolutely *qabīḥ*. Put it differently, the rational ethical value that al-Ījī concedes here is contingent, temporal and separable from qabiḥ, while al-Qāḍī’s ethical value is necessary, permanent and essential to the concept of qabiḥ. Therefore, we can say again that the rational knowledge of benefit and harm is not the focus of controversy, as al-Ījī says, “Detecting benefit and harm by the intellect is not the intended [dispute] as it has been mentioned before.”²¹¹ However, the dispute can be manifest when al-Qāḍī declares that the rational knowledge of these ethical aspects is necessary, namely, that the religious law cannot come up with something different to the ethical necessary knowledge that we have.²¹² Any rational being would conceive the qubḥ of injustice and lying when he recognizes their aspects, which are like the cause of their ethical value. The cause that makes injustice and lying qabiḥ is applicable to any action and gives us certain knowledge about its qubḥ. Al-Qāḍī says, “When we know the cause that made injustice and lying qabiḥ, then we can similarly judge every qabiḥ because of the same cause that they have. Moreover, it is not possible to know something qabiḥ except by knowing the

²⁰⁹ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Al-Mugnī*, 6/19.

²¹⁰ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 323/

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 327.

²¹² George Houranī tries on many occasions to draw similarities between Al-Qāḍī’s and the British intuitionism of William David Rose. See Hourani, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics*, 20, 101-107

aspect that led to its qubḥ.²¹³ The cause that al-Qāḍī is talking about is the simultaneous cause that its effect must exist necessarily with it, such as raising the hand and the necessary effect of rising the ring on it. He says that since it is impossible to have the cause without its effect, it is impossible as well to have the aspect of qubḥ without necessitating the qubḥ of the actions.²¹⁴ In sum, we know that there are a set of aspects related primarily to lying and injustice, and secondarily that could be found in any action; when they are found in any action, they give it the ethical value of qubḥ.

2.2.2.3.3. Determining the Ethical Aspect of Ḥusn

We have already talked about the division of ḥusn according to the Mu‘tazilites of Basra, although we have not mentioned the definition of ḥusn and its aspects together. Al-Qāḍī defines ḥusn in a broad way, and then he elaborates on the aspects of different types of ḥusn. He says, “Some actions that are associated with aspects whose volitional agent will not deserve blame on performing them according to a certain aspect. These are the actions that we described as ḥasan.”²¹⁵ Al-Qāḍī defined ḥusn in a privative way in order to include the three divisions of ḥusn that we already mention: permissible, recommended, and obligatory. First of all, it is important to know that al-Qāḍī is not talking about the legal rulings, but the rational ones. The simplest ḥusn, according to al-Qāḍī is the permissible (*mubāḥ*). He says, “Al-Mubāḥ, all of it, is ḥasan, and it has no additional property except its ḥusn.”²¹⁶ This simple type of ḥusn is restricted to the possessors of intellect who can conceive the ethical aspect and become responsible for their actions, and thus they would deserve blame or praise consequently. In other words, walking and eating might be similarly performed by both humans and animals, though, the actions of the latter cannot have any ethical value. The agent of this type of ḥusn has no ethical obligation to perform or to omit the action, namely, he does not deserve blame or praise for his action. It is worth mentioning that al-Ījī gave this position more attention and dedicated two sophisticated arguments to refute al-Qāḍī’s rational permissibility.²¹⁷

²¹³ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *al-Majmu‘ al-Muḥīṭ bil Taklīf*, (Cairo: al-Dar al-Masrīya, 1965), 1/235.

²¹⁴ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *al-Mugnī*, 6/120.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6/31.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 32; Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 327.

²¹⁷ For al-Ījī’s full argument against rational permissibility, see al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 328.

The second type of ḥusn is not strictly related to the recommended, but to different types of actions that can be included within its broad line. Al-Qāḍī sets its limits as follows: the one whose volitional agent would deserve praise for performing it and not deserve blame for omitting it. To elaborate more on the different actions of this type of ḥusn, we can say that the concept of benefit plays an essential role in this regard. When the benefit of the action is not transmitted to others, then the action can be called ‘recommended.’ On the other hand, when the benefit passes to others and the benefit is not due (*mustaḥaq*), then we have the famous moral principle, beneficence (*tafaḍl, iḥsan*).²¹⁸ However, to keep the argument concise, we move to the last type of ḥusn in this category, which is the obligatory. It has a sense of commitment that makes one side of the action preponderate over the other and, thus, the agent must comply with the preponderated side. Al-Qāḍī defines this type as follows, “The actions that their [volitional] agent would deserve praise in case of performing and blame in case of omitting, we call these actions as *wajib*.”²¹⁹ The idea of deserts is heavily based on the concept of benefit and harm. When the side of benefit or harm in the actions is so manifest, the intellect cannot abstain from giving ethical judgements about these actions. This understanding will lead us to al-Qāḍī’s ethical epistemology.

It must be noted that al-Qāḍī divides the ethical rational knowledge into two types: intuitive (*ḍarūrī*) and speculative (*naẓarī*). All the manifest aspects that he talked about, such as lying, justice, truth-telling, and beneficence are included in the first type. He says,

The knowledge of [the ethical] foundations of *muqabihāt*, *wajibāt*, and *muḥasināt*²²⁰ is intuitive (*ḍarūrī*). Moreover, it [the knowledge] is a part and parcel of the intellect. If the intellect could not conceive this knowledge [the intuitive ethical knowledge] it would be [impossible] to be known forever. The reason for this is that speculation (*naẓar*) and inference (*istidlāl*) need someone who has a [full] intellect and he cannot possess a [full] intellect except the one who knows this [ethical knowledge] intuitively. Therefore, he will be eligible for the religious obligation (*taklīf*).²²¹

Unlike al-Ījī, Al-Qāḍī claims that this type of ethical knowledge is not dependent on the religious law. It means that anyone who is endowed with a sound intellect will be

²¹⁸ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Al-Mugnī*, 6/37.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, 43.

²²⁰ It is quite difficult to render these terms in English, but we can explain them as follow: *muqabihāt* are the ethical aspects that make something *qabīḥ*, while *wajibāt* and *muḥasināt* are the aspect that make something necessary and *ḥasan*.

²²¹ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *al-Majmu’ al-Muḥīṭ bil Taklīf*. 234.

able to discern this ethical value. Nevertheless, when we analyze al-Qāḍī's intuitive aspects, we find that they are based on the knowledge of benefit and harm, and from this perspective, we can say that al-Ījī is not completely at odds with al-Qāḍī's theory. In other words, al-Ījī accepts some parts of al-Qāḍī's theory and rejects others. To demonstrate this fact, we can say that al-Ījī on many occasions declared that the intellect could conceive the aspects of benefit and harm in our actions.²²² Nevertheless, this knowledge that al-Ījī accepts is not necessary; namely, it does not belong to essential aspects that necessitate the ethical value. Al-Jurjānī explains al-Ījī's position as follows, "It is [benefit or harm] an additional issue, not a real property. [If it were real property] it would not change [in respect to different agents]. Similarly, as the same body cannot be conceived [at the same time] black and white in regard to two persons."²²³ Put simply, al-Ījī considers the knowledge of benefit and harm to be relative and have no real property in itself. On the other hand, Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār has a striking passage that manifests his epistemological approach to benefit and harm. He says,

The necessary knowledge of benefit and harm is inherent in our minds. Although, when we cannot discover the benefit and harm of certain actions, God sends prophets to tell us [the ethical] judgements of these actions. Therefore, they [prophets] came to assert what God already built in our intellects.²²⁴

We see that the ethical knowledge of benefit and harm inherently exists in our mind, and this shows another different aspect between al-Qāḍī and al-Ījī. According to al-Ījī, the intellect is an inherent property that is devoid of any type of knowledge, while for al-Qāḍī, we are born with this inherent ethical knowledge.²²⁵ We can briefly mention that the difference between al-Ījī and al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār could resemble the modern dispute of *tabula rasa* vs. *innatism*.²²⁶

However, to give al-Qāḍī's theory its due, we need to say that the intellect is not an autonomous ethical judge, but it is merely a tool that leads us to distinguish between

²²² Chalabī, *Sharḥ Jawahir al-I'tikad*, (Ka767), 72a; al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 324.

²²³ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/203.

²²⁴ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 565.

²²⁵ For more elaboration on al-Qāḍī's epistemic approach, see Mehmet Bulgen, "Tanrı'nın Varlığını Kanıtlamanın (İsbat-ı Vacib) Kelam Bilgi Teorisindeki Yeri: Kādi Abdulcebbar Orneği [Proving God's Existence in Terms of Kalām's Theory of Knowledge: The Case of Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār]," *Marifetname*. 9/1 (Haziran/2022), s. 13-53.

²²⁶ For more information on arguments on *tabula rasa* vs. *innatism*, see A.J. Pyle, *Locke*, (Oxford: Polity, 2013).

harm and benefit. It has a similar function to the religious law, i.e., both the intellect and revelation, according to al-Qāḍī, fulfill the same ethical role. Al-Qāḍī says, “Having different methods [to reach something] does not affect the sought object. Regardless of whether we know by the intellect or by revelation that this action has benefit or that [action] has harm, in both cases, we know the necessity (ḥusn) of the former and the qubḥ or the latter.”²²⁷ Both the intellect and the religious law are tools to discover the ethical value in this world, but the intellect has the innate knowledge of the ethical values, namely, the intellect can judge that benefit is ḥasan and harm is qabiḥ. Al-Qāḍī clearly stated this fact by saying, “we have already mentioned that the necessity of benefit and the qubḥ of harm is inherently placed in our mind.”²²⁸ However, this inherent knowledge of the ethical value is not sufficient to lead us to the rulings of all actions; therefore, al-Qāḍī emphatically stated the indispensability of prophets and revelations, emphasizing that these prophets cannot come with anything contrary to the inherent ethical knowledge that we have in our minds. They assert our innate ethical knowledge and give us more details about ethical facts. Al-Qāḍī gives us a perfect illustration to show the relationship between intellect and revelation. He says, “The case is similar to the doctors when they say that this herb [baql] is beneficent and that one is harmful, and we have already known that avoiding harm is necessary and getting benefit is ḥasanḥasan. Therefore, they [the prophets] did not come with anything contrary to the mind.”²²⁹

We saw clearly that the backbone of the ethical aspects is benefit and harm, and they do not contradict the ethical knowledge that we obtain from the religious law. Furthermore, they both work together to give us a complete ethical understanding, like in the example of the doctors and the knowledge we have in our minds. Nevertheless, al-Qāḍī draw a line between that ethical knowledge that we can get from the unaided reason and the one that we receive from the religious law. The rational qabiḥ, namely the ones that we can know without the assistance of the religious law, are injustice, lying, commanding qabiḥ, preventing ḥusn, intending qabiḥ, hating ḥusn, uselessness, ignorance, corruption, and things that lead to injuring the self.²³⁰ However, this is a set

²²⁷ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Usūl al-Khamsah*, 565.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Al-Majmu' al-Muḥīṭ bil Taklīf*, 236.

of qabiḥ actions that we know rationally; although, we should not forget the al-Qāḍī relies heavily on the aspects of two models of qabiḥ (injustice and lying) and makes them the cause of qubḥ for every action that contains similar aspects. Furthermore, al-Qāḍī gives more attention to the rational qabiḥ than the ḥasan *one* because the values of qubḥ are entirely existential, while the values of ḥasan can be privative sometimes, such as the permissible. Nevertheless, the main necessarily ḥasan values that al-Qāḍī mentioned are justice and showing gratitude to the benevolent (*shukr al-mun'im*).²³¹ Regarding the religious ethical values, al-Qāḍī acknowledges that the revelation is the main source of knowledge of this type of ethical values; nevertheless, the mind can conceive the ḥusn and qubḥ of these values by going back to the intuitive ethical aspects that were already built up in our mind. For example, the ḥusn of the circumambulation (*tawaf*) around the Kaaba is taken from the religious law; still, its ḥusn can be known rationally. Al-Qāḍī explains this as follows, “If it is considered ḥasan from one of us to go around [the sacred] house in order to find out whether [its cover] is ripped off or not, so how it would not be not ḥasan to go around the sacred house [of God the exalted] when we know that [this act] includes such benefit and grace!!.”²³² For this and similar ethical values, we can say that the intellect initially cannot detect the ethical aspects of the actions, but is dependent on the religion to get more details and clarifications of their aspects of benefit and harm.

In summary, we have presented in this part al-Ījī's arguments against three main Mu'tazilites' positions alongside with the Mu'tazilites' positions from their own sources, comparing and analyzing both arguments in light of ethical values and their dimensions. We found out that al-Jubbā'īyah's position is presented by al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār and is the strongest and most profound position amongst the Mu'tazilites.' Moreover, al-Qāḍī's rational aspects that are based on benefit and harm can somehow be accepted by al-Ījī under the category of of ḥusn and qubḥ that are outside the focus of dispute.

²³¹ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Al-Mugnī*. 6/43. Al-Qāḍī in some places did not consider truth-telling to be among the primordial ethical aspects because truth-telling is not always praise-worthy, namely saying truthful statements such as ‘the sky is above us and the ground is under our feet’ does not have ethical value per se.

²³² Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 566.

CHAPTER III

ḤUSN AND QUBḤ IN REGARD TO DIVINE MATTERS

As we have seen in the first chapter, according to al-Ījī, God is the ultimate and unique source of our ethical values; He is the creator and the granter of the values. Therefore, before the advent of the religious law, which is the divine informant of our ethical values, human intellect has no authority whatsoever to judge or detect the ethical values in our actions. This is in short, the thrust of al-Ījī's ethical argument with respect to human actions. However, this conception of human ethics is an outcome of a broader conception, which is the conception of God and His attributes. Now, to get a better understanding of this conception, we need to focus on God's ethics. In other words, we need to know the ethical values of divine actions and the nature of some divine features that are essential for our argument.

In a wider sense, we can say that God and His attributes are the main subject of kalām according to all schools of theology. Moreover, this subject sometimes becomes the principal definition of kalām. Al-Ījī's student, al-Jurjānī defines kalām as follows, "Al-kalām is a discipline that enquires about the divine entity (ẓat) of God (the Exalted), His attributes and the states of contingent beings from the beginning to the end according to the rules of Islam."²³³ The states (*aḥwal*) of contingent beings means primarily human beings and their conceptions of divine matters, including their ethical conception.

However, studying the same subject from the same sources does not entail having the same conception of that subject. Therefore, varieties of different conceptions in the schools of kalām led to different positions in theological matters in general and in ethics in particular. These differences in ethics, at least between the Ash'arites and the

²³³ Al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *The Book of Definitions*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub, 1983), 185. Al-Ījī's definition is different from this one; although, both definitions deal with the same subject. Al-Ījī defines Kalām as "Ilm that by which [one] will be able to prove the religious creeds through providing evidence and eliminating doubts." Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 7.

Mu‘tazilites, are related primarily to the argument of *taḥseen* and *taqbīḥ*. Nevertheless, studying the argument separately from some theological matters will not give us a complete image of ethics. Our main purpose in this chapter is to study the ethical values of divine actions and some other related arguments, such as the possibility of lying, guiding and misguiding human beings, divine purposiveness and the concepts of divine justice, wisdom and kingship (*mulk*).

However, before delving into the argument of divine actions, we need to shed some light on a few prerequisite conceptions related to divine actions, such as the conception of God and His power and will.

3.1. The Conception of God

The Mu‘tazilites and the Ash‘arites unanimously agreed that God is known initially through speculation (*naẓar*) and for this reason many late Ash‘arites allocated significant parts in their books to prove that speculation is an authentic method to prove the existence of God and His main attributes. Since knowing God is an obligation of every rational being, the speculation that leads to the knowledge of God became an obligation as well. Al-Ījī affirms this obligation by saying, “The adopted opinion (*al-m‘tamad*) among us (the theologians) is that the knowledge of God is unanimously considered as an obligation, and it [this knowledge] cannot be reached except by speculation. The prerequisite for an obligation is an obligation as well.”²³⁴

This speculative or deductive method is intended primarily to prove the existence of a necessary being (*wājib al-wujūd*). In order to prove the necessary being, the Ash‘arites divided everything in the world into substances and accidents and followed a deductive method to prove the occurrence (*ḥuduth*) or the contingency of one of these two elements.²³⁵ Our purpose is not to discuss the arguments of proving God,²³⁶ but to mention the initial step that al-Ījī took in order to draw a complete conception of God. Nevertheless, we can succinctly say that proving the occurrence or the contingency of substances or accidents will necessarily entail the existence of a cause that is

²³⁴ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 29.

²³⁵ *Ibid*, 266.

²³⁶ For more details about the arguments of proving God, see al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8 /6-20.

distinguished from them. In other words, this cause has brought substances or accidents into existence, and thus cannot have the same nature of them, i.e., cannot be contingent. Therefore, it must be necessary because in existence nothing can be conceived except the necessary and the contingent.²³⁷ However, al-Ījī gives us a complete conception of God by proving four essential elements: necessity, negative attributes, the oneness of God, and qualified attributes. In short, understanding these four elements is essential for us to draw a correct conception of God, and then we can move to understand His ethics. Now, let us give more details about the concept of necessity and other associated concepts related to it.

“God is a necessary being” is the cornerstone that al-Ījī started from to give us a correct conception of God. This necessary being must have some necessary features that are included in the concept of the necessary being. These features, such as being pre-eternal (*azalī*) and post-eternal (*abadī*) are intuitively understood from the same concept of necessity. Al-Ījī, in *al-Mawāqif*, affirms that post-eternity and pre-eternity will be already proven through proving that the divine entity is necessary.²³⁸ Thus, there is a concomitance between these three concepts, pre-eternal being, post-eternal being and necessary being. Being pre-eternal means that its non-existence cannot be imagined at any point in the past (i.e., it did not come into existence), but that it was always there. Put differently, the existence of the pre-eternal being is from itself; it means that it did not depend on an external cause to come into existence. Therefore, it is different from contingent beings, and it must be necessary. Moreover, the eternity of the necessary being is a necessity as well. For this reason, al-Ījī, in *al-Mawāqif*, opted not to prove these two attributes separately and said that proving them separately is the method of early theologians.²³⁹ We see here that al-Ījī is not only following a different method from the early theologians by not proving these two attributes separately, but also, according to him, the nature of the attribute of post-eternity (*baqā'*) is different from that of al-Ash‘arī’s. While al-Ash‘arī considered the divine

²³⁷ Metaphysical modalities are necessity, possibility (contingency), and impossibility. Concerning existential beings only necessity and contingency could be applied. Contingency cannot be applied to God; therefore, God must be a necessary being.

²³⁸ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 269.

²³⁹ Ibid. It is worth noting that al-Ījī, in his epistle, “al-Aḍḍiyya” starting first with affirming eternity and pre-eternity as attributes to the Creator, and then affirmed the necessity of them.... See Ḥassan bin Shihab al-Kaylanī, *Sharḥ al-‘Aqaid al-Aḍḍiyya*, (Beirut: Dar al-Ma‘arif, 2011), 17.

attribute of eternity as an existential (*wujudīya*) attribute,²⁴⁰ al-Ījī affirmed it as a non-existential (*i'tibārī*) matter and criticized the al-Ash'arī position by saying that its weakness cannot be hidden.²⁴¹

Al-Ījī started defining the concept of God by saying what God is not; namely, al-Ījī followed an Ash'arite' tradition by describing God initially through negative attributes. He commenced his description by saying that God's entity is unlike all other entities, and then he continued counting seven negative attributes, for each of which, he provided lengthy arguments. For the sake of brevity, we will suffice with counting them and providing simple explanations. The seven negative attributes are:²⁴²

- God is neither spatial nor localized in a direction (*jiha*). This negative attribute is understood from the concept of necessity: God is the only necessary being, namely, the only eternal being, and were God spatial, that would entail the eternity of the place (*makan*) as well, which is absurd.
- God is not a body (*jisim*) because if He were corporeal that would necessitate the existence of a being localized in a place, which has been already proven to be impossible for God.
- God is neither a substance nor an accident. This one is similar to the second, which negates that God is a body. Body is composed of substances and accidents, and God is not a body; therefore, God is neither a substance nor an accident.
- God is not temporal (*zamanī*) because time is defined as a known renewable that is used to specify another renewable. Nothing existed in eternity, but God. Therefore, God created time and He is not in time.
- God does not unify with others. Unification (*ittiḥād*) and incarnation (*ḥulūl*) are deemed impossible for God because that would contradict the necessity of God's entity.
- God's entity is devoid of contingent beings, i.e., the occurrence of contingent beings in His entity cannot be conceived. Al-Ījī provided a lengthy

²⁴⁰ AbūBakr al-Mara'ishī, *Nashr al-Tawālī*, (Umman: Dar al-Nour, 2013), 416.

²⁴¹ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 269.

²⁴² Ibid, 270-278. I rendered the seven negative attributes that al-Ījī mentioned in a simple English without the philosophical arguments that are associated with them.

philosophical argument to prove this feature that is beyond the focus of our enquiry.

- God cannot be described with any of the perceptible (*maḥsus*) accidents, such as taste, smell, color or pain.

These seven negative attributes that al-Ījī mentioned here pivot around the concept of the necessary being. In a general way, we can say that God is not subject to the limitations of the contingent beings, i.e., God's nature is completely distinguished from the nature of the contingent being. In short, we can say that the negative attributes that al-Ījī mentioned could be summarized as God is the transcendent who is above and beyond His creatures or anything that could be related to them.

The third element that al-Ījī depended on to define the concept of God is the divine Oneness. This time al-Ījī did not accept to prove this attribute through the concept of a necessary being and ascribed this position to the philosophers.²⁴³ On the other hand, he adopted the two main Ash'arite arguments, which are based on power and its relationship with contingent beings. Explaining both arguments is beyond the focus of our inquiry, but we can briefly try to summarize one of them by saying that the existence of two omnipotent beings means that both of them have the same efficacy over all contingent beings. The existence of the contingent X is either by both powers or by one of them. However, the existence of that contingent being by both powers is impossible because that would lead to having one subject of power shared by two powers, which is absurd. Coming into existence by one of them is impossible as well because that means preponderating without a preponderating factor.²⁴⁴

The fourth and final element by which al-Ījī would complete defining the concept of God is the positive attributes or what is called sometimes as qualified attributes. These types of attributes and their nature became one of the most disputed arguments between the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites. For this reason, al-Ījī, before explaining these attributes separately, tried to prove the existence of all the positive attributes in general. In other words, he tried to deal with what Wolfson called the ontological and

²⁴³ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 278. Al-Ījī like other late Ash'arites does not accept that the concept of necessity entails the concept of oneness; nevertheless, al-Ījī did provide a tenable argument against this position. For the full-fledged argument against this position, see al-Rāzī, *al-Matālib*, 119-133.

²⁴⁴ Al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 278-279.

semantic aspects of the divine attributes.²⁴⁵ However, elaborating on this argument is definitely beyond our ethical inquiry. Therefore, we will suffice to mention the attributes without the arguments. Similarly, to the negative attributes, al-Ījī counted seven positive attributes by saying, “He [God] is knowing all the objects of knowledge, powerful over all the contingents, willing all the creatures (ka’inat), speaking, living, hearing, and seeing.”²⁴⁶ Each one of these seven predicates of God entails an existential attribute that can be conceived separately from the divine entity. In other words, God has knowledge, power, will, speech, life, hearing and seeing as real existential attributes, not merely names of the divine entity as the Mu‘tazilites claimed.²⁴⁷ However, in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the divine actions, we need to elaborate on two essential positive attributes: power and will.

3.1.1. Divine Power

This attribute held a prominent place in all the literature of kalam because it is the first attribute that is associated with the existence of God. The world is an action of God, and all divine actions are related to the attribute of power. For this reason, it is worth noting that the Ash‘arites in general associate many divine names with the attribute of power. Al-Juwaynī, in his elaboration on the names of God, related many names to divine actions, such as the Creator, the King, the All-Mighty, the Compeller (*Jabbar*), the Provider (*al-Razzak*), the Reducer (*al-Khaafidh*), the Exalter (*al-Raafi‘*), the Just (*al-‘Adl*), and many other divine names.²⁴⁸ All these divine names have a meaning or a result of an action. For example, the Creator is the one who brings a contingent being into existence and the Just (*al-‘Adl*) is defined as the one who does whatever he has the right to do.

²⁴⁵ Wolfson in his paper, “Philosophical Implications of the Problem of Divine Attributes in Kalam” divided the whole argument of the positive attributes into ontological and semantic aspects and tried to associate the Islamic argument with the Christian Trinity. See Wolfson, Harry A. “Philosophical Implications of the Problem of Divine Attributes in the Kalam.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 79, no. 2 (1959): 73–80. <https://doi.org/10.2307/595847>.

²⁴⁶ Al-Kaylanī, *Sharḥ al-‘Aqaid al-Aḍuddiya*, 17.

²⁴⁷ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 279.

²⁴⁸ Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Irshād ilā Qawaṭi‘ al-Adillah fi Usūl al-‘Itiqād*, 257.

Al-Ījī defined power in general as an attribute that affects (*tūathir*) according to the will.²⁴⁹ With this definition, al-Ījī distinguishes this attribute from the attribute of *ʿIlm*, which does not have efficiency.²⁵⁰ Divine power is responsible for bringing contingent beings into existence, but the features and the qualities of these beings are related to the will.

Both the Ashʿarites and the Muʿtazilites proved this attribute initially by virtue of the intellect. Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbar says, “The first [attribute] that is known by deductive reasoning²⁵¹ (*istidlāl*) from the attributes of the eternal [God] is that [the attribute of] being powerful. All other attributes are based on it.”²⁵² Deductive reasoning to prove the existence of God starts from the world, and then as soon as we prove that the world has a creator, we know by necessity that this creator is powerful. Al-Ghazālī explains this deductive reasoning by this syllogism: ²⁵³

- The world is a masterful action (*fʿil muḥkam*)
- Every masterful action indicates to a powerful agent
- The creator of the world is a powerful agent.

The proposition that ‘no action except from a powerful agent’ is an intuitive proposition that does not need to be proved, as al-Ghazālī stated. However, sufficing with simple arguments or propositions to prove the attribute of power is mainly the method that is followed by the early theologians. Al-Ījī and his student al-Jurjānī as late Ashʿarites did not follow exactly the same tradition of proving power; although, they share the same understanding of power.²⁵⁴ Al-Ījī states four logical impossibilities that would entail from negating the attribute of divine power. He says, “He is indeed powerful; otherwise, one of these four things will be entailed: negating the existence of the contingent being, negating its dependence on an efficient cause (*mūathir*), infinite regress, or having the caused (*al-ʿāthar*) without its efficient cause.”²⁵⁵ These four things are impossible to happen because each one of them would lead to absurdity

²⁴⁹ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 150.

²⁵⁰ For more details about the attribute of knowledge and its features, see al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 185-290.

²⁵¹ Both Arabic words, *ʿistidlāl* and *ʿnazar* are used interchangeably in the literature of Kalām; therefore, I will render them sometimes as ‘deduction reasoning, ‘reasoning’ alone or ‘speculation.’

²⁵² Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbar, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 151.

²⁵³ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iktisād fī al-ʿItikād*, 149.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*; Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 6/76.

²⁵⁵ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 281.

or negating necessary knowledge. For example, negating the existence of the continent being is counterfactual, and having the cause without its efficient cause is logically impossible. The impossibility of some of these entailments is not intuitive, i.e., to prove their impossibility, deductive arguments are needed. Al-Ījī already provided such arguments in the second chapter of *al-Mawāqif*.²⁵⁶ Elaborating on all of these arguments will not be important for our purpose, but it is sufficient to know that the most important argument is the one that negates infinite regress (*taslsul*).²⁵⁷ Furthermore, the intertwining of the infinite regress argument with these four entailments is clearly manifested in al-Jurjānī's commentaries.²⁵⁸ The main opponent in the argument against infinite regress is the philosophers who maintain the possibility of infinite regress concerning incidents in the past and claim that God is a necessary cause.²⁵⁹ In short, none of the entailment is possible, and God is a powerful agent whose power is distinguished from the contingent power that we have. Nevertheless, to have a better comprehension of the nature of divine power, we need to mention some of the specific characteristics that al-Ījī provided.

Al-Ījī mentioned three main characteristics related to divine power: power must be eternal, unified, and infinite.²⁶⁰ We can briefly summarize the arguments that al-Ījī used to prove these three main characteristics of divine power. In the first one, al-Ījī argues that divine power must be eternal; otherwise, it would necessitate the existence of another power that brought the first one into existence, and each one would necessitate another one ad infinitum. Proving the first characteristics is based on proving that infinite regress is impossible. The second argument is intended to prove that the second characteristic of divine power, i.e., divine power is a unified attribute not composed of multiple powers. Al-Ījī argues that if divine power were composed of multiple powers, it would be dependent on one of the powers or on the entity, but both options are precluded. The former is due to the first characteristic of divine power: it is eternal, and the eternal cannot be susceptible to power, while the latter is due to

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 41-95.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 90-91. Al-Ījī provided five arguments to refute infinite regress, one is demonstrative, and the rest are based on putative and disputed propositions.

²⁵⁸ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/58-60.

²⁵⁹ The most comprehensive Ash'arite work that argue with the philosophers is al-Ghazālī's *Tahafut al-Falasifa*. For a detailed Ash'arites' argument against the philosophers concerning this issue, see Al-Ghazālī, *Tahafut al-Falasifa*, 4th ed., (Cairo: Darul Ma'arif, 1966), 196-197.

²⁶⁰ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 281.

the concept of the volitional agent, namely, if power were based on the entity (*zāt*), it would negate the freedom of choice and become attached to all contingent beings equally. The third characteristic of divine power is regarding its infinity: the infinity of the power itself and its attachments (*ta'luqāt*). For this characteristic, al-Ījī distinguishes between quantity (*kam*) and quality (*kaif*): the former cannot be infinite, but the latter can. Divine power and other positive attributes are qualities; therefore, they are not subject to finitude. Regarding the attachment of divine power, it has two aspects: potential and actual. The potential one must be infinite because it is related to the attribute itself, but the actual is always finite because is attached to the contingent beings.²⁶¹

There is another characteristic of divine power that al-Ījī elaborated on separately and tried to refute the objections to it. It is the characteristic of comprehensiveness of divine power, namely, divine power encompasses all the contingent beings: creatures and their actions, the good and the evil. To prove this characteristic, al-Ījī argues as follows, “His power encompasses all contingent beings. The demonstration of this [fact] is to say that what entails [this characteristic] for the power is the essence (*zāt*), what validates [the attachment of] the power is contingency, and the essence has the same relation (*nisbah*) with all contingent beings.”²⁶²

All-encompassing power means that nothing happens in the world except that divine power is associated with it, i.e., God the creator of everything is the world including whether they are substances or accidents; good or bad. To defend this characteristic, al-Ījī had to refute six different positions that preclude the comprehensiveness of divine power.²⁶³

The first position that negates this characteristic of power is related to the philosophers.²⁶⁴ According to them, only one thing, which is the first intellect, can

²⁶¹ Ibid., 282; al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/66-67.

²⁶² Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 283.

²⁶³ Ibid. I will only mention the positions without al-Ījī's responses to them, except those which are related to our ethical enquiry.

²⁶⁴ The philosophers whos opinion al-Ījī is mentioning are the Neoplatonic philosophers who are normally the main opponents that Muslim theologians argue against. For more information about Neoplatonism, see Wildberg, Christian, "Neoplatonism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/neoplatonism/>>.

emanate from the One;²⁶⁵ everything else comes into existence through different moderators. The second position is related to astronomers and the Sabians (*al-ṣabi'a*) who believed that God is not creating everything and the movements of stars and planets are responsible for some incidents on earth. The third position is ascribed to al-Balkhī²⁶⁶ who maintains that God's power does not create actions that are similar to the servant's actions because our actions are either obedience, disobedience or frivolous (*'abath*), and God is exalted from this type of actions. The fourth position is related to another Mu'tazilite scholar, Abū Alī al-Jubbā'ī, who holds that God's power cannot be linked to the exact action of the servant. To prove this limitation of power, Al-Jubbā'ī used the argument of mutual obstruction (*dalīl al-tamānu'*)²⁶⁷ that a single object of power cannot be acted upon by two powerful agents. Nevertheless, al-Jubbā'ī acknowledges that God's power is more inclusive than the servant's power, but concerning one specific object of power, he says that God's power cannot be linked to it as long as the servant's power is linked to it. Al-Jubbā'ī's position is based on the Mu'tazilites' ethical understanding: God is just and does not create the qabiḥ, and thus humans create their actions with their own power. More detailed arguments about the efficacy of human power and human actions will be discussed in the third chapter.

The following position about the limitation of divine power has some ethical arguments in its folds. It is about the dualists (*thanawīyah*) who claim that there are two eternal powers, one is responsible for the good and the other is responsible for evil. Al-Ījī ascribed this position to the Zoroastrians among the dualists²⁶⁸ who maintain that God is not responsible for creating the evil in the world, i.e., His power can only create the good. They argue that if were God responsible for the evil, He would become good and evil at the same time. Al-Ījī concedes the implication that

²⁶⁵ For a better understanding of the emanation theory and its adoption by Muslim philosophers, see Majid Fakhry, *Al-Fārābī: Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism*, (London: One world Publication, 2002).

²⁶⁶ Abū al-Qassim al-Balkhī is a prominent Mu'tazilite of the school of Bagdad. Ibn al-Murtaḍa considers him from the eighth *tabaka* of the Mu'tazilites. See Ibn al-Murtaḍa, *Tabakat al-Mu'razilia*, 88.

²⁶⁷ The argument of mutual obstruction is primarily used to prove the Oneness of God. As al-Āmīdī declared that, according to the Ash'arites, one single power cannot be common to two efficient agents, but it is possible between one efficient agent, and one acquired agent (*muktasib*). Cf., Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 6/89. The Mu'tazilites on the other hand maintain that it is absolutely impossible to have one single object of power common to two powers, whether these two powers are eternal or contingent. Cf., Al-Qādī, Abdul Jabbār. *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 281.

²⁶⁸ There is a difference between al-Ījī and al-Shahrastānī, the latter does not consider the Zoroastrians to be from the dualists, but from the Magi. Moreover, al-Shahrastānī distinguished between the dualist's belief and the Zoroastrians'. Cf. Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milāl wa al-Niḥal*, 2/257-275.

God is responsible for good and evil in the world, but he does not accept calling God evil for one of these two main reasons:²⁶⁹

- Calling Him evil could insinuate that evil is the most prevalent in His actions. For example, when we call someone evil, we mean that evil stems from his nature.
- Calling Him evil is not mentioned in the revelation, and God's names are revelation-based (*tawqīfīyah*).

Al-Ījī affirms that God's power is responsible for creating everything in the world; thus, he cannot say that God does not create evil. Nevertheless, naming God (the exalted) evil is deemed unacceptable. Al-Ījī here mentioned two possible reasons that prevent us from naming God evil; although, the real reason lies in al-Ījī's understanding of divine actions, which will be discussed later.

The final position about the divine power is the position of al-Nazzām and his followers. They maintain that as long as God knows the *qabīh* action, His power cannot act upon it. This position might be seen as similar to the previous position of the Zoroastrians, but it is quite different. The previous position of the Zoroastrians ascribed creating evil to another eternal power, while al-Nazzām claims that God cannot do *qabīh* due to His knowledge of its *qubḥ*, namely, al-Nazzām does not affirm the existence of another eternal power, but he only restricts the sphere of divine power to performing actions that have the value of *ḥusn*.²⁷⁰ We have finished delineating al-Ījī's understanding of the divine power and its all-encompassing feature. Now, we only need to briefly discuss the divine will before delving into the argument of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* concerning the divine actions.

3.1.2. Divine Will

The argument about the divine will between the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites is considered one of the most disputable questions in the literature of *kalām*. The notion that God is a willing (*murīd*) agent is the convergence point between the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites, and the hallmark that distinguishes them from the philosophers

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 284; Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/72.

²⁷⁰ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 284; Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/72.

who deem God as a necessary cause of the world, i.e., not as a free agent. Nevertheless, according to the Mu‘tazilites, God is willing means that His will is a contingent will, and He cannot be willing (*Murīd*) because of an eternal will or because of His essence (*zāt*).²⁷¹ The Mu‘tazilite position with all its details is beyond the scope of our research, but it is important to affirm that the argument of ḥusn and qubḥ is the main reason that pushed the Ash‘arites and the Mu‘tazilites to differ about this attribute. Al-Qāḍī affirms this claim by saying, “Were [God] willing because of His essence (li-nafsihi), it would entail that God wills the qabiḥ, and thus, an attribute of imperfection would be affirmed to Him.”²⁷² God is exalted from doing or willing qabiḥ; therefore, He cannot be willing because of His essence. Al-Qāḍī explains the reason for this consequence by saying that God is knowing (*‘alim*) because of His essence, and thus He knows everything. Likewise, if He were willing because of His essence, He will be willing everything, i.e., all ḥusn and qubḥ in the world would be the subject of His will.²⁷³ Therefore, God’s will, according to the Mu‘tazilites, is created and all the wills that God creates have the attribute of ḥusn.

On the other hand, al-Ījī considers the divine will to be a separate affirming (*thubutiyyah*) attribute that is distinguished from the power and the knowledge, although it belongs to the same category as them (i.e., the positive attributes). He defines the will as follows, “It [the will] is the third attribute, which is distinguished from power and knowledge. It causes one of the two objects of power to be specified.”²⁷⁴ Divine power, as al-Ījī stated before, is encompassing all the contingent beings, and it is linked to them equally. Thus, if the power has only the nature of bringing contingent beings into existence, there must be another attribute that specifies the way they come to exist, namely, their genus, form, size, color, etc. Al-Ījī continues with this reasoning by saying that one of the two opposites cannot be preponderated over the other by itself because both of them are equally linked to the power. Moreover, bringing one of them into existence at a specific point of time cannot be preponderated over the other time by itself. Therefore, there must be a specifying attribute; otherwise,

²⁷¹ Abdul Barī Mahmud Dawood, *Divine Will between the Mu‘tazilites and the Ash‘arites*, (Alexandria, Darul Ma‘arif, 1996), 9-11.

²⁷² Ibid, 9; Cf, Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbar, *Al-Mugnī*, 2/111.

²⁷³ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbar, *Al-Mugnī*, 2/111.

²⁷⁴ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 291.

determining without a preponderating factor would follow, which is absurd.²⁷⁵ However, al-Ījī provides several arguments to prove that the will is a positive attribute, and then he provides some characteristics that distinguish his position from other theological positions. We will only suffice by mentioning two main characteristics that are related to the divine will.

The divine will cannot be generated in time because that leads to the necessity of another will to bring it into existence, and thus each contingent will becomes in need of another will, and infinite regress will follow.²⁷⁶ Therefore, God's will must be eternal. In other words, God from eternity willed the existence of all contingent beings, whether they are good or bad. The second characteristic of the will is intended to distinguish the will from other similar faculties, such as desire and inclination. The will necessitates the existence of the object that is related to, and this is the main distinguishing character between the will and the aforementioned faculties. In other words, the will has efficacy, while the desire and the inclinations do not have. Al-Ījī affirms that it is unanimous among the Ash'arites that divine will necessitates the existence of its object, while the servant's will is contingent, inefficient, and does not necessitate the existence of its object.²⁷⁷

So far, we have drawn a conception of God and His power and will, and these conceptions will help us to be more confident to tackle our main question of the divine actions concerning the ethical argument of ḥusn and qubḥ.

3.2. Divine Actions

In the first chapter, we saw that, according to al-Ījī, the ethical value of human actions is solely dependent on divine injunctions. Put it differently, the revelation came to determine the ethical value of human actions. However, we take the question beyond the ethical value of our actions to explore, primarily al-Ījī's argument of ḥusn and qubḥ in regard to divine actions, and since al-Ījī's argument in itself is intended to refute the

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid. We see that al-Ījī used the same argument when he wants to prove that the servant's will is created by God. The will must be eternal or infinite regress will follow.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 148.

