IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF ISLAMIC STUDIES

PH.D. THESIS

THE RATIONAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ḤADĪTH CRITICISM: COMPARING THE TRADITIONAL METHOD OF ḤADĪTH CRITICISM AND THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF TESTIMONY

MOHAMMED TAYSSIR SAFI

THESIS SUPERVISOR

PROF. SERDAR DEMIREL

ISTANBUL, 2023

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by

MOHAMMED TAYSSIR SAFI

A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Islamic Studies

THESIS SUPERVISOR

PROF. SERDAR DEMIREL

ISTANBUL, 2023

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	Signature
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

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

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ÖZ

HADİS TENKİDİNİN RASYONEL VE EPİSTEMOLOJİK TEMEL YAPILARI: HADİS TENKİDİNİN GELENEKSEL METODLARI İLE ŞAHİTLİK EPİSTEMOLOJİSİNİN KARŞILAŞTIRILMASI

Safi, Mohammed Tayssir
Temel İslam Bilimleri Doktora Programı
Öğrenci Numarası: 187052002
Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORC-ID): 0000-0002-8686-7937
Ulusal Tez Merkezi Referans Numarası: 10540445

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Serdar Demirel
İkinci Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Issam Eido
Ağustos 2023, 424 Sayfa

Hadis çalışmaları alanı büyük olasılıkla ifadelerin aktarılması ve incelenmesi konusuna odaklanan en geniş ve en dirençli kütüphaneyi oluşturmaktadır. İfadelerin atfedildikleri kaynakların düzenlenmesi, değerlendirilmesi ve onaylanması için hadis ulemalarına ait geleneksel eleştirel metod (*menhec el-nakd*) kullanılmıştır ve kullanılmaya devam etmektedir. Alanın yaygınlığı ve metodun devam eden verimliliğine rağmen, geleneksel metodu bir epistemik sistem olarak ele almış incelemeler yok denecek kadar azdır.

Çalışma bu eksikliği hadis ulemasının geleneksel metodunun rasyonel ve epistemolojik temellerini araştırarak tamamlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu maksat *menhec el-nakd'ın* dayandığı esas aksiyom ve kuralların (*mebadi ve kavaid*) belirlenmesiyle elde edilecektir. Ayrıca, hadis ulemasının geleneksel metodu ve bu metodu kapsayan, daha geniş alandaki İslami epistemik sistem ile şahitlik epistemolojisine ilişkin çağdaş anglofon çalışmalar karşılaştırılıp kıyaslanacaktır. Bu iki geleneğin bir araya getirilmesiyle *menhec el-nakd'in* tam anlamıyla ait olduğu epistemik yapı ortaya çıkacaktır. Öte yandan *mebadi ve kavaid'leri* meşrulaştıracak açıklamaları vurgulamaya yarayacaktır.

Bu analiz ve sentez sonucu, *menhec el-nakd* çağdaş felsefik terimlerle sunulacak, sağlam rasyonel ilkelere dayalı epistemik bir aygıt (*ale marifiyye*) olduğu tam olarak anlaşılacaktır. Geleneksel metodun çağdaş felsefik dille yeniden eklemlenmesi epistemik bir zemine ilişkin olarak daha faydalı bir değerlendirmeye imkan verecektir. Ayrıca, bu *epistemik dönüş* geleneksel metodun rakip alternatif metodlarla kıyaslanmasında faydalı olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Epistemoloji, Hadis, İslami Felsefe, Menhec el-Nakd, Şahitlik.

ABSTRACT

THE RATIONAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ḤADĪTH CRITICISM: COMPARING THE TRADITIONAL METHOD OF ḤADĪTH CRITICISM AND THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF TESTIMONY

Safi, Mohammed Tayssir
Ph.D. in Islamic Studies
Student ID: 187052002
Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORC-ID): 0000-0002-8686-7937
National Thesis Center Reference Number: 10540445

Thesis Supervisor: Prof. Serdar Demirel
Thesis Co-Advisor: Asst. Prof. Issam Eido
August 2023, 424 Pages

The field of ḥadīth studies constitutes the largest and most robust library ever focused on the transmission and epistemic evaluation of statements (*akhbār*). The traditional critical method (*manhaj al-naqd*) of ḥadīth scholars has been used historically and continues to be used to this day to manage, evaluate, and verify the attribution of statements to their sources. Despite the extensiveness of the field and the continued efficacy of the method, there has been little to no work done to investigate the traditional method as an epistemic system.

This dissertation aims to fill that lacuna by investigating the rational and epistemological foundations of the traditional method of ḥadīth scholars. This will be achieved by identifying the central axioms and rules (*mabādiʾ wa qawāʿid*) upon which the *manhaj al-naqd* rests. Furthermore, the traditional method of ḥadīth scholars, as well as the broader Islamic epistemic system in which it operates, will be compared and contrasted with the contemporary anglophone study of the epistemology of testimony. Bringing these two traditions together will help uncover the truly epistemic nature of the *manhaj al-naqd*. It will also help highlight how one might give a justificatory account of its *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid*.

The aim of this analysis and synthesis is to represent the *manhaj al-naqd* in contemporary philosophical terms so that it can be better understood for what it is: an epistemic apparatus (*āla maʿrifiyya*) that is grounded in sound rational principles. The re-articulation of the traditional method in contemporary philosophical language will allow for a more fruitful evaluation of the *manhaj al-naqd* on epistemic grounds. Furthermore, this epistemic analysis will be useful for future studies comparing the traditional method to competing alternatives.

Keywords: Epistemology, Ḥadīth, Islamic Philosophy, Manhaj al-Naqd, Testimony.

DEDICATION

To all the great ḥadīth scholars, past and present.

لكل دين فرسان...وفرسان هذا الدين أصحاب الأسانيد.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been interested in the epistemology of ḥadīth studies for nearly a decade; thus, this dissertation has been a long time in the making. There are several individuals who have supported me during this journey and who deserve my gratitude. Chief among them are my two advisors, professors Issam Eido and Serdar Demirel. Their support and feedback throughout this project have been priceless. I have spent countless hours with each, learning the traditional method of ḥadīth scholars, and it has given me a solid base upon which this thesis is built. Dr. Issam has particularly been not only a long-term teacher and mentor but a companion on this exciting intellectual journey. Similarly, I am grateful to the broader monitoring committee, which in addition to my two advisors, includes professors Bekir Kuzudişli and Hamzeh al-Bakri. Their willingness to listen and provide critical feedback helped make this project possible.

I am also greatly indebted to the Philosophy Department at Northwestern University, where I have served as a predoctoral fellow for the last two years. Professors Jennifer Lackey, Baron Reed, and Sanford Goldberg spent countless hours with me over this period, answering questions, listening to my views, and providing important feedback. Without Dr. Lackey's invitation and subsequent agreement to sponsor me as a fellow, I would not have been able to truly engage with the anglophone epistemological tradition. Similarly, I am grateful to the epistemology club at Northwestern, which in addition to the three aforementioned epistemologists, included an amazing group of graduate students at the university. Listening to them present their work, as well as hearing their feedback about my own, only made this project better.

Beyond the strictly academic domain, there are tens of Islamic scholars that I am indebted to. Their sacrifice and generosity of spirit have carried me throughout this long and arduous journey of learning. I am particularly grateful to the many who were patient with me as I asked my never-ending questions in class, only to follow up with more questions outside of class and then again to stay in contact with me through digital forms of communication well beyond any academic term or educational circle. Your sincerity, knowledge, and wisdom have rescued me from the depths of ignorance, even if the journey is still ongoing.

Finally, I want to thank my beloved family for their patience and support throughout these last few years as this project has become a reality. To my beautiful children, Zaynab, Abubakr, Fatima, and Zahra, you fill my life with meaning and joy. I am indebted to my sister Leenah, who, despite being busy with her own graduate degree, has tirelessly listened to me share my work and provided her sincere input. I am also deeply indebted to my brother-in-law, Taha, for his support, encouragement, and feedback, particularly in the early stages of this project. And last but not least, to my dear wife Rashida, your unconditional love and support got me through this process, and your willingness to listen and provide feedback only made this project better.

And to Allah belongs all praise…

Mohammed Tayssir Safi

Evanston, IL, 2023

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For over a millennium, Islamic scholars have developed and refined a critical method for evaluating the authenticity of statements attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ), known as ḥadīth.[1] Over several generations, this well-developed method underwent various stages of formalization and axiomatization (*taqʿīd*). These rules and axioms (*qawāʿid wa mabādiʾ*) represent the very backbone of what we now refer to as the traditional method of ḥadīth criticism (*manhaj al-naqd*).

The *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars and the rules and axioms that represent it continue to be used and relied upon by Muslim scholars all across the world. Although the traditional method has undergone several stages of development, there is a clear continuity between the work of contemporary scholars and those of the postclassical, classical, and preclassical eras. In fact, Islamic scholars often speak of this broad critical method as being a unique feature (*khuṣūṣiyya*) of Islamic civilization.

Despite the existence of this robust system, the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars remains grossly understudied as an epistemic system. Ignorance of its deep structure and logic has produced a vacuum in the East and West. That vacuum has given way to various forms of ḥadīth skepticism. In response, many Islamic scholars have attempted to defend their methodology against the growing chorus of criticism. However, despite these attempts, the *manhaj al-naqd* has remained largely elusive to outsiders.

This dissertation attempts to fill that void. One of the primary aims of this research project is to analyze the central rules and axioms of the *manhaj al-naqd*. Furthermore, this dissertation aims to reconstruct how these rules and axioms can be used inferentially to evaluate ḥadīth. The intent behind this analysis is to uncover the deep

[1] The symbol (ṣ) will be used throughout this dissertation as an abbreviation for the Arabic: *ṣalla Allahu ʿalayhi wa sallam* (Allah bless him and give him peace).

structure and logic of the traditional system. An overarching theme of this dissertation is that core parts of the *manhaj al-naqd* are best understood as an epistemic apparatus (*āla maʿrifiyya*) made up of rules, axioms, and inferential steps.

Beyond reconstructing and evaluating the traditional critical method, this dissertation puts the *manhaj al-naqd* into conversation with contemporary anglophone epistemology, particularly the epistemology of testimony. As will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 6, when it comes to the epistemic domain, the anglophone technical term *testimony* is equivalent to the arabophone *khabar*.[2] Therefore, the comparison is between the contemporary anglophone philosophical tradition and the Islamic tradition in terms of how we learn from the words of others. The intent behind this comparison is not only to help us better understand the *manhaj al-naqd* but also to show its relevance within contemporary epistemology. Furthermore, the hope is to show how both traditions can learn from one another synthetically.

The dissertation is structured in the following fashion. After the introduction, a summary of the state-of-the-art research is provided. The literature review focuses on contemporary themes and debates found in arabophone ḥadīth studies, Western anglophone ḥadīth studies, turkophone ḥadīth studies, and the epistemology of testimony literature. Within this summary, various gaps in the research are highlighted, as well as how this project hopes to fill them. Afterward, the research methodologies employed in the dissertation are explicated with a particular emphasis on how they fill methodological gaps in the literature.

The main body of the thesis is split into five parts. The first part, Chapter 4, seeks to accomplish two main tasks. The first task is to determine why the epistemology of testimony domain has been largely neglected in Western philosophy until very recently. This is investigated against the backdrop of the large emphasis on testimony in the Islamic intellectual tradition. The second task is to provide a summary of the various areas where the epistemology of testimony is investigated in the Islamic tradition. This is done with the aim of pointing out the breadth and depth of testimony in Islamic epistemology.

[2] Given this fact, I will often use these terms interchangeably except when the context calls for subtle distinctions.

Chapter 5 serves as a *longue durée* historical analysis of the traditional method of ḥadīth criticism. The history of its development is divided into four eras, focusing on both the continuity and change of the system over time. One of the main theses of this chapter is that ḥadīth criticism began as an informal and applied epistemic method; then, due to various epistemic and social dilemmas, it developed gradually into a formal and theoretical system. Chapter 5 seeks to uncover the logic of that formalization and axiomatization and to explicate the connection between contemporary ḥadīth scholarship and the long history of ḥadīth criticism.

Chapters 6 and 7 shift the focus of the investigation by introducing the contemporary anglophone epistemology of testimony literature. Chapter 6 focuses on several investigations having to do with the nature of testimony (*māhiyyat al-khabar*).[3] In each section of the chapter, both the epistemology of testimony literature and relevant literature in the Islamic intellectual tradition are investigated. Sections are dedicated to definitions of testimony, pure vs. hybrid forms of testimonial belief, testimonial kinds, and the belief-transmission vs. belief-generation debate.

After having focused on the nature of testimony, Chapter 7 focuses on testimonial justification (*qabūl al-akhbār*).[4] It begins with an exposition of some of the essential features of Islamic epistemology. Then, given the centrality of the internalism and externalism debate in anglophone epistemology and its importance to the epistemology of testimony, a section is dedicated to its summary and analysis. The subsequent section focuses on the main debate in the literature, the question of reduction. After providing a summary and analysis of the debate, an argument is provided for conceiving the *manhaj al-naqd* in broadly hybrid terms. The chapter ends with a unique investigation into essential differences between Divine and human testimony.

[3] The Arabic phrase *māhiyyat al-khabar* is not a literal translation of the English phrase "the nature of testimony." A more precise translation of *māhiyyat al-khabar* would be "the essence of statements." However, *māhiyyat al-khabar* is more in line with the Islamic tradition's characterization of parallel investigations to the nature of testimony.

[4] The Arabic phrase *qabūl al-akhbār* is not a literal translation of the English phrase "testimonial justification." A more precise translation of *qabūl al-akhbār* would be "the acceptance of statements." However, *qabūl al-akhbār* is more in line with the Islamic tradition's characterization of parallel investigations to testimonial justification. More will be said about the relationship between the epistemic concepts of justification and acceptance in Chapter 7.

Chapter 8 serves as a culmination of the dissertation. The chapter focuses on analyzing and rationally reconstructing the core features of the traditional method of ḥadīth criticism. Previous chapters are drawn on to further ground and justify the axioms and principles of the *manhaj al-naqd*. The chapter concludes with a few suggestions on how the critical apparatus can be further developed and formalized to better respond to objections against axiomatization.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature reviews are meant to provide an overall summary and analysis of the state-of-the-art literature in the desired field of study. The researcher is supposed to select relevant sources and evaluate them, focusing on trends and patterns, as well as debates and gaps in the literature. However, for this present study, accomplishing such a feat is somewhat of a puzzle. The researcher is forced to choose between two extremes: either emphasize the unique nature of the study or engage with several adjacent fields and studies.

If the first is emphasized, the result is the lack of any real literature to review. Given the novelty of the project and it being the first of its kind, there are no genuine related studies to analyze and evaluate. If the second is emphasized, we end up overwhelmed by the amount of relevant literature that needs to be evaluated.

Given this difficult choice, the latter was chosen, but in a more limited fashion. For the purposes of this literature review, the following questions were asked: Who am I in conversation with? Who is supposed to read and benefit from this study? Which threads, debates, and conversations is this study supposed to move forward? The answers to these questions were then used to gather the related bodies of literature that need to be summarized and evaluated.

The result of that assessment led to four distinct but related fields. The first can be referred to as arabophone ḥadīth studies. This is the body of literature written in Arabic about ḥadīth. The research included in this body of literature is often written by practitioners, those who see themselves as a living embodiment of 1400 years of ḥadīth scholarship.

The second can be referred to as Western anglophone ḥadīth studies. This body of literature is written in English, even though it is in conversation with various other European languages like French and German. The field is around one and a half to two centuries old and envisions itself as an evaluator of ḥadīth studies from outside of the native ḥadīth tradition.

The third can be referred to as turkophone ḥadīth studies. This body of literature is written in Turkish and is uniquely situated between the two previously mentioned bodies of literature. Many researchers working on ḥadīth in Turkish are part of the same inherited tradition as those working within arabophone scholarship. In fact, turkophone scholars might, at times, write some of their research in Arabic, even though the standard language they use in their scholarship is Turkish. However, despite this, turkophone ḥadīth studies has had a complex relationship with Western ḥadīth studies. More will be said about this below. For now, it suffices to say that there are elements within the turkophone literature that are more in line with Western ḥadīth studies, and there are other elements that are uniquely positioned between the two other bodies of literature.

The fourth and final distinct field is the anglophone epistemology of testimony literature. Unlike Western anglophone ḥadīth studies, this field is primarily philosophical. In contrast to the previous three fields, the epistemology of testimony literature is not focused on ḥadīth studies. Nevertheless, many of the questions asked and investigated in this body of literature are similar in scope to ḥadīth studies, and thus, it is a useful interlocutor. Due to several constraints, this study is limited to anglophone scholarship on the subject as opposed to the epistemology of testimony literature in other languages.

In each of the four fields, some of the most influential studies have been chosen, paying particular attention to the works most directly related to the subject area of this dissertation. Historical context has been provided when needed and avoided when deemed superfluous or if it will be returned to later in the dissertation. Special attention has been given to pointing out the key patterns and themes in each field, highlighting the most important debates and perceived gaps, and then showing how this current research fits into those threads.

Although this study is being conducted in English, it is meant to be in conversation with all four of these bodies of literature. This presents a difficulty given that arabophone ḥadīth studies are conducted in Arabic and turkophone ḥadīth studies are conducted in Turkish. However, as will become clear below, there is already an exchange occurring between these bodies of scholarship, even if it is not nearly where it needs to be.[5]

Thus, this study is an attempt at a more meaningful interdisciplinary approach, bringing various traditions together under one shared area of inquiry. It also strives to be an embodiment of research that not only talks about the other in an asymmetrical fashion but instead engages with the other in a symmetrical one. The hope is that future researchers will see the benefit of this approach and seek to undertake their own studies.

2.1. Contemporary Arabophone Scholarship[6]

2.1.1. An Introduction

Contemporary arabophone ḥadīth studies is a vast and burgeoning field. As a body of literature, it is the culmination of 1400 years of scholarly activity. As will be discussed thoroughly in Chapter 5, the growth, development, and formalization of the field happened in stages and was a result of various social and intellectual factors. The research questions being investigated today, the themes of scholarship, and the ongoing debates are a result of many others that preceded it. However, for our purposes, we can delineate several clear areas of investigation that map onto a few key contemporary debates in the field.

[5] It is important to stress that this classification by language: arabophone, anglophone, turkophone, does not completely overlap with the question of philosophical traditions. There are researchers writing in English from a traditional Islamic standpoint and vice versa. This is a difficult and vexing question that is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For the purposes of the literature review, I have limited the analysis and classification across linguistic lines. More will be said about philosophical approaches and classifications below.

[6] Two studies that provide context and analysis of the contemporary field of arabophone ḥadīth studies are worth mentioning. The first is Muḥammad Aswad's, *al-Ittijāhāt al-Muʿāṣira* (2008). The second is a collection of articles focusing on various regions in the Arab-speaking Muslim world, edited by Aḥmad al-Jābirī (2017).

Before engaging with these key areas, it is important for us to speak briefly about the era that we are referring to as the "contemporary era" of ḥadīth studies. There is an assortment of different ways of demarcating the history of ḥadīth criticism. In this study, the history of the field has been divided into four main eras: preclassical, classical, postclassical, and contemporary.[7] Any given era might then be subdivided into one or more periods. As for which factors and variables go into demarcating the end of an era/period and the beginning of another, this has been based upon clear shifts in the epistemic system and culture of ḥadīth criticism.

For the purposes of this literature review, we are most concerned with the contemporary era and, more specifically, the most recent period of the contemporary era. However, it would be misleading to summarize the most important trends and debates of the last three decades without providing proper background context. For this reason, it is important to speak briefly about the contemporary era and its early period.

The contemporary era of ḥadīth studies began with a multi-pronged engagement with the West at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. The end of the postclassical period was marred with debates having to do with authority, imitation (*taqlīd*), and independent reasoning (*ijtihād*). While those debates continued to be vibrant well into the contemporary era, it was the engagement with and response to Western ideas and Western criticisms of Islam that ushered in a new era for the field. For the purposes of our study, we will focus on ḥadīth studies, but it is important to note that the engagement with Western ideas and Western criticisms of Islam went far beyond ḥadīth studies, and it is difficult to separate this complex web of views out from one another.

For example, in the Indian subcontinent, figures like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (d. 1898) and Syed Ameer Ali (d. 1929) were aware of the work of orientalists like William Muir (d. 1905).[8] Orientalist views loomed large in their scholarship, whether in the form of responding to them or understanding Islam through them. In the Levant,

[7] See Chapter 5 for an extended analysis of these four eras.
[8] Khan and Ali are not mentioned here as participants in arabophone literature on ḥadīth, rather they are mentioned because they are prominent and well-known voices of the beginning of the era.

figures such as Ṭāhir al-Jazāʾirī (d. 1920) and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (d. 1914) were also aware of orientalist themes and arguments. In Egypt, reformist figures such as Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905) and his student, Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935), were also influenced by Western thought. We will return to this question in Chapter 5, but for now, it suffices to point out that this engagement with the West, particularly ideas relating to Islam and ḥadīth studies, ushered in a new era in the field. Understanding orientalism and responding to it became a core feature of ḥadīth scholarship.

In the decades that followed, these two main areas of investigation continued to persist: the first being debates around authority, imitation (*taqlīd*), independent reasoning (*ijtihād*), adherence to legal schools (*madhhabs*), and the role of ḥadīth in Islamic law (*fiqh*), and the second, addressing the attacks of orientalist critics specifically and Western thought more broadly. It would be inaccurate to imagine that these two areas of investigation were taken up by different individuals since often the same scholars wrote on both topics. However, it is important to keep them conceptually separate since it is the latter that directly relates to this present study.

As for the first area, important figures such as Riḍā, Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (d. 1952), and ʿAbdurraḥmān al-Muʿallimī (d. 1966) engaged in fierce debate well into the middle of the 20th century. But by the 1950s, a new figure in the debate had emerged that would become the face of the anti-traditional, anti-authority camp, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (d. 1999). Al-Albānī would dominate the field for nearly half a century through the publishing of books, articles, and critical editions. In many ways, he, more than the rest of the figures mentioned above, came to symbolize the study of ḥadīth in the second half of the 20th century.

On the other end of the intellectual aisle were ḥadīth scholars like ʿAbdulfattāḥ Abū Ghudda (d. 1997), Muḥammad ʿAwwāma, and Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr (d. 2020). ʿAwwāma's very popular, *Athar al-Ḥadīth al-Sharīf fī Ikhtilāf al-Aʾimma al-Fuqahāʾ* (1997) continues to serve as an important rebuttal against the views espoused by the al-Albānī camp. Given the complicated overlapping nature of the debates, other non-ḥadīth oriented specialists engaged in the conversation and polemics as well. Despite the ire that al-Albānī drew from his critics, it would be difficult to deny that his views set the stage for many of the conversations of the last 50 years. Beyond the direct influence

he had on students, al-Albānī's views endured in other ways as well. For many in the field, his views would become a type of intellectual foil for contemporary debates.

As for the second area of investigation, after Khan and al-Jazāʾirī, new scholars also emerged to respond to Western critics of ḥadīth. Arabophone scholarship, produced between the 1940s and 1970s, tells of the level of consciousness and awareness that Islamic scholars had of orientalist works. Given this dissertation's particular focus on ḥadīth, a few figures stand out and are worth mentioning. Prominent figures such as Muṣṭafā al-Sibāʿī (d. 1964) (n.d.), Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ (d. 1986) (1963), ʿAjāj al-Khaṭīb (d. 2021) (1988), Maḥmūd al-Ṭaḥḥān (d. 2022) (1972), and ʿAbdurraḥmān Ḥabbanaka (d. 2004) (2000), all produced works that engage with orientalist views on ḥadīth in this period.[9]

By the 1980s and 1990s, these discussions had become so prominent and widespread that two developments emerged. First, critiques of orientalism came to play a prominent role in ḥadīth textbooks used in traditional schools (*madāris*) as well as theological faculties. Books such as ʿItr's, *Manhaj al-Naqd fī ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth* (1997), as well as al-Khaṭīb's, *al-Sunna Qabl al-Tadwīn* (1988), serve as examples of this phenomenon.[10] A second development of this period is the academic study of orientalist views on ḥadīth in Ph.D. and MA theses. Some of these were taken up in Muslim theology departments, while others were carried out by Islamic scholars traveling to Western countries to research orientalist views on ḥadīth and to respond to them. Mustafa Azami (d. 2017) (1984), Musfir al-Damīnī (1984), and Fatḥ al-Dīn al-Bayānūnī (2012) are all examples of this second phenomenon.

Two more points are worth mentioning before discussing the central debates and research questions of the most recent period. The first is that despite these upheavals, Islamic scholars continued to produce scholarship and teach in the traditional standard methods. In other words, although these two areas dominated hadīth scholarship, one mustn't think that they eclipsed traditional standard areas of investigation and study.

[9] Whether these responses represent an engagement with the objections and criticisms of Western critics that is based upon a sound understanding of their arguments requires its own analysis and study.
[10] Issam Eido (2021) mentions this point as a key demarcating feature of the common era along with the focus on methodology (*al-manhaj*).

Secondly, although our analysis here includes arabophone ḥadīth scholarship from various geographic locations, nevertheless, the analysis has been limited to the lands of al-Shāmm, Egypt, and to a lesser extent, the Indian subcontinent and Saudi Arabia. However, to get a fuller picture of arabophone ḥadīth studies in this era, other geographic locations would need to be drawn into the analysis from as far east as Indonesia to as far west as Mauritania. The ideas mentioned here, the themes and debates, are only meant to set the stage for the context of the present study, especially those most directly connected to its theses. A more comprehensive and truly global historical analysis of the era would be invaluable but is beyond the scope of the present study.