Mu‘tazilites’ position, we need to shed some light on the Mu‘tazilites’ arguments as well.

It seems that all Muslim theologians agree that God does not do qabiḥ, and all His actions have the ethical value of ḥusn. Nevertheless, they differed after that about the reasoning that leads to this conclusion and about the possibility of applying the ethical value of qubḥ to His actions. Al-Ījī affirmed the common point between the theologians by saying “You should know that all Muslims (al-ummah) are unanimous that God does not commit qabiḥ or discard the obligatory.”²⁷⁸ Ascribing qabiḥ to God could refute the core of all the theological arguments, namely, it could falsify that God is a necessary being. To understand the relationship between qabiḥ and the necessary, we can briefly say that the necessary being is the essence that entails all perfections and must be free from all defects and needs.²⁷⁹ Qabiḥ entails imperfection or need; therefore, ascribing it to God or to His attributes is deemed discarded.

According to the Mu‘tazilites, ascribing qabiḥ to God contradicts primarily the second principle (*aṣil*) of the school of Mu‘tazilites, which is Justice.²⁸⁰ Al-Qāḍī says, “Talking about [divine] justice is related to the actions of the eternal [God, the exalted], and what is admissible and inadmissible to Him.”²⁸¹

However, before plunging into the Mu‘tazilites’ reasons behind affirming that all God’s actions are ḥasan, let us go back to al-Ījī’s words. He succinctly says, “[the reason behind this] according to Ash‘arites that nothing qabiḥ comes out of Him, and nothing is incumbent on Him. The Mu‘tazilites on the other hand, hold that what is qabiḥ is discarded by Him and what is obligatory is done by Him.”²⁸² Al-Ījī’s statement that “nothing qabiḥ comes out of Him,” does not only negate the actual qabiḥ in God’s actions but also negates the potential as well. Al-Jurjānī comments on al-Ījī’s statement by saying that it means that doing qabiḥ is not even conceived in regard to God, and

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 328.

²⁷⁹ Al-Rāzī, *Al-Matālib*, 2/99-144. Al-Rāzī is the best among the Ash‘arites who elaborated on the necessary being and the characteristics related to it.

²⁸⁰ In the following part, we will elaborate on the concept of Justice at Aḍḍ al-Dīn al-Ījī and its relationship with our argument.

²⁸¹ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār. *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 301.

²⁸² Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 328.

similarly leaving the obligatory.²⁸³ It means that the concept of qubḥ is not conceived, not only the action of qabiḥ. Al-Kirmānī, as an immediate student of al-Ījī explains clearly the difference between al-Ījī's and the Mu'tazilites' reason behind not ascribing *qabīḥ* to divine actions by saying, "The truth [of al-Ījī's proposition] according to the Ash'arites is on account of the non-existence of the subject, whereas, according to the Mu'tazilites [the truth of the proposition] is due to the negation of the predicate. Likewise, it is the judgment that God does not discard the obligatory."²⁸⁴ Al-Kirmānī, with this explanation, explicitly distinguished between the Ash'arites' and the Mu'tazilites' reason. To put his explanation simply, we can say that 'qabiḥ' is the subject of the proposition 'qabiḥ is not done by God,' and the subject in itself does not exist in regard to God's actions, i.e., the concept of qubḥ cannot be conceived when we talk about divine actions. We can say that when the subject in itself does not exist, the possibility is discarded as well. On the other hand, when we negate the predicate, we do not negate the possibility. Thus, the Mu'tazilites' position could be illustrated in negating the predicate of the following proposition: 'God does qabiḥ actions,' so when we negate the predicate, we can say that God does not do qabiḥ actions. It still means that God could do qabiḥ actions, but he does not do them for some reasons.

Before finish elaborating on al-Ījī's reason, let us verify the understanding of the Mu'tazilites' position from their own books.²⁸⁵ As we have said that ascribing qabiḥ to divine actions would rebut the principle of Justice and wisdom as well. Al-Qāḍī affirms this as follows, "When we [the Mu'tazilites] describe the Eternal [God] as Just and Wise, we mean that He neither does qabiḥ nor chooses it, and He does not discard what is incumbent on Him, namely, all His actions are ḥasan."²⁸⁶ The statement that 'God neither does qabiḥ nor chooses it' means that qabiḥ is potentially applicable to the divine actions, but God does not do it or choose it. Moreover, al-Qāḍī argues against those Mu'tazilites, such as al-Nazzām and his followers, who consider that God's power does not have the potentiality to do qabiḥ. He says that God the exalted could potentially commit injustice or lying, but He does not do it, however, if God

²⁸³ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/216.

²⁸⁴ Shams al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Hussain paşa, 317), 355b.

²⁸⁵ We mainly consult al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār's books to confirm the Mu'tazilite positions because his books are the fulcrum of the Mu'tazilite school of Basra, which is the main school of Mu'tazilites.

²⁸⁶ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār. *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 301.

wanted to do qabīḥ, He would be able to do it. Al-Qāḍī affirms that this position about the possibility of performing qabīḥ is the main position of the school of Basra.²⁸⁷

The pressing question which would be directed to the Mu‘tazilites is ‘why does God do not do or choose qabīḥ? Al-Qāḍī’s response on this question is based on two divine characteristics: all-encompassing knowledge and self-sufficiency. Since God knows everything, He must know the actions that have qubḥ aspects. Nevertheless, only knowing that something is qabīḥ does not mean that the agent will not do it. For example, human beings know that lying is qabīḥ, but sometimes they might commit this qabīḥ because they need it. God, the Exalted, is self-sufficient, and His self-sufficiency is part and parcel of His necessary being. Furthermore, according to the Mu‘tazilites, God must know that He is needless of qabīḥ since His knowledge is all-encompassing. Al-Qāḍī forms his argument as follows, “He [God, the exalted] knows the qubḥ (badness) of qabīḥ, and He is needless of it and aware of His needlessness of qabīḥ. Therefore, the one whose state is like this will not categorically choose qabīḥ.”²⁸⁸ However, it is worth noting that most of the time the Mu‘tazilites reason from the observable to the unobservable,²⁸⁹ as they did with respect to this question. Al-Qāḍī explicitly states that proving that God does not do qabīḥ is based on the necessary knowledge about our abstinence from qabīḥ. In other words, when someone knows that a certain action is qabīḥ, and he knows that he is not indeed of doing it, then he will definitely abstain from doing it.²⁹⁰ This necessary knowledge that human beings do not commit qabīḥ when these two conditions are met is not accepted by al-Ījī.²⁹¹ First, because he does not accept that the ethical knowledge is intuitive, and second because the concept of ḥusn and qubḥ in human actions cannot be applied to divine actions.²⁹²

However, al-Ījī affirms that the argument of ḥusn and qubḥ with respect to divine actions is subsidiary to the previous question, i.e., ḥusn and qubḥ in human actions.²⁹³

²⁸⁷ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *al-Mugnī*, 6/128.

²⁸⁸ Ibid, 302.

²⁸⁹ This method is known in Kalām literature as “*Radu al-ghāyib ‘ala al-shāhid*,” which could be translated as judging the unobservable in accordance with the observable.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/79.

²⁹² We already expatiated in the first chapter on the concept of *ḥusn and qubḥ* and the intellect’s ability to obtain ethical knowledge.

²⁹³ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 328.

Therefore, the key for understanding both arguments is to know the meaning and the reference of ḥusn and qubḥ, and to know that human intellect according to Ash‘arites is unable to discern the ethical values in actions. Al-Abharī comments on the possibility of applying qubḥ to divine actions by saying that the concept of qubḥ cannot be applied to divine actions because the reality of qubḥ is the thing that is prohibited by God. Furthermore, al-Abharī argues, that prohibition is related to the religious incumbents (*mukalaḥḥīn*); therefore, neither qubḥ nor prohibition could possibly be applied to God.²⁹⁴

The second part of the argument deals with the concept of obligatory (*wajib*) and its usage in regard to divine actions. As al-Ījī stated before, all Muslims are unanimous that all divine actions have the ethical value of ḥusn, and God does not discard the obligatory. Nevertheless, al-Ījī’s reason behind saying that is completely different from the Mu‘tazilites’ reason. Al-Ījī, similarly to the concept of qubḥ, argues that the concept of obligatory cannot be possibly applied to divine actions because the meaning of obligation (*wujub*) is not conceived in regard to divine actions. However, in order to have a full understanding of al-Ījī’s reasoning, we need to explore his definition of the obligatory. He says, “[wujub is] requiring an action that is not abstaining (kaff), and not performing [the required action] during all its [designated] time would entail punishment.”²⁹⁵ To elucidate a bit more on this definition, we can say that *wujub* is related to performing actions, not abstaining from them because abstinence from actions is related to prohibition, not *wujub*. The higher category that *wujub* belongs to is the category of demand (*ṭalab*). In other words, *wujub* is a type of demand that requires performing an action and entails punishment in case of not performing it. Thus, according to this understanding of the obligatory, we can understand the reason behind al-Ījī’s statement that ‘God does not discard the obligatory.’ The obligation is related to the created, not to the creator, and obligation is a type of demand and God is the only all-powerful deity in existence; therefore, the concept of demand cannot be applied to Him. Al-Abharī gives a similar explanation when he elaborates on al-Ījī’s position by saying, “There is no obligation [on God] because the obligation is a ruling, and rulings are taken from the religious law, [in short] there is no one who can set rules

²⁹⁴ Sayf al-Dīn al-Abharī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*. (Lalali, 2372), 241a.

²⁹⁵ Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ Muhtaṣar al-Muntaha al-Uṣūlī*, 2/123.

on the Legislator (Shari‘).”²⁹⁶ We see that having a good grasp of the conception of God and His attributes is very salutary to understand al-Ījī’s argument of ḥusn and qubḥ in regard to divine actions.

The concept of obligation (*wujub*), according to the Mu‘tazilites, has an objective reality that does not change concerning humans and God alike. Unlike the Ash‘arites, the Mu‘tazilites depend on human intellect to discern the concept of obligation. Al-Qāḍī defines obligation as follows, “It is known by necessity that performing some actions would entitle their agent to deserve praise, and when he abstains from performing them, he would deserve criticism. This is what we mean by the obligatory.”²⁹⁷ To put it simply, we say that the obligatory action in itself has a binding power and essential ethical values, and thus the free agent, whether man or God, is incumbent to perform it; otherwise, the blame would be due. Al-Qāḍī emphasized that the obligatory is possibly applicable to divine actions by saying, “It has been affirmed that there are some actions [that are incumbent on God], and in case He does not do it He would deserve blame. This [type of action] must be called obligatory, such as reward (thawāb), grace, enabling the mukallaf, and other similar actions.”²⁹⁸ Notwithstanding, God will never discard the obligatory, and thus all His actions are ḥasan. It is worth noting that the Mu‘tazilites still have both legal and rational obligations, but both of them refer to the objective obligation. They consider both human intellect and revelation as means that guide humans to the objective obligation.²⁹⁹

Al-Ījī categorically refused to apply the concept of obligation to divine actions and launched a series of arguments to refute the Mu‘tazilites’ divine-based obligations. However, for the sake of brevity, we will only focus on one divine-based obligation that the Mu‘tazilites affirmed, and how al-Ījī argued against it, which is divine grace.

²⁹⁶ Sayf al-Dīn al-Abharī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Lalali, 2372), 241a.

²⁹⁷ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *al-Mugnī*, 6/43.

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 46.

²⁹⁹ Ibid, 47.

3.2.1. The *Wujub* of Divine Grace

Divine grace plays an essential role in the philosophy of the Mu‘tazilites, and it is indispensable for many of their arguments. For example, when al-Ījī and his Ash‘arite colleagues based human actions on the divine power, the Mu‘tazilites, after proving the efficacy of the contingent power, tried to keep some connections between God and human actions through the intermediary of divine grace. According to the Mu‘tazilites, since God made man legally incumbent (*mukallaf*), He must provide him with several things, one of them is divine grace, which helps humans to attain good and avoid evil. Al-Qāḍī defines divine grace as follows, “[divine grace] is what the servant becomes along with it closer to choose the obligatory and discard qabīḥ. Nevertheless, the servant [along with divine grace] will be able to perform or omit the action.”³⁰⁰ We can say that divine grace, according to the Mu‘tazilites, is somehow similar to the concept of al-dā‘ī that some Ash‘arites maintain. Nevertheless, unlike al-dā‘ī, divine grace does not necessitate the action, namely, the servant can still perform the action or its opposite. However, we can say that divine grace, according to the Mu‘tazilites, is based on the objective ethical value, and since this value is rationally discerned, it would be possible to say that divine grace has an auxiliary role in drawing the religiously incumbent closer to ḥusn and away from qabīḥ.³⁰¹ It is worth noting that when the Mu‘tazilites made divine grace obligatory on God, they made certain actions obligatory on Him as well.³⁰² On the other hand, al-Ījī and his Ash‘arites colleagues did not deny the existence of divine grace, but they deny its obligatoriness on God. The Ash‘arites in general, despite acknowledging the existence of divine grace, gave it a different name and slightly different explanation. Instead of using the word ‘divine grace’, they use the word *tawfiq*,³⁰³ and defined it as “creating the power of obedience.”³⁰⁴ To elaborate on this position more, we say that, according to the Ash‘arites, both human power and their actions are created by God, so there are two

³⁰⁰ Abdul Karim Uthman, *The Theory of Religious Obligation*, 389.

³⁰¹ Ibid, 387.

³⁰² There are many differences among the Mu‘tazilites themselves in regard to the doctrine of divine grace, some of them maintained that it is absolutely necessary on God in all cases, and others consider it only necessary after the religious obligation (*taklif*). The latter position belongs to the Mu‘tazilite school of Basra, which is the largest denomination among the Mu‘tazilites. For more details about the Mu‘tazilites’ position in regard to divine grace, see Abdul Karim Uthman, *The Theory of Religious Obligation*, 395-396.

³⁰³ The word *tawfiq* could be translated as success or guiding, but we will use the Arabic word with its theological definition.

³⁰⁴ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/188.

types of power that God creates for humans, one for obedience, which is called *tawfīq*, and one for disobedience, which is called *khizlān*.³⁰⁵ However, unlike the divine grace, creating *tawfīq* is not an obligation on God, the Exalted, but He creates it for whomever He wants.

Al-Ījī in his argument against the Mu‘tazilites’ divine grace did not try to prove the concepts of *tawfīq* and *khizlān*,³⁰⁶ but he only suffices with refuting the necessity of some examples of divine grace, such as making the governors pious scholars. He argues that if the governors were pious scholars, that would help people to avoid *qabiḥ* and choose *ḥasan*, i.e., it is a divine grace according to the Mu‘tazilites. Nevertheless, the governors are not pious scholars; therefore, God is not complying with the obligation of divine grace.³⁰⁷ Al-Ījī also provides other examples of divine grace that the opponent agrees on their non-existence, and then he argues that since these examples do not exist, they obviously cannot be necessary on God; therefore, divine grace in itself is not necessary on God. However, to be just to the Mu‘tazilites argument, we say that although almost³⁰⁸ all of them affirmed that divine grace is necessary, no one among them claimed that such examples which al-Ījī mentioned are necessary on God. Furthermore, we can say that al-Ījī in his argument against the necessity of divine grace is committing a famous logical fallacy, which is known in Western literature as *dicto simpliciter*,³⁰⁹ or to put it simply, we can say that al-Ījī is taking the necessity of a general case and applying it to specific situations. However, the late and prominent Mu‘tazilite scholar, Ibn al-Malāḥīmī gives us several arguments to prove the necessity of divine grace, and thus he will be providing an answer to al-Ījī’s objection. He says, “[a specific thing] is not considered as divine grace by itself...but [something] is considered as divine grace because of other external things

³⁰⁵ *Khizlan* could be translated as disappointment. For full explanation of *tawfīq* and *khizlan*, see Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Irshād ilā Qawaḥi‘ al-Adillah fi Usūl al-‘Itiqād*, 254-255.

³⁰⁶ Al-Ījī deals with these concepts when he discusses human powers and related arguments.

³⁰⁷ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 328-329.

³⁰⁸ I say ‘almost’ all the Mu‘tazilites because al-Qāḍī stated that Ja‘far bin Ḥarb, the Mu‘tazilite of Baghdad, did not say that divine grace is necessary. Ibn al-Malāḥīmī ascribed this position to Bishr bin al-Mu‘tamir. See Al-Qāḍī abdul Jabbar, *Al-Mugnī*, 13/5; Mahmūd bin Muḥammad al-Malāḥīmī, *al-Fa‘iq fi Usūl al-Dīn*, (Cairo: Darul Kutub, 2010), 302.

³⁰⁹ *Dicto Simpliciter* is defined as “a fallacy of sweeping generalization. It consists of the application of a broad general rule to an individual case whose special features might make it exceptional.” See Madsen Pirie, *How to Win Every Argument: The Use and Abuse of Logic*, (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 51.

that are associated with it.”³¹⁰ Ibn al-Malāḥīmī with this explanation tries to prove that divine grace, which the Mu‘tazilites deem an obligation on God, is associated with several external things, such as the legally incumbent’s circumstances and so on and so forth. In other words, the same act could be considered divine grace in certain circumstances and not divine grace in others. This understanding of divine grace is not only related to Ibn al-Malāḥīmī himself but also to previous Mu‘tazilite scholars as well as he affirmed.³¹¹ It is worth noting that the proof of the existence of divine grace, for both al-Ījī and the Mu‘tazilites, is taken primarily from revelation (*sam‘*) while the obligatoriness of *tamkīn*, which al-Qāḍī differentiated between it and divine grace, is proved primarily through the rational arguments.³¹²

As we have seen, al-Ījī agrees with the Mu‘tazilites on the existence of some concepts and disagrees with their reasoning and justification. For al-Ījī, the ultimate source of our ethical values of ḥusn and qubḥ is merely God’s commands and prohibitions, and both commands and prohibitions are not conceived in respect to God. Therefore, our ethical values are not applicable to God. On the other hand, the Mu‘tazilites adhered to objective ethical values that are applicable to both God and man. They might sometimes go so far by saying, “What is considered qabīḥ from us is considered qabīḥ from God, [in case He does it].”³¹³ In other words, both humans and God share the same concept of ḥusn and qubḥ.³¹⁴ Nevertheless, the theological arguments about the possibilities of applying qabīḥ actions to God were restricted to certain actions, the main one that we are going to elaborate on is lying.

3.2.2. Can God Possibly Tell a Lie?

The actuality of this question is definitely denied by all ranges of theologians, but the possibility was one of the most heated arguments in the history of kalām. However, to

³¹⁰ Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, *al-Fa‘iq fī Usūl al-Dīn*, 304.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² *Tamkeen* means enabling the religiously incumbent to choose and perform the good and avoid the evil. The Mu‘tazilites differentiate between divine grace and *tamkeen*, but consider both of them to be obligatory on God. See Abdul Karim Uthman, *The Theory of Religious Obligation*, 391.

³¹³ Al-Tufī, *Dar’ al-Kawl al-Qabīḥ fī al-Tahseen wal Takbeeh*, 97.

³¹⁴ It is essential to say that when the Mu‘tazilites assert that humans and God have the same ethical values, they are talking about the main ethical values. For example, fasting, in regard to humans, has the ethical value of ḥusn, not because it is fasting, but because when we fast, we perform the obligatory, which is ḥasan. Similarly, performing the obligatory in regard to God is ḥasan. Although, what is obligatory for us is different from what is obligatory for God.

get a good grasp of this argument, we need to provide an introduction about truth-telling and lying in the literature of kalām, mainly in the school of Ash‘arites.

Al-Taftāzānī defined truth (*ḥaq*) in general as “The judgement that correspondence to reality.”³¹⁵ Al-Taftāzānī distinguishes between truth (*ḥaq*) and truth-telling (*ṣidq*), the former is more general and could be applied to propositions, articles of belief, religions, and different schools of thoughts (*mazāhib*) with reference to their inclusion of truth. While the latter is only applied to propositions, and its opposite is lying (*kazib*).³¹⁶

The veracity of a proposition has a two-fold relationship: with respect to its truth and to its meaning. The truth of a proposition or a judgement is the agreement of the proposition with reality, and the meaning of a proposition is the agreement of reality with the judgement. The truth is based on the correspondence of the proposition with reality, and this correspondence is based on the mainstream understanding of reality that the essence of reality is unchangeable (*ḥaqa’iq al-ashiā’ thābitah*), and thus we can assert the truth of a proposition happens when it corresponds to reality. However, saying that the correspondence theory of truth is the only theory of truth that existed in the literature of kalām is not quite accurate. Al-Magnīsī expatiates on the theories of truth as follows,

The truth of a saying is based on the correspondence of its judgement with reality even if it does not correspond with the belief, this is the opinion (*mazhab*) of the mainstream (*jumhur*), or [the truth of a saying is based on] the correspondence with the belief of the reporter [the one who utters the saying]; this is according to the opinion of al-Nazzām, or [the truth of a saying is based on] the correspondence with them both [reality and belief], and this is according to the opinion of al-Jahīz. Similarly, the falsehood of a saying is based on its non-correspondence with the reality or the belief or them both.³¹⁷

We can say that in the literature of Kalām three theories of truth existed. The first one was adopted by the mainstream, and the other two were preferred by al-Nazzām and his student al-Jahīz. The first theory, i.e., the correspondence theory of truth, was not only common among Muslim theologians, but also among non-Muslim theologians

³¹⁵ Sa‘d al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-‘Aqa’id al-Nasafiyyah*, (Beirut: Darul Turath, 2014), 26.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Maḥmud Ḥassan al-Magnīsī, *Mugnī al-Tulab: A commentary on Isagoge* (Damascus: Dar al-Beiruty, 2009), 127-128.

and philosophers throughout history.³¹⁸ However, if we want to parse al-Nazzām's understanding of truth in Western terminology, then the coherence theory of truth is the best equivalent. Something is true when and only when it is coherent with the set of beliefs that we have. Although, the set of beliefs that we have are primarily verified through the correspondence theory of truth.³¹⁹ The final theory, which is al-Jahīz's theory, is only an attempt to combine his teacher's theory and the theory of the mainstream. Nevertheless, we can say that both Ash'arites and Mu'tazilites in general adhered to the correspondence theory of truth, namely, al-Ījī and his opponents have the same understanding of lying and truth-telling.

It is worth noting that the theologians unanimously agree that truth and falsehood could be only applied to reports (*akhbār*), or logically speaking, propositions (*qaḍīyah*).³²⁰ Al-Taftāzānī defines the report (*al-khabar*) as follows, "The report is a speech whose relation has an external reality that agrees with it, so it is true, or the external reality does not agree with its relation, so it becomes false."³²¹ We have already noted that the agreement with reality is the criterion that decides the truth or the falsehood of a report per se, namely, all reports in themselves are the subject of one of these two values, truth or falsehood. However, the veracity of some reports is intuitive, and the mind cannot assume its falsehood. This type of report is known as the true report (*al-khabar al-sadiq*), which is one of the main sources of knowledge in Islamic epistemology. The true report that its truth is beyond questioning is divided into two: the first one is the collectively transmitted report (*Mutawātir*), such as the existence of China or Mecca, and the second one is the report of the claimant to prophecy, which is substantiated by a miracle.³²² However, al-Ījī does not accept putting these two reports in one category; therefore, despite acknowledging that both of them have necessary truth, he differentiated between them by saying the necessary truth of the first one, the *mutawātir*, is intrinsic to the same report and does not depend on something else, while

³¹⁸ Joshua Rasmussen, *Defending the Correspondence Theory of Truth*, (Cambridge: University Press, 2014), 1-3.

³¹⁹ James O. Young, "The Coherence Theory of Truth," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/truth-coherence/>>.

³²⁰ The proposition (*qaḍīyya*) is defined by Muslim theologians and logicians as, "an expression that is possible to describe the one who utters it as truth-teller or liar." See Al-Magnīsī, *Mugnī al-Tulab: A commentary on Isagoge*, 127.

³²¹ Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-'Aqa'id al-Nasaḥiyah*, 32.

³²² *Ibid.*, 32-34.

the necessary truth of the second on is dependent on something else, which is the miracle in this case.³²³ Now, after providing a sufficient introduction about truth and falsehood in general, we can feel more confident to approach the application of these two values to divine speech.

Before applying the argument to divine speech, it is essential to say that this attribute, divine speech, was one of the major disputes between the Ash‘arites and the Mu‘tazilites. The latter denies the existence of such an attribute and claims that if we say that God is Speaking (*Mutakalim*), we mean that God creates the speech, and His speech is from the genus of our speech. Al-Qāḍī affirms this position by saying, “The speech of God, the Exalted, is from the same genus (jins) of the speech that we know in the presence (al-Shahid). It is [divine speech] formed letters and cut sounds; it is an accident that God creates in the bodies so it could be heard and understood.”³²⁴ The and the whole revelation are created similarly, namely, God creates the speech, and the angel hears that speech and deliver it to the prophet. Therefore, the Mu‘tazilites claimed that the Quran is created because it is a speech that God created, and all God’s actions are generated in time (*haditha*). On the other hand, al-Ījī and his Ash‘arite colleagues affirmed that God’s speech is an eternal attribute. Elaborating on the arguments that prove this divine attribute is beyond the scope of our enquiry, so we will keep the discussion about the possibility of lying.³²⁵

At the outset of the argument al-Ījī asserts that ascribing lying to God is not possible. He says, “Lying in respect to God is unanimously impossible.”³²⁶ Al-Ījī used the word *Mumtani‘*, which is best rendered as ‘impossible.’ Nevertheless, this impossibility cannot be accepted as unanimous among Ash‘arites and Mu‘tazilites alike. The reason for this is that the Mu‘tazilites consider lying as qabiḥ that could be possibly done by both contingent and necessary agents, but the necessary agent, God, does not choose to do the qabiḥ because of some reason. However, before presenting the Mu‘tazilites’ position from their own books, let us see how al-Ījī parsed their argument.

³²³ Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/399.

³²⁴ Al-Qāḍī, *Al-Mugnī*, 7/3.

³²⁵ The dispute about this attribute and its nature is not restricted to the Ash‘arites and the Mu‘tazilites, but it extends to include different theological schools. Al-Ījī and his student al-Jurjānī gave a comprehensive detail about these opinions, See al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 103-106.

³²⁶ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 295.

Al-Ījī states that the Mu‘tazilites maintain that lying is not conceived in regard to God for two reasons: the first one is because lying is *qabih*, and God does not do *qabih* actions. Al-Ījī suffices with saying that this reason is based on their rational judgement of *ḥusn* and *qabih*, and he already tried to refute their rational ethical foundations. The second reason for the Mu‘tazilites, as al-Ījī states, is that lying contradicts the doctrine of the most salutary (*al-Aṣlah*) in respect to this world, and God must do the most the salutary.³²⁷ The most salutary is another doctrine that the Mu‘tazilites consider an obligation on God to perform. To give the Mu‘tazilites their due, we need to present their argument from their own books, and then we will carry on delineating al-Ījī’s argument.

Denying the existence of the attribute of divine speech led the Mu‘tazilites to affirm that truth-telling or lying means creating a speech that is either in correspondence with reality or not. Al-Qāḍī states that when we say that God tells the truth we mean that He is the doer (*fa‘il*) of truth, i.e., God creates speech that is true in itself.³²⁸ Furthermore, al-Qāḍī argues against the Ash‘arites by saying that considering God as a truth-teller (*ṣādiq*) because of his essence would entail negating truth from Him. To explain this charge against the Ash‘arites, we say that the Mu‘tazilites reason as follows,

- God’s essence (*zāt*) is eternal
- Telling-truth means merely the formed letters and separated sounds
- The formed letters and separated sounds cannot be eternal
- Therefore, telling-truth cannot be related to divine essence

Apparently, the disputed premise is the third one, which is ‘formed letters and separated sound cannot be eternal,’ but in reality, this premise and all other premises are conceded by al-Ījī. When he presents the Mu‘tazilites position, he said that we do not deny that God’s formed letters and separated sounds are generated in time, and he adds, “But we affirm something beyond that [formed letters and separated sounds], which is the meaning that is subsisting in the [divine] essence, and we claim that it [this meaning] is different from utterances (‘*ibarāt*).”³²⁹ As we have stated before,

³²⁷ Ibid. The doctrine of *al-Aṣlah* will be discussed in detail in the third chapter.

³²⁸ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 319.

³²⁹ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 294.

al-Ījī and other Ash‘arites affirm that divine speech is an eternal attribute, which is the inner speech (*al-kalām al-nafsī*), which is different from utterances. Thus, we see that the focus of controversy between al-Ījī and the Mu‘tazilites is the existence of the eternal inner speech. Therefore, the Mu‘tazilites’ argument of lying goes back to their main argument of denying qabiḥ actions. God does not perform any qabiḥ because conceding that God does one qabiḥ action would deem it possible for God to perform other qabiḥ, such as lying or injustice. This possibility, as al-Qāḍī states, would leave us unconfident in God’s commands, prohibition, promise and threat.³³⁰ This is a general argument that al-Qāḍī provides to say all qabiḥ actions, with respect to God, are in the same category, and God does not do any of them.

However, the specific argument that the Mu‘tazilites hold to deny the possibility of lying is stemming from their method of applying the observable (*al-Shahid*) to the unobservable (*al-gā’ib*). In other words, applying the humans’ understanding of ethics to God. Al-Qāḍī expresses this argument as follows,

If one of us was given the choice to tell the truth or to lie, and the benefit in both of them [telling truth and lying] was equal. Furthermore, he was told that if you lie, we give one dirham and if you tell the truth, we give you one dirham as well. If this was the case, and the agent was aware of the qubḥ of lying, and he was not in need of it [of lying], and also was aware of his needlessness of lying, then he would never choose lying over telling-truth. It is merely because he knows it is [lying] qabiḥ, and [he knows about] his needlessness of it. The exact reason [that led the man to avoid lying] is valid in the case of the Eternal [the Exalted]; therefore, [God] will never choose it [lying].³³¹

Al-Qāḍī affirms that the exact reason for one of us not to choose lying over truth-telling must be applied to God as well, namely, humans and God have the same cause that necessitates its effect, and this cause is the rational cause (*‘ilā ‘aqlīyah*) that entails its effect in every possible world, i.e., both eternal and contingent beings are subject to it. This argument that al-Qāḍī used is common among the Mu‘tazilites to prove that truth-telling and lying in themselves have an intrinsic ethical value.

For this reason, al-Ījī and other Ash‘arites launched many counterarguments to refute this position. Al-Ījī argues against this argument through three different steps. In the first one, he prevents (*mana‘a*) that lying and truth-telling could be completely equal

³³⁰ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 318.

³³¹ *Ibid*, 303.

in the real essence of the matter (*nafs al-amr*)³³² because both of them, truth-telling and lying, have different implications (*lawazim*), and thus, al-Ījī argues, the assumption of their equality, in this case, is impossible.³³³ Therefore, saying that someone will choose truth-telling over lying after assuming their equality is not true because complete equality is discarded. In the second step, al-Ījī concedes the assumption of the equality between truth-telling and lying, but he prevents the entailment of truth-telling. He says that together with assuming equality, preponderating truth-telling over lying will come first to the mind, but that does mean that the mind will definitely choose it. Al-Ījī here differentiates between potential and actual judging, becoming prone to judge is different from actually judging.³³⁴ In the final step of this argument al-Ījī concedes, for the sake of the argument, that all propositions are true with respect to humans, namely, when telling truth and lying they are completely equal and the agent knows that lying is qabiḥ, and he knows as well that he is needless of it, then he will definitely choose truth-telling over lying. However, al-Ījī does not accept the analogy, in this case, between humans and God, i.e., he differentiates between the observable (*shahid*) and the unobservable (*ga'ib*). He argues that we certainly agree that it is not qabiḥ from God to enable His servant to sin but, on the contrary, it is unanimously qabiḥ from one of us to enable his servant to sin.³³⁵ Al-Ījī simply negates that humans and God share the same concept of qubḥ, namely, what is qabiḥ from us is not qabiḥ from God. To elaborate more on this, we say that according to al-Ījī and his Ash'arite colleagues, qabiḥ in a general sense is either rational or religious (*shar'i*). The rational one is discarded by the Ash'arites, and they already provided several arguments to negate it, while the religious one is not conceived with respect to God, neither by the Ash'arites nor by the Mu'tazilites. The Mu'tazilites on the other hand, affirmed that what is qabiḥ from us is qabiḥ from God; both types of qabiḥ have the same efficient cause, so they must have the same effect. Al-Rāzī affirms that this method, the analogy between human and divine ethics, is an important method that the Mu'tazilites follow, and they claim, as al-Rāzī states, that

³³² Al-Ījī does not mean that truth-telling and lying cannot be equal in *nafs al-amr*, but he means that the concept of equality cannot be conceived in itself. *Nafs al-amr* is a very common concept among late mutakalimins, it means the real essence of something regardless of external perspectives. For further information about *nafs al-amr*, see Isma'il bin Mustafa al-Galanbawī, *Three Epistles in Nafs al-Amr*, (Dubai: Kalām Research & Media, 2017), 77-78.

³³³ Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/79.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid., 79-80.

the knowledge of this analogy is a necessary knowledge.³³⁶ Furthermore, al-Rāzī states that the Mu‘tazilites affirm that the necessary knowledge about the qubḥ of certain actions is more intuitive and necessary with respect to God than to humans. Lying and injustice, for example, are from these actions that their value of qubḥ is more manifest in respect to God than to humans. Al-Rāzī provides one of the Mu‘tazilites’ arguments that confirms this position by saying,

[the Mu‘tazilites maintain] that their qubḥ [lying and injustice] in respect to God is more confirmed in the mind because one of us might commit lying or injustice due to his ignorance or need, and ignorance or need could be considered as an excuse for him [man] based on some aspects (*wujuh*). On the contrary, God is far above (*munazah*) ignorance, inability (*‘ajiz*) and need; therefore, [pure] reason would affirm more emphatically that the qubḥ of lying and injustice in regard to Him are more obvious than [the ones] in regard to the servant.³³⁷

Thus, we have sufficiently provided the Mu‘tazilite arguments about the qubḥ of lying with respect to God. We primarily depended on al-Ījī’s presentation of the Mu‘tazilites’ argument, and then we verified these arguments from the Mu‘tazilites’ own books, and in the end, we bolstered this position by al-Rāzī’s affirmation. However, now, we need to go back to explore al-Ījī’s own arguments about this issue.

Al-Ījī provides three arguments against the possibility of lying with respect to God, but, he only chose the last one to be the main argument in this regard. In the first argument, he argues that lying is impossible because it is a deficiency (*naqs*), and deficiency is impossible with respect to God. Nevertheless, al-Ījī admits that the argument in itself is deficient and does not fit into the Ash‘arites reasoning. He says that deficiency in relation to divine actions ends up with the same position of rational qubḥ, which the Ash‘arites reject.³³⁸ By claiming that lying is an attribute of defect, al-Ījī does not defend the eternal speech, but he tries to discard the possibility of lying in the created words. He says that deficiency in creation means deficiency in actions, and thus we end up claiming that certain actions are imperfect, i.e., we end up judging divine actions on rational bases, which all the Ash‘arites do not accept. The second argument that al-Ījī provides is about negating lying in the eternal speech. This

³³⁶ Al-Rāzī, *Al-Maṭālib*, 3/341. We already mentioned that Hourani tried to affirm the similarity between al-Qāḍī’s ethical understanding and the British Ethical Intuitionism. George F. Hourani, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethic*, 98-107.

³³⁷ *Ibid*, 3/344.

³³⁸ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 296; Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/115.

argument seems quite difficult to grasp, so I will try to render al-Ījī's words in English, and then elaborate on it. He argues,

If lying were an attribute of Him, then His lying would be eternal because the occurrences (*hawadith*) cannot be generated in His essence [the Exalted]. In this case, telling the truth would be impossible for Him because what is eternal does not perish. The implication is untrue since we know by necessity that informing about something that we know is possible. Therefore, this indicates that His inner speech (*al-kalām al-nafsī*) is true.³³⁹

To point out the impossibility of lying that al-Ījī is talking about, we need to understand that the two opposite things cannot exist simultaneously in the same locus at the same time: lying and telling-truth are opposite to each other. The second essential thing we need to know is that the non-existence of the eternal thing is logically impossible. Therefore, ascribing lying to God means, in this argument, that lying is a characteristic of His inner speech, and the characteristic of an eternal attribute is eternal as well, and thus lying becomes an eternal characteristic subsisting on divine attribute and prevents its opposite, which is telling-truth, from subsisting in the same locus. This impossibility of telling-truth is discarded since we know by necessity that it is possible to narrate things that correspond with knowledge and reality, i.e., truth. Furthermore, this leads to another absurdity, which ascribes ignorance to God, the Exalted. Al-Fanārī brought a serious objection that could turn the table and prove by the same argument that truth-telling is impossible as well. He says that we know by necessity that it is possible to tell about things that are contrary to our knowledge and reality at the same time, so saying that God's speech has an eternal characteristic of truth-telling would negate the necessary knowledge about the possibility of narrating things contrary to reality. Al-Fanārī, after presenting this objection, responded to it as follows, "The claim about necessary knowledge [that we could narrate things contrary to reality] is discarded because if the argument was not about verbal (*lafzī*) lying and truth-telling, it would be possible, but it is about that [speech] of the soul (*nafsī*)."³⁴⁰ Al-Fanārī argues that it is impossible to assert something contrary to our inner speech (*al-kalām al-nafsī*) because when we know something by certainty, we can verbally give utterances that are contrary to our knowledge, but we cannot have an inner speech that is contrary to our knowledge.³⁴¹ So far, al-Ījī provided two arguments, one

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/115.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

about the impossibility of lying in verbal speech (*al-kalām al-laḥẓī*) and the other about the inner speech. Nevertheless, these two arguments do not seem free from objection, so al-Ījī did not assertively adopt them as he did with the third argument.

Al-Ījī affirms at the inception of this argument that this is the proof that he relies on. He says that in order to prove that lying is impossible on God we depend on the prophet's report (*khābar al-rasūl*) that asserts the truthfulness of divine speech, and the truthfulness of this assertion is known intuitively in the religion.³⁴² This proof apparently seems simple, but it works for both verbal and inner speeches, as al-Jurjānī affirmed. Nevertheless, this proof does not seem free from objections as well. Saying that the truthfulness of divine speech depends on the prophet's report, which in itself requires attestation (*taṣḍīq*) of God, means an obvious circularity in the proof. Put it logically,

- the truthfulness of divine speech depends on the prophet's reports (p.1)
- The truthfulness of the prophet and all his reports requires divine attestation (p.2)
- Divine attestation is a divine word that demonstrates the veracity of the claimant to prophecy. (p.3)
- Therefore, circularity is inescapable. (conclusion)

Al-Ījī responds to this objection merely by modifying the third premise: divine attestation, which is the miracle, does not belong to divine words, but it belongs to divine actions. Therefore, the attestation here is an action, not a word that has the value of truth or falsehood, i.e., there is no circularity in the argument.³⁴³ However, here we come to a serious objection whereby the Mu'tazilites put the main Ash'arites' argument of prophecy at risk, namely, it is the evidentiary miracle and the possibility of creating it for false prophets.

3.3. Miracle and its Ethical Dimensions

Whether the miracle belongs to divine words or actions, it is unanimously considered as a confirmation of the claim to prophecy.³⁴⁴ Therefore, in case we say it belongs to

³⁴² Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 296.