2.1.2. The Literature of the Last Three Decades

For our purposes, the most recent arabophone scholarly literature in ḥadīth studies can be divided into four areas. Two of them are clear extensions of the investigations mentioned above, while the other two are more recent phenomena. It is these latter two debates that are most relevant to the present study.

2.1.2.1. The Authority Debate Finds New Wind: The Methodology of Jurists vs. the Methodology of Ḥadīth Scholars

One of the consequences of al-Albānī's efforts and the subsequent debates involving his critics is a renewed interest in different approaches to hadīth criticism. A central topic of the most cutting-edge arabophone literature has been a concentration on the juristic (*al-uṣūliyyūn*) approach to ḥadīth criticism, juxtaposed against the traditional ḥadīth scholar approach. Although knowledge of this distinction has always been a feature of ḥadīth scholarship, recently, interest in it has increased.

While this is at least partially a natural consequence of al-Albānī's flat-footed approach to ḥadīth criticism and anti-madhhab views, it is also the consequence of several other adjacent issues. For instance, although al-Albānī served as a prominent thought leader of Salafism, the school was and is much larger than him and includes several variant approaches. The renewed interest in the juristic approach to ḥadīth is a result of centuries of criticism leveled against the classical schools of Islamic law and their

epistemological approach to the ḥadīth corpus. Furthermore, the polemics and apologetics between Salafis and pro-madhhab advocates often had the unintended consequence of centering the critical approach of ḥadīth scholars. Many contemporary scholars have wanted to push back against this perceived encroachment of ḥadīth studies onto Islamic law.

Examples of this line of research are plentiful. For instance, Mutaz al-Khaṭīb's (2017) study of the topic provides a historical and methodological overview of both the jurist and ḥadīth scholar methods. Mohamad Anas Sarmini (2021a) has recently published a monograph comparing the concepts of epistemological certitude and belief according to the two camps. For his part, ʿAbdulmajīd al-Turkmānī (2018; 2020) has authored two works dedicated solely to the juristic method of ḥadīth criticism of the Ḥanafī school of law. In a recent piece, Issam Eido (2020) focused on the role of legal maxims in the critical method of Ḥanafī scholars. Al-Sharīf Ḥātim al-'Awnī (n.d.) has pushed back against this classification and division, arguing that such generalizations are largely unhelpful and require much more nuance and focused study.[11]

2.1.2.2. Classical vs. Preclassical Ḥadīth Scholarship

A second consequence of the al-Albānī debate has been the emergence of two closely associated areas of investigation, which, although conceptually different, share a lot of philosophical space. For our purposes, these two discussions can be collapsed into one area of concern. However, it is instructive to first lay them out separately and then subsequently show how they can be merged.

The first question is historical, having to do with the different methods of ḥadīth criticism employed in the preclassical (*al-mutaqaddimūn*) vs. classical (*al-mutaʾakhkhirūn*) era. This debate is based upon the presumption that there are

[11] Although this requires further study, it seems like three general currents have emerged from this debate. One group advocates for the ḥadīth scholar method as solely justifiable. Another group views the ḥadīth scholar method as being an expression of the Shafiʿī and Ḥanbalī schools of law and thus holds the view that their methodology doesn't apply outside of those schools. The third and final view, which I myself hold, advocates for a division of labor. The ḥadīth scholar method applies to the entire ḥadīth corpus; however, the various Islamic legal school do not cede epistemic authority to the ḥadīth scholar method in questions of law, since each school has its own epistemic method of dealing with legislative ḥadīth.

substantive methodological differences between the two eras. However, the investigation is not purely historical and descriptive; rather, many researchers wish to advance one method over another or to argue for continuity between the two. Ḥamzah al-Malībārī (2001; 2003b), al-ʿAwnī (1996), ʻAbdulqādir al-Muḥammadī (2021), and Eido (2016) have all written full-length monographs on the subject.

A second closely related question has been the debate over the formalization and axiomatization (*al-taqʿīd*) of the traditional method (*manhaj al-naqd*) of ḥadīth criticism. This version of the debate is sometimes expressed as the difference between an apparent or superficial approach to the testimonial chain (*ẓāhir al-isnād*) and the approach or method of signs (*al-qarāʾin*). Other times, the debate is described as a difference between the approach of axioms/rules (*qawāʿid*) vs. the approach of hidden defects (*ʿilal*). In reality, all these descriptions are intended to signify the same debate and tension in the field. On one far end of the spectrum are those who reject the very possibility of the *taqʿīd* of the *manhaj al-naqd*, and at the other end of the spectrum are those who see *qawāʿid* as being epistemologically sufficient.[12]

In actuality, this second question mimics the first. Critics of formalization and axiomatization see the work of classical scholars as being to blame for this turn away from the methods of preclassical scholars to the *qawāʿid* of the classical era. They view the theorization about the applied methods of preclassical scholars as having been mistaken. In other words, classical scholars either failed at formalizing the methods of preclassical scholars or perhaps an even stronger thesis; the work of preclassical scholars is not the type of work that can be formalized and axiomatized. For these critics, al-Albānī and many of his supporters were guilty of a superficial reliance on axioms and rules that were epistemically flawed. Others have defended the axiomatization of classical scholars, arguing for the possibility of a middle ground.

Al-Malībārī (2001; 2003b; 2003a) and ʿAbdussalām Abū Samḥā (n.d.; 2012) have written extensively on this subject, critiquing the classical approach. Al-ʿAwnī (1996), ʿAbdurraḥmān al-Saʿd (2018), and al-Muḥammadī (2021) have defended a similar line of reasoning. Ḥamzeh al-Bakri (2022) has recently published a monograph arguing for

[12] Although this entire dissertation is relevant to this debate, the very last section of Chapter 8 is of particular relevance.

a middle path, which places the blame on those who misunderstand the purpose of axiomatization and not on the scholars of the classical era themselves.

2.1.2.3. Modernism and Ḥadīth Skepticism

At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, a new skeptical challenge emerged, except this time, it wasn't from orientalists but from within Muslim societies themselves. This new skepticism is closely associated with a broader philosophical trend found in Muslim societies, often called modernism (*al-ḥadātha*). This "school" slowly began to form as a view in juxtaposition to both the traditional (*turāthī/taqlīdī*) view, as well as the reformist (*iṣlāḥī*) view. Although explaining the nature of these three trends is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is important to at least allude to how these categories are being used.

One can think of these three trends as a spectrum of different approaches to the Islamic sciences and tradition. On one end of the spectrum is the *turāthī/taqlīdī* view, which embraces the long narrative of the tradition and sees itself as picking up where the last generation left off. The traditional approach can best be thought of through two core doctrines. The first is through the value afforded to the entirety of the tradition, especially in the form of the Islamic sciences. The second is a closely related deference to epistemic authority when it comes to understanding the religion in the modern world.

In contrast, the *iṣlāḥī* view includes several groups who might or might not value the entire long narrative of the tradition. What really distinguishes them is their wish to substantively change some portion of it. Some reformists see parts of the tradition as having been suitable for a given era but are no longer suitable for ours. Others see entire eras of the tradition as having gone off track and thus needing to be ignored or altered. Therefore, in contrast to the traditional view, the reformist approach includes at least *some amount* of valuing of the tradition and *some amount* of deference to authority.

Finally, the *ḥadāthī* view rejects the very concept of deference to religious scholars, experts, or the sciences themselves. Perhaps even more surprising is the lack of value

afforded to anything in the tradition apart from the very basics of the religion. No longer tied to the authority of any intellectual heritage, modernists feel free to construct their own understanding of the religion.

Figures such as Mohammed Arkoun (d. 2010), Nasr Abu Zayd (d. 2010), Mohammed Abed al-Jabiri (d. 2010), Jamal al-Banna (d. 2013), Muhammad Shahrur (d. 2019), Hassan Hanafi (d. 2021), Abdullah Laroui, and Abdolkarim Soroush have emerged as intellectuals who challenge both traditional and reformist views of the religion. One of their chief criticisms has been against the ḥadīth corpus, as well as the traditional epistemological system of ḥadīth scholars. Benefitting from the works of orientalist scholars, these modernist intellectuals critique the authenticity of the ḥadīth corpus as well as the objectivity of the scholars evaluating it. Beyond orientalist-inspired critiques, these modernist scholars at times rely on older critiques from within the tradition itself, attempting to draw inspiration from non-Sunnī theological schools, as well as objections already extant in the writings of previous scholars.

2.1.2.4. Responding to Skepticism: Orientalism and Modernism

For the purposes of this literature review, it is useful to speak of "modernist ḥadīth skepticism" in conjunction with the enduring impact of orientalism. For contemporary hadīth scholars, the accessibility of orientalist works has skyrocketed over the last three decades. Several avenues have made orientalist theses more accessible. Everything from translations of Western ḥadīth studies works into Arabic to traditional and multilingual ḥadīth scholars summarizing arguments from these debates to their arabophone colleagues, to hearing of works through modernists and other proponents of orientalist ideas; these various means have led to ḥadīth scholars being more keenly aware of what others have to say about their discipline.[13]

Traditionalist and reformist arabophone scholarship of the most recent period has lumped both the modernist and orientalist intellectual trends together, characterizing them as antagonistic to their field and representative of a crude type of skepticism

[13] See for example Fahd al-Ḥamūdī's (2014) recent translation.

towards the traditional narrative and approach.[14] Unsurprisingly, contemporary ḥadīth studies, as a field, has largely rejected the dual-pronged skepticism of modernists and orientalists. A large library of scholarship has formed in response to these two ḥadīth-skeptical approaches. As a quick foray into the literature, it is perhaps helpful to differentiate between broader rebuttals and more specific responses to key skeptical theses.

As for the broader response, much of the literature has become associated with the catch-all phrase of *ḥujjiyyat al-sunna*, which can be translated as the authority, binding-proof, or binding evidential status of ḥadīth. This phrase or concept is juxtaposed against those who do not afford the ḥadīth corpus any valid evidential status. The detractors might have any number of reasons for such a view. However, the phrase has come to represent a larger umbrella term against all types of critics, including ḥadīth skeptics.

One of the first works of this sort is the work of ʿAbdulghaniyy ʿAbdulkhāliq (1987). More recent works include the monographs of Anas Sarmīnī (2021b) and Aḥmad al-Sayyid (2017). All these works have the phrase *ḥujjiyyat al-sunna* in the title. Another recent work that does not share a similar title is Aḥmad ʿAbdulqādir's *Ḥarakāt Ḥadm al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya wa Mukāfaḥatuhā* (2023). This latter work is unique in its focus on thoroughly studying various groups and trends of ḥadīth skepticism as well as their arguments. Works from the *ḥujjiyyat al-sunna* genre often approach the question as beginning with how to ground the validity of our reliance on ḥadīth. ʿAbdulqādir's work assumes its validity and moves instead to analyzing and critiquing other views. Finally, Muḥammad Aswad's (2008) *al-Ittijāhāt al-Muʿaṣira fī Dirāsat al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya*, provides an analysis of the various currents in contemporary ḥadīth studies in Egypt and al-Shāmm. Aswad, like ʿAbdulqādir, provides an analysis and rebuttal of some of the main ḥadīth-skeptical views.

As for more specific rebuttals and responses, here, too, the literature is vast. Nevertheless, it is useful to mention some examples. Several works have emerged to

[14] Although there is some awareness of the complexity and spectrum of views in anglophone ḥadīth studies, it does seem that arabophone ḥadīth studies, as a body of literature, continues to view the former as being largely skeptical and dismissive. As we will mention below, this is not entirely true.

disprove the early orientalist thesis that ḥadīth scholars ignored textual criticism. Sulṭān al-ʿAkāyla (2014), Mutaz al-Khaṭīb (2011), and Jamīl Abū Sārah (2016) have all published monographs arguing for the existence of textual criticism in the Islamic tradition. Aḥmad Snober (2023) has recently published a work seeking to disprove another orientalist thesis: the strong influence of politics on the transmission and acceptance of certain ḥadīth and not others. Finally, in a recently edited volume, several researchers have investigated and critiqued the employment of juristic methods of ḥadīth criticism by modernist scholars (Al-Bakri and Snober 2022).

2.1.2.5. How the Current Study Fits In: Gaps and New Horizons

The present study seeks to fill two main gaps in the arabophone literature. The first is the need for a serious philosophical examination of the epistemic foundations of traditional ḥadīth criticism. The second is the need for a true comparison between Western critical approaches to accepting or rejecting statements and the method of ḥadīth scholars.

The first gap is a result of many of the debates mentioned above. The most pressing reason for a serious examination of the epistemic foundations of the traditional critical method of ḥadīth scholars is the prevalence of ḥadīth skepticism. The field has experienced a prolonged and varied set of criticisms that seek to show the insufficiency of the traditional method. A key criticism has been the irrationality of the traditional method or a lack of concern for reason. In contrast, Islamic scholars have wanted to argue for the rationality and strength of *manhaj al-naqd*. Thus, calls for analyses that highlight the rationality and epistemic coherence of the traditional system are many.

There have been a couple of recent attempts to answer that call; however, they have fallen short of what is needed. The first and most relevant is al-ʻAwnī, *al-Usus al-ʿAqliyya* (2020). Many parts of his work provide the reader with the rationale behind the traditional method. However, apart from a few exceptions, they do not provide an analysis of how the system is grounded in rational principles, let alone how those principles can be justified.

A second relevant work is Khaldūn al-Aḥdab's *Taskhīl al-ʿAql al-Muslim* (2021). Like al-ʿAwnī's work, al-Aḥdab strives to stress the rational nature of *manhaj al-naqd*. However, he, like al-ʿAwnī, relies heavily on exegesis, explaining how the system functions and its various positive features, rather than any analysis of its deep structure. Both texts fail to highlight what the ultimate principles and axioms of the traditional method are and how they are used to evaluate the authenticity of ḥadīth.

In order to accomplish this end, this study strives to abstract out the core principles of the field from their ḥadīthic contexts. Thus identifying and separating out the form (*al-ṣūra*) from the matter (*al-mādda*). The present study also relies heavily on adjacent Islamic sciences that have already developed theories around the existence of core axioms for any given science. Beyond this, a further step has been taken in this study by focusing on the justification of these core axioms and principles.

The second major gap that this dissertation hopes to fill in the arabophone literature is a true epistemic analysis of the traditional method of ḥadīth criticism, as well as a comparison and engagement with Western anglophone epistemology. It is important to stress that the comparison is not with Western ḥadīth studies since, in addition to its own problems, Western ḥadīth studies suffers from the blind spot of being unaware of contemporary epistemological research. Rather, the gap this study hopes to fill is putting the field into direct conversation with contemporary anglophone epistemology.

Since the 1980s, there have been very few studies that have focused on epistemology in the arabophone literature. Of those that have been published, most of them have little to no engagement with anglophone epistemology. They mostly serve as summaries of some of the most important epistemic debates in the Islamic tradition. ʿAbdullah al-Qarnī (1994), ʿAbdurraḥmān al-Zunaydī (1992), Aḥmad Saʿd al-Damanhūrī (2018), and Jaʿfar ʿAbbās Ḥājī (1986) have all published monographs on Islam and epistemology that represent this trend. As for the few texts that do engage with Western anglophone epistemology, they either have little engagement with Islamic philosophy or, if they do, they have little engagement with ḥadīth studies and parallel investigations in Western epistemology. Zakī Najīb Maḥmūd's (2017) monograph is representative of the former, and Saeed Fode's (n.d.; 2022) unpublished

work, as well as his more recent published work on contemporary philosophy, are representative of the latter.[15]

This study will fill this second gap in the arabophone literature by presenting a detailed epistemic analysis of traditional Islamic philosophy in light of Western anglophone epistemology, with a specific focus on ḥadīth studies. As will be discussed at greater length below, there is an entire subfield of epistemology, the epistemology of testimony, which overlaps in scope and epistemic problem space with ḥadīth studies. There has been no engagement to date with this field in the arabophone literature. However, before discussing the epistemology of testimony literature, it is important to speak briefly about Western ḥadīth studies and how this present study fits in with the contemporary literature from that field.

2.2. Western Anglophone Scholarship[16]

In contrast to the arabophone Islamic tradition, Western anglophone ḥadīth scholarship's output has been minimal. This is not surprising, given the fact that the content is civilizationally foreign to its initial researchers and given the relatively nascent stage of the field. The former point requires elucidation.

Western ḥadīth scholarship originates in the 18th and 19th centuries as part of two main impetuses. The first is colonial. Major European colonial powers sought to study Islam in order to better understand the subjects of their new empires and as a means of gaining the know-how to better subdue them and other future enemies. The second impetus grew out of critical biblical studies, which itself was an extension of the humanism of the Renaissance (J. A. C. Brown 2018, 227–38).

[15] In fact, many of the works that do not engage with Western epistemology also do not spend much time focused on the critical method of ḥadīth scholars, despite its centrality in Islamic epistemology.

[16] There are now a number of useful summaries of Western ḥadīth scholarship, particularly when it comes to the central figures of the early and intermediate periods of the field. See Herbert Berg (2000, Chapter 2), Harald Motzki (2002, Chapter 1), Jonathan Brown (2018, Chapter 9), and Daniel Brown (2020b). Although I have benefited from all of them in this present literature review, I also went back to the original material, compared and contrasted their analyses, added new material, and have offerred my own analysis of the intellectual debates.

Given the origins of Western ḥadīth scholarship in the colonial projects of the European powers on the one hand and humanism and critical biblical studies on the other, it is no surprise that the entire tradition is rooted in an extreme skepticism towards both the ḥadīth corpus as well as the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars. These two points of origin have continued to impact the direction of the field until this very day. However, there are various trends within the Western ḥadīth studies tradition that are important to isolate and identify.

2.2.1. Goldziherian Skepticism

Although Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921) is often considered the founding father of Western ḥadīth studies, this is not technically true due to the existence of several earlier studies that preceded him.[17] Nevertheless, it is clear that his work has had an enduring impact.[18] One of his two most impactful contributions has been his skepticism towards both the ḥadīth corpus as well as the traditional critical method of ḥadīth scholars.[19] According to him, the ḥadīth corpus is made up of forgeries, which spread during early Islamic history (Goldziher 1971, 2:44, 126–27). He attributes these forgeries to four main motivations: political, legal, sectarian, and communal/historical agendas (J. A. C. Brown 2018, 240–41). He especially emphasizes the role of the political elite in this skeptical narrative. Commenting on this point, Jonathan Brown (2018, 241) writes, "To a large extent, he suggests, the study of hadiths on a large scale occurred because of Umayyad interest in political propaganda." According to this line of reasoning, this process continued to grow under the Abbasids when the usage of ḥadīth extended to all parts of one's life. In summary, the ḥadīth corpus, according to Goldziher, is not representative of what the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) said or did, rather it documents and reflects the Muslim community "during more mature stages of its development." (Goldziher 1971, 2:19)

His second most enduring contribution has been his usage of standard textual criticism tools to prove the inauthenticity of the ḥadīth corpus. For instance, he relies on

[17] See, for example, the works of William Muir (1858), Edward Sachau (1870), Alois Sprenger (1865; 1856), and Alfred von Kremer (1877), all of whom preceded Goldziher.
[18] His most seminal work being, *Muhammedanische Studien* (1971).
[19] A more robust analysis of his skepticism and the skeptcism employed by those who are generally associated with this camp is needed. However, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

anachronisms as proof of fabrication, rejecting the rebuttal that Prophecy, by definition, answers this objection (Goldziher 1971, 2:143). According to Goldziher, ḥadīth critics totally ignored such textual criticism. Goldziher argues, "Nobody is allowed to say: 'because the *matn* contains a logical contradiction or historical absurdity, I doubt the correctness of the *isnad*.'" (Goldziher 1971, 2:140–41) He also relies on the *Principle of Analogy* to construct a better narrative of how fabrications might have spread (J. A. C. Brown 2018, 236).[20]

Daniel Brown (2020b, 42) summarizes Goldziher's focus on textual criticism well, "In the end, the content of a hadith report is the only criterion for evaluating the context and provenance of any particular tradition."[21] These central theses of Goldziher dominated the field for decades and served as building blocks for scholars who embraced his largely skeptical view. According to this line of reasoning, the ḥadīth corpus does not represent authentic statements about what the Prophet said or did; rather, it represents the beliefs, opinions, and attitudes of the community that succeeded him. This view, according to Daniel Brown (2020b, 43), holds that "the likelihood that any given tradition can be confidently attributed to the Prophet approaches zero."

Joseph Schacht (d. 1969) and G.H.A. Juynboll (d. 2010) represent both a continuation and a development of Goldziherian skepticism.[22] For his part, Schacht (1950, 149), while still thoroughly convinced of the fabricated nature of the ḥadīth corpus, was more optimistic about the plausibility of dating when a forgery might have emerged. To further emphasize the fabricated nature of the corpus, he extended the usage of textual criticism, relying on everything from polemics and elaborate details to convenient additions that support one school or help respond to an objection to prove forgery (Schacht 1950, 152, 156–57, 159). He also emphasized the argument from silence as proof of fabrication (Schacht 1950, 140; J. A. C. Brown 2018, 245–46).

[20] The *Principle of Analogy* asserts that cultures and civilizations are largely the same. Although they differ in certain fashions, they ultimately function in a similar fashion. This principle helps the critic reconstruct the past by relying on the present.
[21] See, also, Jonathan Brown (2018, 244–45).
[22] See Henri Lammens (1910) and Leone Caetani (1907) as examples of those who followed suit. Others have gone in another direction, including Montgomery Watt (1956), Maxime Rodinson (1968), Francis E. Peters (1994), and Tilman Nagel (2008).

As for the possibility of dating forgeries, Schacht (1950, 156, 163, 165) relies largely on the testimonial chain (*isnād*), employing his *common link* theory. In doing so, Schacht shifted Goldziherian skepticism considerably. The radical skepticism of Goldziher was far-reaching and applied to the entire ḥadīthic enterprise. For Schacht, skepticism about the authenticity of ḥadīth and skepticism towards the traditional narrative is warranted. However, by coopting the *isnād*, Schacht argued that we didn't need to be skeptical about the ability to come to know when forgeries emerged.

For his part, Juynboll builds on Schacht's *common link* theory, developing new terminology to help extend *isnād* analysis with *dives, spreading isnāds,* and the like (D. W. Brown 2020b, 47). However, his view considerably departs from the Schachtian epistemological portrait. For one, Juynboll doesn't believe that this critical process can tell us what the Prophet said; rather, it can only tell us what he didn't say (J. A. C. Brown 2018, 248–49). Secondly, he does not accept the idea that the *common link* is, by default, the fabricator. He remains largely agnostic about that particularly Schachtian view (Juynboll 1989, 353).

Juynboll also extends the skeptical arguments in two noteworthy ways. The first is his claim that the *common link* is evidence that the existence of that specific ḥadīth at that specific period is historically verifiable, whereas the solitary nature before it does not confer verifiability of its existence and circulation historically. Secondly, he argues that traditional ḥadīth criticism emerged too late to be able to address the extent of the forgeries in circulation and ultimately ignored the possibility that ḥadīth could be entirely forged (J. A. C. Brown 2018, 250; Juynboll 1989, 353).

Finally, a more extreme version of Goldziherian skepticism emerged in the writings of Patricia Crone (d. 2015) and Michael Cook. While earlier skeptics had focused their efforts on the ḥadīth corpus itself, this more extreme skepticism called into question the entire Islamic historical narrative (J. A. C. Brown 2018, 255–56). For example, Crone and Cook, in their now infamous *Hagarism* (1977), relying on Christian writings from the seventh century, argued that Islam was a Judaic apocalyptic movement. Crone (1987, 33), for her part, advocates for a type of presumptive right to skepticism, stating, "In the field of substantive law, traditions attributed to the Prophet must indeed be presumed to be inauthentic." She explains this point further, stating,

"The chance of authentic material surviving at their hands is exceedingly small. Indeed, in purely statistical terms it is minute." For his part, Cook is skeptical that even the *common link* represents a historically verifiable moment. In fact, Cook's skepticism ends up being directed toward any type of dating tools put forward by Schacht, Juynboll, or those that followed in their footsteps (D. W. Brown 2020b, 46–47). Thus, Crone and Cook represent the very epitome of a localized skepticism against all things Islamic.

2.2.2. Rejecting Skepticism

In response to this Goldziherian skepticism, two different currents emerged. The first current is made up of scholars problematizing the skeptical conclusions introduced above. These critics sought to debunk the largely revisionist claims being made by Goldziherian skepticism. Their counter-criticism focused on the assumptions made by the skeptics, their analytical tools and principles, and their conclusions. Secondly, a trend emerged that sought to construct a less skeptical edifice to dating ḥadīth.

Figures as early as Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan engaged with Western ḥadīth skepticism and attempted to respond to it. He argued that this radical skepticism was ultimately based on a bias against Muslims and that skeptics were contradicting themselves, rejecting all ḥadīthic material as being inauthentic while using that same material as evidence for their arguments about its inauthenticity. However, it was not until later figures like Fuat Sezgin (d. 2018), Nabia Abbott (d. 1981), Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi (d. 1976), and Mustafa Azami that a more robust set of rebuttals was brought forth. For his part, Sezgin (1967, 1:79) argues, contra to Goldziherian skepticism, that *isnāds* are reliable and that they document written, not oral, transmission.

As for Abbott (1967, 29, 31–32), she argues against the idea that the ḥadīth corpus was largely forged by the Umayyads or other political elites. Instead, she interprets the spread of ḥadīth transmission and attention to it during this period as an attempt to publicize what had, up until then, been private. She also argues against the idea that the growth of the number of ḥadīth in circulation necessitates forgery. Instead, she explains this growth in number as being a result of the introduction of paper, which made it easier to document ḥadīth. She also attributes this to the development of ḥadīth

studies itself; given the drive to collect all transmissions associated with any given ḥadīth, the number of transmissions was bound to grow (Abbott 1967, 66, 71–76).