³⁴³ Ibid.; Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/116.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 339; Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār. *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 323.

divine words, the miracle then must be only created for the true claimant to prophecy; otherwise, lying would be ascribed to God, the Exalted. On the other hand, if we say it belongs to divine actions, then according to the Mu'tazilites, creating the miracle for a false claimant to prophecy is qabiḥ and cannot be ascribed to God. Apparently, with these two assumptions, the Ash'arites would be caught between a rock and a hard place because if they concede the possibility of creating the miracle for a false claimant to prophecy, they would be either ascribing lying to God or accepting the possibility of such an action and, thus, jeopardizing the veracity of the prophet and the religion as a whole.

3.3.1. The Nature of Miracles

Before exploring al-Ījī's response to this objection, we need to provide some clarifications of the miracle, its nature, and its denotation of the truthfulness of the claimant to prophecy. Al-Ījī defined the miracle as follows, "[the miracle] according to us, is the thing that is intended to prove the veracity of a claimant to prophecy."³⁴⁵ In other words, proving the whole religion is based on the veracity of the prophet, and the prophet's veracity in itself is based on the miracle. Whether the miracle is the only proof of the veracity of the claimant to prophecy or not is a matter of minor dispute among theologians. The majority of theologians consider the miracle to be the only valid proof for this matter.³⁴⁶ The prominent Ash'arite scholar, al-Juwaynī stated that there was no other proof of the veracity of the claimant to prophecy except the miracle. He argues for this matter by saying that any proof, in general, is either ordinary (*mu'tād*), so it could be equally used by the honest and the dishonest, and thus it would be impossible to rely on, or it is extraordinary and it can be only used by the righteous claimant to prophecy. Nevertheless, al-Juwaynī states that being only extraordinary is not enough, but it must be associated with the claim to prophecy as well.³⁴⁷ Thus, al-Juwaynī mentions two main conditions for the miracle, which are being extraordinary

³⁴⁵ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 339.

³⁴⁶ Al-Rāzī does not seem content with the position that miracles are the only proof to assert the veracity of prophecy; therefore, he casts several objections on this position, and claimed that the miracle per se is not enough to give us certainty. At the same time, al-Rāzī adopted another argument to prove the veracity of prophecy, which is the holistic character of the prophet and his ability to complete others' characters. He says that this argument is more rational and has less objections than proof of the miracle. See al-Rāzī, *Al-Maṭālib*, 8/55-71, 103.

³⁴⁷ Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Irshād ilā Qawaṭi' al-Adillah fi Usūl al-Itiqād*, 351.

and associated with the claim to prophecy. Al-Ījī followed al-Juwaynī in depending on the miracle as the only proof of prophecy, but he did not suffice with mentioning only two conditions that make something a miracle. He adds other conditions as well, which are:³⁴⁸

- Conformity between the claim and the miracle.
- The miracle must not belie the prophet, such as the stone speaks and says that he is a false prophet, but if his miracle was resurrecting a dead body, then the belying of the resurrected body does not affect the veracity of his claim. Belying from a resurrected man is a possibility in itself and has nothing to do with the veracity of the miracle because he could be a non-believer.
- It must be divine action or omission (*tark*), such as the claimant to prophecy will say that my miracle that proves my truthfulness is that you cannot put your hands on your heads, and thus the miracle will be merely not creating the power for them. However, al-Ījī accepts omission to be a miracle and said that the theologians who consider omission as an existential thing did not count this condition.

The second important clarification regarding the nature of the miracle is whether it belongs to divine words or actions. We saw that al-Ījī explicitly dismissed the circularity between the truthfulness of God and proving this truthfulness by the prophet's report by stating that the miracle belongs to divine actions, not words. The same assertion that the miracle being a divine action is expressed by many theologians from both schools, the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites.³⁴⁹ Yet, reasoning and justification are still quite different between the two schools. For the Mu'tazilites, the miracle is a valid proof because it is based on divine justice and wisdom,³⁵⁰ while al-Ījī and other Ash'arites have different explanations whereby they linked the miracle, as a divine action, to divine words. They affirmed that it is a divine action that is in the place of verbal assertion, i.e., God creates the miracle with the same connotation as the

³⁴⁸ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 339-340. Al-Ījī counted several other minor conditions, but I only mentioned the most important ones.

³⁴⁹ See for example, Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Irshād ilā Qawaṭi' al-Adillah fi Usūl al-'Itiqād*, 329; Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 322.

³⁵⁰ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 322-323. Divine justice and wisdom and their relationship with our ethical question will be explained in the next part.

expression ‘this claimant to prophecy is saying the truth.’ To explain this connotation, al-Ījī used a clarifying example,

If a man claimed, in front of a huge crowd of people, that he is the king’s messenger to them, and then he said to the king if I am telling the truth then [to approve my claim] change your habit by getting up from your accustomed sitting place, the bed [for example], and sit somewhere else that you are not accustomed to sit on. [Then] when the king does that [changing his accustomed sitting place] the action of the king, in this case, is in a place of an assertion by a plain expression.³⁵¹

Thus, the action asserts or belies the claim to prophecy, and from this perspective we can say that the question of whether the miracle is a divine word or action belongs to the possibility of lying. However, accepting that the miracle is a divine action that is intended per se to prove the veracity of a claimant to prophecy will not rule out completely the possibility of his lying, and thus the possibility of God telling a lie would still be a serious accusation directed to al-Ījī and his Ash‘arites colleagues. The reason for this accusation is that al-Ījī states that the concept of qabiḥ is not applicable to God and His actions, and thus all His actions, including creating miracles for false prophets, i.e., even creating a miracle for a false prophet cannot be described with the ethical value of qubḥ. Al-Ījī, in spite of adopting this position, is still maintaining that God does not create the miracle for false prophets. In other words, he holds that the miracle denotes the veracity of the claimant to prophecy, but what type of denotation it is and whether it rules out the possibility of lying or not is a matter of dispute.

The first position that al-Ījī mentions is the Mu‘tazilites’ position. He states that they consider the denotation of the miracle to be necessary, not because creating the miracle for false prophets is beyond divine power, but because it contradicts divine wisdom. Thus, divine wisdom precludes the possibility of creating the miracle for false prophets and makes the denotation of the miracle to the veracity of the claimant to prophecy a necessary denotation. Al-Ījī explains their reasoning by saying that creating the miracle for a false prophet implies his truthfulness and that entails deluding people, which is qabiḥ in itself and cannot be performed by God.³⁵²

³⁵¹ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 341. Cf. Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Nizamiyya*, (Beirut: Dar al-Nafa’is, 2003), 225.

³⁵² Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 342; Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/253.

Saying that the denotation of the miracle to the truthfulness of the claimant to prophecy is necessary is not restricted to the Mu'tazilites alone; al-Ījī ascribes this position to al-Ash'arī himself and to other Ash'arite colleagues. He says, "The shaykh [al-Ash'arī] and some of our colleagues said that it [creating the miracle for a false prophet] is not an object of power (*gaīr maqdūr*) because it [the miracle] has a certain [necessary] denotation to the truth."³⁵³ Nevertheless, there is no doubt that al-Ash'arī's reasoning is quite different from that of the Mu'tazilites. Two prominent students of al-Ījī, al-Jurjānī and al-Kirmānī, gave us more clarification about the al-Ash'arī's reason behind adopting this position. I will try to summarize and render their explanation briefly here. Saying that the denotation of the miracle to truth is necessary means that the miracle does rationally entail the truthfulness of the one who is the miracle is created for. Put it differently, the miracle is a cause that has only one effect, which is the truth, and whenever the cause happens the effect must happen as well. Al-Ash'arī, as al-Kirmānī states, established his proof of the necessary denotation of the miracle on the necessary relationship between the cause and its effect. Yet, this position is not accepted either by al-Ījī or by the opponent. Another explanation about al-Ash'arī's necessary denotation of the miracle to the truthfulness of the claimant to prophecy is parsed by the commentators as follows: creating the miracle for a false prophet either denotes his truthfulness or not, so maintaining the first one that the miracle denotes his truthfulness would make a liar a truth-teller (*ṣadiq*), which leads to the overturning of realities (*qalb al-ḥaqā'iq*), which is impossible in itself. The second one that the miracle does not denote his truthfulness, i.e., it denotes his falsehood would entail another logical impossibility, which is the separation between the cause, which is the miracle, and its effect, which is the truth.³⁵⁴ Eventually, we can say that al-Ash'arī and those who followed him maintained that the denotation of the miracle is necessary to escape two logical absurdities, which are the overturning of the realities and the separation between the cause and its effect. However, these two impossibilities become part of the argument only in the case of maintaining that the denotation of the miracle to truth is necessary.

³⁵³ Ibid. This position that al-Ījī ascribed to al-Ash'arī is not found in the available books of al-Ash'arī, and I have not seen other Ash'arī scholar maintaining this position or ascribing it to al-Ash'arī.

³⁵⁴ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/253-254; Al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Hussain paşa, 317), 376b.

Al-Ījī did not adhere to the same position of his master, al-Ash‘arī, but he held that the denotation of the miracle to truth is a habitual denotation, not a necessary one. Before expounding on al-Ījī’s position, it is worth noting that this is the main position among the Ash‘arites, i.e., al-Ash‘arī’s position was not followed by the main Ash‘arite scholars, such as al-Bāqillānī, al-Juwaynī and the late Ash‘arites.³⁵⁵ Al-Ījī states that all the habitual or natural things are within the scope of divine power, namely, it is not logically impossible for God to create a miracle for a false prophet. He says, “That we [the Ash‘arites] do not maintain that creating the miracle for a false prophet and lying is rationally impossible on God, the Exalted... because they are from the contingent issues (*mumkināt*), and His power is all-inclusive [over all contingents].³⁵⁶ Creating the miracle for a false prophet entails that the denotation of the miracle in itself to truth is contingent and its contrary is rationally possible. Nevertheless, this possibility does not make us sceptical of the truthfulness of the claimant to prophets because it still gives us certain knowledge about his truthfulness. Al-Ījī states that something being rationally possible does not mean that its existence is habitually possible.³⁵⁷ Al-Rāzī asserts this rule evidently enough by saying, “That the existence of something in itself could be possible; even though, we know by necessity that it would not come into existence. [For example] we deem it possible that someone comes into existence without parents, but when we see someone, we know by necessity that he is generated from his parents.”³⁵⁸ The possibility here that al-Ījī and al-Rāzī are talking about is a rational/logical possibility, while the necessary knowledge that they asserted from the miracle is a type of certainty that we obtain from the natural world around us.

Al-Ījī as usual intends to explain things through clarifying examples, so to simplify how certainty is taken from habitual denotation, he gives us this example,

If someone claimed that he is a prophet, and then lifted the mountain over their heads, and he said that if you belie me, the mountain will fall on you, and if you believe in me the mountain will go away from you. Thus, every time they intend to believe him, the mountain moves away, and on other hand, when they intend to belie him, the mountain draws near to them. [if it is the case] it will be known by necessity that he [the claimant to prophecy] is truthful in his claim,

³⁵⁵ Al-Bāqillānī’s position that the denotation of the miracle is a habitual denotation is mentioned by al-Ījī himself; while al-Juwaynī in *al-Irshād* explicitly stated that it is a habitual denotation as well. See al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 342; Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Irshād ilā Qawaṭi’ al-Adillah fi Usūl al-Itiqād*, 344.

³⁵⁶ Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/81.

³⁵⁷ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 341.

³⁵⁸ Al-Rāzī, *Al-A’arb’īn fi Usūl al-Dīn*, 3/156.

and the habit (*al-‘adah*) prevents [the existence of] this action [lifting the mountain] from a liar.³⁵⁹

Lifting the mountain and its movement according to the claim of the prophet will create in us a necessary knowledge about his truthfulness, but the pure rational possibility of the opposite is always there when we talk about habitual issues, i.e., this possibility is not logical. In short, the possibility of creating a miracle for false prophets is an important ethical question that is primarily associated with the possibility of lying in regard to God, the Exalted. In order to explain the details of this question, we expounded on the nature of the miracle, its nature, whether it is a divine word or action, and finally its denotation to the truthfulness of the claimant to prophecy. Having done this, our inquiry into divine ethics cannot stop at this point; there are a few essential concepts that need to be clarified to have a complete conception of divine ethics.

3.4. Divine Purposiveness

Divine purposiveness is the argument about whether God acts according to a specific objective or not. To delineate the argument broadly, we say that the argument essentially is an ethical argument³⁶⁰ that goes back and forth between those who affirm an objective ethical value and those who deny it. The partisans of rational ethical value claim that it is possible to explain divine actions with ethical objectives, namely, it is possible to say that the purpose behind God’s action is the ethical value of *ḥusn*, and similarly, the reason behind God’s omission is the ethical value of *qubḥ*. On the other side, those who deny the rational ethical value abstain from explaining divine actions by purposes and insist that the ethical value follows God’s actions, not vice versa. Moreover, the argument intends to associate some important divine concepts, such as divine wisdom, justice, omnipotence, and kingship.

Al-Ījī, at the outset of the argument, denied the purposiveness of God’s actions and ascribed the same position to all Ash‘arites.³⁶¹ He provides two arguments that are

³⁵⁹ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 341.

³⁶⁰ Many theologians affirmed that the argument of divine purposiveness is related to the *ḥusn and qubḥ*. Al-Taftāzānī, for example, says that according to the Ash‘arites, the argument of divine purposiveness is subsidiary to the argument of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ*. See Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Makaṣid*, 4/296.

³⁶¹ Al-Jurjānī affirmed the attribution of denying divine purposiveness to all the Ash‘arites; furthermore, he restricted the argument in Islamic theology to three schools: the Ash‘arites who refuse divine the

mainly against the Mu'tazilites who maintain the purposiveness of divine actions. Furthermore, discussing al-Ījī's argument, it is important to explain the Arabic terminologies that are used in this argument. The word *ta'lil* means justifying or finding the reason or the cause of something, so the Arabic name of the argument is *ta'lil af'al Allah*, which could be rendered in English as finding the cause (*'illā*)³⁶² of divine actions, or more eloquently, as "divine purposiveness."³⁶³ The second word that the argument pivots around is the word '*gharaḍ*,' which can be rendered in English by these words: purpose, telos, objective and intention. *Gharad* is defined as well by the Islamic scholars as a moving factor toward a destination or a purpose.³⁶⁴

3.4.1. Divine Perfection and Purposiveness

After explaining the essential terms, we can start delineating al-Ījī's arguments and discussing their ethical dimensions. The first argument that al-Ījī provides is about divine perfection. God is the perfect being whose perfection cannot be affected by anything either positively or negatively. He argues as follows, "If God's action pursued a *gharaḍ*, then He [God] would be imperfect (*naqis*) by Himself and seeking perfection through [the existence of] that *gharaḍ* because the *gharaḍ* for an agent is the thing that its existence is better than its non-existence."³⁶⁵ The *gharaḍ* is the thing that its existence is more convenient to the agent than its non-existence; therefore, claiming that God's action pursues a *gharaḍ* means that God, the self-sufficient perfect being, is seeking advantage through performing that action, and this is impossible. The *gharaḍ* could be translated here as a motive for an action or as a final cause.³⁶⁶

purposiveness, the Mu'tazilites who maintain its necessity, and the Maturidīyah who reject the necessity and affirm that the purpose based on divine favor. See al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/224.

³⁶² The word *'ila* has different definitions in Kalām and Usūl. In the former it means the cause that necessitates or prompts the existence of something, while in the latter means the reason that led a certain action to have a certain ruling. However, the definitions in both disciplines were the subject of various discussions. See Amir Bād Shaḥ, *Tāṣīr al-Taḥrīr*, (Beirut: Darul Kutub, 1996), 4/2.

³⁶³ The argument in Western academia is discussed mainly under the title of "divine purposiveness." See Rami Koujah, "Divine Purposiveness and its Implications in Legal Theory: The Interplay of *Kalām* and *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*," *Journal of Islamic Law and Society* 24, no. 3 (2017): 171–210. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44634470>.

³⁶⁴ Muḥammad al-Barkatī, *Ta'rifat Fiqhiya*, (Beirut: Darul Kutub, 2003), 157.

³⁶⁵ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 331-332.

³⁶⁶ The final cause is defined as "the end that for the sake of which a thing is done." See Falcon, Andrea, "Aristotle on Causality", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/aristotle-causality/>>.

However, excluding the *gharaḍ* will leave us with the question: what does preponderate the existence of the divine action over its non-existence? Al-Ījī responds to this objection by affirming that the only reason for divine actions is the divine will.³⁶⁷ God is a volitional agent whose actions are preponderated by his will and cannot be affected by any other purpose or objective. In other words, the divine will is a faculty that is not influenced by external factors or motives. But some of the Mu‘tazilites³⁶⁸ would argue against this position by claiming that the will in itself cannot preponderate the existence of action over its non-existence. They say that the volitional agent must have power, knowledge and will; though, each of them cannot be sufficient to preponderate the existence of action over its non-existence. Put it differently, the preponderating factor (*murajih*) is related to the action in itself, i.e., it is a characteristic of the action that calls the agent and prompts him to perform that action. This characteristic or ethical value makes the existence side of the action preponderated, and so the wise agent will always choose to perform that action. This is how the Mu‘tazilites connect divine purposiveness with divine wisdom. They said that God’s action must pursue an objective because God is Wise, and wisdom means acting in congruence with the preponderated characteristic in itself (*fī nafs al-amr*).³⁶⁹

3.4.2. Divine Wisdom and Justice

Since wisdom plays a crucial role in proving divine purposiveness, it would be wise to scrutinize the concept of divine wisdom according to the Mu‘tazilites and al-Ījī.

The Mu‘tazilites most of the time associate divine wisdom with divine justice. They claim that these divine characteristics are the guide for divine actions. Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār explains these divine characteristics as follows, “when we describe the Eternal [God] as just and wise, we mean that He neither commits qabīḥ nor chooses it, and He does not neglect what is necessary on Him, and all His actions are ḥasan.”³⁷⁰ So justice and wisdom are essentially related to rational ethical values: performing what is ḥasan and necessary and avoiding what is qabīḥ. Otherwise stated, these are the

³⁶⁷ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 291.

³⁶⁸ This argument is attributed to Abū al-Ḥussān al-Baṣrī and his followers.

³⁶⁹ Salīḥ al-Maqbalī, *Al-Ilm al-Shamikh fī Iyṯar al-Ḥaq ‘la al-Aba’ wa al-Mashaykh*, (Cairo: Egyptian Publication, 1910), 22-23.

³⁷⁰ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 301.

preponderated characteristics that the divine actions pursue, and thus, divine actions can be explained by purposes and objectives. Al-Qāḍī did not articulate his argument the same as Abū al-Ḥussāin al-Baṣrī, although he ended up agreeing with the same conclusion. He did not say that power, knowledge, and will are not sufficient for preponderating the existence of an action, but he said that God’s knowledge about the real ethical value of the action would prompt God to perform the necessary and avoid the qabiḥ.³⁷¹

It is worth noting that the Mu‘tazilites do not always explain wisdom and justice together, but sometimes they separate between them and define justice as providing the right (*ḥaqq*) of others and taking what is due from them.³⁷² Justice for the Mu‘tazilites is the main principle³⁷³ under which they discuss divine actions and the argument of ḥusn and qubḥ, but when they discuss the ethical value of divine actions in particular, they associate wisdom with justice to prove that God neither commits qabiḥ nor leaves the necessary. Ibn al-Malāḥīmī affirms this by saying, “You should know that this principle [the principle of justice] is the basis of the detailed discussions of justice, and it [this principle] is clarifying that [God] the Exalted is wise and [He] neither performs qabiḥ nor leaves the necessary.”³⁷⁴

Al-Ījī and other Ash‘arites affirmed the characteristics of divine justice and wisdom, but since they do not acknowledge the rational ḥusn and qubḥ, they come up with different explanations of them. Al-Ījī does not give us sufficient detail about these two divine characteristics, and he only mentions that Justice is a negating attribute. It means that whatever God does is not qabiḥ.³⁷⁵ We already explained that according to al-Ījī, qabiḥ in respect to God is not conceived, and whatever He does is ḥasan. However, if we go to the early Ash‘arites, we see that their definition of divine justice is similar to al-Ījī’s definition. Al-Baqillānī and al-Juwaynī affirm that justice is whatever God does.³⁷⁶ Al-Juwaynī said when we attribute justice to God, we mean that He is the just (*al-‘adil*), and the just means, “the one who does the things that he has

³⁷¹ Ibid., 302.

³⁷² Ibid., 301.

³⁷³ Justice is the second principle out the five principles that the Mu‘tazilites base their theology on.

³⁷⁴ Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, *Al-Faiḡ fī Usūl al-Dīn*, 166.

³⁷⁵ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 335.

³⁷⁶ Al-Baqillānī, *al-Inṣāf*, 185; Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Irshād ilā Qawaḥī‘ al-Adillah fī Usūl al-‘Itiqād*, 170.

the right to do.”³⁷⁷ What ‘God has the right to do,’ should not be understood as if there are things that God does not have the right to do, but He has the right to do whatever He wants. Al-Ash‘arī laid down the foundation for the whole divine ethical understanding by saying, “Whatever He does, He has the right to do: He is the Almighty king who is not owned (mamlūk) and above Him there is no permissive, commander, preventer, and forbider.”³⁷⁸ In short, it means that God is the utmost authority in the existence, and He is the one who determines the meaning of ḥusn and qubḥ. Therefore, al-Ījī’s definition of justice means that whatever God does is not *qabīḥ* because He is the King (*al-Malik*) who owns all the world and sets the rules and the ethics for it.

Regarding wisdom, the Ash‘arites argue inversely by affirming that wisdom pursues divine actions, not vice versa; namely, the attribute of wisdom is conceived in divine actions after conceiving that the action is divine. Put it simply, God’s actions do not pursue specific wisdom outside, but wisdom is found in whatever God does. Al-Ījī does not give us a specific definition of wisdom, but he seems to be following³⁷⁹ the authentic Ash‘arites’ understanding of wisdom, which might be considered a reductionist approach by the opponent.³⁸⁰ Wisdom, according to the Ash‘arites, could be explained by both divine knowledge and power. When it is explained by divine knowledge, it means the theoretical inclusive knowledge of the orders of things in their minute and grand features, and the determination on how they should be for achieving the functions required of them. On the other hand, when it is explained by divine power, it means the execution of these orders and making them perfect and excellent.³⁸¹ Therefore, wisdom has two meanings: the first one is a type of knowledge, which is perfect and comprehensive, and the second one is a characteristic of power, which brings things into existence with excellence, i.e., as exact as the theological knowledge intended them to be. Al-Ghazālī distinguishes between these theoretical and practical types of wisdom in regard to the divine names. He says that God can be called wise (*hakīm*) in two different meanings. The first meaning is derived from

³⁷⁷ Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Irshād ilā Qawaṭi‘ al-Adillah fi Usūl al-‘Itiqād*, 170.

³⁷⁸ Al-Ash‘arī, *Al-Luma‘ fi al-Rad ‘alā Aḥal al-Zayg wa al-Bida‘*, 117.

³⁷⁹ This is seen in the comments of his students: Al-Jurjānī when he elaborates on divine wisdom, he affirms the authentic Ash‘arites’ understanding. See al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/238.

³⁸⁰ The Mu‘tazilites and Ibn Taymiyyah always accuse the Ash‘arites of negating or reducing the meaning of divine wisdom to divine power. See Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmu‘ al-Fatawī*, 8/37.

³⁸¹ Al-Ghazālī, *al-Iktisād fi al-‘Itiqād*, 225.

wisdom (*hikma*), which is the type of knowledge. The second meaning of wise (*hakīm*) is derived from accuracy/precision (*iḥkām*), which is a type of action.³⁸²

When the Ash‘arites say that something has been entailed by divine wisdom, they do not mean that the specific characteristics or aspects of things prompted God to perform an action in a specific way. Nevertheless, they admit that God created things with certain characteristics and aspects, and when He ordains something to exist, He, with His knowledge and power, is taking these characteristics of things into consideration. However, these are two important points that should be clear regarding this issue. First, God acts according to these characteristics out of favor, and there is no obligation on Him to act in any specific way. Second, if God acted differently, His act would still be ḥasan and there would be wisdom in His act. It should be known that divine wisdom is not a condition that divine actions attain, but any divine action has inseparable wisdom whether we know it or not. However, many Ash‘arites implicitly or explicitly defended the divine wisdom. For example, when al-Ījī argues that prophets are better than angels, he said, “[God] commanded the lower (al-adnā) to fall prostrate before the better (al-afḍal)... and its opposite is contrary to the wisdom.”³⁸³ Al-Ījī here affirms that God created the lower and the higher, and His commands are in congruence with what He created, although He has the right to act and commands as He wants and no qabīḥ is not conceived in His actions. Furthermore, al-Āmidī explicitly asserted that the Ash‘arites do not negate the divine wisdom by saying, “We [the Ash‘arites] do not negate that God is wise (*hakīm*) in His actions, but this [the wisdom] is manifested in His manufacture (*ṣan’a*), and it [the wisdom] is manifested according to His knowledge and will. This [manifestation of wisdom] does not depend on the existence of a purpose or an objective.”³⁸⁴

3.4.3. Divine Omnipotence and Purposiveness

Al-Ījī’s second argument against divine purposiveness is based on divine omnipotence. God’s power is all-inclusive, and everything in the existence is created initially by God. Therefore, God does not need to create something in order to be able

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 367.

³⁸⁴ Sayf al-Dīn Al-Āmidī, *Abkar al-Afkar fi Usūl al-Dīn*, 2nd. ed., (Cairo: Dar al-Turath, 2004), 2/157.

to get something else. Al-Ījī states his argument as follows, “The purpose of the action is outside the action, namely, it is something that follows the action and happens through it. And since God is the one who creates everything initially, as we have clarified, then nothing from the creatures except it is [initially] His action, not a purpose of another action.”³⁸⁵ Al-Ījī has already clarified the concept of divine power and its efficacy, and we already elaborated on that at the outset of the chapter. Nevertheless, we say that according to al-Ījī and most of the Ash‘arites, divine omnipotence means that God’s power is the only efficient (*mūathir*) power in the existence and that God is the only real agent as well. The reason for this, as al-Ījī argues, is that everything apart from God is contingent, and one contingent being cannot generate the existence of another contingent being; therefore, God is the only necessary being who can bring contingent beings into existence through His necessary omnipotent power. Furthermore, the all-inclusiveness of the divine power stems from the fact that all contingent beings are equal with respect to divine power because the essence of contingency is shared by all of them.³⁸⁶ Al-Sialkūtī tried to bolster al-Ījī’s argument by saying that if God is creating something in order to get something else that would be considered frivolous (*‘abath*). The reason for this frivolity is to say that God’s power is equally related to all contingent beings, so creating the intermediary action or the intended action per se is exactly the same in respect to God’s power, and God, the Exalted, is far from seeking intermediaries to achieve His will. Al-Sialkūtī uses an example from the seen (*al-shahid*) and tried to apply it to the unseen (*al-ghā’ib*). He says, “if someone is able to sell his stuff (*matā’*) in his own town by 10 [dirham]; though, he went to a far town in order to sell them by 10 [dirham] that would be considered frivolous (*‘abath*).”³⁸⁷ However, it is worth noting the argument from frivolity is a Mu‘tazilite argument that they use against the Ash‘arites who deny divine purposiveness. However, for Mu‘tazilites, frivolity means the absence of purpose³⁸⁸ and the action that is devoid of purpose is rationally qabih, but God does not do qabih; therefore, God does not perform actions that are void of purpose. Although al-Ījī

³⁸⁵ Ibid, 332.

³⁸⁶ Ibid, 283. The non-efficacy of human power and the creation of human actions by God will be discussed in detail in the third chapter. For further discussion about the Islamic concept of divine omnipotence in English, see Eric Linn Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought: The Dispute over al-Ghazali’s Best of All Possible Worlds*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 148-159.

³⁸⁷ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/225.

³⁸⁸ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Al-Mugnī*, 11/93; Salih al-Muqbalī, *al-Ilm al-Shamikh fi Iyṯar al-Ḥaq ‘ala al-Aba’ wa al-Mashaykh*, 145.

negates that divine actions pursue a purpose, he does not say that divine actions are frivolous. He argues against the Mu‘tazilites’ accusation of frivolity by saying, “if you mean by frivolity the action that does have a purpose, then this is the matter [that we are disputing], but if you mean something else, then you need to describe it, prove it, and then demonstrate that it is impossible in regard to God.”³⁸⁹ However, the Ash‘arites do not accept Mu‘tazilites’ definition of frivolity (*‘abath*), and they define it differently. Al-Jurjānī provides us with an authentic Ash‘arite definition of frivolity by saying, “Frivolity (*‘abath*) is [the action] that is devoid of benefits (*fawaid*) and advantages (*manafi‘*), His actions, the Exalted, are perfectly done and contain innumerable [amount] of wisdom and interest that return to the creature.”³⁹⁰

Both the Mu‘tazilites and the Ash‘arites affirm divine wisdom from different perspectives. The Mu‘tazilites focus on the ethical aspect of the action and the congruence of divine actions with it, while the Ash‘arites focus on the comprehensive divine power, will and knowledge, and they deny the objective ethical aspects.

The third argument that al-Ījī is presenting against the Mu‘tazilites’ divine purposiveness is an argument from infinite regress. He says that conceding that divine actions are purposeful would lead to infinite regress, and since infinite regress is impossible, the purpose in respect to God’s actions is impossible as well. The details of the argument could be explained by saying that if every divine action follows a purpose, then either infinite regress will follow or it will end up with an action that does follow a purpose, i.e., an action that is intended per se. Escaping from infinite regress and accepting the existence of an action that is intended per se will disprove the Mu‘tazilites argument of the necessity of purposes in divine actions.³⁹¹ It is worth mentioning that al-Ījī’s argument from infinite regress is an abbreviation of al-Āmidī’s argument who tried to prove that God is the only active agent in reality, and His actions do not pursue purposes.³⁹² The impossibility of the infinite regress that al-Ījī and al-Āmidī are talking about is when the objective entails the intermediary action, i.e., the

³⁸⁹ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 332.

³⁹⁰ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/227.

³⁹¹ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/226. It is worth noting that proving the existence of one action that does not follow a purpose is not enough to disprove that divine actions are purposeful in general, but it is enough to disprove the necessity that the Mu‘tazilites claim. As it is in Logic: proving the existence of one particular is sufficient to disprove the universal negative proposition.

³⁹² Sayf al-Dīn Al-Āmidī, *Abkar al-Afkar fī Usūl al-Dīn*, 2/157.

existence of the intermediary is necessarily based on the existence of the objective action. For example, the existence of the grass is based on the existence of the rain, so God cannot create the grass before creating the rain, and the rain cannot be created before creating what is the purpose of it, and so on endlessly. Nevertheless, proving the impossibility of divine purposiveness through infinite regress does not seem to be free from objections. Al-Sialkūtī put the argument at risk by distinguishing between two types of infinite regress: into the past and into the future. The former is impossible, but the latter is possible. Al-Sialkūtī forms his objection as follows, “Why it is not possible [to say] that doing something today to pursue a purpose on the second day and doing [another] action on the second day to pursue a purpose on the day after and so on endlessly! Therefore, [Infinite regress] like this is not impossible. It is similar to [the case of] the blessing (na‘īm) of the heave.”³⁹³ Al-Sialkūtī’s objection is based on rejecting the infinite regress into the past, i.e., the creation of the grass is based on the creation of the rain and so on, so he tried to entertain the possibility of divine regress based on the possibility of endless series of actions that goes into the future. In other words, it is possible to look at the purposes inversely, and instead of saying that the existence of grass is based on the existence of rain, you can say that the existence of the rain is an objective for the next action that will exist in the future.

3.4.4. The Purpose of Creation and Religious Obligation (*Taklīf*)

One of the main actual disputes in divine purposiveness between the Mu‘tazilites and the Ash‘arites is about the purpose of creation, and subsidiary to it, the purpose of religious obligation. The Mu‘tazilites were the pioneers in explaining these purposes and connecting them to their ethical foundations. Therefore, we will try first to elaborate on the Mu‘tazilites’ answers, and then mention al-Ījī’s response and position on these matters.

Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār affirms that when God created the world, He pursued an objective that has an ethical aspect of ḥusn because without pursuing an objective, God’s creation would be frivolous (*‘abath*), and without having the ethical aspect of ḥusn, God would be committing qabiḥ. Therefore, when God created the world, He

³⁹³ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/226.

pursued an objective that has an ethical aspect of ḥusn.³⁹⁴ However, the focus of the argument is about the creation of human beings and making them legally incumbent; nevertheless, some Mu‘tazilites discuss the purpose of the existence of other creatures as well. However, Al-Qāḍī and the other Mu‘tazilites of Baṣra based their ethical theory on the concept of benefit, so the purpose of creating human beings is related to the concept of benefit as well. The benefit definitely is not conceived in regard to God, the Exalted, i.e., God does not need to seek benefit because He is needless and perfect. Therefore, the creation of human beings must be for their own interest. Al-Qāḍī affirms this by saying, “He [God] created me alive in order to benefit me.”³⁹⁵ Life is a prerequisite condition for receiving benefits because the inanimate objects cannot benefit from their existence, but they are created for the benefit of others. Al-Malāḥimī explains the chain of benefit between the types of creatures in this world as follows, “What exists in the world is divided into two: animal and inanimate, and the animal is divided into two: rational and irrational. The irrational one is created for the benefit of the rational one, either in his life or his religion. The inanimate [on the other hand] is created for the benefit of the animals.”³⁹⁶ However, the Mu‘tazilites looked at the act of creation objectively and purposefully, i.e., they affirmed that creation is intended to lead to a benefit, and the creation in itself is a benefit as well. The reason for this twofold approach stems from their definition of the benefit, which is defined by Ibn al-Malāḥimī as follows, “Benefit is the pleasure (laḥa) and the delight (surūr), what leads to them, and what validates (yuṣaḥih) them.”³⁹⁷

This purposeful explanation of creation cannot be free from objections. So the main objection that is directed to the Mu‘tazilites is that life is not purely pleasure and delight, but on the contrary, it is full of pain and agony. Moreover, the amount of pain and agony sometimes outweighs the pleasure and the delight, and that defeats the purpose of creation. In other words, God’s action—according to the Mu‘tazilites’ ethical understanding—would be frivolous (*‘abath*). However, the Mu‘tazilites

³⁹⁴ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Al-Mugnī*, 11/92. It is worth noting that we are here elaborating on the position of the Mu‘tazilites of Basra who are the main Mu‘tazilite School, and most of the Ash‘arite theological arguments are against them. Furthermore, the position of the Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad regarding the purpose of creation is rarely discussed in theological books. Nevertheless, their position seems similar to the Mu‘tazilites of Basra, except that they asserted the necessity of creation. See Al-Juwānynī, *Al-Irshād ilā Qawaḥi‘ al-Adillah fi Usūl al-‘Itiqād*, 287.

³⁹⁵ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 77.

³⁹⁶ Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Al-Faiḳ fi Usūl al-Dīn*, 251.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

responded to this objection by denying that pain and agony are bad in themselves, but, in essence, they have great benefits that are associated with religious obligation (*taklīf*), such as reminding people of the hereafter and increasing their rewards.³⁹⁸ This would lead us to elaborate on the purpose of religious obligation, which has the real benefit: the eternal reward.

Religious obligation for the Mu‘tazilites is implemented by God in order to expose human beings to great benefits, and these great benefits are different from the initial benefits that the living beings get in this world: they are purely good and eternal.³⁹⁹ However, the Mu‘tazilites’ divine purposiveness is most manifested in their theory of religious obligation. They affirm that the only way that humans would deserve the great benefit, which is the reward, is through religious obligation. In other words, God cannot reward human beings except through religious obligation because when they have great difficulty performing the obligatory religious actions and avoiding the prohibited ones, and thus they become worthy of rewards. Al-Malāḥimī explains the necessity of religious obligation in order to have the reward by saying, “We said that there is no other way to have this reward except through religious obligation because the reward is [in return of] great glorying (*ta‘zīm*), and it is not ḥasan to initially be given [the reward] without being deserved.”⁴⁰⁰ Reward cannot be given as favor, i.e., it must be in return for accepting the religious obligations.

Al-Ījī precluded the *qubḥ* of rewarding initially without religious obligation because he already argued that the ethical value of *qubḥ* is not conceived in regard to God, the Exalted. Furthermore, God is the king who owns everything, and the absolute owner cannot be asked about his actions in what he owns.⁴⁰¹ Accepting the *qubḥ* of rewarding without obligation is not going to free the Mu‘tazilites from objections. Al-Ījī argues that religious obligation is not proportional to the reward, namely, the difficulties that are including in the religious obligation are not equal to the reward that we get in the hereafter. Negating the equality between reward and religious obligation will prove the existence of the favor (*faḍl*), and thus disproving that the reward is deserved.

³⁹⁸ Ibid, 253.

³⁹⁹ Abdul Karim Uthman, *The Theory of Religious Obligation*, 453.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Al-Faiḳ fi Usūl al-Dīn*, 254. However, in third chapter, we will allocate one part to discuss the doctrine of reward and punishment in more details.

⁴⁰¹ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 332; Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/227.

Al-Ījī formed his objection as follows, “Reward is neither proportional to the difficulties [in the religious obligation] nor a return (‘iwad) for it. Do not you see that the reward for uttering the testimony (shahādah) is greater than performing many difficult acts of worship?”⁴⁰² The commentators adopted and defended al-Ījī’s position that religious obligation is not proportional to the reward. Nevertheless, some of them did not accept the examples that al-Ījī used in his objection. Al-Kirmānī provided us with a criticism that says, “The example is not congruent because difficult acts of worship, such as jihad and fasting, without the word [of testimony] are not deserving [reward]. For sure the whole is bigger than the part, so how could be the deserved [reward] of the whole lesser than the deserved [reward] of the part.”⁴⁰³

Regarding al-Ījī’s position of the purpose of creation and obligation, we can say that his position is diffused in his arguments of divine actions. Nevertheless, we say that al-Ījī affirms that God’s actions do not pursue a purpose, i.e., God does not need to do something in order to get to His purpose or objective. Al-Ījī also affirms that God is Wise, and His actions cannot be deprived of wisdom, and wisdom is intrinsic to His actions due to His knowledge and power. However, al-Ījī and the rest of the Ash‘arites, after affirming their position about divine actions, did not like to elaborate on the questions that ask why did God do so and so? They always intend to respond with the verse {He cannot be questioned for His acts, but they will be questioned} 21:23. Al-Baqillānī, for example, states this Ash‘arite position as follows, “He [God] is the real king/owner; He does what He wants with what He owns; He cannot be questioned for His acts, but they will be questioned.”⁴⁰⁴ Al-Rāzī, after using the same verse, gave us a precious comment about its meaning. He said that when we say that God cannot be questioned for His actions, we do not mean that He is like the tyrants who are not asked about their actions because of the fear of their evil, but we mean that after knowing that God’s actions cannot be deprived of right and wisdom, asking detailed questions about His actions will be redundant.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 332.

⁴⁰³ Shams al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Hussain paşa, 317), 361a.

⁴⁰⁴ Al-Baqillānī, *al-Inṣāf*, 47.

⁴⁰⁵ Al-Rāzī, *Al-Maṭālib*, 9/310.

CHAPTER IV

THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ETHICS IN HUMAN ACTIONS AND OTHER RELATED ARGUMENTS

After studying the theological foundations of ethics in divine actions, we need to apply the same inquiry in human actions and other related arguments in order to get a complete theoretical foundation for ethics from the theological arguments.

In this chapter, we will explore al-Ījī's argument of human actions, contingent power and freedom of choice. Our inquiry will extend to discuss the argument of obligation beyond capacity and its ethical dimensions in both human and divine actions. The doctrine of *al-ṣalāh wa al-aṣlah*, its subsidiary argument of prophecy, and its necessity on God will be discussed in both al-Ījī's and the Mu'tazilites' arguments. Finally, the argument of reward and punishment, which presents the consequences of human actions, will be examined under the light of the argument of ḥusn and qubḥ.