As for Azami (2000, xvi), he argues that skeptics make radical inferences without justification. For example, their claims that the state commanded that ḥadīth be fabricated is unsupported by any evidence. Furthermore, any conclusions they do have evidence for are based on incredibly small sample sizes. Azami (2000, 219–21) also claims that the argument from silence is flawed since there are many factors that might obtain that would prohibit a scholar from referencing a ḥadīth as evidence. Finally, Azami (2000), Abbott (1967), and Siddiqi (1993) all argue that the writing of ḥadīth was much more widespread and rigorous than conceived of by Western skeptics.

Later, figures like David Powers (1989, 195) continued this rebuttal against the Goldziherian skeptics, arguing that the narrative the skeptics were asking their readers to believe was much less likely and much more incredible than the traditional Muslim narrative. Powers also argues that the *common links* referred to by the skeptics can be shown to have emerged much earlier than they do in their narrative. Furthermore, he argues that the view of radical skeptics like Crone, for some type of presumptive right for skepticism, should be rejected. Instead, he argues that "the burden of proof lies on those who would deny the authenticity of reports attributed to the Prophet." (Powers 1989, 199–200)

As for the second trend that emerged, which involved the construction of a less skeptical edifice of dating ḥadīth, the prime example of this is the work of Harald Motzki (d. 2019). Like those mentioned above, Motzki was critical of the work of Goldziher, Schacht, Juynboll, and others. For example, Motzki (2010) claims that the argument from silence is invalid; *common links* occur much earlier than previously thought, perhaps even as early as the Companion era, and finally, major ḥadīth transmitters such as Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742) were generally reliable in transmitting ḥadīth from their predecessors. His views break completely with the skeptical camp of Western critics.[23]

[23] This runs contrary to Daniel Brown's (2020b, 43, 52) assertion that Motzki and others like him are closer to the Goldziherian camp than popularly presumed. It seems Brown is not distinguishing between similar but different points. Naivety and credulity are a measure of one attitude, while skepticism is a

But what really sets Motzki's work apart is his offering up of a substitute to Goldziherian skepticism in all its iterations, in what came to be called the *isnād cum matn* analysis. Motzki's (2000, 174–75) system requires that all the variants of any given ḥadīth be gathered and compared and contrasted. Both the *isnāds* and the *matns* are taken into consideration during this analysis. Key to the analysis is the search for similarity vs. dissimilarity. Similarity is said to indicate an authentic moment, whereas more egregious dissimilarity is said to indicate either carelessness or deliberate fabrication.

It is important to stress that in many of these rebuttals, the idea is not to vindicate the traditional critical method of ḥadīth scholars per se, as much as it is to reject the radical skepticism of Goldziher and his successors. A good example of this can be found in Abbott (1967, 74), noting that the widespread disagreement among Muslim ḥadīth critics nullifies their work and renders their system ineffective. In contrast to Abbott, Motzki (2016, li) remained agnostic about the traditional critical method, stating, "Western scholarship has shown little interest in Muslim ḥadīth criticism." He hypothesizes that this might have something to do with the origins of the field, taking for granted the inadequacy and bias of the native system.

2.2.3. The Contemporary State of the Literature

Up until this point, the focus has been on the origins and development of Western ḥadīth studies. In contrast, this subsection will focus on the most recent scholarship in the field and its relation to what was mentioned above. It is useful to split this section into two: a continued focus on the question of authenticity and the investigation of ḥadīth beyond the question of authenticity. We will begin with the scholarship that continues to focus on the question of authenticity.

measure of another. To assert that Motzki and others like him are rigorous, careful etc, and thus not credulous is one thing, but to then claim that that means that they are similar to the Goldziherian view is incorrect. While Motzki and others might claim to not have certainty in the authenticity of a given ḥadīth being attributable back to the Prophet, this does not imply that they hold a weaker skeptical view about our ability to know that fact, or a stronger skeptical view about whether we can justifiably believe that fact. As mentioned above, these views deserve their own epistemic analysis, however, such an analysis is beyond the scope of the present study.

Recent scholarship in the field has not diverged greatly from the two main views and their various iterations. For example, Wael Hallaq (1999) has argued that the entire framing of Western ḥadīth scholarship concerning the question of authenticity has missed the mark. Islamic scholars have always viewed the ḥadīth corpus as being probabilistic (*ẓannī*) and not certain (*qaṭ ʿī*), thereby rendering Goldziherian skepticism misplaced. Jonathan Brown (2009) responds to this claim, asserting that Hallaq has superimposed a largely rationalist classical understanding onto the work of preclassical scholars, one that they themselves would not accept.

Brown (2008; 2012), for his part, has argued that the Goldziherian skeptic's assumption that ḥadīth scholars did not engage in *matn* criticism is incorrect. However, according to Brown, ḥadīth scholars might have concealed that side of their criticism due to their dispute with rationalists as well as due to the unregulated nature of such an approach. Elsewhere, Brown (2007a) has worked to disprove another key claim of Schacht, that forgeries can be discerned through what he called a backgrowth of *isnāds*.[24] Brown's rebuttal is that ḥadīth scholars were alive to this issue and that Western skeptics failed to research properly how ḥadith scholars engaged with this question, particularly in their failure to research the genre of ḥadīth scholarship known as *ʿilal al-ḥadīth*.

Andreas Görke, Gregory Schoeler, and Sean Anthony have taken up and further developed the Motzkian dubbed *isnād cum matn* analysis. Through their work, they have attempted to push the dating of ḥadīth further back into history beyond the late first century. Through the usage of these means, Görke (2003, 191), Schoeler (2011, 114), and Anthony (2010) claim to be able to establish the historicity of the transmission of key events to as far back as al-Zuhrī, ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 94/712), and Anas b. Mālik (d. 91/709). Through similar means, Görke, Schoeler, and Anthony argue that they can verify incidents from the Prophet Muhammad's (ṣ) life. Although their method doesn't get them all the way back to the Prophet himself, it gets them to within a few decades. For them, this is enough to historically verify the incidents in question. Schoeler (2011, 114) writes, "We can as a rule assume that the report correctly reflects at least the main outlines of the event." Similarly, Görke (2012, 3)

[24] See Schacht (1950, 22).

writes that these ḥadīth are "likely to reflect traces of the historical Muhammad." Finally, Anthony (2010, 465) writes, "Here, I believe there is plenty of evidence to be optimistic that the conditions of the early Medinan community have been preserved."

The Motzkian alternative to Goldziherian skepticism, as well as the criticisms of the skeptical view more broadly, have been so successful that they have emerged as the dominant view. Reflecting on the success of the Motzkian method against the previously ascendant view of Goldziherian skepticism, Herbert Berg (2003, 261) writes, "It would seem, however, that a consensus is forming in support of the sanguine scholars, leaving (at least in the minds of the former) the burden of proof with the skeptical scholars." Pavel Pavlovitch (2020, 117), who has himself further developed the *isnād cum matn* analysis, writes, "Since the second half of the 1990s, Western scholars have been using the *isnād*- cum-*matn* analysis on a wide scale."

Some critics on the other side of the intellectual aisle, while admitting that these methods have been fruitful to some degree, are more hesitant about the conclusions and usefulness of these *isnād cum matn* analyses. For example, Stephen Shoemaker (2011, 267, 332), while admitting that Motzki has successfully dated ḥadīth to the second century, is unconvinced by the attempts to date further back, beyond al-Zuhrī. Similarly, Christopher Melchert (2003, 302–3) agrees that Motzki's methods have proven that ḥadīth can be shown to be authentically attributable to the second century. However, Melchert argues that the use of single strand *isnāds* and the number of contradictions in the ḥadīth corpus itself renders this process ultimately historically useless. Furthermore, Melchert (2004) and P.J. Gledhill (2012) have argued that Motzki's conclusions rely heavily on assumptions about how forgery works. Gledhill (2012) also argues that Motzki's methods, when applied to other cases, do not produce reliable findings.

2.2.4. Beyond the Authenticity Debate

Although the question of authenticity has been by far the most central question of the study of ḥadīth in the anglophone West, recently, scholars have begun to venture out into new territory. The view that the debate has reached an impasse and that there are other interesting topics that deserve investigation has grown considerably. While many

of these topics still have a bearing on the question of authenticity, the analyses and investigations are focused elsewhere.

For example, Jonathan Brown's (2007b; 2011) research has heavily focused on the canonization of various ḥadīth texts in the Islamic tradition. He has particularly focused on two of the most important texts in Sunnī Islam, *Ṣahīh al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Pavel Pavlovitch's (2023) prosopographic study of Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875) adds to Brown's work through his deep dive into the famous ḥadīth scholar's life and works. While Pavolvitch's study of Muslim can be seen as being a continuation of the authenticity debate from one vantage point, it moves well beyond it. Mir Sadeq Ansari's (2022) recent doctoral dissertation on Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī's (d. 321/933), *Sharh Muskhil al-Āthār*, accomplishes something similar. From one vantage point, it relates to the authenticity debate in that it focuses on the role of *matn* criticism and reason in al-Ṭaḥāwī's critical apparatus. However, in its focus on al-Ṭaḥāwī and the deep dive into his work, it has already moved beyond the normal area of inquiry.

Racha El-Omari (2012), Sohail Laher (2014), and Dale Correa (2014) have each provided important research tying the study of ḥadīth to the fields of legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and theology (*kalām*). El-Omari has researched classical Muʿtazilite views on ḥadīth. Laher's investigation into *tawātur* provides both a historical and multidisciplinary analysis of the concept of *tawātur* in Islamic thought. For her part, Correa investigates how Transoxanian Muslim scholars constructed a theory of knowledge that grounds both the Qurʾān and ḥadīth.

Michael Dann (2105), Aiyub Palmer (2020), and Jawad Qureshi (2020) have each focused on the study of ḥadīth from the vantage point of a particular group or period. Dann investigates the role of Shiʿī ḥadīth transmitters in Sunnī sources. Palmer focuses on the historical relationship between Sufism, ḥadīth scholars, and ḥadīth studies more broadly. Qureshi's work investigates the study of ḥadīth in the Muslim world over the last two hundred years.

Recep Şentürk (2005), Joel Blecher (2018), and Garrett Davidson (2020) have each investigated ḥadīth studies from a new lens. Şentürk's study investigates the network

of ḥadīth transmission from a sociological perspective, focusing on the social structure of generational and intergenerational discourse. Blecher's work has focused on ḥadīth commentaries, particularly commentaries on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in classical Andalusia, late medieval Egypt, and modern India. Davidson, for his part, also focuses on ḥadīth transmission, particularly on what he calls the post-canonical period, but from a historical, intellectual, and social perspective.

A further indication of this shift in focus can be found in one of the most recent publications in Western ḥadīth studies, an anthology of articles edited by Mohammed Gharaibeh titled *Beyond Authenticity* (2023). The anthology includes pieces on the inscription of ḥadīth on medieval Anatolian and Cairean architecture, as well as an article on the legislative ḥadīth genre (*aḥādīth al-aḥkām*). The anthology also includes several studies focusing on the social function of ḥadīth and ḥadīth in various geographic locations.

2.2.5. How the Current Study Fits In: Gaps and New Horizons

2.2.5.1. The Traditional Critical Method of Ḥadīth Scholars

The present study fills several gaps in the Western anglophone literature. The first and most pressing gap is the absence of any thorough investigation into the traditional critical method of ḥadīth scholars. While there have been some surveys into the traditional critical method, it has not received the type of analysis and evaluation that it deserves. The following works are the most important found in the literature to date.

Iftikhar Zaman's (1991) work is one of the first, if not the first, anglophone work that attempts to address the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars. However, his work is more of an application of multiple methods of analysis and then a comparison between the results. Zaman (1991, 192) himself explains his choice, writing, "My initial approach was to attempt to isolate two 'paradigms,' perhaps with reference to two sets of presuppositions. This problem was complicated enough that I felt that a simple elaboration of two such sets of presuppositions would have to be deemed a 'significant and original contribution' to the field of hadith studies. A study of this problem led me to the idea that the diversity of scholarly approaches was sufficient that I would not be

able to come up with two sets of presuppositions and two paradigms." Thus, Zaman's work cannot be properly understood as an analysis of the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars, as much as it is a comparative project, which we will return to below.

Eerick Dickinson (2001), in his study of the *Taqdima* of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 327/938), provides a historical analysis of his life and works, followed by a more focused analysis of the text itself. While useful in many ways, Dickinson's study ignores the vast theoretical literature on ḥadīth criticism developed by Islamic scholars after the *Taqdima*. Dickinson, at times, alludes to these texts in the footnotes, but it's as though their theoretical analysis and development are not a part of his own analysis. While this is partially understandable given that he is focusing on one particular figure and one particular text, we do not walk away with a thorough understanding of the traditional critical method of ḥadīth scholars as they understood it, theorized about it, and applied it. If the idea is that the theorization of later scholars is not representative of the work of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī and those that preceded him, it would still require some type of engagement with the later material, all of which he largely ignores.

Scott Lucas's work, *Constructive Critics, Ḥadīth Literature, and the Articulation of Sunnī Islam* (2004, 21), is a multifaceted study that "analyzes the origins of the Sunnī articulation of Islam from the angle of the vast Sunnī ḥadīth literature." Lucas (2004, 1) highlights the lacuna in the field, writing, "The quintessential Sunnī disciplines of ḥadīth compilation and criticism remain essentially unexamined by modern scholarship…." Unlike Dickinson's work, Lucas does not focus on one ḥadīth critic or book, rather his study is an impressive and expansive study of ḥadīth criticism spanning generations. Similarly, unlike Dickinson's book, Lucas (2004, 24–40) recognizes the theoretical development of the traditional critical method by classical scholars and begins his study there. However, despite the many useful contributions of the work, Lucas ignores an essential aspect of the traditional critical method: the development of axioms and rules that ḥadīth scholars were using that most clearly represent their method. Furthermore, like Dickinson, there is little engagement with the philosophical views underpinning the traditional system. More will be said about this in the methods section below.

Finally, there are a few articles that shed light on more limited aspects of the traditional approach. For example, Melchert (2001) investigates the attribution of *al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr* to Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) as well as some simple comparisons between it and other adjacent texts. Jonathan Brown (2016) investigates the relationship between two important classical ḥadīth figures and their respective texts, al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405/1014) and his work, *Maʿrifat ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*, and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) and his work, *Tārīkh Baghdād*. Albrecht Noth (2016), in an attempt to bring together what he calls "autonomous Muslim ḥadīth scholarship" on the one hand and "orientalist ḥadīth scholarship" on the other, suggests taking a closer look at the Islamic scholarly genre of fabrications (*al-mawḍūʿāt*). His article provides an introduction to this genre through the work of Abū al-Faraj ʿAbdurraḥmān b. al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) and his list of reasons for fabrication. Belal Abu Abu-Alabbas (2017), in a recent article, investigates the similarity in critical methods and views between Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) and Imām Muslim. Lastly, Pavlovitch (2019), in his entry on ḥadīth criticism in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, completely associates the term with the subgenre of ḥadīth criticism known as *al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl*, which he translates as impugning and accrediting. He then proceeds to give a bird's eye view of the various types of texts found in this genre, as well as some of the important figures and ideas associated with it.

2.2.5.2. What or Who Is the Object of Study

The second major lacuna that this present study hopes to fill is to articulate the inherited *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars as a living philosophical system. Lucas (2004, 14) writes, "Furthermore, the transmission and criticism of ḥadīth continues to this day, over 1400 years after the Prophet Muḥammad's death, wherever Muslims are to be found." Yet, despite this reality, most of Western ḥadīth studies has largely ignored the living scholarship and articulation of Muslims of their own religion and sciences.

For too long, the study of Islam has been monopolized by a view that treats the religious tradition as either some ancient lost tradition that must be discovered and studied or as a continuous tradition that cannot speak for itself. Rather, "objective" researchers from "outside of the tradition" must evaluate it and speak for it. Evidence

of this fact can be found in the absence of citations or serious engagement with contemporary ḥadīth scholarship in the Muslim world. Commenting on a similar point, Jonathan Brown (2018, 227) writes, "Second, however, Western criticism of the hadith tradition can be viewed as an act of domination in which one worldview asserts its power over another by dictating the terms by which 'knowledge' and 'truth' are established. From this perspective, one could ask why the 'light' that Western scholars shed on hadiths is necessarily more valuable to 'the advancement of human understanding' than what the Muslim hadith tradition has already offered."

Two further points are worth noting about this gap in the scholarship. The first is that there is an adjacent phenomenon occurring between what can be characterized as "inside" and "outside" perspectives within the Western discourse on ḥadīth studies. This "inside" vs. "outside" tension might be confused with a type of engagement mentioned above, and therefore, the difference must be clarified. The views of scholars such as Sezgin, Abbott, and Azami are discussed and engaged with to varying degrees, and one could argue that they are representative of the traditional view. However, this is not the type of representation of views or substantive engagement intended. For one, the research of these authors was not focused on explicating the traditional critical method itself. At most, their work can be characterized as a rejection of and critique of the radical features of Goldziherian skepticism. The fact that they might accept some of the standard narrative does not necessitate that their views and arguments are representative of the traditional method. Of course, the opposite is also true, and it does not preclude them from such views either. Therefore, ultimately, this point hinges on what type of scholarship is produced and published.

Furthermore, it is not just strange but outright testimonially unjust that contemporary scholarship in the Muslim world, which vastly outnumbers Western scholarship on ḥadīth, is given, at best, a subordinate position. Not only should the *manhaj al-naqd* of hadīth scholars be analyzed and explicated, but it should be done so in conversation with Muslim scholars who have inherited this philosophical system and have been theorizing about it and applying it in an unbroken chain for more than a millennium. This project hopes to begin to fill this obvious gap.

Building off the above, the second point worth noting is that some in the Western academy have slowly begun engaging with contemporary ḥadīth scholarship in the Muslim world. In the recently published *Wiley Blackwell Concise Companion to the Hadith* (2020a), edited by Daniel W. Brown, and separately, *Modern Hadith Studies: Continuing Debates and New Approaches* (2020), edited by Abul-Alabbas, Dann, and Melchert, several articles have been published in each compendium by researchers who are not only living in the Muslim world but who can also be properly thought of as both scholars of ḥadīth and practitioners of traditional ḥadīth criticism. This, of course, is a positive and welcome development. The present study can thus be seen as further building upon this new direction in the field.

2.2.5.3. An Epistemological Impasse

The third and final lacuna that the present study fills is that it begins to answer the most serious impasse that the field currently faces. As mentioned above, the Motzkian method has, for the time being, gained the upper hand against what we have called Goldziherian skepticism. However, the debate continues and remains unresolved.

In fact, it has become normal to characterize the debate concerning the question of authenticity as being at a type of standstill or impasse, which seems unresolvable. On this point, Berg (2003, 261) writes, “Neither side seems to be able to convince the other, and both seem perplexed, even exasperated, with each other. In this article I will demonstrate that these two sets of scholars are operating with two different and mutually exclusive paradigms, and that there is little hope of one side convincing the other.”

Furthermore, the debate around the authenticity of the ḥadīth corpus has morphed into a meta-methodological debate, where the debate is no longer merely about the authenticity of the corpus but about the reliability of the analytical tools and assumptions of both sides. The latter point, concerning the assumptions of the two camps, has become particularly important in the ensuing debate. At least some of the participants feel that the “debate is deadlocked over initial assumptions.” (Melchert 2020a, 217)

To add to the complexity above, some Western scholars have recognized that the traditional method of Islamic scholars also has its own set of analytical tools and assumptions. On this point, Jonathan Brown (2018, 228) writes, "The Muslim hadith tradition and the Western academic study of Islamic origins represent diametrically opposed approaches to evaluating the authenticity of reports about the past. Both are critical, in that they concern themselves with questions of the reliability of historical sources, but they proceed from two sets of assumptions that are at loggerheads."

Although the debate between the Goldziherian skeptics and their detractors is not often discussed in the same context as the traditional critical method, the reality is that it is the same area of inquiry. This debate, having evolved into a meta-methodological debate, has essentially become epistemological in nature. No longer is it a debate about ḥadīth; it has broadened into a debate about the epistemological evaluation of analytical tools. It has also descended into adjacent epistemological questions concerning skepticism, dogmatism, and what they call assumptions, which will later be referred to in this study as principles or axioms.[25]

Unfortunately for the field, it is ill-equipped to engage in this meta-methodological discussion since its focus is socio-historical and not philosophical. In a way, this has already been recognized by researchers when discussing the different "epistemologies" at play. It is instructive here to quote Daniel W. Brown (2020a, 9) at length:

> The second major story line of this book traces what happens when a centuries old body of scholarship based on a tradition-centered system of historical epistemology becomes the object of another scholarly system with a quite different set of assumptions and methods. From the nineteenth century onward the hadith became the pre-occupation of a Western tradition of historical scholarship that applied sophisticated tools of source criticism pioneered and already destructively employed in the study of early Judaism and Christianity. The assumptions of Western scholarship have often been profoundly skeptical and the results often devastating to bodies of received knowledge. One of the subtexts of this book will be the interaction between these two very different ways of approaching the hadith literature. Distinguished scholars of both traditions are represented here. Contributors make no effort, however, to reconcile these perspectives, if indeed such a reconciliation is possible.

[25] See, for example, the back and forth between Berg (2003) and Motzki (2003), as well as more recently Pavlovitch (2020).

Elsewhere, Daniel W. Brown points to another important and relevant epistemological point; the epistemological study of ḥadīth is not essentially different from the epistemological study of other transmitted statements. Brown (2020a, 3) writes, "We should also not let complexity obscure the fundamental universality of the epistemological issues raised by the study of hadith. We can begin to grasp this universality by stepping outside of the Islamic tradition altogether." He goes on to give the example of a quote from Winston Churchill and the epistemological investigation into its attribution to him. Further down, Brown (2020a, 3) writes, "Hadith thus reflects an epistemological system governing the transmission and evaluation of knowledge about the past."

What Brown is conceptually referring to is already a lively field of investigation in Western philosophy, referred to as the epistemology of testimony. Prior to Brown's allusion to this domain, both Laher (2014, 12) and Correa (2014, 2) had identified the overlap between the Western investigation into the epistemology of testimony and traditional ḥadīth studies, but their works were not comparative, nor were they integrative or synthetic. Laher merely alludes to the possibility of further research at the juncture between the two fields, whereas Correa benefits slightly more from the epistemology of testimony literature. This is precisely where the third intervention into Western ḥadīth studies will take place and is the gap that this study hopes to fill. While the idea and impetus for the project did not come from these two works, it serves as a logical progression to their having identified the need.

Of course, it is important to stress that this project will not attempt to analyze Golziherian skepticism nor the non-skeptical approach of the Motzkian camp; rather, the focus will be solely on the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars. Beginning with *manhaj al-naqd* makes sense for two reasons. For one, it came first historically. Second, the ḥadīth corpus as we know it, which is being studied by all these various groups, is at least partially a result of it. This will allow for future research, which is focused on analyzing the other methods as well as studies dedicated to comparing and contrasting them with the traditional method.

2.3. Turkophone Scholarship[26]

2.3.1. An Overview

As mentioned above, turkophone ḥadīth scholarship is both a distinct field and yet also an outgrowth of the arabophone Islamic intellectual tradition. Thus, many of the trends found in the turkophone body of literature overlap considerably with the arabophone literature. For the purposes of this literature review, the various similarities and points of continuity will not be listed out; rather, only what is relevant to this dissertation will be focused on.

Despite being an outgrowth of the arabophone Islamic intellectual tradition, certain segments of turkophone academic research in ḥadīth studies have also been heavily influenced by Western ḥadīth studies. Given the impact of both the Islamic intellectual tradition (*vis-à-vis* arabophone sources) and Western ḥadīth scholarship on turkophone ḥadīth studies, the result has been the formation of two different camps. On one side of the intellectual aisle are the traditionalists, who are in line with the inherited intellectual tradition. On the other side of the aisle are the modernists, sometimes called the progressives, who hold much more critical, if not outright skeptical, views.

While the Faculty of Theology in Ankara has served as a hub for the modernist camp, its history is more complex. Muhammed Tayyib Okiç (d. 1977) was asked to establish the ḥadīth department, and having studied in Paris, he had extensive knowledge of the Western approach to the subject. Although he did not himself advocate for particular orientalist views, he did encourage his students to learn European languages so that they could study the works of orientalists (Kızıl 2020).

Mehmed Said Hatiboğlu, one of Okiç's first doctoral students, would eventually grow to become one of the most important standard bearers of the progressive camp. In his dissertation, he advocates for a more critical approach to the ḥadīth corpus. He relies on Goldziher and political conflicts, as well as the tribulation (*fitan*) genre, as examples

[26] I have relied on Fatma Kızıl's (2020) "Western Hadith Studies in the Turkish Academe" for a summary of turkaphone ḥadīth scholarship. While I have added slightly to her exposition, in general I have drawn on her analysis and restructured it to fit into the classifications and aims of this project.

of the need for a more skeptical approach to the ḥadīth corpus (M. S. Hatiboğlu 2017, 157; 2020, 60). Eventually, he argues that the entire genre of ḥadīth about *fitan* is forged (M. S. Hatiboğlu 2015, 19). Hatiboğlu also relies on many other orientalist researchers in his works.

Talât Koçyiğit, another student of Okiç, took a different path. He, unlike Hatiboğlu, investigated the work of Goldziher but was largely critical of his findings. Like Okiç, Koçyiğit was not entirely dismissive of Western ḥadīth studies, but he also argued that some Western researchers were purposefully misrepresenting their findings to discredit the religion (Okiç 2017, 6, 9; Koçyiğit 1961).