This chapter will try to answer several theological questions that form the ethical conceptions of Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī.

Some of these questions are:

- What is the nature of human power and will?
- Does negating the efficacy of human power negate their agency?
- Does the theory of acquisition (*kasb*) challenge the freedom of choice?
- Are humans ethically responsible because of the efficacy of their power or the freedom of their choice?
- Does al-Ījī really maintain al-Rāzī's position about the compelling motive?
- Does al-Ījī negate the freedom of choice?
- What are the actual and possible types of obligations beyond capacity?
- Is it necessary on God to take humans' interest into consideration?
- Is it ethically correct to reward the sinner or punish the obedient?

- Do human actions rationally necessitate their reward or punishment?

By answering these questions, we will have a complete understanding of human agency and the ethical responsibility from the theological perspective. Furthermore, we will understand the relationship between God and human actions in terms of assisting humans to attain the ethical value of ḥusn and avoid the ethical value of qubḥ, and the consequences of their actions, such as reward, punishment, or forgiveness.

4.1. Essential Elements for Actions

Before exploring al-Ījī's argument of human actions, we need to explain two essential attributes: will and power. These two attributes are indispensable for any actions to come into existence, namely, they are needed for divine and human actions alike. Nevertheless, the nature of divine will and power is completely different from the one that belongs to human beings. We already expounded on these two attributes in respect to God, and now when need we explain them again in respect to human beings, and thus the differences between eternal and contingent attributes will be clear enough.

4.1.1. The Will

In order to prove that the will is a distinct attribute in itself, al-Ījī had to launch a few arguments to refute the opponents' position about the nature of the will. It is not a belief, an inclination, a desire, or knowledge as he stated at the outset of his argument.⁴⁰⁶ Al-Ījī acknowledges the existence and sometimes the connections between the will and the previously mentioned faculties, but he insists that the will has a different nature. He argues that the will is distinguished from the desire⁴⁰⁷ because of two reasons: the will, unlike the desire, cannot be attached to itself, namely, the desire is always attached to the desired object and has no specific faculty in itself; it is merely the inclination of the self to the desired object.⁴⁰⁸ The second reason that al-Ījī provides is that someone might want (*yurid*) to drink a detestable medicine in spite of

⁴⁰⁶ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 148.

⁴⁰⁷ The desire as al-Jurjānī defines it is "the yearning of the soul to pleasurable things" i.e., it is not limited to sexual or gluttonous desire; See al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 6/74.

⁴⁰⁸ Al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 148. Al-Ījī casts doubt on this reason by saying that this reason is a subject of further inquiry (*fīhi naẓar*).

not desiring that medicine.⁴⁰⁹ Thus, al-Ījī shows the nature of the desire is different from the will because if they were the same, they must co-exist in every assumed case, and proving the existence of one of them in one case when the other does not exist is sufficient to show that they are different. Al-Ījī continues his argument by distinguishing between the will and the wish (*tamanī*) by saying that the object of the will must co-exist with the will, while the object of the wish could pertain to the impossible or the past. In short, we are not going to discuss all the arguments that al-Ījī is proving, but it is enough to say that al-Ījī is trying here to distinguish between the will and other faculties mainly by providing examples and showing that the will and other faculties do not exist always together. Now, after proving that the will is different from some faculties, we need to delve into al-Ījī's understanding of the will.

The will, according to al-Ījī and his Ash'arite colleagues, is a distinct specifying attribute that determines the actions that we are able to perform or omit. He says, "The will according to the Ash'arites is an attribute that determines the existence of one side of the object of power."⁴¹⁰ To simplify the definition, we say that one side of the object of power (*al-Maqdūr*) means either performing or omitting a specific action. For example, the action of standing up requires a will that preponderates its performance over its omission, and this is the function of the will to choose one side of the action.

Al-Ījī sufficed to affirm that the will is a distinct attribute in itself and did not expound on the nature of that attribute, whether it is a privative attribute or existential attribute, or that it is neither privative nor existential, i.e., it is a state (*ḥāl*).⁴¹¹ Most of the theological arguments focused on the divine will and its nature, while the contingent will received little attention in the literature of Kalām. Nevertheless, we can see a few late Ash'arites affirmed that contingent will is a real attribute, i.e., it is not a state (*ḥāl*).⁴¹² For more details about the nature of this real attribute, we find among the early

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid. Al-'Omarī brought al-Juwaynī's definition of the will, which is quite similar to al-Ījī's definition. He says, "*The will is a real attribute that is valid for performing of omission in all the servant's volitional actions.*" See Marzouk al-'Omarī, *The Theory of Acquisition in the Ash'arite Tradition*, (Beirut: Darul Kutub, 2009), 62.

⁴¹¹ The state (*ḥāl*) is something that neither existed nor did not exist; it is merely an attribute of an existed thing and this attribute is an intermediary between existence and non-existence. See Sa'd al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāsid*, (Pakistan: Dar al-Ma'arif al-Nu'maniyah, 1981), 80.

⁴¹² Ibid., 2/129; Sa'if al-Dīn al-Āmīdī, *Abkār al-Afkār fī Usūl al-Dīn*, 2nd ed., (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Qawmiya, 2004), 2/459.

Ash‘arite sources that Ibn Furak provides us with the position of al-Imām al-Ash‘arī himself. He says, “He (al-Ash‘arī) used to say that the contingent will is an accident... that cannot exist by itself, but it requires a living being to subsist in.”⁴¹³ Thus, we get a better conception of the contingent will, and we can say that the will is an existential attribute, i.e., it is an accident that entails a living being to subsist in.

However, it is worth noting that the Mu‘tazilites and the Ash‘arites are not at odds in regard to the contingent will;⁴¹⁴ namely, both of them share the same conception in regard to the nature of this attribute. Al-Qāḍī expounds on the nature of the contingent will as follows, “One of us wants what he wants because a meaning, which is the will, and the method to prove this will is the same method of proving al-akwān.”⁴¹⁵ Affirming that the will is a meaning means it is an accident and the way to prove its existence is the same way of proving the four main *kawns*, which are the main accidents themselves. We will suffice with this account about the nature of the will as a faculty that chooses one of the alternatives. However, the argument about the choice and its quiddity will come into the folds of al-Ījī’s main argument about human actions. Before that, we need to shed some light on human power (*qudrah*) and its nature.

4.1.2. The Power

Surprisingly enough, the human power (*qudrah*), not the will, was the pivot that the early theological arguments of free will turn around. The attribute of human power was discussed in theological arguments as *qudrah*, *quwah* or *istiṭā‘a*; all these words have the same meaning and could be rendered as “power” in English.⁴¹⁶ However, our theological scholar in question, al-Ījī, defines power in general, without distinguishing between eternal and contingent power by saying, “It [the power] is an attribute that

⁴¹³ Muḥammad bin Al-Ḥassan bin Furak, *Makalāt Abū al-Ḥassan al-Ash‘arī*, (Cairo: Darul Al-Thaqafa al-Dīnīya, 2005), 70.

⁴¹⁴ In the second chapter we already mentioned the dispute between the Ash‘arites and the Mu‘tazilites on the Divine Will, so there is no need to mention it again here.

⁴¹⁵ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 432. *Al-Akwān* is the plural of *kawn*, which could be rendered as a being. There are four types of *kawn* that are accepted by all theologians to be the main accidents. These four types of *kawns* are: motion, rest, being separated into parts, being aggregated from parts; See al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 5/13.

⁴¹⁶ *Qudrah* and *Quwah* are mainly translated as power; while *istiṭā‘a*, which has the same meaning, could be translated as capability. However, the affirmation that the Ash‘arites use these words to mean the same thing is found in Ibn Furak’s book; See Ibn Furak, *Makalāt Abū al-Ḥassan al-Ash‘arī*, 109.

causes effect (tuathir) according to the will.”⁴¹⁷ With this short definition of power, al-Ījī tries to exclude other attributes that have different functions, such as the attribute of knowledge that does not cause effect or the power of nature that its effect is not based on the will.⁴¹⁸ Nevertheless, when al-Ījī comes to explain human power, he denies its efficacy and claims that the originated power, according to the Ash‘arites, is an attribute that is attached to human actions, but it is not responsible for causing any effect. In other words, power, in general, is an attribute that causes effect according to the will, but human power, though it is associated with the will, does not have efficacy. Al-Jurjānī highlights al-Ījī’s position by saying, “The contingent power, according to our opinion [the Ash‘arites], does not have an effect on any action at all.”⁴¹⁹ This apparently strange position about human power was a matter of great dispute between the Ash‘arites and the Mu‘tazilites and led to stigmatizing the school of Ash‘arism with compulsion (*jabr*).⁴²⁰

Claiming that all Ash‘arites hold the same position about the contingent power does not seem quite accurate. Nevertheless, it is still true that al-Ash‘arī himself affirmed the non-efficacy of human power⁴²¹ in order to fit the concept of contingent power into his theory of acquisition.⁴²² The attribution of this position to al-Ash‘arī himself is beyond questioning since most of the Ash‘arites followed the same position and ascribed it to their master. Yet, some important Ash‘arites did not follow their master in negating the efficacy of contingent power.

Al-Juawynī, as a significant figure in the school of Ash‘arism, did not follow al-Ash‘arī in his position about the contingent power and tried to prove the efficacy of human power. He says, “Human power is created by God, and its object [the object of

⁴¹⁷ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 150.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid. What al-Ījī means by the power of nature is the power of the different elements in nature, such as fire that has the nature to cause effect, but this effect is not ruled by a will, i.e. its effect co-exists with its substance, unlike the human power.

⁴¹⁹ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 6/86.

⁴²⁰ This stigmatization is repeated in the Mu‘tazilite books, such as the books of Al-Qādī Abdul Jabbār and Ibn al-Malāḥimī; moreover, it could also be found in the books of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qaim.

⁴²¹ Al-Ash‘arī gave a complete conception of human power and its nature in his book, “*al-Istiṭā’a fi al-Rad ‘alā al-Mu‘tazilites*,” but, unfortunately, the book is lost and we only have some passages of it narrated by other Ash‘arites; See, Ibn Furak, *Makalāt Abū al-Ḥassan al-Ash‘arī*, 115-120; Muhammad bin Abdulkarim al-Sharastānī, *al-Milal wa Al-Niḥal*, 2.ed. (Beirut: Darul Kutub, 1992), 1/84.

⁴²² The theory of acquisition would be explained in detail when we come to al-Ījī’s main argument about human actions.

human power] definitely comes to exist by this power [human power].⁴²³ This assertion of al-Juwaynī about the efficacy of human power does seem to be admired by some Western scholars who insist on accusing the Ash‘arites of compulsion (*jabr*). Wolfson, for example, interpreted the position of al-Juwaynī as a philosophical tendency by saying, “What Juwaynī did was to take a principle from the metaphysical philosophers” and dress it up in the garb of the kalam” in order to avoid the utter folly of compulsion.”⁴²⁴

Claiming that al-Juwaynī adopted this position due to some philosophical tendencies does not seem quite accurate because implementing philosophical terms and methods in the Ash‘arites’ theological arguments came to exist later on after al-Juwaynī. Moreover, Al-Juwaynī was not the only Ash‘arite who held this opinion about the contingent power; another important Ash‘arite approved and praised al-Juwaynī’s position as well. In other words, he himself might be maintaining the same position about the contingent power. This Ash‘arite is al-Shahrastānī who dedicated one complete book to refuting the philosophers’ ideas; he called his book, *Wrestling the philosophers*.⁴²⁵ Al-Shahrastānī says, “Imām al-Haramayīn Abū al-Ma‘alī al-Juwaynī passed this position a little by saying, ‘negating the power and the capability is not accepted by the reason and [the principles of] ḥusun; nevertheless, affirming [the existence of] power that does not have any efficacy is like negating the power.’”⁴²⁶ Furthermore, al-Baqillānī affirmed some kind of efficacy to the contingent power, as we are going to see when we discuss the theory of acquisition (*kasb*).

Although some Ash‘arites affirmed the efficacy of human power, the majority of them followed the position of their master, al-Ash‘arī, and this is the case for our theologian in question, al-Ījī, who followed the exact position of his master in negating the efficacy of human power. As we have seen before, al-Ījī intends in many of his positions to present the authentic picture of the school of Ash‘arism.

⁴²³ Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Nizzamiya creed*, 192.

⁴²⁴ Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The philosophy of Kalām*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1970), 679.

⁴²⁵ AbdulKarim al-Shahrastānī, *Muṣar‘at al-Falāsia*, (Beirut: Al-Jablawī Press, 1976)

⁴²⁶ Al-Shahrastānī, *Milal wa Al-Niḥal*, 1/85.

4.1.2.1. The Main Reason behind the Non-Efficacy of Human Power

The complete reasons for the non-efficacy of human power will be manifested in the folds of al-Ījī's argument on human action; nevertheless, we can mention here the main reason that most of the Ash'arites tried to emphasize in their arguments and their definitions of power. Al-Amīdī, as a late Ash'arite, defines power as follows: "Power is an existential attribute whose function is to generate (tuḥdith) and bring into existence the contingent power is also like this [has the same function], but it does not affect because its object of power is attached to the divine power."⁴²⁷ Therefore, the main reason for the non-efficacy of human power is the attachment of divine power to human actions, i.e., to the object of the contingent power.

To continue building up the concept of human power according to al-Ījī, we say that negating the efficacy of human power, as al-Ījī affirms, does not negate its role in bringing the action into existence. In other words, human power is an existential attribute along with which one side of the action could be performed or omitted. Al-Ījī says, "Human power is an existential attribute that along with it, acting instead of omitting and omitting instead of acting could be performed."⁴²⁸ Being an existential attribute means that it is an accident and should have other characteristics that are related to accidents in general. However, al-Ījī, by stating that human power is an existential attribute, that is, an accident, follows the position of his master, al-Ash'arī, and other Ash'arite colleagues. Al-Jurjānī gives us a more transparent definition of human power by saying, "Power is an accident that God creates in the living being whereby he performs his voluntary actions."⁴²⁹ It is worth noting that the word, 'whereby' does not mean that the power has effects on our actions, but still, it has some kind of attachment to our actions. Al-Ījī, by affirming that human power is an existential attribute, intends to argue against Bishr bin al-Mu'tamir⁴³⁰ who maintains that human power is a privative attribute; namely, it is merely the absence of defects in human body. He says, "[the contingent power] is merely the absence of defects from

⁴²⁷ Khaled al-Nakishbandī, *Wafī al-Bayan fī Sharḥ al-ʿIrāda al-Juwziyya ʿinda al-Insān*, (Beirut: Daru al-Kutub, 2019), 65. Cf. Sayf al-Dīn Al-Āmidī, *Abkar al-Afkar fī Usūl al-Dīn*, 2/389.

⁴²⁸ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 6/91.

⁴²⁹ Al-Jurjānī, *The Book of Definitions*, (Beirut, The Library of Lebanon, 1985), 18.

⁴³⁰ The head of the Mu'tazilite school of Baghdad; he is considered to be among the sixth *tabaka* of the Mu'tazilites. More information about was already provided in the first chapter.

the physical structure [of human body].”⁴³¹ When we define something as a non-existence of something else, we affirm that the essence of the defined thing is privative and has no real existence.

The question ‘whether human power is a separate attribute or merely the soundness of human body’ is an old dispute between al-Ash‘arī, on one side, and the Mu‘tazilites, on the other, and it is not restricted to Bishr bin al-Mu‘tamir as it is understood from al-Ījī’s affirmation. Al-Ash‘arī started this dispute by asserting that human power is a meaning, i.e., it is an accident that is distinct from the physical body.⁴³² We see again the authentic Ash‘arite position presented by al-Ījī, although there are other Ash‘arites who maintained that human power could be the soundness of the physical structure as well. Al-Jurjānī stated that al-Rāzī chose the position of Bishr bin al-Mu‘tamir and narrated his words [al-Rāzī’s words] as follows: “The reference (al-marji‘) to [human] power, according to us, if it is the soundness of limbs then [this reference] it is plausible (ma‘qūl) and if it was something else then it is disputable.”⁴³³ By this comment, Al-Jurjānī shows that al-Rāzī adopted the same position of Bishr bin al-Mu‘tamir. However, al-Rāzī in his book, *al-Ma‘alim*, affirms a similar position and explains al-Ash‘arī’s position explicitly by saying,

Imām Ash‘arī maintains that human power is a separate attribute that is additional to the soundness of physical organs; he argues [al-Ash‘arī] that we distinguish between the physically sound person and the disabled one (*al-mu‘āq*) by affirming that the former is able to act, while the latter cannot. This distinction is due to an attribute that subsists in the physically sound person and does not subsist in the disabled one.... [al-Rāzī states that] the truth (*al-ḥaqq*) is that the self-evident distinction [between the one who is able to act and the one who is not] is related to the soundness of the physical organs and the balance of the humours, not to an additional attribute.⁴³⁴

However, our intention is to show that some late Ash‘arites, such as al-Imām al-Rāzī, did not follow the exact position of al-Ash‘arī, while al-Ījī, as we have seen in our arguments, is adopting the exact position of his master about the nature of human power.

⁴³¹ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 151.

⁴³² Al-Ash‘arī, *Al-Luma‘ fī al-Rad‘ alā Aḥal al-Zayg wa al-Bida‘*, (Cairo: The Egyptian Press, 1955), 93.

⁴³³ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 6/91-92.

⁴³⁴ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Ma‘alim Usūl al-Dīn*, (Kuwait: Dar al-Dhiyā, 2012), 104. Nevertheless, al-Rāzī himself in other places acknowledges the existence of human power as an accident; however, the exact position of al-Rāzī is beyond the scope of our enquiry.

Al-Ījī believes that human power is an accident that is distinguished from the soundness of the human body; namely, it is an existential attribute, while the opponent claims that human power is merely the soundness of human body and it is the void of defects (i.e., it is a privative attribute). In this case, the onus of proof is on those who affirm the existence of something additional to the soundness of the body. Al-Ījī knows that the burden of proof is on him, so he started arguing about the existence of human power by saying, “The truth [that the existence of human power] is known via the consciousness (*wijdān*).⁴³⁵ In other words, there is no theological argument that could prove the existence of human power as an accident because its existence is self-evident and arguments are only intended to prove theoretical knowledge. Al-Jurjānī bolsters al-Ījī’s position with a few examples. He says the difference between the voluntary climbing movement and falling movement from a high place is necessary (*ḍarūrī*). This necessary distinction between these two movements entails the existence of something additional that is related to the voluntary climbing movement which does not exist in the falling movement.⁴³⁶ This example would fit perfectly to prove the difference between the existence of power and its non-existence, but it is not a demonstrative proof for the existence of power as an accident that is separate from the soundness of the physical body.

Human power is an accident and accidents do not endure in time, i.e., they are recreated constantly. Therefore, al-Ījī cannot pick and choose from al-Ash‘arī’s conception of contingent power. Once he accepts that human power is an existential accident, he has to concede all the other essential characteristics of the accidents as well. One of the main characteristics of accidents is that they do not endure in time, i.e., they are ephemeral. Being ephemeral entails a few things, which are disputable between al-Ījī and his Ash‘arite colleagues and the Mu‘tazilites.

The main argument that is related to the ephemera of human power is the co-existence of human power with its action. The power of action is created simultaneously for that action, i.e., it does not exist before or after it. This is the main position of al-Ash‘arī

⁴³⁵ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 151. Al-Ījī here presents a very authentic Ash‘arī position as well. Al-Āmidī proves this by saying that the people of truth from the Ash‘arites followed the same method in proving the existence of the contingent power. See Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, *Abkar al-Afkar fi Usūl al-Dīn*, 2/290.

⁴³⁶ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 6/92.

and those who followed him in affirming that human power is an accident that does endure in time. Al-Ījī and his commentator al-Jurjānī asserted the impossibility of power before or after the action, and they formed a logical argument to prove the absurdity of the opponent's claim. They asserted their position as follows, "The contingent power exists at the time of the action and attaches to it [to the action] at that time; therefore, the contingent power does not exist before it nor is it attached to it. Thus, before the action, the action is not possible; namely, its existence in it [in that time] is impossible."⁴³⁷ The possibility that al-Ījī and his commentator are talking about is a logical impossibility, and their logical argument to prove this impossibility could be simplified and rendered as follows: If the contingent power existed before the action, the action would be the subject of that power since power does not exist without it is object. For this reason, assuming a state before the action where power did exist, and then assuming that the action came to exist at that time, means the assumed time is the real time of the action, and we already assumed that it is the preceding time, and thus the logical absurdity follows.⁴³⁸ This logical absurdity, or as al-Ījī calls it, *al-khulf* means assuming the possibility of something and then ending up with an impossible case, which means the thing that we assumed as possible was impossible in the first place.⁴³⁹

Al-Ījī elaborated more on the impossibility of action preceding power, but when it came to the enduring of power after the time of action, he negated that briefly by saying, "The attachment of the power [to the action] merely means bringing it into existence, and thus, bringing into existence what has already existed is impossible."⁴⁴⁰ The reason behind not providing a full-fledged argument here is due to the accidental nature of the contingent power. Al-Ījī already, in the chapter on accidents, provided several arguments to prove the impossibility of the enduring of accidents in time.⁴⁴¹ Al-Ījī's master, al-Ash'arī, on the other hand, kept the focus of his argument on the contingent power itself rather than on accidents in general. He tried to prove the impossibility of enduring in time as follows,

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 6/94.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 6/94-95.

⁴³⁹ For more information about the argument of *al-khulf*, see Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Burhan fī Usūl al-Fiqh*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub, 1997), 36.

⁴⁴⁰ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 152.

⁴⁴¹ See al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 101-103.

Power does not endure in time because if its self-endurance was necessary then it would be always present, i.e., its existence would be necessary as well, and that will contradict its contingent nature. Similarly, if we say that its endurance was caused by an attribute related to it, then that would lead to the subsisting of accident on another accident (*qiām al-‘rad bil ‘rad*), and it is obviously inconceivable. Therefore, power does not endure in time.⁴⁴²

So far, we have proved that al-Ījī is following the exact concept of the power of his master, al-Ash‘arī: contingent power is an accident that does endure in time and does not exist before or after the action; it is for the action and at the time of its existence. However, the last subsidiary issue that is related to the ephemera of the contingent power is the potential attachment of power to the opposite sides of the action, i.e., performing or omitting. Al-Ījī and his master al-Ash‘arī deem it impossible, while the Mu‘tazilites and those who maintained that human power is merely the soundness of human body considered it possible. After proving that human power is an accident that is created for the action and exists only at its time, al-Ījī found it sufficient to only affirm the position of al-Ash‘arī about the attachment of human power to two objects of power at the same time. He says that power cannot be attached to two objects of power, whether these two objects were opposites, identical, or different.⁴⁴³

However, the last extension of the argument of human power is the nature of *al-‘ajiz*,⁴⁴⁴ which is the state when someone does not have power to perform actions. It seems that all the Ash‘arites and most of the Mu‘tazilites agree that *al-‘ajiz* is an existential accident,⁴⁴⁵ which is contrary to the power and is not merely the absence of it. The main opponent whose argument al-Ījī tries to refute is Abū Hashim al-Jubbā’ī who is, unlike the rest of the Mu‘tazilites, maintained that *al-‘ajiz* has a privative nature, i.e., it is merely the absence of power. Al-Ījī and al-Jurjānī argue against him as follows, “Our proof that it [*al-‘ajiz*] is existential is the necessary distinction between the disabled (*al-zamin*) and the one who is prevented from acting.... This distinction is only because the disabled have an existential attribute, which is *al-‘ajiz*, and this attribute does not exist in the prevented one.”⁴⁴⁶ Al-Ījī tries to prove the existence of power and its opposite, *al-‘ajiz*, through consciousness (*wijdān*). In other words, he

⁴⁴² Al-Ash‘arī, *Al-Luma‘ fi al-Rad ‘ala Ahal al-Zayg wa al-Bida‘*, 94.

⁴⁴³ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 6/108.

⁴⁴⁴ *Al-‘ajiz* could be rendered as disability or incapability; however, I will stick here to the Arabic word to avoid confusion.

⁴⁴⁵ Affirming that *al-‘ajiz* is an existential accident entails the same argument that is used for the power, namely, the ephemeral nature of *al-‘ajiz*, being created for a specific *‘ajiz*, not existing before or after that *‘ajiz*, and not attaching to more than one *‘ajiz* at the same time.

⁴⁴⁶ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 6/112.

compares two things and then finds out something additional in one of them, and the existence of that additional thing is known intuitively, i.e., it is a necessary knowledge that cannot be denied.

To sum up al-Ījī's conception of human power, we say that al-Ījī held the exact position of his master, al-Ash'arī, and tried to present an authentic Ash'arī argument about the nature of human power and *'ajiz*. He was different from other late Ash'arites who did not hold tight to the reasoning of their master and affirmed the efficacy of human power or deprived it of its existential nature.

4.2. Al-Ījī's Argument about Human Actions

There are two statements that al-Ījī strongly emphasized in his argument: 'divine power is all-encompassing' and 'human power does not have any efficacy (*tāthīr*). ' In reality, the second statement is a logical entailment of the first one because affirming that divine power encompasses everything in the world means that human actions are merely objects of divine power. With this firm position, al-Ījī elaborated on human actions under the chapter of divine actions; he commenced his argument by saying, "Volitional human actions come into existence through God's power alone, the High, the Exalted."⁴⁴⁷ Al-Ījī narrows down the argument of human action to only volitional actions because theologians from all stripes agree that humans are only responsible for their volitional actions, which are the subject of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ*.⁴⁴⁸ However, in spite of calling the actions volitional, al-Ījī insists that they are the subject of divine power, and human power has no efficacy on them. He argues that the all-encompassing efficacy (*tāthīr*) of divine power negates any other efficacy along with it.⁴⁴⁹ The first argument that al-Ījī presents here is an authentic Ash'arite argument: it is the argument of mutual hindrance (*Dalīl al-Tamānu*).⁴⁵⁰ Al-Ījī presents his argument as follows,

⁴⁴⁷ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 311.

⁴⁴⁸ Both the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites affirmed that the ethical values of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* can only be attached to volitional actions; See, Al-Qādī Abdul Jabbār, *Al-Mugnī*, 6/7; Al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 342.

⁴⁴⁹ As we have stated in the previous part, the non-efficacy of human power is the main position in the Ash'arite School, but it is not the only position. Al-Ījī follows the position of his master, al-Ash'arī, in defining the contingent power.

⁴⁵⁰ The argument from mutual hindrance (*dalīl al-tamānu*) is a famous Ash'arite argument that is repeated in their books mainly to prove the oneness of God. See Al-Ghazālī, *al-Iktisād fī al-Itiqād*, 49; Al-Juwānī, *Al-Irshād ilā Qawāṭi' al-Adillah fī Usūl al-Itiqād*, 75.

The servant's action is contingent (*mumkin*), and every contingent [thing] is the subject of God's power, the Exalted, based on [what we affirmed] about the all-inclusiveness of His power. [Therefore] no object of divine power can occur through the servant's power because it is impossible to have one object of power related to two efficient powers.⁴⁵¹

Divine power is unanimously efficient, and the efficacy here has a specific theological meaning, which is bringing from non-existence (*'adam*) into existence (*wujūd*). In other words, this argument is related to the efficacy of the power itself. Human power is not efficient, i.e., it cannot have this effect, which is bringing from non-existence into existence. However, assuming that both powers, human and divine, are efficient, still means that the action is coming into existence only through one of them. This conclusion is accepted by both the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites alike because both of them agree on the theological principle that says that 'one object of power cannot be related to two efficient powers.'⁴⁵² Nevertheless, both schools used this principle to prove two opposite conclusions: the Ash'arites to exclude the efficacy of human power, and the Mu'tazilites to give human power complete efficacy and autonomy. Ibn al-Malāḥimī affirms that the Mu'tazilites accept this theological principle by saying, "The opinion of our masters (shuykhna) that powers are distinguished and not identical, and based on this, they decided that one object of power cannot be related to two efficient agents (qadirān)."⁴⁵³ Believing in the same principle and coming to opposite conclusions is due to the application of the principle from two different perspectives. The Mu'tazilites implemented the principle in light of divine justice, namely, God is just and will not make humans accountable for what He creates for them, so He lets their powers alone bring their actions into existence. On the other side, the Ash'arites tackled the principle in light of the all-inclusive divine power; therefore, they included human actions in that power.

It is worth noting that the Ash'arites⁴⁵⁴ are not unanimous about this principle; one of the main early Ash'arites declared that it is possible for two powers to be related simultaneously to one object of power (*maqḍūr*). This Ash'arite is the master (*al-*

⁴⁵¹ Al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 312.

⁴⁵² This principle does not mean that it is impossible for two powers to participate to achieve an action. For example, the power of Zayd and Amr can be combined to execute some works. Nevertheless, what is impossible here is to have one effect (*athar*) caused by two efficient causes.

⁴⁵³ Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Al-Faiḳ fī Usūl al-Dīn*, 283.

⁴⁵⁴ Some of the Mu'tazilites did not adopt that principle. Al-Ījī states that Abū al-Ḥussān al-Bassārī allows one object of power to be related to two efficient powers. See al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 151.

ustād) Abū Ishāq al-Esfarāynī⁴⁵⁵ who did not follow the Ash‘arī’s reasoning regarding the nature of power and affirmed the relativity (*ta‘luq*) of human power, i.e., he accepts its efficacy as well. The attribution of this position to al-Esfarāynī is beyond questioning since many Ash‘arites ascribed this position to him. Al-Ījī and al-Jurjānī ascribed this position to him by saying, “Al-Ustād [al-Esfarāynī] said that [actions come into existence] through the combination of two powers [Divine and human powers] on the basis of their relativity (*ta‘luq*) to the same action. Thus, he [al-ustād] deemed it possible to have two efficient causes (*mu‘athirin*) on one effect.”⁴⁵⁶ Al-Esfarāynī’s position is narrated in most of the Ash‘arites’ books without sufficient details about his arguments; nevertheless, al-Sialkūtī, in his comments on *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, tries to assume a justifiable argument about his non-Ash‘arī position. He says that maybe al-Esfarāynī’s argument is that human power does not have full efficacy, and when divine power joins it, the combination of both powers would be efficient. Al-Sialkūtī continues his justification by saying that human power is either part of the real effect (*mu‘athir*) or divine power assisted human power to have full efficacy.⁴⁵⁷ These interpretations, as al-Sialkūtī affirms, might free al-Esfarāynī from the charge of the possibility of having two complete efficient powers acting on one single object of power. Nevertheless, these interpretations do not stand in front of the multiple narrations about al-Esfarāynī’s non-Ash‘arite position.⁴⁵⁸ Finding out al-Esfarāynī’s real argument about this position is beyond the scope of our enquiry; we only wanted to show that some Ashar‘ites tried to ascribe some roles to human power, and thus, ethical values could be related to their actions.

Human actions are created directly by divine power, and thus, human power has no efficacy at all: this is the hallmark of al-Ījī’s argument on human actions. With this understanding of human power, al-Ījī affirms his adoption of al-Ash‘arī’s theory of acquisition (*kasb*).

⁴⁵⁵ He was a contemporary of al-Bāqillānī and Ibn Furak; he is known as *al-ustād* and *rukun al-dīn*. He died in Esfarāyen (in Iran) in 418H. See Abdullah Mu‘alīm ‘abid, *Al-Budur al-Zahira fi Tabakat al-Ash‘aira*, (Somalia, Private Publication, 1999), 119-120.

⁴⁵⁶ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/164.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ The widely known position is that al-Esfarāynī firmly maintains the possibility of relating two efficient powers to one object of power, although some theologians tried to interpret his position to fit within the position of the mainstream. Al-Kirmānī, al-Ījī’s immediate student, tried to give a different interpretation to the one that al-Sialkūtī provided; See Al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Hussain Paşa, 317), 331b.

4.2.1. The Theory of Acquisition (*Kasb*)⁴⁵⁹

Al-Ash‘arī in his time renounced two famous theories about human action and tried to forge a middle path between the Mu‘tazilites, who affirmed a full efficacy of human power, and the Jabriyyah,⁴⁶⁰ who denied the existence of human power at all. Within the literature of Kalām, al-Ash‘arī is famously known to be the first one who used the word *kasb*⁴⁶¹ to describe the man’s role in his actions. He intended with his theory to free man from compulsion and make him religiously responsible for his actions while, at the same time, human actions could hold the ethical values of *husn* and *qubh*.

Al-Ījī did not explicitly say that he is following the theory of *kasb*, but he maintained the essential elements of the theory, which are the creation of human actions through divine power and the non-efficacy of human power. We can simply define the theory of acquisition as the creation of God of the contingent power and then the creation of the human action with His power. This understanding of the theory of acquisition led many Western scholars to consider it identical to the doctrine of Occasionalism. Majid Fakhri defines the latter doctrine as follows, “Occasionalism can be defined as the belief in the exclusive efficacy of God, of whose direct intervention the events of nature are alleged to be the overt manifestation of ‘occasion.’”⁴⁶² It is clear that both acquisition and Occasionalism share the same essence, which is the all-inclusiveness of divine power. Nevertheless, we will try to focus and give more details on the theory of acquisition from al-Ījī’s arguments.

⁴⁵⁹ The word *Kasb* is mainly rendered in English as Acquisition, but in Arabic, *kasaba* means gathered something or gained a provision (*riziq*), see Muḥammad Ibn Manzour, *The Dictionary of Lisan al-Arab*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dar Ṣadir, 1999), 1/716.

⁴⁶⁰ The doctrine of compulsion (*jabr*) gained its garb as a theological doctrine with Jahm bin Safwan who declared that man cannot be described with power at all, and he is like a leaf in the wind. For more details about the doctrine of compulsion, see Alī Samī al-Nashar, *The Foundation of Islamic Philosophy*, (Cairo: Dar al-Asslam, 2008), 1/330-332.

⁴⁶¹ Wolfson tried to prove the existence of three theories of *kasb* prior to al-Ash‘arī. Wolfson ascribed these three theories of *kasb* to Ḍirār, al-Najjār, and al-Shaḥām. For more information on these three theories, see H.A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Kalām*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1970), 674.

⁴⁶² Majid Fakhri, *Islamic Occasionalism: and its Critique by Averroes and Aquinas*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 9. The theory of acquisition might have some other details that distinguish it from the doctrine of Occasionalism; nevertheless, comparing the theory of *kasb* with Occasionalism is beyond the scope of our enquiry. For more details about the doctrine of Occasionalism, see Susan Peppers-Bates, *Nicolas Malebranche: Freedom in an Occasionalism World*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

We can say that the focus of al-Ījī's arguments about human action is to prove that humans cannot be the creator of their actions. He says that the creator of an action must know all the details about that action, and only God knows all the details about our actions; therefore, God is the real creator of our actions. Al-Ījī defended this opinion through a Modus Tollens argument:⁴⁶³

-If man creates his actions (p. A)

-Man must know all the details of his action (p. B)

-Promise B is not true

-Therefore, promise A is not true as well.⁴⁶⁴

For the validity of this argument, al-Ījī has to prove two things: the falsity of promise B and the implication between premises A and B. He argues that the movements of a sleeping person have forms and quantity, and neither of them is known to the agent.⁴⁶⁵ Yet, the movement of a sleeping person is an involuntary movement, and the argument is about volitional human actions; therefore, al-Ījī's point here does stand as a proof for his argument. The second argument that al-Ījī tries to prove his point through is an atomistic argument. He says that, according to the majority of theologians, bodies are composed of indivisible particles (*jawahīr*).⁴⁶⁶ Therefore, the slow volitional movement of a hand, for example, has a few numbers of stills (*sakanat*) that happen through the complete movement and the agent of that movement cannot be aware of the number of the stills in his movement.⁴⁶⁷ Proving that the agent is not aware of the details of his action is not enough to prove that he is not the real agent of it. Therefore, al-Ījī, through proving the implication between his premises, tries to prove the necessity of knowledge for actions. He argues as follows, "Because the lower (adnā) or the higher (a' lā) [amount] of an action is possible [in itself], and the existing of the action with a specific [measurement], neither lower nor higher, is due to the intention and choice, and knowledge is a prerequisite [of the choice]."⁴⁶⁸ This implication, as

⁴⁶³ *Modus Tollens* argument is a conditional syllogism; it is formed as follows, If A then B, Not B, therefore not A. For more details about this argument, see Peter Kreeft, *Socratic Logic*, 291-301.

⁴⁶⁴ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 312.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ The indivisible particle (*al-jawhar al-fard*) is an Ash'arite atomistic theory intended to prove the all-inclusiveness of the divine power. For more information, see H.A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Kalām*, 466-490.

⁴⁶⁷ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 312; al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/168.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid. Al-Ījī uses intention and choice here as one thing, which is the volition.

al-Jurjānī argues, is self-evident (*badahī*) and does not require further argument. The action that is chosen to be with specific quantity and quality requires necessarily knowledge of this quality and quantity.⁴⁶⁹ Al-Ījī already stated that the servant is not aware of the specific details of his actions, and now he argues that for an action to be with specific details, it requires a choice that entails the knowledge as well. Man does not have specific knowledge about his own action, but God does; therefore, God is the creator of man's actions.

In short, al-Ījī in this argument tries to prove that the absence of knowledge entails the absence of the agency, or in other words, bringing an action from non-existence into existence requires complete knowledge of that action, and only God is all-knowing and all-powerful, i.e., only God is the real agent. However, arguing from complete knowledge of human actions is one of the most repetitive arguments in al-Rāzī's books,⁴⁷⁰ so we can say that al-Ījī used the same argument of al-Rāzī in order to prove that human actions are created by God. Yet, al-Ījī used two arguments to prove this point, while al-Rāzī used scriptural proofs and five arguments. In this way, al-Rāzī's argument is more sophisticated.

The Mu'tazilites, on the other hand, emphatically rejected the idea that humans do not create their actions because their whole ethical understanding is based on the idea that humans are the real agents of their actions. Al-Qāḍī states his position about human actions as follows, "Human actions are not created in them [by God], but they [humans] are the ones who generate [create] their actions."⁴⁷¹ Furthermore, according to al-Qāḍī, accepting the theory of acquisition would deprive human actions of their ethical values. He argues against the theory of acquisition by saying, "Your theory (*maḏhab*) of *kasb* cannot be conceived (*lā yu'qal*), and even if it were conceived, it would be related to God [not to humans]. Therefore, the [human] actions would be void of [ethical] aspects (*wujuh*)."⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁹ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/166.

⁴⁷⁰ Al-Rāzī, *Al-Maḏālib*, 9/85; Al-Rāzī, *Al-Arba'īn fī Usūl al-Dīn*, 1/25. Al-Rāzī's argument has more details than al-Ījī's argument. Nevertheless, both arguments have an identical essence.

⁴⁷¹ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 332.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 333.

We see that the main disputable point between the Mu‘tazilites and the Ash‘arites, in general, is the question of creating human actions. The Mu‘tazilites accuse the Ash‘arites of compulsion (*jabr*), and the Ash‘arites accuse them of ascribing a divine attribute, which is creation (*khalq*), to humans. Al-Ījī affirmed this accusation at the onset of his argument by saying that the Mu‘tazilites ascribe the creation of actions to human power.⁴⁷³ However, to do justice to the Mu‘tazilites, we say that none of the Mu‘tazilites claimed that humans have the power to create, or their power is similar to the divine power. Al-Qāḍī defined the limits of human power so distinctly to show what is subject to human power and what is not. He says that actions or creation could be divided into two groups: the first group has thirteen types of actions, such as particles (*jawahir*), colors, taste, smell, life, and power. These thirteen types of actions are not related to our power,⁴⁷⁴ namely, it is only God who can create particles, color, smell, life and so on. The second type of actions is subject to human power, i.e., humans have the power to create or perform these actions. These actions are of ten types, five are created by our external limbs (*al-Jawarih*) and five are related to the heart. He counts them as follows, “The five that are the actions of limbs are: beings (*al-akwan*),⁴⁷⁵ positions of body (*i‘timād*), compositions (*ta‘lifāt*), sounds and pains, while those belonging to the heart are beliefs (*i‘tiqadat*), wills (*iradāt*), hates (*karahāt*), conjectures (*ẓunūn*) and speculations (*anzār*).”⁴⁷⁶ We see that the Mu‘tazilites, in reality, are not ascribing a divine attribute to human power, but they are giving human power a functionality in bringing some actions into existence. Moreover, they affirm that the power by which they perform their action is a created power, i.e., God is the One who gives humans their power and enables them to create their actions.

After clarifying the dispute about human power between the Mu‘tazilites and the Ash‘arites, we need to go back to have a complete understanding of the theory of acquisition (*kasb*). According to the Mu‘tazilites, for humans to be religiously and ethically responsible they need to create their own action, while al-Ījī and his Ash‘arite colleagues said that it is sufficient for the human to acquire their actions. What they

⁴⁷³ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 311.

⁴⁷⁴ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 89-90.

⁴⁷⁵ The four beings (*kawns*), which are movement, still, congregation and separation.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

mean by acquiring is gaining something or asking for something to be done for them. Al-Ghazālī explain this process of acquiring in an example by saying,

A man enters a workshop, say a pottery. He sees the potter working on his wheel and molding clay into pots of various shapes and sizes. He orders a pot of a certain shape and size and when the potter has made it for him in accordance with his specifications he pays for it and takes it home. The pot is his acquisition and legally his property, but it is the potter's creation.⁴⁷⁷

With this example, al-Ghazālī makes the theory of acquisition so plausible, even for a layman reader. According to this example, we ask for our actions, and God creates the actions according to our request. Therefore, we become responsible for our actions, and they can be described as ḥasan or qabiḥ.

The question is: if the theory of kasb is as simple as this, why do still many opponents accuse it of implausibility? To the extent that when they want to describe something as extremely mysterious, they say it is more mysterious than the kasa of al-Ash'arī.⁴⁷⁸

Al-Ghazālī makes the theory of acquisition look merely like the choice that humans make for their actions. Though, in reality, kasb is more general than the choice we make. Ramadan al-Bouṭī affirms this understanding of kasb by saying, "Kasb is more general than the choice of intention; since the choice can be sometimes only the inclination towards something without executing it."⁴⁷⁹

Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, the Mu'tazilite, repeats the same charge against the Ash'arites and claims that they invented the theory of kasb to camouflage their compulsion (*jabr*).⁴⁸⁰ We can say that the mysterious part of the theory of kasb is in the function of the contingent power itself. For man to acquire his action, he needs his contingent power, but this contingent power has no efficacy. Despite being non-efficient, the contingent part must be associated with the action, so God will bring the action into existence. Al-Juwaynī affirms this by saying that kasb is the association (*iqtirān*) of the contingent power with the action and thus the action comes into existence.⁴⁸¹ Therefore, the

⁴⁷⁷ H.A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Kalām*, 671.

⁴⁷⁸ Marzouk al-'Omarī, *The Theory of Acquisition in the Ash'arite Thought*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2009), 9.

⁴⁷⁹ Ramadan al-Bouṭī, *Al-Insān Mussaīr ām Mukhaīr*, (Damascus: Dar al-Fikir, 1997), 62-63.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, *Al-Faiḡ fi Usūl al-Dīn*, 185.

⁴⁸¹ Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Irshād ilā Qawaṭi' al-Adillah fi Usūl al-'Itiqād*, 187-203.

mysterious part of the theory dwells in the contingent power; it must exist, but still it does have efficacy. Ibn al-Malāḥīmī carries on his argument against kasb by saying,

Tell us first what is the reality of kasb? They [the Ash‘arites] would say, ‘the reality of *kasb* is a movement or a still (*sukūn*) that is associated with a [contingent] power, in the locus (*maḥal*) [of the action]. Then, [we say] did that movement happen by that power, or did it acquire an attribute because of that power? They will say no, but it became [the movement] *kasb* because of the association of [the contingent] power [with the movement] in its [the movement] time and locus.⁴⁸²

After this long argument with Ash‘arites, Ibn al-Malāḥīmī accused them of stripping the power from its meaning. What is conceivable (*ma‘qul*) from the power is having an effect on creating something or creating an attribute for something.⁴⁸³

4.2.1.1. The Three Variant of Kasb

The charge that it is inconceivable for a power to exist and to have no effect at all pushed the Ash‘arites to have three variants of the theory of kasb in regard to the efficacy of human power. The main variant is the authentic theory that came with al-Ash‘arī himself and was adopted by most of the Ash‘arites, including al-Ījī as well. The focal point of this kasb is the complete non-efficacy of human power, although power is indispensable for the action to be created by God. Al-Kirmānī affirms this authentic meaning of kasb by saying,

The opinion (*mazhab*) of the Ash‘arites who say that there is no efficient cause in the existence except God; [they] said that the contingent power neither causes its object of power to come into existence nor causes any attribute for it. God is the One who made the custom (‘*adā*) of creating the object of power [at that time] The action is created by God [inventing it ex nihilo], and acquired by the servant, and this is the meaning of Kasb.⁴⁸⁴

Al-Ījī and his commentators maintained the authentic variant of kasb, and this variant particularly received many criticisms and was called by the opponents as the mysterious kasb of al-Ash‘arī. However, some Ash‘arites did not accept this mysterious part of the theory and tried to interpret kasb in a more plausible way. The first Ash‘arite who took this initiative was al-Baqillānī himself. He maintained that the action is created by God, although he ascribed some functionalities to human power. The action comes into existence through divine power and gains its attributes through

⁴⁸² Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, *Al-Faiḳ fī Usūl al-Dīn*, 185.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ Al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Hussain Paşa, 317), 330b.

the contingent power. This position is attributed to al-Bāqillānī by many Ash‘arites; al-Ījī, for example, explains al-Bāqillānī’s additional point by saying, “Al-Qaḍī [al-Bāqillānī] said that the divine power has an efficacy on the origin (aṣl) of the action [i.e., creating it]; while the servant’s power [has efficacy] on [making the action] obedient or disobedient.”⁴⁸⁵ Moreover, al-Rāzī elaborates on al-Bāqillānī’s variant of kasb as follow, “Al-Qaḍī said that although the servant’s power did not cause the action to come into existence, it has an efficacy [in creating] an attribute of its attributes, and [the creation of] this attribute is called kasb.”⁴⁸⁶ The acquisition or the servant’s share in his action is causing the action to have a specific attribute. Al-Rāzī continues his elaboration on al-Bāqillānī’s position by saying that both the movement that is obedient and the movement that is disobedient share the same essence and have different attributes. The essence of the movement and its existence are caused by divine power, while being obedient or disobedient is caused by the servant’s power.⁴⁸⁷

Are obedience and disobedience real attributes created by human powers? To respond to this question, we say that the narrations about al-Bāqillānī’s position, in al-Ījī’s and al-Rāzī’s books, do not explicitly state whether these attributes are existential or not. Nevertheless, one of the commentators on *al-Mawāqif* denied the existential reality of these attributes and said that any affirmation of real existence would end up with a position similar to the Mu‘tazilites’ position. This commentator is Al-Fanārī who commented on al-Bāqillānī’s kasb as follows, “This attribute [of the action] is *enis rationis*⁴⁸⁸ (*amr i‘tibarī*) that is entailed from the servant’s action when it is complying with what God has commanded or opposed to it. Therefore, there is no need to make it [this attribute] an effect of the [servant’s] power.⁴⁸⁹ Proving an effect for human power, whether bringing into existence or causing an attribute, would affirm somehow a type of efficacy, which the majority of Ash‘aites deny completely.

It is worth noting that some scholars stated that al-Bāqillānī’s variant of kasb is similar to Maturīdī’s kasb. In *Wafī al-Bayan*, Al-Nakishbandī affirms the similarity between

⁴⁸⁵ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 312.

⁴⁸⁶ Al-Rāzī, *Al-Maṭālib*, 9/10.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ *Enis Rationis (amr i‘tibarī)* is thing that only exist in the mind and has no real existence in itself. See "ens rationis." *Oxford Reference*. Accessed 19 Jun. 2022. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095752785>.

⁴⁸⁹ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/164.

al-Baqillānī and al-Maturīdī as follows, “Al-Imām al-Maturīdī [himself] did not expatiate on his opinion [regarding kasb]... though most of his followers say that his position [al-Maturīdī] is the same as the position of al-Qāḍī Abū Bkr al-Baqillānī.”⁴⁹⁰ Nevertheless, both positions are not absolutely similar because the acquisition for the Maturīdīs has a different focus from kasb of al-Ash‘arī. Therefore, we can say that at least both al-Maturīdī and al-Baqillānī acknowledged some efficacy of human power.

Explaining al-Maturīdī’s position is beyond the scope of our inquiry, but to clarify this similarity between these two scholars we need to shed some light on al-Maturīdī’s theory of acquisition. We say that generally kasb, for the Maturīdī scholars, pivots around the will, or more precisely, *irada al-jauziyyah*. They agree with al-Ash‘arī that the servant cannot create his action, but they do not focus so much on human power and its efficacy. Al-Naqishbandī in the same book elaborates more on the al-Maturīdī’s kasb by saying,

Know that *al-irāda al-juziyyah*, which is the kasb according to the Maturīdī scholars, is generated by the servant’s choice and the effect of his power. Since they [the Maturīdī scholars] unanimously agree that the servant cannot create anything; although, they deem it possible that the servant have a power that has an effect on relations (*nisab*) and attributions (*iḍafat*) in a way that does not entail the existence of something real.⁴⁹¹

It seems that al-Ghazālī’s example about *kasb* fits better within the Maturīdī’s understanding of kasb. Humans are the ones who request their own actions by *al-irāda al-juziyyah*. Regarding the similarity between al-Maturīdī and al-Baqillānī, it seems that they have the same understanding of the efficacy of human power: it causes specific attributes for the action, and these attributes has no real existence, i.e., they are relations (*nisab*) and attributions (*iḍafat*). Finally, saying that this type of efficacy does not have real existence affirms the objection that al-Fanārī directed to al-Bāqillānī’s position: This efficacy is *enis rationis* (*amr i‘tibarī*).

The third variant of the theory of kasb was adopted by al-Juwaynī who is the only Ash‘arite who affirmed a complete efficacy for human power, i.e., the power can bring its object into existence. We already elaborated on the efficacy of power according to

⁴⁹⁰ Khaled al-Nakishbandī, *Wafī al-Bayan fī Sharḥ al-Irada al-Juwziya ‘inda al-Insān*, 52.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid. 55. Al-Nakishbandī ascribed the affirmation of this Maturīdī understanding of *kasb* and efficient human power. See Sai‘d al-Taftāzānī, *Al-Talwiḥ ‘alā al-Tawḍīḥ*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub, 1996), 324-332.

al-Juwaynī, so there is no need to repeat it. Nevertheless, al-Juwaynī adopted this non-Ash‘arite position only in one book, while in the rest of his books, he affirmed the authentic Ash‘arī’s position of kasb: Human power has no efficacy at all. In *al-Irshād*, he states that accepting that the servant’s power has an efficacy would jeopardize the belief in the omnipotent God. He says, “It is impossible for a servant to have an object of power alone, with God, the Exalted. However, if we assumed that the contingent power has efficacy and ascribed this efficacy to the servant, then that would be violating the necessity of believing in an omnipotent Lord.”⁴⁹² This vehement negation of the efficacy of the contingent power contradicts his later position in *al-Nizzamīya*.⁴⁹³ These contradictory opinions that exist in al-Juwaynī’s books could have two interpretations. The first one is that al-Juwaynī later on in his life changed his position and wrote his book *al-Nizzamīya* where he affirmed the efficacy of human power. It is true that al-Juwaynī wrote *al-Nizzamīya* in the later period of his life, but this is not a sufficient proof, as long as we do not know the exact date of his other books of *kalām*.⁴⁹⁴ The second interpretation of this contradiction is that al-Juwaynī, as an Ash‘arī scholar, maintained an authentic understanding of kasb all of his life; however, in *al-Nizzamīya*, he intended to explain the theory of kasb in a simple and plausible way and, thus, he affirmed the efficacy of power. The reason behind this is that al-Juwaynī wrote *al-Nizzamīya* as a gift to the minister Nizzam al-Mulk,⁴⁹⁵ and maybe he did not want to expose himself to the most difficult part of the theory of acquisition. However, we can say that, regardless of which interpretation is true, it is famous in the books of *kalām* that al-Juwaynī has a different understanding of the theory of kasb. Nevertheless, some theologians tried to cast some doubt on what is famous in the books of *kalām*. Al-Sialkūtī does seem to like the attribution of this position to al-Juwaynī; moreover, he cited the opinion of the commentator on *al-Makaşid* by saying, “The commentator on al-makaşid said: ‘even if this position of al-Juwaynī [about the efficacy of human power] is famous in the books [of *kalām*], still it is contrary to what

⁴⁹² Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Irshād ilā Qawaṭi‘ al-Adillah fi Usūl al-‘Itiqād*, 209.

⁴⁹³ “Human power is created by God, and its object [the object of human power] definitely comes to exist by this power [human power].” Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Nizzamiya creed*, 192.

⁴⁹⁴ Finding out the dates of all his *Kalām* books requires a thorough research and it is beyond the scope of our enquiry.

⁴⁹⁵ Al-Ḥassan bin ‘Alī Ishāq (d.485), known as Nizzam al-Mulk, was the most famous head minister in the Seljuk Empire. He was famous for defending the Ash‘arites and building schools for them. For more information about his life and achievements, see Abdulhādī Muhammad Riḍā, *Nizzam al-Mulk*, (Cairo: Egyptian-Lebanese Publication, 1999).

he [al-Juwaynī] stated in al-Irshad and other books.”⁴⁹⁶ Finally, al-Juwaynī’s attribution of efficacy to human power does not go exactly in the same line with the Mu‘tazilites’s understanding of human power because he still insists that human actions are the creation of God. Put it simply, human power has efficacy, and this power with its efficacy is from God; therefore, the action is still God’s creation. Gimaret highlights this understanding of al-Juwaynī by saying, “Juwaynī expose alors sa propre solution, dans son principe elle est fort simple véritable de l’act mais cette puissance est elle-meme créée par dieu, et donc, par cet intermédiaire, l’act est act de Dieu.”⁴⁹⁷

4.2.1.2. Defending Kasb from Compulsion

After expounding on the three variants of kasb, we need to understand the ethical connection to the theory and why the opponents of kasb always insist on accusing the Ash‘arites of compulsion (*jabr*). Broadly speaking, it is true that compulsion or determinism contradicts any moral or ethical responsibility that humans could have. If we are not the real agents of our actions, then we are not responsible for them.⁴⁹⁸ In other words, our actions cannot have the ethical values of ḥusn and qubḥ, and we cannot be praiseworthy or blameworthy. To explain this, we say that the Mu‘tazilites connected compulsion and ethical responsibility to human power so they charged *Al-Jabriyya*, *Jahm* and his followers with sheer compulsion because they denied the existence of human power, while they accused the Ash‘arites (who affirmed the existence of the power and denied their efficacy) sometimes with compulsion and at other times with the implausibility of their theory.

The absence of the efficacy of human power should not deprive human actions of their ethical values, since we can still be ethically responsible because of the choices we make, i.e., humans are ethically responsible as long as they have free will. Nevertheless, the early Ash‘arites in their arguments about human action did not

⁴⁹⁶ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/165.

⁴⁹⁷ Daniel Gimaret, *Théories de l’Act Humain en Théologie Msūlmane*, (Paris, Librairie Philosophique, 1980), 123. The quoted text could be rendered into English as follow, “Al-Juwaynī then presented his own solution: by principle, it is simply true that it [the power] belongs to the action, but the power itself is created by God. Therefore, by this intermediary, the action [still] the act of God.

⁴⁹⁸ Ishtiyauq Haji and Justin Caouette, *Free Will and Moral Responsibility*, (London: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2013), 2.

discuss whether humans have free will or not, but their main focus was on human power and their efficacy. So the question is: Why did the Mu‘tazilites accuse the Ash‘arites of depriving humans of their freedom if they only negate the efficacy of power? To respond to this question, we say that the Mu‘tazilites wanted to give humans complete autonomy over their actions and, thus, they can be entirely religiously and ethically responsible. In addition to this, human power and its efficacy were the measure of human agency, not only in the Muslim world but maybe also in the medieval world as a whole. Robert Kane affirms this understanding of the importance of power and its efficacy in medieval arguments by saying,

Traditionally, compatibilists⁴⁹⁹ themselves have defined freedom in terms of “can,” “power,” and “ability.” To be free, most compatibilists have insisted, means in ordinary language (1) to have the power or ability to do what we will (desire or choose) to do, and this entails (2) and absence of constraints or impediments preventing us from doing what we will, desire, or choose.⁵⁰⁰

We cannot confirm that the discourse of free will was completely absent in the early kalām arguments, but certainly it was not central in the argument of human actions. Although, we contend that free will and its metaphysical dimensions became central in the argument of human actions by Imām al-Rāzī who claimed that human will has no freedom at all. In other words, the argument of human actions before al-Rāzī was focusing on human power and its efficacy, and the early Ash‘arites neither elaborated on free will nor negated it. Moreover, if we scrutinize their arguments, we might find some clues about the affirmation of free will.⁵⁰¹ Ibn al-Wazīr affirms that the early theologians, in general, ignored the argument of free will because it is obvious enough and does not need to be proven. He says, “Regarding the obvious side—which they did not discuss it because of its clarity—that our actions are based on our intentions, motives and choices.”⁵⁰² Ibn al-Wazīr defends the early Ash‘arites from compulsion (*jabr*) and stated that al-Rāzī’s position does present the authentic theory of acquisition, but only through al-Rāzī’s idea. He states this as follows, “It should be

⁴⁹⁹ Compatibilists are those who negate conflicts between determinism and free will. For a detailed Western argument of Free Will and related terminology, see Robert Kane, *A contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵⁰⁰ Robert Kane, *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12.

⁵⁰¹ What is important of us is the position of al-Ījī, whether he affirms the existence of free will or not. Nevertheless, we need to clarify first the Ash‘arite authentic position to see whether al-Ījī is going to adhere to the authentic position of the school or he will choose the position of al-Rāzī.

⁵⁰² Muhammed Bin Ibrāhīm, Ibn al-Wazīr, *Ithār al-Ḥaqq ‘alā al-Khalq fī Rad al-Khilāfat*, 2nd ed., (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiya, 1987), 282.

known that labelling the school (madhab) of al-Ash‘arī with compulsion by al-Rāzī is something related [specifically] to him [al-Rāzī], not to them [the Ash‘arites].⁵⁰³

To demonstrate this fact, we need only to show some clues from the writings of al-Ash‘arī, al-Bāqillānī, and al-Juwaynī. We say that in order to prove the acquisition, al-Ash‘arī distinguished between voluntary and involuntary actions. The distinction between them is self-evident according to him: Both are created by God; nevertheless, in the voluntary action, the agent deliberately uses his power and choice.⁵⁰⁴ Al-Shahrastānī elaborates on al-Ash‘arī’s distinction by saying, “The distinction [between voluntary and involuntary actions] is related to the voluntary actions, in which the power is based on the choice of the capable agent.”⁵⁰⁵ Affirming a deliberate use of power means affirming two things, power and choice.

Al-Baqillānī, as we have stated before, acknowledged some efficacy for human power, which is in itself enough to negate compulsion. Furthermore, he followed al-Ash‘arī’s distinction between voluntary and involuntary movement and based the former on human choice. He says, “Any man with a sound faculty of mind would distinguish between the compelled movement of his hand or any part of his body when he is having fever or shiver and the [voluntary] movement of any part of his body by virtue of his choice.”⁵⁰⁶ Zahīd al-Kawtharī commented on al-Baqillānī’s argument by saying that claiming that the servant is compelled (*majbur*) in his action is not the opinion (*mazhab*) of al-Ash‘arī, and the first one who attributed compulsion to the school of Ash‘arīsm is Imām al-Rāzī.⁵⁰⁷ Zahīd al-Kawtharī emphasized the same point that we stated: The authentic theory of the acquisition of al-Ash‘arī does not deprive humans of their choice, but it only negates the efficacy of their power.⁵⁰⁸

Now, the last significant Ash‘arī that we want to prove his affirmation of human choice is Imām al-Juwaynī. His ideas about the efficacy of human power were already

⁵⁰³ Ibid. 290.

⁵⁰⁴ Al-Ash‘arī, *Al-Luma‘*, 71.

⁵⁰⁵ Al-Shahrastānī. *Al-Milāl wa al-Niḥal*, 1/84.

⁵⁰⁶ Al-Bāqillānī, *Al-Inṣāf*, 44.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid. 43.

⁵⁰⁸ Al-Kawtharī dedicated a substantial amount of his writing to refute determinism in general and to defend al-Ash‘arī from this charge in particular. In modern times, he had to respond to the determinism of Mustafā Sabrī who adopted a position similar to that of al-Rāzī; see Mustafā Sabrī, *Mawḳif al-Bashar Taḥta Sultan al-Qadar*, (Cairo: Dar al-Bashir, 2008).

delineated enough, so we need only here to prove human choice. He affirms that divine knowledge does thwart human freedom, yet God knew from eternity what they are going to choose. He says, “The people of moderate belief say, ‘God wanted from His slaves what He knew that they are going to choose, and thus He did not take away their power or prevent them from their guidance. Therefore, the Islamic Religious Law (Sharia) has been justly established according to divine judgments.’”⁵⁰⁹ God did not prevent the human from their guidance means that He did not deprive them of their choice. Gimaret highlights the fact that the al-Juwaynī states about the freedom of human choice by saying, “A maintes reprises, Juwaynī souligne la liberté de choix (iḥtiyār) laissée à l’homme, sa qualité d’agent libre (fā’il muḥtār)”⁵¹⁰

So far, we proved that the theory of acquisition deals mainly with human power, although there are variant understatings of its efficacy among the early Ash‘arites. Furthermore, we affirmed that the early Ash‘arites, al-Ash‘arī, al-Baḳillānī, and al-Juwaynī, confirm the existence of the freedom of choice. Now, we need to explore al-Ījī’s position of freedom of choice.

4.2.2. Al-Ījī’s Argument about Human Choice

Al-Ījī, in his main argument of ḥusn and qubḥ, argues that human actions are either compelled or arbitrary and, in both cases, they cannot be rationally attributed to ethical values. Nevertheless, we pointed out that al-Ījī’s argument in itself has a compelling (*ilzamiyya*) premise, which al-Ījī did not seem to be embracing wholeheartedly. In the argument on human action, al-Ījī repeated the same argument of the compelling motive, but in a different form. He argues as follows,

If the servant was the one who creates his action, then he must be able to perform it and omit it [equally]. [Though], preponderating performance over omission is based on a preponderating factor, and this preponderating factor cannot be [originated] from the man; otherwise, infinite regress will follow, [i.e., the preponderating factor is from God]. Therefore, human action becomes necessary when the preponderating factor exists.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁹ Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Nizamiyya*, 202.

⁵¹⁰ Daniel Gimaret, *Théories de l’Act Humain en Théologie MUSūlmane*, 123. The quoted text could be translated as follows, “On many occasion, al-Juwaynī highlights the freedom of choice, and thus he acknowledges man [his quality] as a free agent.

⁵¹¹ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 312.

This preponderating factor (*marajīh*), as al-Ījī argues, must have a complete efficacy, namely, it must be a decisive factor that forces the agent to choose performing a certain action or omitting it. To simplify the argument, let us take an example of the movement of Zayd, more precisely, the movement of his hand. Performing this movement or omitting it (i.e., not performing it), requires a motive that urges him to perform that movement. This motive (*al-dā'ī*) is the preponderating factor that al-Ījī is talking about. However, the motive cannot be generated by the servant himself because it is contingent and the existence of every contingent being is based on the Necessary Being. In other words, God is the One that creates the motive in the servant's heart, i.e., God is the real agent of the action. We already proved that according to al-Ījī, God creates human power, which has no efficacy, and then God creates the servant's action itself. The servant in this case, according to the early Ash'arites, is still religiously and ethically responsible for his action because he has his own free choice. However, affirming that the preponderating motive—you can call it the decisive will—is created directly by God, then none of the essential elements of the action are in the servant's hand. Al-Rāzī, who was the first Ash'arī who presented the doctrine of *al-dā'ī*, describes the servant's agency with his famous maxim: “Man is compelled under the guise of a voluntary agent (*al-insān majbūr fī ṣurati mukhār*).”⁵¹²

Before discussing al-Ījī's argument and his real opinion of *al-dā'ī*, it is worth noting that the al-Ījī's argument is a summarized form of al-Rāzī's argument. Therefore, we will depend on al-Rāzī's books to have a full understanding of the argument and its details.

Linguistically, *al-dā'ī* is an agent noun (*isim fa'il*) that is derived from the verb *dā'a*, which means, according to Ibn Faris, to make something inclined to you, either by a voice or a speech from you.⁵¹³ According to this linguistic definition, *al-dā'ī*, is the one or the thing that calls or draws something closer to him or it.⁵¹⁴ While according to al-Rāzī, *al-dā'ī* could be one of these three things: Knowledge (*ilm*), conviction

⁵¹² Al-Rāzī, *Al-Maṭālib*, 9/25. The English translation of al-Rāzī's maxim is taken from Shihadeh's book; See, Ayman Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, Leiden: Brill, 2006).

⁵¹³ Ahmad bin Faris, *Mu'jam Maqāṣṣ al-Luġa*, (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1979), 2/279.

⁵¹⁴ We will alternate between the English word, 'the motive,' which could be the best translation of *al-dā'ī*, and the transliteration of the word itself.

(*'itiqad*), and conjecture (*zan*).⁵¹⁵ He elaborates on these motives as follows, “If a human knew, thought, or believed that he has preponderated (*rajiḥ*) good in a specific action, then, that knowledge, conviction, or conjecture would drive him to perform that action.”⁵¹⁶ In reality, al-Rāzī is talking about the nature of the motive, not about every specific motive, i.e., any motive that drives man to perform or omit an action belongs to one of these three categories: Knowledge, conviction or conjecture. These three levels of motives are equal in terms of driving the agent to perform or to omit the action. For example, if someone knew, thought, or believed that there is a lion on the road, then the motive of avoiding that road is created in his heart, and the agent will definitely avoid the road. In other words, the motive is a complete motive by which the action comes into existence.

The motive is not a simple comprehension (*taṣawwur*) that we might have in our mind, but it is a firm judgement (*taṣdiq*)⁵¹⁷ that preponderates one side of the action over the other, i.e., performing over omitting or omitting over performing. Al-Rāzī connects this overbalancing of the action with benefit and harm, namely, the motive should outweigh either the side of benefit or harm, and in both cases, the agent will act accordingly. Al-Rāzī states this position as follows,

Motives are not simple comprehensions (*taṣawurat*), but they are judgement (*taṣdiqat*). If the mind did judge that a certain action has outweighed benefit, then the motive to act would not exist. [Similarly] if the mind did not judge that a certain action has outweighed harm, then the motive to omit [the action] would not exist.⁵¹⁸

The motive in this context has two ethical sides: Benefit and harm, and the human mind is the one who decides this ethical side, namely, in this interpretation of the motive, al-Rāzī affirms implicitly that the mind can discern the ethical values of human actions.⁵¹⁹ Furthermore, al-Rāzī, unlike al-Ījī, reduces the legal (*shar'ī*) meaning of

⁵¹⁵ For more information about the nature of *'ilm*, see Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 9-25. These three types of motives, according to al-Rāzī, have a compelling effect although they are slight differences between them: knowledge and belief are quite similar, but conjecture must have external pieces of evidence (*qara'in*) to reach to a similar level. See al-Rāzī, *Al-Maṭālib*, 3/13-18.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid, 3/9.

⁵¹⁷ According to logicians and theologians, knowledge is divided into comprehension (*taṣwūr*) and judgement (*taṣdiq*), the former is only a simple image of something, while the latter is to affirm judgement (*ḥukum*) about the reality of that thing. See al-Magnīsī, *Mugnī al-Tulab: A commentary on Isagoge*, 60; Peter Kreeft, *Socratic Logic*, 28.

⁵¹⁸ Al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib*, 3/12.

⁵¹⁹ Al-Ījī as well acknowledges that human intellect can find out *ḥusn and qubḥ* in human actions based on the benefit and harm. Nevertheless, al-Ījī, unlike the Mu'tazilites, does not acknowledge this ethical value to be the real reliable value.

ḥusn and qubḥ to the rational one. In other words, he affirms that the mind plays an essential role in discerning and following the legal ethical value. He states his position as follows,

The legal ethical value of qubḥ has no meaning except that the religious law (*shar'*) is saying to him [the servant]: 'If you do that certain action, you would be punished for that.' The mind in this case will say: 'Shall we affirm the necessity of avoiding the punishment or not?' If the mind is affirming the necessity of that [of avoiding punishment], then the rational ḥusn and qubḥ have been affirmed.⁵²⁰

The mind, according to al-Rāzī, must affirm the necessity of avoiding punishment; otherwise, the religious law needs to affirm the necessity of avoiding punishment, and the affirmation would entail another affirmation ad infinitum.⁵²¹ Put it simply, the religious law says doing a certain action is punishable, then the mind affirms that it is necessary to avoid punishment, but if the mind is not affirming this necessity, then the religious law needs to dictate (*amr*) this necessity as well. The necessity of obeying this dictation would need another dictation, and infinite regress would follow.

Al-Rāzī, as we have stated before, asserts that there are things that the human mind pursues per se, not for something else. These things are pleasure (*liza*) and felicity (*surūr*), which have the ethical value of ḥusn, and pain and sadness (*gham*), which have the ethical value of qubḥ. Thus, the human intellect before the advent of the religious law can discern and judge these ethical values. He states his position about ḥusn and qubḥ in both human and divine actions as follows, "these aspects (*wujuh*) indicate that the rational ḥusn and qubḥ in terms of human actions are considered, while in terms of God's actions: We say that it is impossible."⁵²² The impossibility of discerning ḥusn and qubḥ in divine actions is because the same cause (*'ilā*) is not conceived in regards to God, i.e., neither pleasure and felicity nor pain and sadness are possible in respect to God.

Going back to the argument of motive, we say that both al-Ījī and al-Rāzī argue that the motive must be sufficient enough to drive the agent to perform or omit the action, i.e., it must be compelling (*mujbir*). Moreover, al-Rāzī and some commentators of al-Ījī went further to claim that having the action with insufficient motive would

⁵²⁰ Ibid., 3/289-290.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Ibid., 290.

disprove the argument of the existence of God. Al-Jurjānī, for example, argues that the insufficient motive entails two things: The arbitrariness (*itifaqīa*) of the action and the needlessness (*istighnā*) of the cause (*sabab*) for the contingent being. Assuming the possibility of the latter, as al-Jurjānī argues, would prevent us from proving the existence of God.⁵²³ Al-Kirmānī, the other immediate student of al-Ījī, affirms the same thing: Saying that the action comes into existence without a full motive means that the contingent being does not need a cause/motive for its existence.⁵²⁴

The implication between proving the existence of God and having the action without a sufficient motive is related to the famous kalām argument of the need for the efficient cause (*mūathir*) for the contingent being.⁵²⁵ This need, as the theologians affirm, is necessary. Al-Taftāzānī states the necessity of the efficient cause by saying, “The [logical] necessity entails that the contingent being must need an efficient cause because it is impossible to preponderate one of its side [existence or non-existence] without a determining factor (*murajih*).”⁵²⁶ Human actions are unanimously considered as contingent beings; therefore, they must need an efficient cause—or you can call it an efficient motive in this case—to preponderate their existence or privation (*‘adam*). Thus, affirming that human actions, which are contingent, do not need an efficient cause will falsify the argument of the existence of God. Everything apart from God is contingent and needs an efficient cause—which should not be contingent itself—to bring into existence. However, it is worth noting that the argument from the necessity of a cause for the contingent/occurrence is not only a traditional kalām argument but also a modern theological and philosophical argument. William Lane Craig, a contemporary philosopher of religion, brought forth the Islamic argument of the existence of God to modern philosophy under the name of “the kalām cosmological argument,” and elaborated profoundly on its premises.⁵²⁷

⁵²³ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/167.

⁵²⁴ Al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Hussain Paşa, 317), 332a.

⁵²⁵ The contingent being necessarily needs an efficient cause to come into existence; the reason for this need is either its occurrence (*huduth*) or its contingency. The early Ash‘arites affirmed that the reason is its occurrence, while the late Ash‘arites were more inclined to the contingency as a complete reason, partial reason, or a condition. See Sa‘d al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Makāshid*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: ‘Alam al-Kutub, 1998), 1/481.

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ Traditional and modern kalam cosmological argument are presented as follows, everything that begins to exist has a cause. The universe began to exist. Therefore, the universe has a cause. For more information about modern cosmological argument, see William Lane Craig, *The Kalām Cosmological Argument*, (London: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1979)

Nevertheless, neither all motives are compelling nor all of them are from God. Al-Rāzī affirms this when he divides motives into two categories. The first category consists of the motives that exist in the servant’s hearts, which do not initiate actions, i.e., they are merely ideas, desires or inclinations. This type of motive is not created immediately by God and does not necessitate any action or omission. The second category contains the motives that are created by God, and they decisively determine one side of the action, performance or omission.⁵²⁸ Although these motives have a correlation between them and the first type of motives they are still created directly by God. Al-Rāzī explains this correlation by saying, “It has been asserted that the originated states (*aḥwāl*) in the heart culminate in a necessary motive (*dā’ī*) that exists by God’s creation.”⁵²⁹ By the states in the hearts, al-Rāzī means the first type of motives, such as ideas, desires and inclinations. Furthermore, according to al-Rāzī, these necessary motives could be divided into universal (*kulī*) and particular (*juz’ī*). The universal motive presents the general will to perform an action that contains several sub-actions to be achieved. These several actions themselves have motives that are necessarily generated by the universal motive. For example, the universal motive is visiting a friend, this will or motive to visit a friend contains several particular wills, such as choosing the roads, the methods, and so on.⁵³⁰ Although the particular motive is not necessarily included in a universal motive, it can be created initially per se. For the particular motive, al-Rāzī gives an example of the movement of the finger in a specific moment, to a specific extent.⁵³¹ However, al-Rāzī elaborated abundantly on the idea of the motive in order to prove that humans are compelled in their actions, but strangely enough, he insists that humans are the agents of their actions. Thus, al-Rāzī proves compulsion (*jabr*) and does not deny human responsibility. He stated these two conflicting ideas as follows,

The combination of [contingent] power with the specific motive (*dā’ī*) necessitates the existence of the action. The creator (*mujiid*) of power and motive is God, and they both necessitate the action; therefore, the servant becomes the real agent of the action because the efficient cause in that action is his power and motive. At the same time, all human actions exist by divine predestination.⁵³²

⁵²⁸ Al-Rāzī, *Al-Maṭālib*, 3/61.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, 3/62.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*

⁵³² Al-Rāzī, *Al-Maṭālib*, 3/73.

According to al-Rāzī, humans are responsible for their actions because the power and the motive are created in them, and thus they and their actions belong to them. As we stated before, he ideally summarized his theory with a short statement: “Man is compelled under the guise of a voluntary agent.” Finally, we can say that with this full illustration of al-Rāzī’s position, we found out that he completely eradicates the agency of free will by the theory of compelling motives. However, our theologian in question, al-Ījī, used the same theory of motive to prove that humans are not the real agents of their actions, and thus their actions per se cannot be described as the ethical value of ḥusn and qubḥ.

Al-Ījī, in this argument, adopts and defends al-Rāzī’s argument of the compelling motives, and he seems to be negating human free choice. For this reason, he was stigmatized by some Western scholars to be a radical Ash‘arite who deny the efficacy of human power and choice. Gimaret affirmed this stigmatization when he elaborated on al-Ījī’s position as follows, “La puissance humaine n’a aucune efficience sur l’acte; Dieu crée dans l’homme une puissance et une volonté, puis l’act qui leur correspond.”⁵³³ We say denying the efficacy of the contingent power is the main position in the school of Ash‘arism, but denying the choice is not. Al-Rāzī explicitly repudiates the agency of free will, while al-Ījī, although he defends al-Rāzī’s argument, does not seem to be embracing the idea of the compelling motive. Having said that, we are still so far unable to give a decisive judgement about al-Ījī’s position of free will. Apparently, in the argument of human actions, he seems to follow al-Rāzī’s model in denying the free will, and sometimes, he goes further by affirming that praising and criticizing humans for their actions is similar to praising and criticizing them for their physical beauty or ugliness. This apparently extreme position is stated as a response to an opponent’s objection. This objection itself is an ethical argument made by the Mu‘tazilites against those who deny the efficacy of human power and objective ethical values. The objection is stated as follows, “If it were not for the servant’s independent agency, then religious obligation (taklif) and teaching good manners (tadib) would be nullified; furthermore, praise, criticism, reward and

⁵³³ Daniel Gimaret, *Théories de l’Act Humain en Théologie MUṣūlmane*, 160. This paragraph could be rendered in English as follows, ‘human power has no efficacy on the action at all. God is the One who creates power and will in the man, and then He creates the action that is associated with them.

punishment would be pointless.”⁵³⁴ Al-Ījī responded only to the second part of the objection, which is the pointlessness of praise, criticism, reward and punishment. He says, “Praise and criticism are because of the locality (*maḥliyah*), not the agency (*fa‘liya*). It is similar to praising or criticizing something because of its beauty, ugliness, soundness or defect.”⁵³⁵ Humans are the locus of their actions, not the agents of them. Therefore, praising someone for his good actions is similar to praising him for his beautiful face. Al-Jurjānī affirms his teacher’s position by saying that this similarity is because of the non-efficacy of human power, namely, human power does not cause the existence of both actions and physical beauty.⁵³⁶ Al-Kirmānī, the second immediate student of al-Ījī elaborates on this position by pointing out the difference between human actions and inanimate objects. He says, “it [human action] is different from the actions of inanimate objects because it [human action] is associated (*muqarin*) with the contingent power and attached to it.”⁵³⁷ In other words, humans acquire their action, which is the *kasb*, while actions are created in the inanimate objects without any role from their parts. Al-Ījī continues his response to the ethical argument of the Mu‘tazilites by saying that reward and punishment are like other habitual (*‘adiyah*) issues. He proceeds by saying, “It is not correct, according to us, to say: Why did God create combustion after touching the fire and did not happen [the combustion] initially [without touching the fire]. Thus, the case [of reward and punishment] is similar.”⁵³⁸ Reward and punishment are habitual consequences of our actions. Put it differently, our actions necessitate neither reward nor punishment, i.e., there is no rational entailment between human actions and reward and punishment. However, the argument of reward and punishment is subsidiary to the argument of rational ḥusn and qubḥ. Some of the Mu‘tazilites affirm the rational entailment between our actions and reward and punishment. If the actions are objectively ḥasan or qubiḥ, they must be rewarded or punished by God; otherwise, that would contradict the divine wisdom. They try to prove the rational implication through scriptural proofs as well. God said that He will punish the sinful, so not punishing them would entail attribution of lying to His words, Exalted is He. Lying is rationally impossible, and thus anything might

⁵³⁴ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 314.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁶ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/172.

⁵³⁷ Al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Hussain Paşa, 317), 334a.

⁵³⁸ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 314.

lead to it.⁵³⁹ However, al-Ījī's position here is not a demonstrative proof that he maintains compulsion because affirming that humans are the locus of their actions as they are the locus of their physical beauty does mean that humans do not have free choice. Al-Kirmānī, commented on al-Ījī's position by distinguishing between human actions and inanimate objects by affirming that humans have acquisition, which contains the human choice. Regarding reward and punishment, we say that all Ash'arites maintain that the relationship between our actions and divine reward and punishment is a habitual relationship, i.e., there is no rational entailment between them.