Thus, although there are two distinct camps, the traditionalists and the modernists, in reality, there is a spectrum of views from both within the Turkish academy and outside of it. Despite the common association between the Ankara school and the modernist camp, where one falls on that spectrum is not dictated by geography; rather, it is dictated by the approach of the scholar, irrespective of where they are based. The result is that faculties across Turkey are home to a diverse spectrum of views.

The disagreement and debates between the two camps express themselves in both the academy and the public preaching square. One of the more paradigmatic cases of the two opposing sides is found in Yaşar Kandemir (1998) defending the reliability of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* and Hatiboğlu's (1997) critique of their reliability. Although these tensions are not unique to the turkophone literature, the figures and some of their arguments are.

Given the more recent popularity of the Motzkian rejection of skepticism among Western ḥadīth scholars, contemporary turkophone research has shifted in its evaluation of Western views as well. While the battle lines might have been more sharply drawn a few decades ago, recent research shows a greater willingness to benefit from others while also maintaining principled positions. For example, Bekir Kuzudişli (2016) argues that while benefit can be drawn from the methodologies and approaches of Western ḥadīth scholarship, it needs to be grounded in language and concepts that are integrable within the Islamic tradition. For her part, Fatma Kızıl

(2011) argues for an improved approach by combining the Motzkian *isnad cum matn* analysis and the evaluations of ḥadīth transmitters by ḥadīth critics.

It is important to stress that turkophone ḥadīth studies is varied and multifaceted. Not only is there a spectrum of views on the question of the reliability of the corpus, but there is also a diversity of views and interests on other topics as well. We find researchers working on other topics, like Shīʿism and ḥadīth studies, commentaries, transmitter criticism, as well as juristic approaches to ḥadīth.[27]

2.3.2. How the Current Study Fits In: Gaps and New Horizons

Given the relationship of the turkophone literature to other traditions, the present study is relevant to it in many of the same ways that it is relevant to the arabophone and anglophone literature. Thus, like in the case of the arabophone literature, it begins to fill the need for a serious philosophical examination of the epistemic foundations of traditional ḥadīth scholarship. Similarly, it fills the need for a true comparison between Western critical approaches to accepting or rejecting statements and the method of ḥadīth scholars.

As for its similarity to the Western anglophone tradition, the turkophone literature has also picked up on the thread of an epistemic methodological impasse. For instance, Kızıl (2015) investigates what she calls "theological *musallamāt* (propositions)" as a way of making sense of the vast differences between Western and Islamic methods and views. While the present study does not investigate the same exact premises, it coheres well with the trend in her scholarship.

Ultimately, while turkophone scholarship is truly distinct in certain ways, given its historical reality and given the global intellectual village that we occupy, it is derivative in others. Thus, both the topics that are investigated and the gaps that exist often mimic those found in either the traditional literature and its contemporary arabophone expression or the Western ḥadīth literature. However, that similarity should not lead us to overlook some of the unique threads of investigation found

[27] See, for example: Serdar Demirel (2013); Bekir Kuzudişli (2018); Mustafa Macit Karagözoğlu (2017b; 2019; 2020); Murteza Bedir (2002); and Muhammet Beyler (2021).

therein, as well as the unique solutions put forward within the turkophone literature. For instance, it is not common to find middle-ground approaches to Western ḥadīth literature within arabophone ḥadīth studies. For the most part, arabophone ḥadīth scholars are either extremely critical or extremely supportive of Western approaches to ḥadīth.

2.4. The Epistemology of Testimony[28]

2.4.1. An Overview

In this fourth and final section of the literature review, the anglophone epistemology of testimony literature will be introduced, as well as how this thesis fits into the debates found in that field. Unlike arabophone ḥadīth studies, the anglophone epistemology of testimony literature is a recent phenomenon, going back only a few decades. The first part of Chapter 4 will focus on analyzing this glaring gap and trying to make sense of it in light of Islamic epistemology and ḥadīth. For now, we only need to highlight the main trends in the epistemology of testimony literature and how Islamic philosophy, ḥadīth studies, and this particular dissertation fit into that picture.

There are several ways to classify the debates and areas of investigation found in the epistemology of testimony literature. However, despite those differences, a clear picture has emerged of some of the most pressing questions in the field. It is useful to list out those questions and then tie them together.

The first question asks what testimony is. This investigation focuses on the definition and necessary and sufficient conditions of testimony as a source of knowledge. The second question has to do with what is often referred to as the reduction debate. This debate focuses on how we make sense of our justified belief and knowledge of facts based on testimonial communication. Is that justification, after further analysis,

[28] I have relied upon a few resources for a bird's eye, big-picture, view of the field. Fist, Nick Leonard (2021) has a useful short article summarizing the major debates in the epistemology of testimony. Second, Axel Gelfert (2014) has published the first textbook-style introduction to the epistemology of testimony. Finally, Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa (2006) have jointly edited a volume on the epistemology of testimony that groups the areas of investigation into various topics of concern. While I benefitted from each of these three resources, I have not limited myself to them. Instead, I have synthesized across the three and added to and edited them based upon actual research in the field.

irreducible? Or does it ultimately reduce to non-testimonially-based beliefs? Between these two questions is a third question that focuses on the nature of testimonial communication, whether beliefs are being generated or transmitted through this epistemic process. A fourth question focuses on what has come to be called the individualism vs. anti-individualism debate. This question relates to whether our analysis of justification in cases of testimonial communication should be limited to the cognitive processes of the hearer or whether the analysis should be expanded to include the cognitive processes of the speaker. A fifth and related investigation strives to make sense of testimonial knowledge either through largely evidential terms or through non-evidential terms. The views associated with the latter path are often referred to as trust and assurance views.

The questions mentioned above can be thought of as all being inextricably linked to one another. However, several secondary questions have been raised that also occupy the literature. One such question is the role of authority and expertise in testimonial communication. A second area focuses on the testimony of groups and how to properly analyze such epistemic exchanges. A third area of research has been a focus on the history of testimony in both Western and non-Western philosophies. This has included a focus on specific historical figures, as well as non-Western traditions. Finally, there has been a focus on pathologies of testimony, things like lying, gossip, rumors, urban legends, and epistemic injustice.

This thesis will engage with only some of these questions. Chapter 4 will begin with an engagement with the history of testimony. The focus will be on analyzing why the Western tradition, historically, seems to have lacked a robust engagement with testimony when compared to the Islamic tradition. In this way, we will be engaging with two closely associated questions in the epistemology of testimony literature: the history of testimony and non-Western epistemologies.

We will then move on to the third and fourth areas of investigation, the definition of testimony and the question of belief-generation vs. belief-transmission. There is a rich amount of literature on the former in both traditions, while the latter is less robust in the Islamic tradition and more clearly documented in the anglophone tradition. Both

questions will be studied in Chapter 6, along with several other closely related questions pertaining to the nature of testimony.

The fifth and sixth areas of investigation that are relevant to this study are the questions of reduction and individualism. The question of reduction pertains to how we can justify the axioms and principles of the traditional method of ḥadīth criticism. As for the question of individualism, it will help us make sense of both the nature of testimony and its justification. These topics will be investigated in Chapter 7, which is dedicated to testimonial justification.

2.4.2. Narrowing the Engagement

Given the stated purpose of engaging with the anglophone epistemology of testimony literature, the relevant questions articulated above, the breadth of this project, and the nature of philosophical debates, this dissertation will engage with particular philosophers and texts as opposed to the whole field. Between these individuals and their views, a sufficient range of views is represented on any given question. It is useful here to say something about these choices.

For the questions of reduction, belief-transmission vs. belief-generation, and the definition of testimony, the present study will focus on the work of Jennifer Lackey (2006; 2008) and Axel Gelfert (2014). Lackey's seminal work is seen as a turning point between reductionist and nonreductionist views and thus presents a thorough summary and critique of both. More importantly, she argues for a hybrid view, which results in the full spectrum of views being accounted for. Lackey's work is also considered a turning point in the belief-transmission vs. belief-generation debate. Before her work, the former view was considered standard. Her work has, in many ways, helped change the current. As for Gelfert's work, given that it is written as an introductory textbook, it also provides a good summary of the wide spectrum of views.

When it comes to the question of individualism vs. anti-individualism, the primary work that will be engaged with is Sanford Goldberg's (2010; 2017; 2021) work. His research on the subject is the only genuinely standalone work focused on it. Therefore, my engagement, critique, and synthesis will be based on it.

Finally, as for the questions of the history of testimony and non-Western epistemologies, a thorough analysis of the literature can be found in Chapter 4. Beyond these areas, adjacent philosophical literature outside of the epistemology of testimony will be engaged with, primarily with the epistemological work of Baron Reed (2010; 2013), Richard Feldman (2003), Richard Fumerton (1995), and Catarina Novaes (2007; 2011). Reed's work on stable invariantism is a useful interlocutor when it comes to broader features of Islamic epistemology. Feldman and Fumerton's work on both epistemology as a field, as well as the internalism vs. externalism debate, is useful for introducing and understanding these questions. Finally, Novaes's work on formalization, axiomatization, and deduction is engaged within the portions of this thesis that focus on ḥadīthic axioms, rules, and inference.

2.4.3. How the Current Study Fits In: Gaps and New Horizons

The contemporary philosophical literature on Islamic epistemology is sparse. The condition only worsens if we focus on Islamic conceptions of testimony. Therefore, this work is groundbreaking in its analysis of Islamic epistemology in general and ḥādīth and testimony in specific. It is instructive to list the various types of literature already available.

The first relevant type of literature available comes in the form of studies of particular Islamic scholars or epistemic themes. Jon McGinnis's (2008) study of Avicenna's (d. 427/1037) epistemology, Moiz Hasan's (2017) study of Al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī's (d. 816/1413) epistemology, Khairil Husaini Bin Jamil's (2017) study of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi's epistemology, Najah Nadi Ahmad's (2018) study of Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī's (d. 729/1390) epistemology, and Sohaira Siddiqui's (2019) study of the epistemology of Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), are all examples of individual-based scholarship. Franz Rosenthal's (2007) work on concepts of knowledge, which is not focused on a particular figure but rather on various definitions of knowledge, is an example of a thematic study. With the exception of Bin Jamil's study, none of these works touch upon ḥadīth as a substantive part of Islamic epistemology. For its part, Bin Jamil's study is focused on ḥadīth but not testimony. Furthermore, these studies are historical and do not engage with the material as a living philosophical system, nor do they engage with contemporary epistemology.

The second relevant form of literature engages Islamic philosophy from the vantage point of contemporary epistemology. A good example of this can be found in Anthony Robert Booth's (2016; 2017) works on Islamic philosophy and epistemology. However, he, too, largely ignores the question of testimony and ḥadīth.

The third and most relevant form of literature engages with Islamic views on testimony while taking into account contemporary epistemology. This can be found in Deborah Black's (2013) analysis of Avicenna's views on testimony, as well as Brett Yardley's (2021) and Peter Adamson's (2021) analysis of al-Ghazālī's views on testimony. However, Black and Yardley approach the question historically, not as a living system. Furthermore, all three, including Adamson's work, do not engage with ḥadīth studies as a field.

Therefore, this study fills several gaps. It is the first investigation of ḥadīth studies from a contemporary epistemic lens. It is also engaging with the literature as a living philosophical system. Therefore, it is not only furthering research on the history of testimony, but it is also furthering our understanding of non-Western philosophical systems. Finally, it is the first true comparative study between ḥadīth studies and the epistemology of testimony literature.

As Bryan W. Van Norden (2017) has recently argued, philosophy departments are facing a dilemma. They can continue to only offer classes and research on predominantly Western European philosophy, but in that case, they must change their department names to fit that limited scope, or they can expand their scope, classes, and research to include non-Western philosophy. In this way, this research project fits in with the growing interest in philosophy departments to expand to non-Western philosophies. This study is an attempt at doing just that. Before moving on to an engagement with the history of testimony literature, we need to identify another unique feature of this project: its methodology.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The goal of academic research is to produce new knowledge. Dissertations are the epitome of this type of knowledge production. The researcher is supposed to engage a given topic from a particular vantage point, relying on certain methods that then yield conclusions and new knowledge that can be shared with the broader research community. However, this all presupposes that the research methods being used are valid and efficacious.

Varying research methods can yield varying results. They can, if used improperly, fail to yield useful conclusions. Just like using the wrong tool to fix an appliance might lead to failure, so too, using the wrong research methodology might ultimately yield flawed results.

Beyond these considerations, the research methods of this particular dissertation are important for another reason: they help fill several methodological gaps in the literature. The research being undertaken in contemporary arabophone ḥadīth studies is often limited to a particular "history of philosophy" model. In comparison, the Western anglophone literature is largely socio-historical. Neither of these fields engages with the philosophical problem space of the questions being investigated. If the deep epistemic structure of the traditional critical method is the object of study, or if ḥadīth skepticism in its various arabophone and anglophone iterations is an impetus for this study, then the philosophical and epistemic space is of primary importance.