4.2.3. Defending al-Ījī from Compulsion (Jabr)

Proving or disproving compulsion has a great significance in the ethical argument of ḥusn and qubḥ because any ethical argument about compelled actions would be meaningless. For this reason, we claim that al-Ījī, similarly to the early Ash'arites, does not negate the faculty of human free will. Al-Ījī in the argument of human actions, seems to be holding a position contrary to human free will; nevertheless, if we scrutinize the whole book of *al-Mawāqif*, we find out some scattered pieces of evidence that prove our claim.

We say that al-Ījī, in the argument of human actions, intends primarily to negate human autonomy over their actions, and he explicitly admits this intention by saying, "We say that our intention (garad) is to disprove the [servant's] autonomy [over his actions], which the Mu'tazilites affirm."⁵⁴⁰ For this reason, al-Ījī negates the efficacy of human power, which is the main position of the Ash'arites; furthermore, he implemented al-Rāzī's argument of the compelling motive, but he admitted using the argument only for the sake of argument. Nevertheless, by proving that al-Ījī renounces the idea of the motive, we will obtain a solid ground to defend him against compulsion.

Al-Ījī argues against the idea of the conditioned will. He affirms that the will is a faculty that is not conditioned by benefit or inclination. In other words, for the will to

⁵³⁹ Abdul Karim Uthman, *The Theory of Religious Obligation*, 498. The argument about reward and punishment is one of the main arguments among the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites. It is worth noting that reward and punishment is the third principle among the Mu'tazilite' five principles. See Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār. *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 609-621.

⁵⁴⁰ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/171.

choose one thing over the other, it is not necessary to believe that there is a benefit in one of them or to have an inclination that is proceeded with a choice. To prove this contention, al-Ījī utilized two examples. In the first one, he says, “The man who is escaping from a lion if he comes to a fork in the road, he will choose one of them [the roads], and his choice is neither based on preponderating the benefit in one of them nor on an inclination that [he] proceeds. He preponderates one of them by virtue of the will.”⁵⁴¹ Here, al-Ījī seems to depend on the will as a faculty that is able to choose without a motive at all. In the second example, he emphasizes the unnecessary of motive. He says, “Similarly is [the example of] the thirsty man if he had two cups of water, and he assumed that they are exactly identical, then he would choose one of them without a motive that he preponderates based on his belief.”⁵⁴² What is highlighted here is ‘choosing without a motive.’ Although al-Ījī seems to be renouncing the idea of the motive (al-dā‘ī), he does not negate the preponderating factor (*al-Murajih*). He affirms this by saying, “I do not say that the action does not have a preponderating factor, but I say that it does not have motive (dā‘ī).”⁵⁴³ The preponderating factor, according to al-Rāzī, is the motive that forces the agent to choose one side of the action over the other. In other words, the preponderating factor is an existential factor that is separated from the will. Al-Ījī narrates the position of al-Rāzī in the chapter on the contingent being, and then he denies its truth. He says, “Al-Imām al-Rāzī chooses that it is necessary before the existence [of something] to have a preponderated side. Preponderance (al-tarjih) is an existential attribute; therefore, it must have a locus (maḥal), and it [the preponderance] is not the affected object (al-athar).”⁵⁴⁴ Al-Ījī responds to al-Rāzī succinctly by saying, “We do not concede this position; hence, preponderance happens with the existence [of that object], i.e., it is an attribute of the existence that does not subsist on something else.”⁵⁴⁵

Al-Ījī renounces the idea of the motive in a few different places in his book, but he maintains the notion of the preponderance. This preponderance is interpreted differently in two places. In the first place, he stated that man can preponderate two equal things merely by virtue of his will, while when he responded to al-Rāzī, he

⁵⁴¹ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 149.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., 71.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

affirmed that preponderance is an attribute of the preponderated object, i.e., it does not have a separate existence. Apparently, these two opinions of al-Ījī are contradictory, but if we examine them closely, we can find them quite similar. To explain this similarity, we say that in the first position, al-Ījī affirmed that preponderating one side of the action does not depend on an external motive; it is merely the choice of the will. Whereas in the second position, he stated that preponderance is merely an attribute of the preponderated object. In other words, if preponderance is simply the act of choosing, then the preponderated object has the attribute of being chosen. Therefore, preponderance at the same time is the act of choosing and the attribute of the chosen/preponderated object.

According to al-Ījī and his commentators, this attribute cannot be existential and cannot exist apart from the preponderated object, i.e., the action. Al-Jurjānī vigorously affirms this position by saying, “The truth [al-ḥaqq] is that preponderance and the renewable existence are not necessarily existential because what is non-existential (‘adamī) might be renewable [as well]. Therefore, [preponderance] is *ens rationis* (i‘tibarī) which is the attribute of the contingent being as long as it is conceived (mutaṣawar).⁵⁴⁶ Al-Sialkūfī commented on al-Jurjānī’s previous position as follows, “What has previously mentioned [about the motive] was a polemic answer.... and this is the true answer, and for this reason, he said the truth.”⁵⁴⁷

Therefore, we can say that the real position of al-Ījī is that preponderating without a motive (*dā‘ī*) neither leads to logical impossibility nor prevents us from proving the existence of the Creator. Al-Ījī and his commentators made a very clear distinction between preponderance without a motive and self-preponderance. The former is possible, while the latter is logically impossible and could lead to falsifying the argument of the existence of God. Al-Jurjānī expatiates on this opinion as follows, “Preponderating the agent of one of his objects of power over the other without a motive (*dā‘ī*) that calls him to choose that [specific] object of power is different from the existence of one of the two equal sides [of action] without a cause.”⁵⁴⁸ Another commentator affirms the same position by saying that preponderating without a motive

⁵⁴⁶ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3/144.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 3/159.

does not entail the arbitrariness of the action because what is impossible is the tilting of one side of the contingent, i.e., its existence or privation by itself without a cause.⁵⁴⁹ Hence, we come to the premise that everyone agrees on: “Everything that came to existence must have a cause.” Thus, when a man chooses his action, there must be a cause and this cause is his own will. Man is a volitional agent, and his will is sufficient to preponderate his actions. However, excluding the compelling motive from the argument does not mean excluding the possibility of compulsion. In other words, affirming that the volitional agent is able to preponderate his choices by virtue of his will is not enough to stop the objections. Al-Jurjānī presented one of the main objections as follows, “If the volitional agent is able to preponderate one of his objects of power, then [in the case] that his will of one object of power is exactly equal to another will of another object of power in respect to himself, then [the objection] why did [the agent] was attributed with one [of them] not the other?”⁵⁵⁰ Put it simply, when the will is attached to one object of power (*maqdur*), it preponderates its existence, but when we have two wills that are equally and simultaneously attached to two objects of power, and only one of them comes into existence, then the objection is why that specific one was preponderated, not the other. Al-Jurjānī does not give a clear answer to this objection, but he only provides potential answers, which are not free from objections. He gives us three possible answers. The first one: Saying that the preponderance of one will over the other happened due to another will would move the question to the cause of that will, and then infinite regress will be inescapable. The second possible answer is saying that one of the wills preponderated and the other did not, although they are both exactly equal; this would lead to another logical impossibility, which is preponderating without a cause. The third answer seems more plausible, which is that the will is one in itself, i.e., there is no two different wills, but it is one will that has several attachments.⁵⁵¹ However, when the objection is moved to the attachments, then infinite regress could be possible in this case according to some theologians.⁵⁵² The reason for this that the attachments have no real existence in themselves, i.e., they are *enis rationis (i‘tibarī)*. Ruling out infinite regress will not finish the argument; we need to respond to the second objection, which is

⁵⁴⁹ Al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Hussain Paşa, 317), 333b.

⁵⁵⁰ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3/159-160.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² Al-Sialkūtī concedes that infinite regress is a possible answer to this objection. Al-Rāzī, on the other hand, does not accept infinite regress in the *enis rationis*. See al-Rāzī, *Al-Maṭalib*, 1/151.

preponderating one of the attachments without a cause. Al-Sialkūtī affirms that the existence of the *enis rationis* (*amr i'tibarī*) without a cause is completely possible. He says, “The possibility of the existence of the *enis rationis* without a cause does not entail the possibility of the existence of the contingent without a cause..... this [response] is quite firm.”⁵⁵³ Contingent beings unanimously need a cause for their existence, while the *enis rationis* could exist without a cause, according to some theologians.

After providing these pieces of evidence, we can say that al-Ījī does accept al-Rāzī's argument of the compelling motive. Although he used it and defended it in the argument of human actions and in the argument of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ*, he renounced it in several places and stated that he is only using it polemically. The faculty of the will is sufficient to choose from alternatives without any external motive, meaning that the preponderance of one side of the action is related to the will, not to an external factor. This preponderance, according to the commentators, does not have real existence in itself, and thus it could happen without a cause and no logical impossibility would follow. Finally, we can say that al-Ījī's main goal in the argument of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* is to negate human autonomy over their actions. For that reason, he pursued two main methods. The first one is arguing from the non-efficacy of human power, which is an authentic Ash'arī method that has been adopted by the majority of the Ash'arites. The second method is al-Rāzī's method, which argues that humans need a motive to choose their actions; this motive is the compelling factor that is created immediately in the servant's heart to preponderate his actions. The first method was genuinely adopted by al-Ījī, while the second was only used for the sake of the argument.

4.3. Obligation beyond Capacity (*Taklīf ma la-yuṭāq*)

Human actions are the core of the ethical argument because they are the value carriers and the true representatives of our ethical conviction. Therefore, in the previous question, we tried to prove that ethical responsibility is based on the free faculty of choice, rather than the efficacy of power. In other words, God, according to al-Ījī and other Ash'arites, is the One who creates our actions, but we are still responsible for

⁵⁵³ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 3/160. Al-Sialkūtī attributed this response to Ṣadr al-Shariy'a, but I could not find it.

them because we choose them. This solution would satisfy both the Ash‘arites and the Maturities, but it will still raise some objections from the Mu‘tazilites’ side who did not accept to give up on human full autonomy over their actions. The question we are tackling in this part was a vigorous dispute between the Mu‘tazilites and the Ash‘arites where the former absolutely denied the actuality and the possibility of it, while the latter affirmed them generally and then distinguished between different cases.

Al-Ījī starts his argument by affirming the possibility of obligation beyond capacity, i.e., it is possible that God obligates (*yukalif*) man with things that are beyond his power. This possibility stems from the Ash‘arite ethical understanding of God and His attributes. He initiates the argument as follows, “Obligation beyond capacity is possible according to us [the Ash‘arites] based on what we previously provided that there is no obligation on God and no qabīḥ is perceived from Him. He does what He wills and judges what He wants..., and the Mu‘tazilites deem it impossible for its rational qubḥ.”⁵⁵⁴ As we have seen in the second chapter, God has absolute sovereignty and only ḥusn is applicable to his actions, namely, whatever He does is ḥasan, and qubḥ cannot be conceived in respect to Him. It might be easier to clarify the Mu‘tazilites’ position before expatiating on al-Ījī’s argument since the latter elaborated on various types of obligation beyond capacity.

4.3.1. The Mu‘tazilite Position

Ibn al-Malāḥīmī asserted al-Ījī’s words about the Mu‘tazilites’s position by saying, “Our masters [the Mu‘tazilites] maintained that God does not obligate the servant beyond his capacity, and every obligation beyond capacity is qabīḥ [because] God is far above (munazah) doing qabīḥ.”⁵⁵⁵ We see here that both the possibility and impossibility of this question are based on the conception of divine ethics. Nevertheless, Ibn al-Malāḥīmī said that our opponents in this argument are the jahmiyyah and the Ash‘arites, and then he ended up reducing the Ash‘arites position to the Jahmiyyah. Of course, the reason for this reduction is the none-efficacy of the contingent power that the Ash‘arites maintained. Therefore, according to Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, obligating human beings, and then depriving their power of its efficacy and

⁵⁵⁴ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 330-331.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, *Al-Faiḳ fi Usūl al-Dīn*, 279.

creating their actions is an obligation beyond capacity. He stated the Ash‘arites’ position as follows, “The Ash‘arites and the Najjarriyah⁵⁵⁶ maintained that God obligated His servants beyond their capacity because He is the creator of their actions.... even if they say that the servant acquires it [his actions].”⁵⁵⁷ Ibn al-Malāḥīmī tried to be just to the Ash‘arites by saying that this obligation beyond capacity is based on their definition of human power as a power that exists at the time of the action and cannot be related to the two opposites at the same time, i.e., performing and omission. In other words, Ibn al-Malāḥīmī tried to show that the Ash‘arites and the Jahmiyyah are not quite identical in terms of obligation beyond capacity.

However, as we clarified before, negating the efficacy of the contingent power leads to compulsion according to the Mu‘tazilites, but does not lead to the negation of free will according to al-Ījī and most of the Ash‘arites. Nevertheless, the Mu‘tazilites insist on stigmatizing the Ash‘arites with compulsion and thus ascribing to them the position of obligation beyond capacity. The reason for this accusation is that the Mu‘tazilites reduced the argument of obligation beyond capacity to the non-efficacy of human power. Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār affirmed this understanding by saying, “Obligation beyond capacity would be entailed from saying that it [the contingent power] is associated with the object of power (maqdūr). It [obligation beyond capacity] is qabīḥ, and divine justice precludes performing qabīḥ.”⁵⁵⁸ To explain this association, we say that God commanded humans to perform an action, but at the time of the command, humans did not have any power, and despite that, the divine speech was directed to them, i.e., the obligation happened despite the absence of human power. The Ash‘arites do not shrink from admitting this obligation, whether it is called beyond or within human power. It. Nevertheless, the argument of obligation beyond capacity, according to the Ash‘arites, does not stop at the concept of human power, but it includes different types of possible and actual obligations.

⁵⁵⁶ They are the followers of Muhammad bin Hussaīn al-Najjar (220H); they maintained a similar position of al-Ash‘arī in regard to human actions; nevertheless, they held a few Mu‘tazilites’ doctrines as well. Al-Shahrastānī said that most the Mu‘tazilites in al-Ray follow the teachings of al-Najjar; see Al-Shahrastānī, *Milal wa Al-Niḥal*, 1/75.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, *Al-Faiḳ fi Usūl al-Dīn*, 279.

⁵⁵⁸ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār. *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 390.

4.3.2. Types of Obligation beyond Capacity

Al-Ījī divided obligation beyond capacity into three degrees: high, middle and low. He elaborated on each one of them in terms of the possibility and the actuality.⁵⁵⁹ We will start explaining them from the lowest to the highest because the lowest degree shares the same meaning as the Mu‘tazilites’ criticism of the Ash‘arites’ conception of human actions.

4.3.2.1. The Lowest Degree of Obligation beyond Capacity

Al-Ījī stated that the lowest degree or level of obligation beyond capacity is when human action is deemed impossible due to three reasons, which are divine knowledge, will or report. These three reasons could be explained as follows:

- God knew that the action will not happen, then the existence of that action is impossible.
- God did not will the action to happen, then the existence of the action is impossible as well.
- God reported that the action will not happen, and then it is impossible to happen.⁵⁶⁰

This type of obligation, namely, God obligating the servant with something, although He had known, willed, or reported the non-existence of that thing, is unanimously actual and possible, as al-Ījī stated. He says, “Obligation with this [type] is possible and actual (waqi‘) by consensus; otherwise, the disobedient despite his disbelief and lewdness (fisq) will not be religiously incumbent (mukalaf).”⁵⁶¹ To prove the actuality and the possibility of this obligation, al-Ījī used a conditional syllogism that could be spelt as follows: If this obligation is not possible, then the disobedient, whether he is a non-believer or a *fasiq* believer, is not religiously incumbent. But the disobedient is religiously incumbent; therefore, this type of obligation is possible. To explain the implication between the antecedent and the consequent, we say that God knew from

⁵⁵⁹ Every actual is possible in itself, but not vice versa. The possible could be divided into physical and logical; however, every physical is logical, but not vice versa.

⁵⁶⁰ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 331; al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/222.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

eternity that x man will not believe although He obligated/asked him to believe. Therefore, x man was obligated beyond his capacity because nothing contrary to God’s knowledge can exist. To simplify the implication and connect it to human power, we say that according to al-Ījī, the creation of human power happens simultaneously at the time of the action, and this power is only valid for that action, not for its opposite. Therefore, when the servant, for example, is indulged in doing something and the religious obligation is asking him not to do that thing. At that moment, the servant is obligated beyond his power because his power, at that moment, is occupied with performing a different action, and as long as he is engaged in that action, the power is not valid to perform the opposite. The currently engaged action is an object of divine knowledge, i.e., it must happen, and in spite of that, the obligation is asking the servant to do the contrary. Al-Ījī affirmed this as follows, “Such an action [that God knew, willed or reported its none-existence] cannot be an object of the contingent power; hence, the power [exists] simultaneously with the action and cannot be related to the two opposite [sides of the action].”⁵⁶²

Al-Ījī presents this type of obligation in a way that it looks like God is obligating the servant to do the impossible. That is because he presented divine foreknowledge as a necessitating factor of human actions. He starts this type of obligation by saying, “The [servant’s] action would be deemed impossible due to God’s knowledge, will or report of the non-existence [of the action].”⁵⁶³

Nevertheless, we do not think that al-Ījī maintains that divine knowledge is an efficient (*muathirah*) attribute because mainly the Ash‘arites hold that knowledge is a revealing (*kashifah*) attribute that does not affect its object, and it is in accordance with its object, not vice versa. In other words, had the action been different, the knowledge would have been different as well. Al-Ghazālī affirms this Ash‘arī understanding of divine knowledge as follows, “[the knowledge follows the object of knowledge (ma‘lūm) and attached to it as it is [as the ma‘lūm is], and [thus] it [the knowledge] does not affect or change it [the ma‘lūm].”⁵⁶⁴ Al-Rāzī affirmed the same understanding of divine

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *al-Iktisād fī al-I‘tiqād*, 168. I could not find an explicit statement about the efficiency of divine knowledge in al-Ījī’s books. In modern philosophy there is ongoing debates about divine foreknowledge and human freedom; however, we did not elaborate on this because we are not

knowledge by saying that knowledge attaches (*tat'alaq*) to the object of knowledge (*ma'lūm*) as it is without changing its reality, and we already proved that it is impossible for knowledge to have an affecting factor (*tathīr*).⁵⁶⁵

The impossibility of action because of divine will or report is different from the impossibility because of the nature of the contingent power, i.e., the power being not related to the two opposite sides of the actions. Al-Sialkūtī objected to al-Ījī's opinion by saying that the contingent power is not attached to the opposite because the power exists simultaneously with the action, and this case is different from the preclusion of the action because of divine knowledge, will, or report. The difference between these two impediments of the action is that maintaining that the action is precluded because of the nature of contingent power would mean that every obligation is an obligation beyond capacity according to the Ash'arites. Al-Sialkūtī explains this as follows, "It would entail that every required command (*mukalaf bihi*) is beyond [the servant's] capacity, regardless whether God knew its existence or its non-existence because obligation (*takif*) is necessary before the action and the contingent power is simultaneous with it [the action]."⁵⁶⁶

Therefore, we can say that al-Ījī's first type of obligation beyond capacity contains two parts: The first one is when the action is prevented because of God's knowledge, will or report. Nevertheless, we clarified that God's knowledge is not an efficient cause, namely, it does not necessitate or prevent human actions.⁵⁶⁷ Therefore, we only have God's will and report that would make the action impossible if they willed or reported its non-existence. The former, i.e., God's will, is only disclosed to us through divine reports; therefore, the actual argument is only restricted to divine reports. God reveals that a certain action, from the actions that He obligated his servants to do, will not exist. For this reason, the existence of the action is impossible, and the servants are

discussing human free will in this question. For more information about the modern debate about divine foreknowledge, see William Lane Craig, *Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom: The Coherence of Theism: Omniscience*, (Leiden: Brill, 1991).

⁵⁶⁵ Al-Rāzī, *Al-Maṭālib*, 9/49. Al-Rāzī brings up ten arguments to prove that divine knowledge does not change the reality of things.

⁵⁶⁶ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/222.

⁵⁶⁷ Maybe al-Ījī wants to say that divine knowledge that was revealed to us about the non-existence of certain actions prevents those actions from coming into existence. In this case, we can say that the action is prevented due to the knowledge, but in reality, the knowledge only gave us the factual future reality of those actions, i.e., it did not cause their non-existence.

still obligated to perform that action. The most famous example of this case is the belief of Abū Lahab. God reported in the Quran that will end up in hellfire, and at the same time he was ordered/obligated to believe. Al-Rāzī explain this theological conundrum as follows, “God obligated Abū Lahab to believe, and the belief entails believing in everything that God talked about. From the things that [God] talked about is that he [Abū Lahab] will not believe. Therefore, he [Abū Lahab] became obligated to believe that he will not believe.”⁵⁶⁸ This is the only actual case of obligation beyond capacity because of God’s report. However, theologians, in general, tried to give a plausible answer or justification for this type of obligation. Al-Jurjānī, for example, said that the general belief in terms of Abū Lahab is not impossible, while the particle one is impossible,⁵⁶⁹ but only in case of his knowledge of that particular obligation.⁵⁷⁰ The second part of al-Ījī’s first type of obligation is related to the nature of the contingent power, namely, the power is an accident that does not stand for two instances of time; therefore, it exists simultaneously with the action, i.e., it does not exist at the moment of the obligation and cannot be valid for the action and its opposite at the same time. This is an authentic Ash‘arite understanding of power, but it does not entail the impossibility of obligation and the qubḥ of divine action because the servant still has the faculty of choice at the time of obligation. However, we say that the true obligation beyond capacity would be directed to al-Rāzī’s argument who said that God creates the compelling motive in the servant’s heart. He affirms this type of obligation by saying, “Because He [God] creates the motives (dawā‘ī) to disbelieve for the sake of disbeliever [the one who will disbelieve], and then He commands him to believe. This is quite exactly the obligation beyond capacity.”⁵⁷¹ This obligation is truly an obligation beyond capacity, but the one that al-Ījī and his master al-Ash‘arī are talking about would be only called an obligation beyond capacity according to the opponents’ understanding of compulsion and human power. Nevertheless, according to the Ash‘arites who do not deny the freedom of choice, this obligation is a normal obligation that does not entail any impossibility, although they might accept calling it

⁵⁶⁸ Al-Rāzī, *Al-Maṭālib*, 9/267.

⁵⁶⁹ It is important to note the impossibility here is not a rational impossibility, i.e., the thing is not impossible in itself, but it is impossible because of an external reason. In this case, it is impossible because of the truthfulness of divine speech. For more details about these two types of impossibilities, see Shihab al-Dīn al-Qarāfī, *Nafa‘is al-Usūl fī Sharḥ al-Maḥsul*, (Mecca: Nizar Mustafa Al-Baz, 1995), 4/1549.

⁵⁷⁰ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/175.

⁵⁷¹ Al-Rāzī, *Al-Maṭālib*, 9/269.

an obligation beyond capacity in order to show that humans do not have an efficient capacity: It is God who creates their actions.

In order to prove the previous contention, we need to explore al-Ash‘arī’s understanding of this obligation beyond capacity because he is the one who came up with this definition of human power. Al-Ash‘arī narrates the opponent’s objection about obligating/asking the disbeliever to believe, and whether the disbeliever has the power to believe or not. Al-Ash‘arī responds to this objection as follows,

If he [the disbeliever] had the capacity, he would have believed [i.e., he has the power to believe]. Then if he [the opponent] said: ‘Has he [God] obligated him with things that he cannot do?’ We respond to him as follows, this question has two [different] things: if you mean by ‘he cannot believe because of his disability (‘*ajiz*), then we say No [i.e., God does obligate him with things beyond his capacity], but if you say that he [the disbeliever] cannot do it [the belief] because he left it [the belief] and got engaged in [performing] its opposite, then the answer is Yes [i.e., God obligated him to do what is beyond his capacity].⁵⁷²

This manifest explanation of al-Ash‘arī helps us to have a complete understanding of the relationship between obligation beyond capacity and contingent power. The servant is not disabled (‘*ajiz*), i.e., he has the potential capacity to believe, and in this regard, there is no obligation beyond capacity because the servant has the potential capacity, which would turn to be an actual one as soon as he directs his free choice to do the opposite. Nevertheless, at the moment when the servant is engaged in disbelief, he cannot believe, and thus asking him to believe at that moment is an obligation beyond capacity.⁵⁷³ In other words, asking the servant to use the same power of disbelief to believe, at that moment, is an obligation beyond capacity. We argue that Al-Ash‘arī conceded to call this case an obligation beyond capacity because of the definition of the contingent power that he maintained. Ibn al-Talmasānī⁵⁷⁴ emphasized the need to concede the doctrine of obligation beyond capacity by saying, “The principles (qawā‘id) of the Ash‘arism cannot be affirmed except by conceding it [obligation beyond capacity] because the servant’s power exists simultaneously with

⁵⁷² Al-Ash‘arī, *Al-Luma‘ fi al-Rad ‘alā Ahal al-Zayg wa al-Bida‘*, 100. Al-Maturīdī enriches this position by saying that the servant is the one who is wasting his power in disobedience, and thus the obligation is not *qabīh*; see Abū Mansūr al-Maturīdī, *Al-Tawhīd*, (Alexandria: Dar al-Jamī‘at al-Masriya, 1970), 266.

⁵⁷³ In reality, asking the disbeliever to believe is not one command, but there are two commands. The first one is asking him to stop disbelieving, and then the second one is asking him to believe.

⁵⁷⁴ Sharaf al-Dīn Ibn al-Talmasānī (d.644h) is the famous commentator on al-Rāzī’s books. In his comments on Ma‘alim Uṣūl al-Dīn, Ibn al-Talmasānī tried to argue against al-Rāzī’s at some points in order to highlight al-Ash‘arī’s true positions. See Khaīr al-Dīn al-Zirkily, *al-A‘lām*, 5th ed. (Beirut: Dar al-‘Ilm lalmalayn, 2002), 4/125.

the object of power (maqdur).”⁵⁷⁵ Furthermore, Ibn al-Talmasānī divided obligation beyond capacity into several types, and when he elaborated on this type, he gave another justification and affirmed the freedom of choice as well. He said,

The fourth [type of obligation beyond capacity] exists according to the opinion of al-shaykh [al-Ash‘arī], but he does not consider it an impossible obligation because this [obligation] is conditioned by the action being from such actions that are possible for the physically sound body (buniya), and it must be from the genus of actions that the power is created for when [the servant] has a determinant will (‘*azim*) to do it.⁵⁷⁶

For this obligation not to be impossible, two conditions must exist: The first one is the soundness of the physical body, i.e., the absence of physical disability. The second condition is that obligation should be from the actions that humans normally can perform when they choose to do so. For example, asking a sound human to walk is from this type of obligation, but asking him to fly to the sky is not. Finally, we have demonstrated that the lowest degree of obligation beyond capacity is actually two parts: The first one is when the action becomes impossible because of an external reason, such as God’s report. The second part is because of the nature of the contingent power: All obligations are from this type of obligation. According to al-Ījī, both parts are actual⁵⁷⁷ obligations, i.e., they really occurred.

4.3.2.2. The Middle Degree of Obligation beyond Capacity

The middle degree of obligation beyond capacity is also a matter of ethical dispute between the Mu‘tazilites and al-Ījī. The Mu‘tazilites preclude its possibility on account of its qubḥ, while al-Ījī does not acknowledge their ethical rationality and insists on considering it possible. This middle degree of obligation beyond capacity is related to the actions that are normally beyond human power. It bears no relation with the Ash‘arites’ understanding of human power because it is more related to the limitation of our power in general.

Al-Ījī elaborates on this type of obligation beyond capacity by saying that human power is not linked to this type of action, i.e., the actions are not within our scope of power. He says that there are two reasons for the prevention of this type of action: The

⁵⁷⁵ Sharaf Al-Dīn al-Talmasānī, *Sharḥ ma‘alim Usūl al-Dīn*, (Amman: Dar al-Fatīḥ, 2010), 465.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid, 468.

⁵⁷⁷ Affirming their actuality means that they are possible as well because actuality entails possibility and not vice versa.

first onerefers to actions that are not linked to our power because the nature of those actions cannot be possibly related to human power, namely, they are the actions that can only be performed by God, such as creating bodies.⁵⁷⁸ Al-Jurjānī commented on this position by saying, “The contingent power absolutely cannot cause the existence of a substance (jawhar).”⁵⁷⁹ Creating a substance belongs to the genus (*jins*) of divine actions; therefore, performing this type of action is impossible for the contingent power.

The second reason is the type of actions, which are still from the same genus of human actions, but they exceed the limitation of our power. In other words, these actions in themselves are not impossible, but the limitation of our physical structure and power make their existence precluded. The examples that al-Ījī gives for these actions are carrying mountains and flying to the sky.⁵⁸⁰ Carrying and moving upwards belong to the same genus of our actions, which is the movement; therefore, the mind can still conceive the possibility of them.

Obligation with these types of actions, whether they are from the same genus of our actions or not, is possible according to al-Ījī, but it is not an actual obligation, i.e., it did not exist. Al-Ījī affirmed this position as follows, “This [type of obligation] we deem it possible, although it did not exist; [we know this] by inductive method (*istiqrā*), and [also we know it] from His saying, the Most High: {God burdens not anyone beyond his capacity}.”⁵⁸¹ Al-Kirmānī bolstered his teacher’s position by further scriptural proofs. He says that God asked us in the Quran to supplicate to Him not to burden us with actions that are beyond our capacity when The Exalted said {Lord, do not burden us with more than our capacity} (2:286). Therefore, God Himself affirms the possibility of this obligation; otherwise, there would be no reason for this supplication.⁵⁸²

⁵⁷⁸ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 331.

⁵⁷⁹ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/223. Saying that human power cannot create substances is not a matter of dispute between the Ash‘arites and the Mu‘tazilites. The Mu‘tazilites agree that creating actions is from the genus of actions that does not belong to our power. Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār states that there are thirteen types of actions that are not in the scope of human power. See Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 90.

⁵⁸⁰ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 331.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² Al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Hussain Paşa, 317), 360.

The possibility of the existence of this type of obligation is precluded only after knowing the divine reports, but if it was left to the reason alone, it would assert its possibility. In other words, the obligation to perform⁵⁸³ supernatural actions is rationally possible and actually or physically impossible. The reason for this rational possibility is that the mind can conceive (*yataṣawar*) the command, and thus it judges its possibility. Performing the action or having the potential power to perform it is not a condition for the obligation according to al-Ījī and other Ash‘arites who deem this type of obligation possible. The only condition that they stipulate for the possibility of the obligation is understanding the command. Al-Ījī states this condition as follows, “The understanding of the legally incumbent (*mukalaf*) of the obligation is a condition for the validity (*siḥa*) of obligation according to the erudite scholar (*muḥaqqiqīn*).”⁵⁸⁴ In other words, it is possible that God obligates/commands certain actions that are beyond the scope of human power. This possibility stems from the ethical understanding of divine actions; God does whatever He wants and whatever He does is not *qabīḥ*.⁵⁸⁵ Al-Taftāzānī affirms that the only condition for an obligation is the understanding of the *Mukalaf*. Furthermore, he stated that this middle degree of obligation beyond capacity, that is the obligation to perform supernatural acts, is the focus of dispute⁵⁸⁶ between the theologians. In other words, this obligation beyond capacity is the one that is really related to the argument of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ*. This type of obligation does finish at the incumbent’s understanding, but it also requires him to perform the supernatural action. Al-Taftāzānī states this requirement as follows, “It means [this obligation] requiring the existence of the action and performing it, [and thus] deserving punishment in case of not performing it. [What we mean] is not intending to show the disability [of the incumbent].”⁵⁸⁷ Although the obligated action is beyond the incumbent’s scope of power, he is still required to perform the action, and he will be deserving punishment in case of not performing it. This is the

⁵⁸³ It is worth noting that according to most theologians, obligation is only related to actions, i.e., God obligates or requires from his servants to perform or to abstain from certain actions. The reason for this argument is that the opponents consider abstaining from certain actions as the absence of the action, while Al-Ījī and the majority of theologians consider abstaining as an action. See Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/245.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 2/259.

⁵⁸⁵ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 330.

⁵⁸⁶ Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: ‘Alam al-Kutub, 1998), 4/298. We already stated that the Mu‘tazilites’ argument was focused on the first degree of obligation beyond capacity: the one that is related to the Ash‘arites’ definition of human power. This copy of *al-Maqāṣid* will be used now from now onwards.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

controversial ethical question that the Mu‘tazilites deem impossible due to divine justice and the purpose of obligation. According to them, the purpose of obligation is exposing (*ta‘rīd*) the incumbent to divine reward, not punishing him as the case is in the obligation to perform supernatural actions. *Ibn al-Malāḥīmī* affirms the real purpose of obligation by saying, “The real purpose of the Most Wise is to expose [his servant] to the reward.”⁵⁸⁸ However, al-Taftāzānī emphatically highlights that intention behind this obligation is to require the action, not demonstrate the disability of the incumbent as it is the case in asking them to bring a similar Quran. He says that this demand, i.e., imitating the Quran, is intended without a doubt to display the servants’ disability.⁵⁸⁹ Al-Rāzī in his Tafsīr highlights the difference between this middle degree of obligation beyond capacity and the divine demand in order to demonstrate the disability of the servants. He says that some people maintained that the divine demand from the angels to tell the names of things is a proof of obligation beyond capacity, and this is, al-Rāzī says, an untenable position.⁵⁹⁰

4.3.2.3. The Highest Degree of Obligation beyond Capacity

We have so far elaborated on two degrees of obligation beyond capacity: the lowest and the highest. Both of them are possible with respect to God, but only the first one has an actual existence. The final type is the highest degree of obligation beyond the capacity. It is the obligation to perform the logical impossibility. Al-Ījī states this type of obligation as follows, “The highest degree [of obligation] is when [the action] is precluded (*yamtani‘*) merely because of its concept (*mafḥūmihī*), such as causing the co-existence of two contraries or altering the [logical] reality.”⁵⁹¹ The existence of such obligation is unanimously precluded, but the argument is about whether it is possible for God to obligate His servants to perform these logically impossible actions or not. Al-Ījī in *al-Mawāqif* does not express his own opinion about the possibility of this type of obligation, but he only affirms that some Ash‘arites considered it possible and others impossible. The reason for this dispute among the Ash‘arites goes back to

⁵⁸⁸ Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, *Al-Faiḳ fi Usūl al-Dīn*, 469.

⁵⁸⁹ Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqaṣid*, 4/298.

⁵⁹⁰ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dar Iḥyā’ al-Turath, 1999), 2/398.

⁵⁹¹ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 331. Altering the logical realities means changing the existence mode of something, i.e., making the contingent being necessary or the impossible contingent and so on. See Muḥammad bin Abdullah al-Jarashī, *Al-Far‘id al-Saniya fi Sharḥ al-Muqadima al-Sanusīya*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub, 2015), 229.

the possibility of conceiving (*taṣawwur*) the impossible.⁵⁹² The possibility that is discussed by al-Ījī is quite vague and philosophical, so I will try to depend on the commentators in order to summarize the argument.

Those who maintain the impossibility of this obligation argue that conceiving (*taṣawwur*) the impossible is precluded in itself, and thus affirming the possibility of such an obligation is impossible. What cannot be conceived cannot be demanded. They argued that conceiving the impossible means conceiving it as substantiated in reality, and the impossible in itself has no existence in itself (*fi nafs al-amr*). Thus, the one who claims that he is conceiving the number four not as an even (*zawj*) number, he is in reality conceiving something else, not the number four. In other words, conceiving the number four as an odd number is logically impossible, and the one who claims that he is able to conceive it so, is in reality conceiving another number. Thus, conceiving the impossible means conceiving it as an existed being, and this is unanimously impossible; therefore, the obligation is impossible as well.⁵⁹³

On the other hand, those who hold the possibility of this obligation argue that there are two valid methods to conceive the impossible. The first method is the method of negation, which means conceiving that there is nothing, whether real or imagined, such as the co-existence of the two contraries. The second method is the method of resemblance (*tashbīḥ*), which is conceiving the co-existence of two different things (*al-mukhtalifīn*), such as black and sweetness, which is possible to conceive them existing together, and then judging that such a co-existence or combination cannot happen between the two contraries.⁵⁹⁴ Therefore, the mind can conceive somehow an image about the impossible, though this image is not the exact reality of it because the impossible does not have a reality in itself.

Knowing al-Ījī's real position about this obligation is quite difficult because he does not affirm or negate the possibility of it in any of his books. Furthermore, we have two contrary pieces of evidence about his position. The first one is that in some of his

⁵⁹² Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 331.

⁵⁹³ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/222-223; Al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Hussain Paşa, 317), 358a.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

arguments in *al-Mukhtaṣar*, he tries to prove the falsity of some cases based on the fact that they might lead to obligation with the impossible.⁵⁹⁵ The opposite piece of evidence is given to us by his immediate student, al-Kirmānī, who commented on the second position by saying, “As a result, we do not claim that the impossible cannot be conceived unconditionally, but [we maintain] the negation of conceiving it exited (waqi’an), and thus we maintain the possibility of this [type of] obligation; hence, negating the specific (al-akhaṣ) does not entail negating the general.”⁵⁹⁶ The specific here is conceiving the occurrence of the impossible, which is precluded, but the general, which is conceiving it somehow through the methods of negation or likening, is still possible according to al-Kirmānī who stated this possibility by the plural pronoun *we*.

We cannot assertively ascribe none of these two positions to al-Ījī because we do not know whether al-Kirmānī is referring to al-Ījī with that pronoun or not. Nevertheless, we are more inclined to say that al-Ījī acknowledges the possibility of this obligation because we see al-Juwaynī affirming the possibility of this obligation as well. Al-Juwaynī affirms this possibility by saying, “from the examples of the obligation beyond capacity is the demand to combine between the two contraries and perform [actions] that are beyond the scope of our objects of power. The right [position] according to us [the Ash‘arites] is that [type of obligation] is rationally possible.”⁵⁹⁷ Al-Juwaynī does not distinguish between the second and third degrees of obligation beyond capacity; both of them are rationally possible. His argument is that the required action is not necessarily wanted by the commandant (*al-a‘mir*).⁵⁹⁸ Put it differently, God might ask the servant to perform an action, but in reality, God does not want the existence of that action.

Finally, we can say that obligation beyond capacity has different degrees according to al-Ījī: low, middle and high. The first one is an actual obligation, but it is called beyond capacity because of the Ash‘arites’ conception of human power. The second one is

⁵⁹⁵ Al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/101, 204. He argues, for example, that the same thing cannot be prohibited and obligatory from the same perspective because that would lead to obligation with the impossible. However, this is not a proof about his real position because as we saw that al-Ījī uses some concepts only for the sake of the argument.

⁵⁹⁶ Al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Hussain Paṣa, 317), 359a.

⁵⁹⁷ Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Irshād ilā Qawaṭi‘ al-Adillah fi Usūl al-‘Itiqād*, 226.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 227.

related to supernatural acts, which God can possibly demand from humans and punish them for not performing them. The possibility here is a rational possibility, but in reality, this type of obligation is precluded based on inductive research and scriptural proofs. This obligation is not qabiḥ according to al-Ījī and his Ash‘arites colleagues: God is the absolute Ruler whose actions are not restricted or confined by any creature’s rationality. The Mu‘tazilites, on the other hand, affirm the impossibility of this obligation based on their ethical understanding of human actions and divine justice. The final degree of obligation beyond capacity was a matter of dispute among the Ash‘arites themselves, as the al-Ījī stated. The dispute stems from the possibility of conceiving the impossible; hence, the only condition that the Ash‘arites stipulate for an obligation is the understanding of the command, i.e., the command must be conceived/understood by the legally incumbent (*mukalaf*).

4.4. Al-Ṣalāḥ wa al-Aṣḥaḥ

As we have seen in the last argument, Ījī affirmed that God can possibly obligate humans to perform actions that are beyond their scope of power or even impossible. God does whatever He wants, and no one can set rules for Him. Nevertheless, we are going to deal here with another Mu‘tazilite argument that claims that God has an ethical obligation towards humans to do always the good and the fittest for their interest. This argument is called ‘*al-ṣalāḥ wa al-aṣḥaḥ*,’ which simply means the good and the best. The good in this argument means the action that does not have an aspect of qubḥ; the action that is intended to establish the good that helps to sustain humans in this life and lead them to eternal felicity in the hereafter. *Al-aṣḥaḥ*, on the other hand, is a comparative or superlative form of ‘the good.’ It is used when there are two good actions, both of them do not have the aspect of qubḥ, but one of them is closer to the absolute good, which means in this context the general good for the legally incumbents.⁵⁹⁹ However, not all the Mu‘tazilites maintained both parts of the doctrine, i.e., some of them hold that God must do *al-ṣalāḥ*, but not *al-aṣḥaḥ*. They argue that doing *al-aṣḥaḥ* has no final end since there is no good for humans except something better than it can be imagined.⁶⁰⁰ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbar explains to us that when the

⁵⁹⁹ Abdul Karim Uthman, *The Theory of Religious Obligation*, 400; Abdul Karim al-Shahrastānī, *Nihayat al-Iqdam*, 399.

⁶⁰⁰ AbdulKarim al-Shahrastānī, *Nihayat al-Iqdam*, (Cairo: Religious Culture Library, 2009), 390.

Mu‘tazilites use *al-aṣlah*, they do not mean the superlative form of ‘good’, but something else. He says that we do not use *al-aṣlāh* in a superlative sense, but we mean the most adequate action that God must create for the legally incumbent (*mukalaf*) to help him to obey.⁶⁰¹

4.4.1. The Root of the Doctrine

To understand this doctrine in a better way, we need to dig down to its root. We find out that al-Nazzām is the first one who came up with this doctrine. Al-Baghdādī conveyed to us al-Nazzām’s opinion as follows, “God cannot do for His servants unless what is good for them, and He cannot diminish the blessing of the people of heavens because the blessing [they have] is *ṣalāh* for them, and [thus] diminishing what is good (*ṣalāh*) is injustice (*ẓulum*).⁶⁰² We already stated that, according to al-Nazzām, divine power cannot be related to *qabiḥ*, and not doing what is good for humans is *qabiḥ*; therefore, God must do what is good for humans.

Some modern scholars and old theologians tried to trace al-Nazzām’s theory to non-Islamic sources, such as Neoplatonism, Manichaeism, and Christianity.⁶⁰³ Al-Shahrastānī, for example, ascribed al-Nazzām’s doctrine to the philosophers, more specifically to Neoplatonic philosophers who claim that God’s most prominent characteristic is generosity, and thus He cannot hold back any good from His creature, i.e., God must do *al-ṣalāh* and *al-aṣlah*.⁶⁰⁴ Nevertheless, ascribing the doctrine to non-Islamic sources does not negate that the doctrine itself is based on the Mu‘tazilites’ Islamic principles, such as obligation, divine justice, and divine wisdom.

⁶⁰¹ Al-Qādī Abdul Jabbār, *Al-Mugnī*, 14/37.

⁶⁰² Abdul Qahir al-Baghdādī, *Farq bain al-Firaq*, (Cairo: Avicenna Library, 1988), 121. Cf. Al-Shahrastānī. *Al-Milāl wa al-Niḥal*, 47-51.

⁶⁰³ Abdul Karim Uthman, *The Theory of Religious Obligation*, 401-402; Al-Shahrastānī. *Al-Milāl wa al-Niḥal*, 49-51; Abdul Qahir al-Baghdādī, *Farq bain al-Firaq*, 119.

⁶⁰⁴ Abdul Karim Uthman, *The Theory of Religious Obligation*, 401. The Neoplatonic concept of God is based on the theory of Emanation that the intellects and the universe emanated from God. For more details about the theory of emanation, see A. C. Lloyd, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism*, (Oxford: University Press, 1990).

4.4.2. The Difference between the Two Schools of Mu‘tazilites

It is worth noting that the doctrine of *al-ṣalāḥ wa al-aṣḥaḥ* is a matter of dispute between the Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad and Basra as well. Therefore, we will try to explain briefly the differences between both schools, and thus we will be giving a more comprehensive image of the doctrine as a whole. The Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad maintained that God has to do whatever is good (*al-ṣalāḥ*) for his servants in both religious and worldly affairs, while the Mu‘tazilites of Basra maintained that God has an obligation to do *al-aṣḥaḥ* for his servants only in regard to the religious matters. The rational grounds are somehow different between the two schools. Those of Baghdad hold that *al-aṣḥaḥ* in regard to divine wisdom and management (*tadbir*).⁶⁰⁵ They said, “It is not permissible for God, who is the Wise, to leave any possible aspects of good (*al-ṣalāḥ*), neither in this world nor in the hereafter, for His servants unless He does it.”⁶⁰⁶ The Baṣrians, on the other hand, based their doctrine on the concept of benefit. Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār affirmed the concept of benefit in this doctrine by saying, “Regarding *al-ṣalāḥ*, [we say that] it is the benefit that we already explained... everything that is known as a benefit is known as *ṣalāḥ* as well, and what is not known as a benefit is not known as *ṣalāḥ*.”⁶⁰⁷ This benefit, as al-Qāḍī argues, is only restricted to the living beings, i.e., God is obligated to do *al-ṣalāḥ* only to living beings because it is impossible for non-living beings to receive a benefit. He says, “*Al-ṣalāḥ* is impossible for those benefit is not applicable; therefore, there is nothing is considered as *ṣalāḥ* for the dead and inanimate objects.”⁶⁰⁸ It is important to note that for the Mu‘tazilites of Basra, the benefit is the reason for something to be considered *ṣalāḥ*, but it is not the reason for something to be obligatory on God. In other words, the Mu‘tazilites do not claim straight away that something is *ṣalāḥ*, and therefore, it must be obligatory on God, but they return this doctrine and many other doctrines to their ethical principles and then claim their necessity on God. Al-Qāḍī affirms this as follows, “We only say that these actions are necessary [on God] because the [ethical]

⁶⁰⁵ Sa‘d al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 4/330.

⁶⁰⁶ Abdul Karim Uthman, *The Theory of Religious Obligation*, 403. The Bagdadī Mu‘tazilites emphasized the concept of wisdom and thus made many things necessary on God, such as claiming that it is necessary on God to create the universe. See Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Irshād ilā Qawaṭi‘ al-Adillah fi Usūl al-‘Itiqād*, 287.

⁶⁰⁷ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Al-Mugnī*, 14/35. The concept of benefit played a major role in the school of Basra; to that extent, they claimed that the reason for creating humans as living beings is to benefit them. See Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 77.

⁶⁰⁸ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Al-Mugnī*, 14/35

aspects (wujuh) that entail their necessity are conceived [by the mind]. According to our masters, the action is not necessary on God [to perform] because it is *ṣalāh*, *aṣḥāh*...”⁶⁰⁹ This ethical necessity that is associated with benefit (*naḥ*) stems from the concept of divine justice. To explain this relationship between necessity on God and divine justice, al-Qāḍī divided the obligation (*al-wujub*) on God into two types:⁶¹⁰

- The initial obligation regarding Himself and the others.
- Obligation due to an act that has been already done by Him.

The first type, which is the initial obligation, is discarded by al-Qāḍī who states that there is no initial obligation on God by any means, i.e., the mind cannot conceive any ethical necessity of actions on God without any previous action from Him.⁶¹¹ The second type of obligation on God is due to an act that God initially did without any previous obligation, but after doing that act, which is obligating his servants, then God is committed to performing certain actions that are entailed by that first action.⁶¹² Creating human beings does not entail any rational necessity on God, but since He obligated them, He became committed to performing certain actions for them, such as completing their rational faculties whereby they can understand the obligation, providing them with divine grace, and performing *al-aṣḥāh* for them in regards to the religious affairs.

4.4.3. Arguments and Counterarguments

After explaining the Mu‘tazilites’ doctrine of *al-ṣalāh* and *al-aṣḥāh* and showing the differences between the Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad and Basra, we need to see how our theologian in question, al-Ījī, responded to this doctrine. After stating that the concept of *qabiḥ* is not conceived in respect to God and that no action is ever necessary on Him to perform, al-Ījī started arguing against the Mu‘tazilites’ ethical doctrines as a whole. In this way, he did not tackle the argument of *al-ṣalāh* and *al-aṣḥāh* separately.⁶¹³

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid, 14/54.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid, 14/24.

⁶¹¹ In this point, al-Qāḍī and the school of Basra as a whole diverge from the Mu‘tazilite school of Baghdad who claim that it was necessary on God to create the universe, although they based this necessity on divine wisdom.

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ Some Ash‘arites discuss the argument of *aṣḥāh* and *al-aṣḥāh* with other questions related to it separately, but al-Ījī dealt with this argument somehow under his main ethical argument against the Mu‘tazilites. For more detailed Ash‘arite response on this argument, see Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Irshād ilā Qawaṣi‘ al-Adillah fi Usūl al-‘Itiqād*, 287-300.

Instead, he addressed this argument within his main argument, but when he narrated the Mu‘tazilites’ position, he said that they necessitate that God to do *al-aṣḥāḥ* in this world, namely, he ignored the main position among the Mu‘tazilites, which the position of the Mu‘tazilite school of Basra and mentioned only a part of the position of the Baghdadi school. For this reason, al-Kirmānī elaborated on al-Ījī’s statement and affirmed that the Mu‘tazilites, or at least the majority of them, necessitate *al-aṣḥāḥ* in regard to religious matters, but the Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad are the ones who maintain the necessity of *al-aṣḥāḥ* in both religious and worldly matters.⁶¹⁴ Nevertheless, after scrutinizing al-Ījī’s objections, we can see that despite mentioning *al-aṣḥāḥ* in this world, he is actually arguing against those who necessitate *al-aṣḥāḥ* in regard to religious matters. Al-Kirmānī clears up this confusion by saying that al-Ījī’s second objection is intended to refute the position of *al-aṣḥāḥ* in regard to the hereafter.⁶¹⁵

Al-Ījī only provided two objections against the Mu‘tazilites’ argument of *al-ṣalāḥ wa al-aṣḥāḥ*. The first one is about an actual case where God clearly did not take the interest of some human beings into account, i.e., He did not accomplish the assumed duty on Him by performing *al-aṣḥāḥ*. He says, “*al-aṣḥāḥ* for the poor infidel would have been not to be created.”⁶¹⁶ The creation of the poor infidel has no good interest for him, neither in this life nor in the life to come. In this life, he lives miserably because of his poverty, and in the hereafter, he will be eternally in hell. God created that servant in spite of His knowledge of his worldly and other worldly situations; therefore, God did not perform *al-aṣḥāḥ* by not taking that servant’s interest into account.

On the other hand, al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār does not concede this Ash‘arite objection and insist that God, by creating the infidel, is not neglecting *al-aṣḥāḥ* for him. Al-Qāḍī responds to this objection both in a general and detailed way. The general response can be summarized as the divine justice and wisdom have been proven, and thus we know that God by creating and obligating the one who is not going to believe is not committing any qabīḥ, i.e., creating and obligating the poor infidel are ḥasan in regard to God’s actions. The detailed response that al-Qāḍī gives, in this case, is comparing

⁶¹⁴ Al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Hussain Paşa, 317), 356b.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid., 356a.

⁶¹⁶ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 329.

the creation and the obligation of a believer and a non-believer. God provided both of them with power and choice, and He removed the obstacles that might prevent them from believing, and thus the believer used his intellect and chose to believe, while the non-believer made his bad choice and did not believe.⁶¹⁷ God already did *al-ṣalāh* for both of them and exposed them to great reward, but the consequences of the infidel were due to his bad choice. He states this opinion as follows, “our response that the infidel caused harm (*ḍarar*) to himself by his own action when he made a bad choice and did not believe.”⁶¹⁸

Al-Ījī’s second objection is merely a story of a conversation between al-Ash‘arī and his teacher, Abū Alī al-Jubbā’ī. The conversation is a question that al-Ash‘arī asked to his teacher. He said,

What do you say about three brothers, one of them lived righteously, the other sinfully, and the third died while still a child? He [al-Jubbā’ī] answered: ‘the first will be rewarded by paradise, the second will be punished in hell, and the third will neither be rewarded nor punished.’ [al-Ash‘arī] then said: ‘suppose the third were to say: “Lord had you left me to live longer, I would have lived righteously and thus entered the heaven. He [al-Jubbā’ī] responded: ‘the Lord would say: “I knew that had you lived longer you would have sinned and caused corruption, and then you would have entered hell. [Al-Ash‘arī] said: ‘then the second would have said: “Lord, why did not you cause me to die young, and thus I would have not sinned and entered the hell, just as you caused my brother to die? Then al-Jubbā’ī was dumfounded (*buhita*).’⁶¹⁹

Al-Ash‘arī’s argument is focusing on the second and the third brothers. The fittest (*al-aṣlah*) for the second is to die young, so he would have not sinned and entered hell, while the fittest for the third one is to live longer and, thus, he could have acted righteously and gained rewards. Nevertheless, God did not perform what is good for them and let the second to live longer and caused the third to die younger. With this story, al-Ījī tries to prove that there is no necessity on God to perform *al-ṣalāh wa al-aṣlah*. Proving one instance where God is not performing *al-aṣlah* is enough to disprove the Mu‘tazilites’ claim of necessity because God, according to them, must always do the necessary; otherwise, the ethical value of *qabiḥ* would be ascribed to Him, the Exalted. Therefore, refuting the doctrine of *al-ṣalāh wa al-aṣlah* is actually threatening the whole Mu‘tazilites’ ethical system. The argument between al-Ash‘arī and his teacher, as al-Ījī said, was the main reason upon which al-Ash‘arī departed

⁶¹⁷ Al-Qāḍī, Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 511-513.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 514.

⁶¹⁹ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 329.

from the school of the Mu‘tazilites and returned to the opinion of the right (*ahl al-ḥaq*).⁶²⁰

It is important to note that the same story of the three brothers is mentioned by al-Rāzī who narrated the story without clarifying the name of the questioner. He said that al-Jubbā’ī was asked about three brothers and continued the same story without mentioning the name of al-Ash‘arī at all.⁶²¹ However, the story is not mentioned in the available books of al-Ash‘arī, so we can say that the veracity of ascribing this dialogue to al-Ash‘arī needs further enquiry.

Whether al-Ash‘arī was a part of that dialogue or not, does affect the importance of the argument as a strong objection to the Mu‘tazilite doctrine of *al-ṣalāḥ wa al-aṣḥāḥ*. This objection was defended and refuted by both the Ash‘arites and the Mu‘tazilites. Al-Rāzī brought to us a response to this objection done by a prominent late Mu‘tazilite. It is Abū al-Ḥussān al-Basrī who studied with al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār. According to al-Rāzī’s narration, Abū al-Ḥussān does not accept these simple responses that are mentioned in the story and suggested other different methods to cope with this question according to the Mu‘tazilites’ principles. The first response that he suggested is similar to al-Qāḍī’s response in the case of the poor infidel. He says that the Lord would have said to the first and the second brothers that He obligated them in order to expose them to great benefits, and thus the first one made the right choice and saved himself from punishment, while the second one fell in Hell due to his bad choice.⁶²² In regards to the third brother, the case is quite different and there is no ethical obligation entailed on God in causing the third brother to die young without being obligated. The best response to this according to Abū al-Ḥussān would be as follows, “if the child were to say: ‘Lord had you obligated me?’ The Lord would answer: ‘obligation is my favor (*faḍl*), and if I favored someone, it is not necessary on Me to favor everyone.’”⁶²³ Therefore, letting someone to live longer and obligating him is a God’s favor, i.e., it is not an ethical necessity on Him. Similarly, the second brother does not have the right

⁶²⁰ Ibid., 330.

⁶²¹ Al-Rāzī, *Al-Maṭālib*, 3/326.

⁶²² Ibid., 3/327.

⁶²³ Ibid.

to ask God to cause his death when he was young because it is not an obligation on God to cause the death of everyone who would have disbelieved.

The second method to respond, according to Abū al-Ḥussaīn, is arguing from divine wisdom and saying that the fittest for the first brother is different from the fittest for the third brother. God let the first brother to live longer and obligated him because He knew that in doing so there would have been no corruption to other incumbents (*muklafīn*), while letting the third brother to grow up and obligate him, would cause corruption to other incumbents. Therefore, God caused him to die young because that was al-aṣḥāḥ for other incumbents.⁶²⁴ To put it differently, God only has a commitment to do al-aṣḥāḥ for the incumbents because obligation (*taklif*) is the action that entails some necessary actions on God. However, the argument of al-ṣalāḥ wa al-aṣḥāḥ extends to other ethical discussions that resonate with divine justice and human interests, such as the question of prophecy and the Imamate.⁶²⁵

4.4.4. The Question of Prophecy and its Necessity

The question of prophecy has different layers, such as its existence, necessity and veracity, but what it is important to us in our argument of al-ṣalāḥ wa al-aṣḥāḥ is the necessity of prophecy. The question of whether sending prophets is a necessity on God or not was a hot dispute between the Mu'tazilites on one side and the mainstream theological schools on the other. However, we will primarily present the Mu'tazilites' position and then al-Ījī's response to them, which presents the authentic Ash'arī position.

The Mu'tazilites are unanimous about the necessity of sending prophets because it is related to the fittest for humans in regard to religious matters. Both the Mu'tazilites of

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

⁶²⁵ We will only allocate one small part to discuss prophecy and its necessity, while for the Imamate it is enough to clarify some points here in the footnotes. We say that the argument of Imamate is mainly discussed between the Sunnite theologians and the Shiites, although the Mu'tazilites' position has some similarities with the Shiite ones. Comparing between al-Ījī and the Mu'tazilites, we say that both of them maintain the necessity of the Imamate, though the necessity that al-Ījī affirms is a necessary obligation on the incumbents to appoint an Imam, while the Mu'tazilites claim the necessity on God, based on their doctrines of divine grace and *al-ṣalāḥ wa al-aṣḥāḥ*. See al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 395- 399; Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Al-Faiq fi Usūl al-Dīn*, 635-638.

Baghdad and Basra maintain the fittest in this regard, while only those of Baghdad maintain the fittest in regard to worldly affairs.

The fittest in regard to religious affairs contains two types of actions: One is done by God alone and the other by the incumbent. Ibn al-Malāḥīmī affirms this division and the necessity of sending prophets as follows,

what is good (*maṣāliḥ*) in regard to religious matters is divided into two [parts]: The first one is done by God, the Exalted, and the other belongs to our actions, which are the religious actions (*'ibādāt sharīya*), and then these religious actions [i.e., the second part] must be defined by God, and if the only way to know them [the religious actions] was by sending prophets, then sending prophets is necessary.⁶²⁶

To explain this necessity, we say that religious actions are intended for our benefit, and humans cannot know them by virtue of their minds. Although the Mu'tazilites give the human mind an essential role in finding the ethical values in our actions, they still insist on the importance of prophecy, and even its necessity. It is worth mentioning again that human intellect can only discern the rulings of human actions in a general way, but it cannot judge a specific action per se. The reason for this that a single action might have a different aspect that changes its ethical value.⁶²⁷ Nevertheless, the necessity of prophecy arises from the fact that we only have general ethical knowledge, and we need prophets to give us detailed ethical judgements about actions respectively.⁶²⁸ Al-Qāḍī already explained the relationship between the rational ethical knowledge that we have in our minds and the necessity for prophets. He said that by virtue of our mind, we know the ethical values of benefit and harm, but we do not know for sure the existence of benefit or harm in certain actions; therefore, we need prophets to point out the benefit and the harm, and thus, they affirm the ethical values that already exists in our mind. Prophets are like physicians who tell us the benefit or the harm of certain food, and we already know the ethical values of benefit and harm.⁶²⁹ It is worth noting that the Mu'tazilites only emphasize the importance of prophets for religious matters. In other words, the purpose of sending prophets is to clarify religious matters, not worldly matters. Al-Malāḥīmī makes this point clear by saying,

⁶²⁶ Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, *Al-Faiḡ fi Usūl al-Dīn*, 349.

⁶²⁷ As we have already stated in the first chapter, this is the Mu'tazilites' main position, i.e., the position of the Mu'tazilites of Basra who maintain that actions become good or bad because of different ethical aspects.

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*, 352.

⁶²⁹ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 565.

“It is not admissible that He [God] send them [the prophets] for the good of worldly matters.... since humans could be guided to some worldly matters by virtue of their mind as they do in their business and agriculture.”⁶³⁰

However, prophecy is not only connected to the Mu‘tazilites’ concept of benefit, but also to divine justice. Al-Qāḍī points out the necessity of prophecy in order to preserve the argument of divine justice as follows, “The way that [this argument] is connected to [divine] justice is from the perspective that since God the Exalted knows that our ṣalāḥ is depended on these religious issues, then He must inform us [with them]; otherwise, He would be breaching what is necessary on Him. Justice means not breaching what is necessary.”⁶³¹

So far, we have elaborated sufficiently on the Mu‘tazilites’ position from their own books, and now we see how al-Ījī stated their position and what was his response to them. Al-Ījī argues that the mind in itself cannot judge the necessity of sending prophets; moreover, it cannot affirm any necessity on God. A necessity on God is conceived neither before nor after obligation (*taklif*). In other words, the religious obligation is not an action that makes God committed to performing other certain actions. Nevertheless, al-Ījī does not deny that God, sometimes, takes human interests into account, but He does this as a favor, not as an obligation.⁶³²

Al-Ījī, based on his Ash‘arite ethical understanding, maintained that prophecy in itself is a contingent action, i.e., there is no necessary aspect or side that would necessarily preponderate its existence. It is merely based on divine volition. God is a free agent who does not have any necessary obligation and sending prophets or any other action that is for the interest of human beings is done as favor, not as an obligation.⁶³³ Al-Ījī affirms that the Mu‘tazilites, in general, maintain the necessity of prophecy, but some of them require the condition of believing in the prophetic message. In other words, sending prophets is a necessity on God only if He knew that the people would believe, but if He knew that they would not believe, then sending prophets is no more necessary

⁶³⁰ Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, *Al-Faiq fi Usūl al-Dīn*, 353.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*, 563.

⁶³² Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/215-216.

⁶³³ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 342.

on Him, though it is still ḥasan.⁶³⁴ We say that this is the position of the Mu‘tazilites of Basra who give great importance to the concept of benefit. Ibn al-Malāḥimī affirms this position by saying, “Our masters maintain that [prophecy] is not always necessary [on God], but it becomes necessary when the incumbents have benefit in sending a prophet.... Our proof is the only [ethical] aspect of prophecy is being intended for the good of them [the incumbents].”⁶³⁵

The main opponents in the argument of prophecy for both the Mu‘tazilites and the Ash‘arites are those who deny the existence of prophets completely;⁶³⁶ nevertheless, the Ash‘arites in particular never forget pointing out the defects in the Mu‘tazilites’ position. Al-Ījī states that their claim of the necessity of prophecy is based on their ethical argument of ḥusn and qubḥ, which he has sufficiently argued against. Therefore, he is not going to repeat his ethical arguments for the sake of refuting their position about prophecy. Nevertheless, al-Ījī provided a side-argument whereby he showed the possibility of accepting the Mu‘tazilites’ position about prophecy. He said that even conceding the Mu‘tazilites’ ethical argument—for the sake of the argument—would not cause a real conflict between our position about prophecy and the Mu‘tazilites’ position. The reason behind the lack of conflict of these two positions is the concept of contingency that al-Ījī claims. He said that when we affirm the contingency of prophecy, we mean the general contingency (*al-imbkān al-‘ām*), not the particular contingency (*al-imbkān al-khās*).⁶³⁷

The difference between these two types of contingency is that the former negates only the impossibility, that is, it approves the contingency in a general sense that might include the necessity as well, while the latter affirms pure contingency, which is a

⁶³⁴ Ibid.; Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/254. It is worth noting as well that there are some Mu‘tazilite scholars who did not maintain the doctrine of *al-ṣalāḥ wa al-aṣlah*, and thus, they did not maintain the necessity of prophecy. These Mu‘tazilite scholars do not present the main opinion of the Mu‘tazilite schools. They are Ḍirar bin ‘Amr, Ḥafṣ al-Fard, Bishr bin al-Mu‘tamir, and Ja‘far bin Ḥarb. See Abdul Karim Uthman, *The Theory of Religious Obligation*, 404.

⁶³⁵ Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Al-Faiḳ fī Usūl al-Dīn*, 382.

⁶³⁶ The main denier of prophecy that the Muslim theologians argue against are the Brahmins (al-Brahīma). They are an old Indian religious group. Al-Sharāstanī gives a sufficient detail about them and highlights that they are not ascribed to the prophet Abraham. See Al-Shahrastānī, *Milal wa Al-Niḥal*, 3/706.

⁶³⁷ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 342; Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/254-255.

mode of existence that contradicts both necessity and impossibility.⁶³⁸ However, as we have stated at the beginning, the argument of prophecy has multiple layers, and most of them are not connected to our ethical doctrine of *al-aṣalāḥ wa al-aṣlah*. We only tackled the aspect of its necessity on God and demonstrated how both al-Ījī and the Mu'tazilites presented their ethical understanding of this aspect.

Last but not least, we say that after elaborating on the doctrine of *al-ṣalāḥ wa al-aṣlah*, we have only one more theological argument that have ethical dimensions both on divine and human levels, which is the argument of reward and punishment.

4.5. The Argument of Reward and Punishment

The argument of reward and punishment is one of the most profound Mu'tazilite arguments; it is related to three principles out of their five principles. These three principles, which are Divine justice, Promise and Threat, and the Intermediate Position, form the backbone of the Mu'tazilite theology and have various ethical dimensions.⁶³⁹ Since the Mu'tazilite position is not the core of our enquiry, we will suffice to summarize their argument as al-Ījī presented it to us along with his counter-arguments, and then trying to give them some justice by verifying al-Ījī's words from their own books,⁶⁴⁰ and finally presenting al-Ījī's own position.

Al-Ījī delineated the Mu'tazilites' position by saying that the argument of reward and punishment is based on their rational theory of ḥusn and qubḥ, which entails some necessary actions on God, such as rewarding the good doer (*al-muḥsin*) and punishing the sinner (*al-Muznib*). However, this necessity on God in terms of reward is only claimed by the Mu'tazilites of Basra who argued from the purpose (*garaḍ*) of

⁶³⁸ Al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Hussain Paṣa, 317), 379a. The detailed differences between the general contingency (*al-inkān al-'am*) and the particular contingency (*al-inkān al-khāṣ*) is mentioned in the logical books. See for example, Quṭub al-Dīn Mahmud Al-Rāzī, *tahrir al-Qawa'id al-Mantiqiya*, (Cairo: Mustafa al-Babī library, 1948),109-110.

⁶³⁹ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 131-140. Studying the argument of reward and punishment profoundly from these three principle requires a complete PhD thesis. Moreover, it is not the focus of our enquiry. There are a few studies that tackled the Mu'tazilites five principles in depth; see 'Awad al-Mu'fiq, *The Mu'tazilites: their Five Principles, and the Response of Ahl al-Sunna*, 2nd ed., (Al-Riyadh: Al-Rushed Publication, 1995).

⁶⁴⁰ We will try to verify the Mu'tazilites' position within the same argument, i.e., we will not finish al-Ījī's presentation of their argument and then present their own position, but we will try to verify their own position within al-Ījī's presentation of their arguments.

obligation. Their argument is stated by al-Ījī in a form of an exclusive disjunctive,⁶⁴¹ which could be rendered simply as follows: religious dispensations (*takālif al-shar'īya*) are done by God either for a purpose or without a purpose. Saying that they are without a purpose would entail frivolity (*'abath*), which is impossible in regard to God; therefore, they must have a purpose. This purpose either returns to God or to humans. Returning to God is impossible; thus, it must return to humans. Al-Ījī continues presenting their argument by saying that this purpose is either in this life or in the life to come. Saying it is in this life would mean that it is only drudgery (*mashāq*), which is precluded; therefore, the purpose belongs to the life to come, and it must be a reward because compensating for religious dispensations by punishment is qabīh.⁶⁴²

We see al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār and Ibn al-Malāḥīmī affirming that reward is due because of the difficulty (*mashāq*) of the religious obligations and divine justice. They argued differently from al-Ījī by saying that God could have made the religious obligations easier or increased our power, but since He did not do that and obligated us to perform these difficult obligations, then He must reward us; otherwise, He would be unjust and committing qabīh.⁶⁴³ However, al-Qāḍī stipulated two conditions for the reward to be deserved. The first condition is related to the ethical value of the action itself. The action cannot be only plain good,⁶⁴⁴ but it must have an extra aspect of ḥusn. The second condition is related to the doer of the action. He must be aware of that extra aspect of ḥusn because, according to al-Qāḍī, the knowledge of the action and its ethical value play an essential role in describing the action as ḥasan or qabīh.⁶⁴⁵ In a few words, we can say that the fulcrum of al-Qāḍī's and al-Malāḥīmī argument pertains to the difficulty of religious obligation. Ibn al-Malāḥīmī summarized the reason for the necessity of reward as follows, "Obligating (ilzām) with difficulties (mashāq) is equal to putting [someone] in difficulties, and since putting in difficulties without benefit is injustice, then obligation [with difficulties without benefit] is

⁶⁴¹ Exclusive disjunctive is a type of conditional syllogism where the thing is either A or B and cannot be both of them. See Peter Kreeft, *Socratic Logic*, 301-304.

⁶⁴² Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 367.

⁶⁴³ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 614; Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, *Al-Faiq fi Usūl al-Dīn*, 467.

⁶⁴⁴ Plain good actions are the actions that are permissible and do not have an extra aspect of ḥusn.

⁶⁴⁵ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 613.

injustice.”⁶⁴⁶ The due benefit is the necessary reward that is entailed by the difficulties of the religious obligations.

Al-Ījī responded to the Mu‘tazilites by only saying that the necessity of purpose in God’s actions is precluded.⁶⁴⁷ The reason for this concise answer is that al-Ījī presented the Mu‘tazilites’ argument in a way that he put the purpose as a core of their argument, and then simply affirmed the Ash‘arites’ argument of denying the purpose in God’s actions. Nevertheless, we saw that al-Qāḍī and Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, although they maintain the purpose of divine actions, argue from the difficulty of religious obligations and divine justice.

Regarding the position of the Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad, we say that they maintain a position somehow similar to the Ash‘arites’ position by denying the necessity on God to reward the believers. Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār gave us a sufficient account of their argument by saying that Abū al-Qassīm al-Ka‘bī⁶⁴⁸ allowed the possibility of obligation without reward because God has already showered us with different types of blessing, and thus, He has the right to ask us to perform the religious obligations without any necessary reward from Him.⁶⁴⁹ Although al-Ka‘bī denied the necessity of reward, he affirmed the existence of reward due to a different reason. He says, “He [God] rewards the obedient servants not because they deserve that [reward], but because of His generosity (jūwd).”⁶⁵⁰ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār does not accept al-Ka‘bī’s argument and insists on the difficulty of religious obligations. He says that the already-given blessings are not enough to exclude the necessity of reward because some religious obligations require us to put our souls at risk for the sake of God, such as in

⁶⁴⁶ Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, *Al-Faiḡ fī Usūl al-Dīn*, 467.

⁶⁴⁷ Al-Ījī’s argument of divine purposiveness is discussed in detail in the second chapter.

⁶⁴⁸ Abū al-Qassim al-Ka‘bī is the head of the Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad; therefore, his position presents the school of Baghdad.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid, 617-618. If we were to compare this argument with the Ash‘arites’ position, we say that both of them do not necessitate reward, but the Ash‘arites do not necessitate it regardless of any previous condition, while the Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad preclude the necessity due to the existence of numerous blessings.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid, 618. In the argument of *al-ṣalāḥ wa al-aṣḥāḥ*, we saw that the Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad argue from divine generosity in order to prove the necessity on God to perform the fittest for human beings. Nevertheless, in this argument, they maintain that God rewards the obedient servants because of His generosity, and reward is not necessary on Him because He already given plenty of blessings.

the case of Jihād.⁶⁵¹ Therefore, the argument of necessity of reward is only adopted and defended by the Mu‘tazilites of Basra.⁶⁵²

4.5.1. Punishment and its Necessity

Regarding the argument of punishment, al-Ījī stated that there are two disputes with the Mu‘tazilites. The first one is about the necessity of the punishment of the grave sinner (*murtakib al-kabira*),⁶⁵³ and the second dispute is about the eternal punishment of the grave sinner.⁶⁵⁴ All the Mu‘tazilites maintain the same position in regard to these two disputes because they are intrinsically related to the Mu‘tazilites’ three principles that we already mentioned at the outset of the argument. Al-Ījī narrates two Mu‘tazilite arguments that support their position in the first dispute. The first argument is based on legal and rational proofs, while the second is merely a rational argument.

In the first argument, we say that Mu‘tazilites are arguing from their principle of ‘promise and threat’ (*al-wa‘d wa al-wa‘īd*). They said that God threatened that He is going to punish those who commit grave sins and die without penitence (*tawba*) and this threat is conveyed to us through divine reports. Therefore, not executing the punishment would entail lying in the divine reports, but since lying is impossible in respect to God,⁶⁵⁵ He must execute the punishment in regard to the grave sinners. Al-Ījī responded to this argument by pointing out the difference between the implication of existence and the necessity. Maintaining the unnecessary of something along with the existence of it does not entail any impossibility. Al-Jurjānī supported the response of his master by affirming that anything subject to divine power must be

⁶⁵¹ Ibid. It is worth noting that when al-Qāḍī wants to refute a position of the Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad, he argues against al-Ka‘bī and never addresses the whole school of Baghdad. This method was repeated by al-Qāḍī when he argued against the intrinsic ethical value of the Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad. See Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *al-Mugnī*, 6/77-81.

⁶⁵² It is worth noting that the argument of the necessity of reward is about the rational necessity, not the legal necessity. The latter is agreed on by all Muslims in a general sense.

⁶⁵³ The primary argument with the Mu‘tazilites is about the grave sinner, while the argument of the disbeliever is about whether the necessity of his punishment is rational or not. The Mu‘tazilites’ position about the grave sinner is one of the main distinguishing characteristics of the whole school. For them, the grave sinner is neither a believer nor a disbeliever, he is called *fāsiq* and has an intermediate position between the believer and the disbeliever. See

⁶⁵⁴ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 376.

⁶⁵⁵ Both the Mu‘tazilites and the Ash‘arites agree that lying is impossible in regard to God, but they differed in the justification. We have already explained the difference between them in the second chapter.

contingent and cannot be necessary. Therefore, punishing or forgiving the grave sinner is subject to God's power and cannot be necessary.⁶⁵⁶

It is true that the Mu'tazilites emphasize the idea that breaking a promise or threat entails lying in divine words, which is impossible. Nevertheless, they also relied on different rational and legal arguments. One of the main rational arguments that al-Qāḍī provides to us is that there are only two places to go in the hereafter: heaven and hell. Therefore, the wicked (*fa'siq*) must enter one of them. Claiming that he is going to enter heaven, then we say that he must be entering either by divine reward or by divine favor since there is no other possibility. However, rewarding the sinner is rationally qabiḥ, and God does not commit qabiḥ, and entering due to divine favor is precluded as well since the legally incumbent must have a different status from the children who enter solely by divine favor. Therefore, the grave sinner must enter the hell fire.⁶⁵⁷ The Mu'tazilites' legal proofs could be somehow reduced to their ethical theory of the rational ḥusn and qubḥ. Al-Qāḍī argues from legal proofs by saying that the universal meaning of the verses⁶⁵⁸ of threat (*wa'īd*) affirms the punishment of the grave sinner. This legal argument is based on two foundations: one is rational and the other is linguistic. The rational one is that God does address humans with something while He is intending something else. In other words, using mysterious and enigmatic language would be considered as driving people away from the intended meaning, i.e., misguiding them, and this is rationally qabiḥ. The linguistic ground for al-Qāḍī's legal argument is that the generality (*'umūm*) of the terms are not followed by any exception, and thus they must be general. For example, God, the Exalted, said: {verily, the Mujrimūn⁶⁵⁹ will be in the torment of hell to abide therein forever}. (43:74). '*The mujrimūn*' as al-Qāḍī argues, is a general term that includes the disbeliever and the *fa'siq*, and it is not followed by exception; therefore, the disbeliever and the *fa'siq* must enter the hell fire. Similarly, is the Quranic verse: {Verily, the Abrar will be in paradise, and verily, the Fujjar will be the blazing fire}. (83:22-23). Here, the word '*fujjar*' has a similar linguistic meaning as '*Mujrimūn*,' and both of them, in the

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.; Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/331.

⁶⁵⁷ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 650.

⁶⁵⁸ Al-Qāḍī does elaborate on individual verses, but he only argues from the general meaning that is taken from all of them.

⁶⁵⁹ Mujrimūn is rendered in English as criminals, but in the religious sense, it means those of commit major sins, such as disbelieving or grave sins.

religious sense, include the disbeliever and the fa'siq, as al-Qādī and Ibn al-Malāḥīmī are arguing.⁶⁶⁰

The second Mu'tazilite argument in this dispute is related primarily to the Mu'tazilite ethical understanding. They argue that if the grave sinner knew that God might forgive him, he would think that this is an approval of his grave sin, and he would not repent from it. Moreover, assuming this possibility⁶⁶¹ not only would lead the sinners to insist on their sins, but also would encourage others to commit sins as well. Insisting on the sin and encouraging others to commit sins are definitely qabiḥ, and anything that leads to qabiḥ is qabiḥ as well. Therefore, forgiving the grave sinner is qabiḥ, and it has been already proved that God does commit qabiḥ actions.⁶⁶² Strangely enough, al-Ījī did not respond to this argument by negating the rational ḥusn and qubḥ, but he responded differently as follows, "We prevent the approval [of the sins] and encouraging [others to do it] and say that the inclusiveness (shumūl) of the threat and exposing (ta'riḍ) of all [the grave sinners] to the punishment along with the conjecture (ẓan) of fulfilling the threat have a [great deal] of deterrence and admonishing."⁶⁶³ Al-Jurjānī expounded on al-Ījī's response by saying that the threat with punishment is a general threat that apparently includes every sinner, so every sinner will probably think (*yāẓun*) that God is going to execute the punishment on him. This probability is enough for mentally sound people to stop insisting on their sins. Regarding the assumption of forgiving, al-Jurjānī argues by saying that this assumption is a weak possibility that does not conflict with the probability of punishment, which entails deterring the sinners from grave sins. In other words, al-Ījī and al-Jurjānī do not claim that a particular grave sinner knows for sure that he is not going to be punished, but he only has a weak possibility that might be considered as a hope. The existence of this hope neither approves the sinners' sins nor encourages others to commit sins, but it negates the necessity of punishment.⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid., 651, 560; Ibn al-Malāḥīmī, *Al-Faiḳ fi Usūl al-Dīn*, 551.

⁶⁶¹ As an actual possibility because the Mu'tazilites of Basra accept forgiving sins as a rational possibility; the Mu'tazilites of Baghdad preclude both possibilities. More discussion on this will come in the following part of the argument.

⁶⁶² Al-Qādī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 650.

⁶⁶³ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 376.

⁶⁶⁴ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/331-332.

Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār insists that advocating for the possibility of forgiveness would lead to committing qabiḥ. To prove his point, he provided legal and rational proofs to preclude this possibility. One of these proofs is quite similar to the one that al-Ījī stated in the argument. He argues, “The intellect [tells us] that if the wicked (fa’siq) knew that he is not going to be punished despite committing the grave sin, then he will be tempted (mughra) to do qabiḥ. This [temptation] has the same ruling of [the statement]: ‘Do and no blame is on you.’”⁶⁶⁵ We see here that the Mu‘tazilites rely on their ethical principle: “God neither commits qabiḥ nor encourages others to commit it.” Ibn al-Malāḥimī affirms the same ethical understanding about forgiving and encouraging doing qabiḥ, but he put more emphasis on divine justice by arguing that divine justice is manifested by punishing the grave sinner more than in forgiving them. The reason for this is to say that forgiveness stems from divine generosity, and divine generosity is suitable for those who repented from their grave sins, while those who did not repent they deserve divine justice, which is putting them in the hellfire.⁶⁶⁶

The second dispute that al-Ījī presents to us is about the eternity of the punishment of the grave sinner. Al-Ījī states that he is presenting the Mu‘tazilites’ main rational argument in this regard. He says, “Their main argument is that the grave sinner (al-fā’siq) deserves punishment, and deserving punishment is continuous pure harm. On the other hand, deserving reward is a continuous pure benefit, and thus combining them [reward and punishment] together is impossible.”⁶⁶⁷ If the grave sinner is definitely going to be punished, he cannot receive any reward. In other words, saying that he is going to enter the fire for some time and then he will be allowed to enter heaven is impossible because that contradicts the Mu‘tazilites’ exact meaning of reward and punishment. The Mu‘tazilites defined punishment as pure harm that is deserved, and defined reward as a benefit that is deserved due to glorifying (*ta’zīm*) and reverence (*ijlāl*) of God.⁶⁶⁸ Al-Ījī responded to the Mu‘tazilites’ argument by precluding the continuity and the deserve of reward and punishment. God is free from any obligation towards human beings, i.e., rewarding the obedient and punishing the disobedient are not necessary on Him. Al-Ījī affirmed that neither the act of obedience

⁶⁶⁵ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 650.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Al-Faiḍ fī Usūl al-Dīn*, 554-555.

⁶⁶⁷ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 376.

⁶⁶⁸ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 700. Glorifying and revering of God include all types of worship, such as praying, fasting and other religious acts.

nor the act of disobedience necessitates by itself reward or punishment. It is worth noting that the Mu‘tazilites did not necessitate punishment on the grave sinner unconditionally, but they stipulated two essential conditions that are similar to the ones that they stipulated in regard to the reward. The first condition is related to the action, which has the ethical value of *qubḥ*, and the second is related to the doer and his awareness of this ethical value.⁶⁶⁹

4.5.2. The Doctrine of Deserts

The Mu‘tazilites’ doctrine of deserts (*istiḥqaq*) is based primarily on their rational ethical understanding. They argue that reward cannot be given as a favor, and punishment—in the case of the disbeliever and the grave sinner—cannot be removed by forgiveness. Al-Qāḍī states that our actions or omissions are the causes of reward or punishment and their necessary effects are reward and punishment. He affirms this by saying, “The efficient [cause] in deserving praise and reward is his [the servant’s] performance of necessary (*wajib*) [actions] and avoiding *qabiḥ* [actions], and what is alike; anything else [apart from performing the necessary and avoiding *qabiḥ*] is considered as a condition.”⁶⁷⁰ The efficient cause is what undoubtedly necessitates its effect, so praise and reward are the effects that are necessitated by performing the necessary and avoiding the *qabiḥ*. Similarly are blame and punishment, which are necessitated by performing *qabiḥ* actions and neglecting the obligatory.⁶⁷¹ Although reward and punishment are deserved in a cause-effect way, they might be dropped in certain cases by a stronger cause that might remove the deserts. After being deserved, a reward can only be dropped in two cases: The first is regretting the action that caused the reward, and thus reward will be dropped, i.e., it will not be deserved anymore. The second case is committing a great sin that is bigger than the reward, and thus, the reward would be removed by that sin.⁶⁷² This great sin, according to al-Qāḍī, contains disbelieving and committing grave sins, i.e., both the disbeliever and the believer who committed a grave sin will not have any reward in the hereafter. Al-Ījī rejects the latter

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid, 613.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid, 614.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid, 642.

⁶⁷² Ibid., 643. Al-Qāḍī insists that there are only two possible ways that abolish the reward, i.e., the reward cannot be abolished initially by God without the existence of these two reasons. Again, the reason for this is their rational ethical theory: dropping the reward without the two mentioned reasons is *qabīḥ*, and God does not commit the *qabīḥ*.

and accepts the former, namely, he agrees that disbelieving would abolish any other reward, but he rejects that the grave sin of the believers could abolish all their rewards.⁶⁷³ However, it is important to note that al-Ījī only accepts dropping the reward by disbelieving based on scriptural proofs, but rationally speaking, according to al-Ījī, both reward and punishment do not have meritorious ground.

The Mu‘tazilites theory of abolishing the punishment is primarily related to our argument about the grave sinner. Al-Qāḍī stipulated two conditions for abolishing the deserts of punishments. The first one is penitence (*tawba*) and the second one is obedience (*tā‘ah*), which is greater than the sin. However, the second condition has a specific limitation, which is that the obedience here only abolishes venial (*ṣagīrah*) sins, while the grave sins require penitence to be abolished. Al-Qāḍī affirms this as follows, “The plenty [acts] of obedience has an effect in dropping the punishment in terms of venial sins, while the punishment of the grave sin cannot be abolished by multiple acts of obedience.”⁶⁷⁴ If the acts of worship are not enough to drop the punishment, then penitence seems to be the only effective way in dropping it. Nevertheless, al-Qāḍī allowed a rational possibility of abolishing the punishment initially by God, without the existence of the previous conditions, but he precludes the actual possibility due to other proofs. In this regard, al-Qāḍī argues against the Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad who reject both possibilities.⁶⁷⁵

The Mu‘tazilites insist on the continuity of reward and punishment for another reason, which is to preserve the idea of purity in both harm and benefit, i.e., reward should be a pure benefit, while punishment should be pure harm.⁶⁷⁶ Al-Ījī does accept the implication between the purity of reward and punishment and their continuity. Nevertheless, he argues that accepting this implication for the sake of the argument

⁶⁷³ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 379. Al-Ījī affirms that the main position of the Mu‘tazilites is that one grave sin would abolish all the reward, but he mentioned that some Mu‘tazilite scholars maintain that the reward will stay in case it outweighs the grave sin.

⁶⁷⁴ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 644.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., 644-647. The Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad preclude this possibility based on the doctrines of divine grace and *al-ṣalāh wa al-aṣlah*. According to them, punishment is considered a divine grace that is intended to deter people from committing sins, and God the Wisest cannot prevent this grace. However, further elaboration on the argument of the Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad would be unnecessary to our argument.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., 667. The purity of harm and benefit could be explained by saying that the punishment must be completely negative and does not have any pleasure that is mixed with it and, similarly, the reward should not have any pain or harm.

does not preclude the possibility that God might abolish both reward and punishment, and then allow the grave sinner to enter heaven by His favor.⁶⁷⁷ Entering heaven by divine favor (*faḍl*) does not necessitate equality between reward and favor because they are still different in one aspect and that is enough to negate the equality between them. According to the conditions that the Mu‘tazilites stipulated for abolishing reward and punishment, God cannot abolish both of them and allow the grave sinner to enter heaven by His favor. However, the Mu‘tazilites, by their insistence on the eternal punishment of the grave sinner, seem to be going overboard by claiming that the belief of the fa‘siq resembles the belief of the Jewish and the Christians in terms of knowing God. In other words, the fa‘siq’s knowledge of God is not a sufficient reason to save him from eternal punishment because the Jewish and the Christians also have the knowledge of God and that does save them from eternal punishment.⁶⁷⁸ So far, we have elaborated on al-Ījī’s presentation and refutation of the Mu‘tazilites’ arguments and, at the same time, we provided the Mu‘tazilites’ clear arguments from their own books. Now we need to elaborate on al-Ījī’s own position of reward and punishment.

4.5.3. Al-Ījī’s Argument

As we have stated many times, according to al-Ījī and other Ash‘arites, God is the absolute King who is free from any obligation towards human beings or any other creatures. He has the right to punish them even without committing any sin or to reward them without doing any act of obedience. Nevertheless, God promised to reward the obedient, and He is going to fulfil His promise according to al-Ījī, not because of the existence of any rational obligation that compiles Him to do so, but because of His promise. Al-Ījī argues that breaking a promise (*khulf*) is a defect (*naqīs*) and God, the Exalted, is free from defects.⁶⁷⁹ Saying that breaking a promise is a defect means affirming the possibility of ascribing a negative ethical value to divine actions. Al-Qaṣṭalānī criticizes al-Ījī’s position by saying that the possibility of ascribing a defect to divine attributes is unanimously impossible; therefore, this defect—in the case of breaking promise—would be ascribed to divine action, and thus we end up

⁶⁷⁷ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/332.

⁶⁷⁸ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 671.

⁶⁷⁹ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 378.

affirming the exact Mu‘tazilites’ position about the rational qubḥ. ⁶⁸⁰ Put it simply, al-Qaṣṭalānī is pointing out that al-Ījī’s statement, “breaking a promise is a defect” implicitly affirms the rational qabiḥ that al-Ījī himself argues against. Moreover, al-Qaṣṭalānī says that the method that al-Ījī followed to prove that God does not break a promise is a non-Ash‘arite method⁶⁸¹ because it ends up maintaining the same position of the Mu‘tazilites in respect to the rational ethical value. Al-Qaṣṭalānī suggests that al-Ījī should argue from the impossibility of lying, i.e., breaking a promise is lying and lying is impossible in respect to God; therefore, breaking a promise is impossible as well.⁶⁸²

Although al-Ījī agrees with the Mu‘tazilites in describing punishment as divine justice, he substantially disagrees with them about the definition of divine justice.⁶⁸³ He says, “Punishment⁶⁸⁴ is [from His] justice; therefore, He has the right to execute it, and He has the right to forgive because [forgiveness] is a divine favor. [Moreover] not fulfilling the threat is not considered as a defect according to the sane (al-‘uqalā’).”⁶⁸⁵ Al-Ījī, unlike the Mu‘tazilites, distinguishes between not fulfilling a promise and not fulfilling a threat, the former is a defect, while the latter is a favor. In other words, not fulfilling the punishment in spite of threatening to do it, is a praiseworthy act and cannot be described as lying. Al-Ījī and other Ash‘arites insist on distinguishing between promise and threat and bolster their argument with lines of poetry affirming praise to those who did not fulfil their threat.⁶⁸⁶ We see that al-Ījī and other Ash‘arites

⁶⁸⁰ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/334. Al-Kirmānī, al-Ījī’s student, affirms the possibility of the same criticism that al-Qaṣṭalānī put forward. See Al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, (Hussain Paṣa, 317), 424a.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid. Al-Qaṣṭalānī’s claim that this method is a non-Ash‘arite method is not completely accurate since we find another two late Ash‘arites who used the same method to prove that God is not going to break His promise. These two Ash‘arites are al-Taftāzānī who is al-Ījī’s student and Sayf al-Dīn al-‘Āmidī. See Sayf al-Dīn Al-‘Āmidī, *Abkar al-Afkar fī Usūl al-Dīn*, 4/378; Al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 5/126.

⁶⁸² Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/334. As we have stated in the second chapter, according to the Ash‘arites, lying is rationally impossible because divine speech is an inner speech that is congruent to divine knowledge: both are eternal and congruent to reality; therefore, lying is not conceived in respect to God.

⁶⁸³ Al-Ījī affirms that God is the absolute owner of everything, and anything that He does by His own possessions is considered justice, while the Mu‘tazilites based divine justice on their rational ethical understanding. See the second chapter, divine justice.

⁶⁸⁴ Al-Ījī here argues about punishment in a general sense, and then he will elaborate differently on the punishment of the disbelievers and the grave sinners.

⁶⁸⁵ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 387.

⁶⁸⁶ This Ash‘arite method is seen clearly in the early Ash‘arite period as well. Al-Baqillānī argued that letting off punishment is a praiseworthy act, and he supported his arguments with lines of poetry. See Abū Bakr al-Baqillānī, *Mahīd al-‘Awa’il wa Talkhiṣ al-Dala’il*, (Beirut: Al-Kutub al-Thakafia, 1987), 401.

are falling in the same error that they criticized the Mu‘tazilites for It is the error of applying some of the human ethical values to divine actions. Arguing that not fulfilling the threat is a praiseworthy act because it is considered like this among humans, and then applying this judgement to divine actions is somehow considered as drawing resemblance between the seen and the unseen (*qiās al-gāib ‘alā al-shāhid*).⁶⁸⁷

Nevertheless, al-Ījī, based on scriptural proofs, affirms that all Muslims unanimously agree that the disbeliever will be eternally punished in the hellfire. He says, “The Muslims unanimously affirm that the disbelievers are in hellfire forever and their punishment is unstoppable.”⁶⁸⁸ In order to defend this position, al-Ījī had to prove some contentions, such as the eternity of fire, and the possibility of burning without dying. For the veracity of the second contention, al-Ījī argues that the essential conditions for the continuity of life in this world are different from those in the hereafter. The physical structure and temperaments (*akhlāṭ*) are necessarily essential for life according to the opponent, but al-Ījī does not concede these conditions and affirms that life is continuously created by God, and thus God is able to keep creating life in the punished creature perpetually along with providing him with a non-obliterated physical structure.⁶⁸⁹

Unlike some Mu‘tazilites,⁶⁹⁰ al-Ījī does not differentiate between the disbeliever who insisted on his disbelieve because of obstinacy and the one who did not believe because he has not found convincing proofs. Al-Ījī affirms that both types of disbelievers are going to be punished eternally, and this is what Quran, Sunnah and the consensus (*ijma‘*) attested. Moreover, none of the early scholars mentioned this distinction, as al-Ījī affirms. He argues by proving the existence of some actual cases. He says, “It is known for sure that the disbelievers at the time of the prophet, who fought [the Muslims] and have been judged to be eternally in fire, not all of them were disbelieving out of obstinacy, but some of them [remained] disbelievers after exerting themselves

⁶⁸⁷ The argument of *‘qiās al-gā‘ib bi il shāhid’* is used both in Kalām and Usūl. However, when it is used in Kalām, it means comparing the seen, which are the creatures, to the unseen, which is God. For more information about the theological for of the argument see Al-Āmidī, *Abkar al-Afkar fī Usūl al-Dīn*, 2/414.

⁶⁸⁸ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 387.

⁶⁸⁹ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/335.

⁶⁹⁰ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 378. Al-Ījī mentions that al-Jaḥīz and al-‘Anbārī, the two Mu‘tazilites scholars, preclude the eternal punishment of the disbeliever who made an effort to reach the truth but was not guided to Islam. They said that he will be punished initially, and then his punishment will stop.

[to find the truth].”⁶⁹¹ Although this type of disbelievers exerted themselves to find the truth, they were not guided, and they are going to be eternally punished in the fire. Al-Ījī’s justification of this is that they initially rejected to believe and thus God sealed⁶⁹² their heart; therefore, they could not believe anymore.

4.5.4. Repentance and its Conditions

The believer who committed a grave sin has no intermediate position because he is going to be either initially or finally with the believers in heaven. In case he repents from his sin before dying, he will be initially with the believer. This repentance or penitence became a matter of further discussion between theologians because they differed about its acceptance and conditions. Al-Ījī defined the real repentance (*tawba*) as follows, “Repentance is remorse (*nadam*) for the sin as it is a sin along with the determination (‘*Azim*) not to return to [commit] it again despite having the power [to commit it].”⁶⁹³ From this definition, we can say that for repentance to be a real one, it must have remorse and leaving the sin because it is a sin not because of other reasons. For example, the one who repents from drinking alcohol because it is giving him some health issues, his repentance is not considered a real repentance. The second essential element of real repentance is the determination not to return to sin again, but this determination must be associated with the potential power over the sin. In other words, the one whose penis has been removed (*majbub*) and then he repents of fornication, his repentance is controversial among the theologians. According to al-Ījī’s definition, this repentance should not be accepted; nevertheless, al-Jurjānī elaborated on this example by saying that the remorse for what he did is enough in this case, and his repentance is accepted by the consensus of early scholars (*al-salaf*).⁶⁹⁴

Al-Ījī mentioned that the Mu‘tazilites stipulated three fundamental conditions for the acceptance of repentance. These conditions are restitution (*rad al-maẓālim*), not

⁶⁹¹Ibid., 379.

⁶⁹² Sealing (*khatīm*) on the heart is repeated many times in the Quran, al-Ījī and other Ash‘arites interpret the verses as a complete prevention of belief.

⁶⁹³ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 380.

⁶⁹⁴ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/343. Al-Kirmānī affirmed the same position of al-Jurjānī, and both of them tried to interpret al-Ījī’s position in a way that does not deny the repentance of *al-majbūb*. They resembled this case with the one who repented in his sickness before dying, and both repentances are accepted. See Al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*. (Hussain Paşa, 317), 429a.

returning to the sin, and maintaining remorse. Al-Ījī rejected these conditions for different reasons. He rejected the first one not because it is not necessary, but because it is not part of the reality of repentance. The essence of repentance is remorse (*nadam*), and restitution is another necessary action that the repentant should do. For the second one, al-Ījī necessitates the determination not to return to the sin, not the actual never returning to it. He justifies this rejection by saying that the repentant might return to the sin after a while and this does not mean that his repentance was not accepted, but that he should repent a second time. Finally, al-Ījī rejected the last condition, which is maintaining remorse, because it entails hardship (*mashaqa*), which is not accepted in the religion. Furthermore, he distinguished between the potential continuity of remorse and the actual one. The former is sufficient for the validity of repentance, while the latter is beyond human power.⁶⁹⁵

The main dispute about the repentance between al-Ījī and the Mu‘tazilites is about the efficacy of the repentance in itself. For the Mu‘tazilites of the Basra, repentance is the efficient cause that abolishes the punishment, i.e., repentance is not dependent on divine favor to drop the punishment at the time of the repentance. In other words, repentance is more like a cause and dropping the punishment is its effect.⁶⁹⁶ Al-Ījī argues against this position by affirming that everything is in God’s hands, and there is no obligation on Him at all; He can accept the repentance if he wants or He can reject it.⁶⁹⁷

The second part of the argument is about the believer who committed a grave sin and died without repenting. Al-Ījī affirms that he is going to be eventually with the believers in heaven. God can forgive all the believer’s sins, venial and grave, before and after repentance. Nevertheless, in case God punishes the grave sinner, He is not going to keep him in the fire forever, i.e., the grave sinner will be taken out of the fire and allowed to be in heaven eventually. Al-Ījī’s argument is that grave sins do not abolish the believer’s faith, and God, the Exalted, said, *{whoever does an atom’s*

⁶⁹⁵ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 381; Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/344.

⁶⁹⁶ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 790.

⁶⁹⁷ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 381; Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/345. It is worth noting that the Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad maintain a position that is similar to al-Ījī’s position by affirming that God, by His favor, is the one who abolishes the punishment at the time of repentance. See Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 790.

weight of good will see it (99:08). Therefore, the grave sinner's faith will not be abolished, and he must receive some reward. This reward, as al-Ījī argues, is either before or after receiving the punishment. Saying that the reward is before the punishment is not true because heaven is the only abode of reward in the hereafter, and God said those who enter heaven will have neither fear nor sadness. Therefore, the believer who is going to be punished for his grave sin will be punished initially, and then he will receive his reward in the abode of reward, heaven.⁶⁹⁸

Nevertheless, not all the believers who committed grave sins and died without repentance are going to be punished: Some of them will be forgiven initially by God and some will be forgiven by God after the intercession of the prophet or the other righteous believers. However, the intercession for the grave sinners does not fit into the Mu'tazilites' ethical theory because it contradicts many of their principles, such as divine justice, the doctrine of deserts and the necessity on God. So it would be salutary to our purpose to shed some light on the argument of intercession before concluding this part.

4.5.5. Intercession (*Shafa'a*)

The existence of intercession of the prophet⁶⁹⁹ in a general sense is a matter of agreement between the Mu'tazilites and the mainstream theologian schools. Both al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār and al-Ījī affirmed this agreement and then elaborated on those who deserved this intercession.⁷⁰⁰ The agreement between theologian schools includes the existence of intercession in a general sense and the exclusion of the disbelievers from it. Therefore, the dispute between al-Ījī and the Mu'tazilites is about the grave sinner. For the Mu'tazilites, abolishing the deserved punishment of the grave sinner is conditioned mainly by repentance, and even the prophet cannot intercede for him to enter the heaven because, if God accepted this intercession, He would be committing a qabiḥ action, and God does not commit qabiḥ. Al-Qāḍī explains this as follows, "If he [the prophet] interceded for him [the fa'siq] it [his intercession] would not be

⁶⁹⁸ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 379; Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/336-337.

⁶⁹⁹ Mainly the theological arguments of the intercession focus on the intercession of the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and do not discuss the possibility of the intercession of the righteous believers.

⁷⁰⁰ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 380; Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 687-688.

permissible because we already proved that rewarding the one who does not deserve reward is qabiḥ, and moreover, the legally incumbent cannot enter the heaven by divine favor.”⁷⁰¹ Therefore, the prophet, according to the Mu‘tazilites, cannot intercede for the grave sinner, so who is the subject of the intercession then? Al-Qāḍī restricts intercession only to the repented believers. Although they already repented from their sins before dying, the intercession will help them to gain more rewards and have better positions in heaven.⁷⁰²

Al-Ījī, on the other hand, does not accept that intercession is only for increasing reward, but he affirmed that the main purpose of the intercession is to save the grave sinners from the hell fire. Saving the grave sinner is either by asking for forgiveness for him before entering the fire or by cutting short his punishment by asking God to take him out of the fire. However, in order to include the grave sinner in the intercession, al-Ījī used scriptural proofs from the Quran and Sunna. The main Quranic verse that he uses to prove his contention is *{Ask forgiveness for your sin and for believing men and believing women}* (47:19). Al-Ījī argues that God ordered the prophet to ask for forgiveness for the believers’ sin and asking forgiveness is an intercession.⁷⁰³ The second proof that al-Ījī used is taken from the prophetic tradition, which is “my intercession is for the grave sinners of my Umma.”⁷⁰⁴ The Mu‘tazilites tried to cast doubt on the authenticity of this hadith in particular and pointed out in general that the prophetic reports are mainly individual reports, which cannot be used as a proof in matters of belief.⁷⁰⁵

Al-Ījī’s students and commentators did not only follow their teacher by providing Quranic and prophetic reports, but some of them tried to give different types of proof. Al-Jurjānī, for example, indicated to al-Rāzī’s argument that the specific (*khāṣ*) proof is stronger than the general (*‘ām*) one. He summarizes al-Rāzī’s argument as follows, “Your [the Mu‘tazilites] arguments about negating the intercession are general (*‘ām*) in respect to individuals and times and our arguments in affirming it [the intercession]

⁷⁰¹ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 689.

⁷⁰² Ibid., 688.

⁷⁰³ Al-Ījī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 380.

⁷⁰⁴ This hadith is mentioned in Abi Dawud, no: 4739, al-Tirmidhī, no: 2435, and Ibn Majah, no: 4310.

⁷⁰⁵ Al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, 691. Nevertheless, we see that al-Ījī’s student, al-Kirmānī, is supporting al-Ījī’s position on the intercession with multiple prophetic reports. See Al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*. (Hussain Paṣa, 317), 428a.

must be specific because we do not affirm the intercession for everyone and all times. Therefore, the specific has more preference over the general.”⁷⁰⁶ The argument from the generality and specificity of the terms is an Usul argument that has multiple details that are beyond the scope of our argument.

Finally, it is sufficient to say that al-Ījī depended mainly on scriptural proofs in order to prove intercession. On the other hand, the Mu‘tazilites reject al-Ījī’s interpretation of the Quranic verses and the authenticity of the prophetic reports. They mainly used rational arguments that are in line with their rational ethical understanding.



⁷⁰⁶ Al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/342. Al-Rāzī is considered the most prolific Ash‘arī in the argument of the intercession because he argued excessively against the Mu‘tazilites in his grand tafsir. See Al-Rāzī, *Grand Tafsīr*, 3/494-500, 6/531-532, 7:11-12, 9:450.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this study, we demonstrated that theological arguments are capable of answering many ethical questions regarding the nature and the source of ethical values and how we understand them in respect to divine and human actions alike. The scope of our inquiry was al-Ījī's arguments of theological ethics where we found that al-Ījī's position reflects the authentic stance of the Ash'arite School. The study presented al-Ījī's arguments dialectically with their Mu'tazilite counterparts in order to give a more comprehensive understanding of the arguments.

To summarize the arguments and the findings of our enquiry, we start from the first chapter where we elaborated on al-Ījī's three divisions of ḥusn and qubḥ: Their meanings and origins. We found out that other Ash'arites came up with similar divisions, but al-Rāzī was the first one who divided the argument exactly as al-Ījī did. It is true that al-Ījī followed al-Rāzī in some details of his argument, although he did not accept his semi-rational ḥusn and qubḥ. We managed, as well, to pin down the focus of the dispute between the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilite to the legal accountability (*muākhaza shar'iah*).

We discovered that the Mu'tazilites who maintain the intrinsic ethical value are mainly the Mu'tazilites of Baghdad. Al-Ījī adopted two main arguments against them: The first one is the argument that the changeable cannot be intrinsic, which is an authentic Ash'arite argument, that has been used by most of the early Ash'arites. The second one is the argument of the liar paradox where he argues that the ethical value of lying and truth-telling are not intrinsic. We elaborated on al-Ījī's argument against Abū al-Ḥussain al-Baṣrī and proved that his position is the same as the position of the Mu'tazilites of Bagdad. We proved that the ideas of Abū Ali Jubbā'ī and his son Abū Hashim were contained and presented by al-Qāḍī Abdul Jabbār who is the most prominent figure in the Mu'tazilite school of Basra. We saw that the intellect, according the Mu'tazilites, is not a value-granter but an ethical tool that discovers the

ethical aspects in actions and affirm their ḥusn or qubḥ. The intellect can only know for sure the ethical values of certain actions; therefore, prophets and religious law are needed to guide us to the ethical values of other actions. The epistemic approach of this group of Mu‘tazilites was discussed and manifested separately and during the folds of the argument.

Theological arguments that are related to divine actions and their value judgements were discussed thoroughly in the second chapter. We prepared the groundwork by providing a sufficient account of al-Ījī’s divine conception. By criticizing al-Ash‘arī’s position about the existentiality of the attribute of eternity (*baqā*), al-Ījī gives us another piece of evidence that he adheres to the main position in the school of Ash‘arism and rejects other positions even if they belong to al-Ash‘arī himself. Divine power and will were the subjects of more attention because they are primarily related to divine actions. Divine power is known by deductive reasoning and it is the first attribute that guides us to the existence of God. Al-Ījī stated that divine power is eternal, unified, infinite, and all-inclusive. The former characteristic was the main attention of al-Ījī’s argument, whereby he tried to prove that nothing in the world except it is a subject of the divine power, i.e., God creates what is called good and what is called bad. Regarding the divine will, al-Ījī followed the same argument to prove its association with everything in the world as well. Al-Ījī affirmed that all Muslims negate qubḥ from divine actions, but they differ about its justification. For the Ash‘arites, God does not do qabiḥ actions because the value of qubḥ cannot be conceived in His actions, i.e., whatever He does is just and ḥasan. On the other hand, the Mu‘tazilites argue that God has the power to do the qabiḥ, but He does not do it because of three reasons: Knowing its qubḥ, being needless of it, and knowing His needlessness of it. These three reasons of abstaining from qabiḥ are applicable to contingent and necessary beings alike. Al-Ījī argues that there is no obligation on God because obligation is only conceived from a higher source and God is the Highest. The Mu‘tazilites agree that initially there is no obligation on God, but after making human beings legally incumbent, He is obliged to do certain actions for them; otherwise, He will be discarding the obligatory and deserving criticism. Al-Ījī argues against them by refuting the necessity of these certain actions. Refuting the necessity of divine grace (*lutf*) got more attention in the argument. We gave sufficient detail of both al-Ījī’s and the Mu‘tazilites’ arguments and showed that al-Ījī and other Ash‘arites, in place of

divine grace, use the concept of *tawfiq*, which means creating the power of obedience. To better understand of the argument of the possibility of telling lies in respect to God, we elaborated on the theological theories of truth. Both al-Ījī and most of the Mu‘tazilites adhere to the correspondence theory of truth. The Mu‘tazilites prevented the possibility of lying based on the qubḥ of lying and because it contradicts their doctrine of al-ṣalāḥ wa al-aṣḥāḥ. They provided several arguments where they applied the observable (*al-shāhid*) to the unobservable (*al-gā‘ib*). Al-Ījī also precluded the possibility of lying and provided us with three arguments. The first one is a polemic argument that is related to the defective nature of lying and the perfect nature of God. The second argument demonstrates the impossibility of lying through the eternity of divine speech, namely, divine speech is not articulated words, but it is the inner speech (*kalām naḥsī*) that is eternal and associated with divine knowledge. Al-Ījī admitted that those two arguments are not free from objections; therefore, he relied on the third argument, which proves the impossibility of lying by the prophetic report, i.e., the textual proof. Proving the truthfulness of God through the prophetic report whose truthfulness is based on God’s attestation (*taṣḍīq*) would lead us to circulation (*dawr*). Therefore, we had to elaborate on the miracle and its nature. The Miracle is the only valid proof of the truthfulness of the claimant to prophecy, according to al-Ījī and the Mu‘tazilites. We explained how al-Ījī precluded the circulation by affirming that the miracle is a divine action that is in place of a verbal attestation. Furthermore, we elaborated on the denotation (*dalāla*) of the miracle to the truthfulness of the claimant to prophecy, whether it is necessary or habitual denotation. The Mu‘tazilites and al-Ash‘arī maintain that the denotation of the miracle is necessary, but both had a different reasoning. Al-Ījī rejected the necessity and affirmed that the denotation of the miracle is a habitual (*‘adī*) denotation. He argues that something being habitual does not mean it is not certain and when God creates a miracle for a claimant to prophecy, we know for sure that he is telling the truth. The Mu‘tazilites maintain that God is wise and just, and thus His actions must pursue a purpose or objective; otherwise, His actions will be frivolous (*‘abath*). They argued that wisdom means acting according to the ethical aspects of things. Al-Ījī rejected the purposeful approach in divine actions by arguing from divine perfection and divine omnipotence. We proved that al-Ījī and other Ash‘arites affirm divine wisdom and associate it with divine knowledge and power.

The final chapter was dedicated primarily to the theological arguments that are related to human actions: their nature and ethical values. We saw that al-Ījī distinguishes human will from other faculties, such as the desire and the wish; nevertheless, both Ash‘arites and Mu‘tazilites agree that human will is an existential attribute that subsists on the living being. Al-Ījī adopted the exact position of his master al-Ash‘arī about the characteristics of human power and provided several arguments to prove that human power is an existential accident that has ephemeral nature and cannot be attached to two objects at the same time. The main characteristic of power, which has been disputed, even among the Ash‘arites, is the efficacy of human power. Al-Ījī, like his master and the majority of Ash‘arites, maintains that human power does affect its object and divine power is the only efficient power that creates everything in the existence, including human actions. We saw that some Ash‘arites, such as al-Juwaynī and al-Rāzī, disputed some Ash‘arite characteristics of human power like its efficacy and existential nature of it. The theory of acquisition *kasb* has been explained and simplified in light of al-Ījī’s and other Ash‘arites’ arguments. The central point in the argument was affirming that humans cannot create their own actions. To prove this point, al-Ījī used two main arguments: The first one is based on the atomistic argument and all-inclusiveness of divine power, while the second was related to the necessity of knowledge for creating actions. We showed that al-Ījī’s second argument is initially used by al-Rāzī whose argument has more details and profundity. We cleared up the mystery of the theory of *kasb* and related that to the necessity of human power and its non-efficacy at the same time. We provided three variants of the theory of *kasb*: The first one is the principal theory that is related to al-Ash‘arī and most of the Ash‘arites, including al-Ījī. The second one is modified by al-Bāqillānī whose theory is similar to al-Maturīdī’s theory of *kasb*; we compared and proved the similarity between them. The third variant is related to al-Juwaynī who claimed a complete efficacy of human power. We scrutinized his position and provided two possible explanations. We demonstrated that the authentic theory of *kasb* does not negate the freedom of choice, and the accusation of compulsion (*jabr*) was due to negating the efficacy of human power; furthermore, the first Ash‘arite who eliminated the choice from the theory was Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. We examined al-Ījī’s position about human choice from different angles. We found out that al-Ījī adheres to the authentic position of the Ash‘arites by affirming the freedom of choice. According to him, preponderance without motives is possible, but self-preponderance is impossible and might challenge the argument of

the existence of God. Al-Ījī maintains that humans can preponderate their actions by virtue of their will alone. We elaborated on the nature of human choice and how it does not contradict the all-inclusive characteristic of divine power. We explored the argument of obligation beyond capacity because it has ethical dimensions in both divine and human actions. Al-Ījī divided the obligation beyond capacity into three levels: low, middle, and high. He maintained the possibility and the existence of the first one, and only the possibility of the other two levels. The Mu‘tazilites not only rejected the possibility of obligation beyond capacity, but also asserted that God must do the fittest for human beings. They affirmed this assertion under their doctrine of *al-ṣalāḥ wa al-aṣḥāḥ*. We traced back this doctrine to al-Nazzām and provided sufficient details about the positions of the Mu‘tazilites of Baghdad and the Mu‘tazilites of Basra. The former build their doctrine on the concept of benefit, which is the core of their ethical theory, while the latter depend on divine wisdom. Al-Ījī tried to refute this doctrine by proving the existence of actual cases where God did not take humans’ interest into account, such as creating the poor infidel. Moreover, al-Ījī used the famous story of al-Ash‘arī and Abū al-Alī al-Jubbā‘ī about the death of three brothers to prove that God does whatever He wants, and He is not bound to do the fittest for us.

The theological arguments that are related to reward and punishments manifested the consequences of human actions and the concept of divine kingship (*mulk*). The Mu‘tazilites of Basra claimed the necessity of reward on God based on the difficulty of religious obligation. They argued that obligating with difficulties without benefit is like putting someone in difficulties without benefit: Both have the ethical value of *qabiḥ*, and God does not do *qabiḥ*. Al-Ījī maintained that reward is a divine favor, though He must do it because He promised to do so. He argues that God does not break His promise because breaking a promise is a defect (*naqṣ*) and God is perfect and above defect. We showed that al-Ījī’s argument about defect ends up proving a rational ethical value. The argument about punishment was restricted to the punishment of the grave sinner and its eternity. Al-Ījī and other Ash‘arites maintain that the grave sinner will be either initially or eventually in heaven. According to them, not fulfilling a threat is not a defect, but a praiseworthy action, and the grave sinner is still a believer and cannot be eternally in hell. The Mu‘tazilites, on the other hand, argue that forgiving the grave sinner or rewarding him has multiple aspects of *qubḥ*, and his grave sin abolishes any other reward.

It is important to note that the Mu‘tazilites’ arguments in our study have been used instrumentally to sharpen and manifest al-Ījī’s position. Nevertheless, we can conclude from their arguments that their rational ethics is not completely independent of God. God instilled the ethical knowledge of benefit and harm in our intellects, and thus what is beneficial must have the ethical value of ḥusn and what is harmful must have the ethical value of qubḥ. Human intellect is not an absolute ruler, but it is merely an instrument to detect the benefit and harm in things, and thus it can ascribe the ethical value to them accordingly. The obligations that the Mu‘tazilites claimed on God are based on their conception of divine justice and wisdom, i.e., it is an obligation from God and on God.

Al-Ījī’s arguments draw a very distinct line between the Creator and the created; the former is necessary, and the latter is contingent. The contingency of human beings and their actions make them in need of God for their existence and for their ethics. Al-Ījī does not deny the fact that the intellect can call something good or bad based on different perspectives, but it cannot by itself know the real and the ultimate ethical value, which can be only given by God through His revelation. In a contingent world and with an absolute Omnipotent God, the intellect, like everything in existence, can only submit to the divine law and does not claim any real ethical value beyond that.

Al-Ījī, by affirming the contingency of the world, negates the objectivity of the ethical value: the changeable cannot be intrinsic. The ethical aspects that are based on the concepts of benefit and harm cannot be the measure of ethical values because benefit and harm are changeable and relative. Furthermore, the real benefit and harm are based on obeying and disobeying God, and thus human intellect cannot discern them without the religious law. The source and justification of ethics, according to al-Ījī, can be succinctly summarized by saying that ḥusn and qubḥ are based on divine injunctions, and thus the ethical values of our actions are based on obeying and disobeying these divine injunctions. The simple justification that is manifested in al-Ījī’s arguments: God is the creator and owner, and we are created and servants.

Since the Mu‘tazilites put great emphasis on the freedom of man, al-Ījī used the argument of compelling motive (al-dā‘ī) as the main argument to refute the rational ḥusn and qubḥ. Nevertheless, al-Ījī did not follow al-Rāzī in maintaining the

compelling motives and he only used the argument in a polemic way and intended to negate the autonomy of humans over their actions. Al-Ījī affirmed that the faculty of choice is based on human free will and responded to al-Rāzī in different places in his books. Maintaining the theory of acquisition (*kasb*) does not deprive man of the freedom of choice; it only negates the efficacy of his power, which does not affect his ethical responsibility. The ambiguity of the theory lies in necessitating the contingent power and then denying its efficacy. The agency of an Omnipotent God does not leave room for any other real agency in the world.

Negating the agency of human beings completely would negate their ethical responsibility since the ethical value of our actions is based on obeying divine demands. Al-Ījī managed to combine the ethical responsibility and the divine Omnipotence by affirming that human choice is *enis rationis* (*amr i‘tibārī*), and thus it can exist independently of the Omnipotent power. Thus, affirming the non-efficacy of the contingent power and the existence of human choice neither proves our autonomy over our actions nor negates our ethical responsibility.

Al-Ījī, based on the distinction that he drew between God and humans, affirmed that the concept of *qabiḥ* is not conceived regarding divine actions, namely, whatever God does is *ḥasan*. God is not ethically bound to perform any action for us, and whatever He does for us, He does it out of favor. God is the absolute King whose actions are always just and wise because justice means doing what you have the right to do, and God has the right to do whatever He wants, and wisdom is related to His Omniscience and Omnipotence. In other words, divine justice and wisdom are a part and parcel of the divine conception. Al-Ījī rejected the purposive approach to divine actions, but he did not deny the wisdom and benefits. God, the Omnipotent, can create anything He wants initially and does not seek objectives to get what He wants. Al-Ījī’s conception of the absolutism of God and His attributes logically prevents us from ascribing the ethical value of *qubḥ* to Him.

To conclude, the theological arguments that are related to the value judgements can give us a solid foundation for our ethical understanding. Al-Ījī’s arguments do not eliminate all value judgements before the advent of the religious law, but they affirm that the real ethical judgements are based on the will of the omnipotent necessary

being. Humans are ethically responsible for their actions not because of the efficacy of their contingent power, but because of the freedom of their choice.



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CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Information:

Name - Surname: Mohammad Makdod

Education:

2006-2011 BA in English Language and Literature, Aleppo University, Syria

2016-2019 MA in Civilization Studies, Ibn Haldun University, Turkey

2019-2023 PhD in Islamic Studies, Ibn Haldun University, Turkey

Experience:

2013-2017 Freelancer translator

2018-2020 Teaching assistance fellow at Ibn Haldun University, Turkey

Publications:

Makdod, Mohammad. "Al-Ījī's Arguments against the Mu'tazilite Ethical Realism". *Kader* 20/3 (December 2022), 922-937. <https://doi.org/10.18317/kaderdergi.1213577>