While the focus on the socio-historical side of a question can be of great benefit, it can, at times, eclipse the actual philosophical ideas being studied. In contrast, a history of philosophy approach, while allowing for greater attention to be paid to philosophical ideas, generally does so in a more exegetical and descriptive sense. The researcher's

job is ultimately to describe a system rather than to engage with it, critique it, or make a case for it.

Therefore, to fill these gaps, this study will be undertaken using both philosophical and historical methods. For the philosophical elements of the dissertation, various forms of analysis, as well as philosophical synthesis, will be used. For the historical sections, a diachronic, *longue durée*, history of ideas model, as well as a history of epistemology framework will be employed. In the next two sections, the various philosophical and historical methods that will be used will be expanded upon, with a particular focus on how these methods will help in the production of new knowledge.

3.1. Philosophical Methods

The primary domain of this dissertation is philosophical epistemology. In other words, the primary aim is to engage with epistemological questions philosophically. In terms of philosophical research methods, several forms of analysis, as well as philosophical synthesis, will be relied upon. These two methods are often juxtaposed as opposites of one another. Each of them aids in the production of new knowledge in its own way.

There is almost universal agreement that analysis is a core feature and method of philosophical inquiry (Beaney 2021, 1). However, giving an account of what analysis is, is a bit more complicated. At its core, analysis involves a form of deconstruction or a breaking down of that which is being analyzed into its component parts.

There are two closely related conceptions of analysis at play here. The first, often referred to as the *decompositional* conception of analysis, includes "the process of breaking a concept down into more simple parts, so that its logical structure is displayed." The second conception of analysis, which is often referred to as the *regressive* conception of analysis, includes "the process of working back to first principles by means of which something can be demonstrated."[29] (Beaney 2021, 4)

[29] There are other forms of analysis beyond the *decompositonal* and *regressive* type, but a taxonomy of analytical kinds is beyond the scope of this dissertation. See Beaney (2021) for an expansive treatment of the subject.

Analysis in these two senses will be readily used in this dissertation. The primary object of this analysis will be the traditional critical method (*manhaj al-naqd*) of ḥadīth scholars. Therefore, philosophical analysis of the *decompositional* variety will be used on the *manhaj al-naqd* to break down the critical method into simpler parts "so that its logical structure is displayed." Similarly, philosophical analysis of the *regressive* variety will be used on the *manhaj al-naqd* to work back from the finished form of the critical method to its first principles. The combination of these two analytic forms is represented in the first half of the dissertation's title: *The Rational and Epistemological Foundations of Ḥadīth Criticism*.

Before moving on to philosophical synthesis, given the popularity of *conceptual analysis*, it deserves a bit of elucidation. It has become common to refer to *conceptual analysis* as a key methodology of philosophical inquiry. *Conceptual analysis*, like analysis proper, can be described in several different ways. However, given the more limited nature and objective of this research methodology section, we can suffice ourselves with a brief overview.

The roots of modern *conceptual analysis* can be found in the Socratic inquiry into definitions. In fact, the Platonic definition of knowledge as "true belief with an account," or its modern equivalent of "justified true belief," are paradigmatic cases of *conceptual analysis*. One begins with a concept like knowledge and then attempts to clarify and define that concept through its various parts (Beaney 2021, 8–9). *Conceptual analysis* will also be used widely throughout the dissertation. At various stages in the dissertation, concepts like knowledge, justification, testimony, statements, and other terms will need to be clarified and defined through the process of *conceptual analysis*.

Given the explanation laid out above, it is clear that *conceptual analysis* is a type of *decompositional analysis*. In both cases, the explicandum is clarified and made more exact by breaking it down into its component parts. However, *conceptual analysis* can be thought of as being more limited to definitional inquiry, while the broader category of *decompositional analysis* might include an explicandum that is not one concept but an entire system. The parts and deep logic of a system, like the critical method of ḥadīth scholars, can be the object of analysis and not just a concept.

Philosophical synthesis is often characterized as the opposite of analysis. If analysis is a form of deconstruction or a breaking down into component parts, then synthesis can be characterized as a type of construction or a bringing together of disparate parts into a compound form. Therefore, analysis aims for simplicity and fundamental parts, while synthesis aims for complexity and the construction of compound forms.

Using somewhat parallel terminology, C.D. Broad (d. 1971) first classifies philosophical inquiry into critical vs. speculative philosophy. He then associates analysis with critical philosophy and synthesis with speculative philosophy (Broad 1947). Critical philosophy, according to Broad, has two chief tasks. The first task is to "analyze certain very general concepts such as number, thing, quality, change, cause, etc." The second task is to examine fundamental assumptions, "to take these propositions which we uncritically assume in science and daily life and to subject them to criticism." (Gustavsson 2021)

According to this parallel classification and terminology, synthesis is a type of speculative philosophy. Broad (1947) subclassifies speculative philosophy into two types. The first type is synopsis, which he characterizes as "the deliberate viewing together of aspects of human experience which are generally viewed apart, and the endeavor to see how they are inter-related." The second type, synthesis, aims "to supply a set of concepts and principles which shall cover satisfactorily all the various regions of fact which are being viewed synoptically." According to Broad's taxonomy and classification, both synopsis and synthesis are "specially characteristic" of speculative philosophy.

For the purposes of this study, Broad's synopsis has been collapsed into synthesis. The result is an analysis vs. synthesis distinction or a critical vs. speculative distinction. Although Broad is right to highlight that part of the aim of synthesis is to construct principles and concepts that work across an assortment of domains, the synthetic itself begins with the simpler task of bringing various domains together. The bringing together of separate domains presents a condition and state within the examiner that calls for a higher form of understanding.

The synthesis intended in this dissertation functions at two levels. The lower level includes analyzing the traditional method of ḥadīth scholars in light of the broader epistemic system found within Islamic philosophy. Many parts of the traditional critical method can't be made sense of without making sense of adjacent concepts and views or other topics that take logical precedence. This was already being done within the Islamic tradition to varying degrees. However, the aim here is to widen that scope and to be more explicit about it.

The second higher form of synthesis comes in the form of putting the traditional critical method of ḥadīth scholars in conjunction with the broader Islamic epistemic system into conversation with the anglophone epistemology of testimony literature. Putting these two traditions into conversation with one another presents a unique condition, one that calls for more clarification and analysis of each respective tradition. This then encourages the construction of concepts and principles that work across the two traditions.

Broad himself points to a similar tension found when engaging in synopsis:

> As I have shown in my examples, it often happens that each of several regions of fact, which we generally contemplate or react to separately, gives rise to its own set of concepts and principles; that each such set seems satisfactory and internally coherent; but that, when we contemplate these various departments together, we find that the corresponding sets of concepts and principles seem to conflict with each other. The intellectual discomfort thus produced in a person of philosophical disposition is perhaps the most usual motive for trying to analyze those concepts and to formulate those principles clearly. Such a process is an indispensable step towards deciding whether the inconsistency is real or only apparent and towards formulating it precisely if it is real; and this is a precondition of any efficient attempt to resolve it. (Broad 1947, 16)

Beyond the tension that might arise when bringing together two separate traditions, there are various aspects of the traditional critical method that are given new meaning and activated when brought into conversation with the anglophone tradition. For instance, elements of the traditional method are accentuated only when compared to a separate tradition. This is similar to how certain colors or shades in a painting might only become visible when compared to another painting. Furthermore, various philosophical threads might have made sense at their time but fell out of favor and, therefore, are preserved only in word. When these preserved views are put into

conversation with an entirely different tradition, new life is breathed into previously inactive views.

In fact, something similar can be said even for the dominant view. The traditional critical method of ḥadīth scholars developed over hundreds of years. However, eventually, it settled as a philosophical and epistemic system. While it continues to be applied on the ḥadīth corpus until this day, the traditional critical method is inherited without the same awareness of the philosophical space that it was constructed to occupy. The renewed interest in skepticism has reinvigorated some of that consciousness; however, to fully activate the system, it requires examining all of its features. Comparing it to another foreign tradition brings ossified parts of the traditional system back to life.

Finally, each tradition can benefit from the other. As was already mentioned above, the two traditions are ultimately concerned with the same domain and are investigating similar phenomena. Perhaps we can say that the epistemology of testimony literature is more concerned with testimony as a source in the absolute sense, whereas Islamic scholars are concerned with a special kind of testimony, Prophetic testimonies. Despite this difference, the investigations overlap in many useful ways, and there are many things that each tradition can learn from the other.

The Islamic tradition is much older and much more complex than the anglophone tradition. One thousand four hundred years of ḥadīth scholarship is filled with debates and views that anglophone scholars have yet to consider. Abstracting those views from their specialized context will allow them to be better considered in other contexts.

Conversely, there are philosophically upstream investigations found in the anglophone tradition that are largely nonexistent in the traditional critical method of ḥadīth scholars. These investigations are useful when it comes to contemporary debates around skepticism. However, in this dissertation, the focus will be more on how to fit the traditional critical method, in conjunction with the wider Islamic epistemic apparatus, into these discussions, as opposed to replying to skeptical objections directly.

These various benefits of philosophical synthesis are represented in the second half of the dissertation's title: *Comparing the Traditional Method of Ḥadīth Criticism and the Epistemology of Testimony*. Therefore, the analytic portions of this dissertation focus on the rational and epistemological foundations of the traditional critical method, and the synthetic portions of this dissertation focus on putting the two systems into conversation with one another. Through these two core philosophical methods, the dissertation will provide a wide variety of new findings.

3.2. Historical Methods

As described in the section above, the primary aim of this dissertation is philosophical epistemology. The epistemological questions themselves and the philosophical problem space that they occupy are the objects of study. However, given the long history of *manhaj al-naqd*, parts of this thesis are historical. Here, too, the dissertation hopes to fill methodological gaps in the literature. In each of the four bodies of literature mentioned above, there are methodological lacunae that remain unaddressed. The historical methods that will be relied upon throughout this dissertation are meant to fill those gaps.

The focus on axiomatization in the arabophone literature occurs in the absence of any diachronic, *longue durée* investigation into the epistemological historical arc of formalization. Critics of formalization focus on the differences between the classical expression of epistemic rules and the applied informal practices of the preclassical era. However, their focus is on the differences and not the similarities. Furthermore, their focus is often on showing how a given rule is violated by the practice of preclassical scholars, without any attention to the enduring ideas and overarching logic of epistemic formalization that occurs over several generations.

By relying on a diachronic, *longue durée* approach, often associated with Arthur Lovejoy's (1936) history of ideas method, this study hopes to highlight elements of the debate that have so far been ignored. The history of ideas method focuses on underlying unit ideas that persist – in some form - throughout history (Mouton 2023). It also concentrates on how ideas emerge throughout history and how they relate to one another. This is key to evaluating emerging and enduring epistemic concepts in

the traditional method of ḥadīth criticism. Furthermore, as Mark Bevir (2000) points out, traditions change and develop over time. Therefore, beyond merely identifying these key concepts and ideas, a diachronic history of ideas approach will need to focus on explaining departures from the preclassical tradition "by reference to the reasons people had for extending, modifying, or even rejecting" certain aspects of it.

> People develop, adjust, and transform traditions in response to dilemmas, where dilemmas are authoritative understandings that put into question their existing webs of belief. Dilemmas prompt changes of belief because they consist of new beliefs and any new belief necessarily poses a question of the agent's web of beliefs. Historians can explain a change of belief, therefore, by referring to the relevant dilemma. They can explain why someone reached a particular web of beliefs by representing it as a product of a series of modifications made to an inherited tradition in response to a series of dilemmas. (Bevir 2000, 221–22)

Thus, throughout the historical portions of this thesis, the focus will be on the underlying epistemic unit ideas and concepts that have emerged and/or endured, how they relate to one another in the ḥadīth tradition, as well as how that tradition has changed or developed through debate and social and intellectual dilemmas. In doing so, the present study will highlight continuity throughout the ages, right up to the contemporary era. In addition to continuity, it will show how the transformation and development of the *manhaj al-naqd* took place and why formalization occurred.

However, this historical approach is not enough. While the diachronic history of ideas method helps address the contemporary debate over axiomatization, it is not best suited to address other methodological gaps. The Western ḥadīth studies tradition, as well as the anglophone epistemology of testimony tradition, each has largely failed to recognize the value of the traditional critical method of ḥadīth scholars. The former has largely ignored it out of extreme bias and skepticism, while the latter remains essentially unaware of it. To fill this gap, a history of epistemology approach will be relied upon to highlight the strong rational foundations of the traditional method, as well as its value and relevance as an epistemic system.

Thomas Sturm (2011, 304), commenting on the history of epistemology approach, writes that it "is a way of studying knowledge and theories thereof that derives more from philosophical epistemology." He then identifies two key aspects of the history of epistemology method. Each of these two areas fills a methodological gap in the literature. For the sake of simplicity, we can show how the first part fills a

methodological gap in the Western ḥādīth studies literature and how the second part fills a methodological gap in the epistemology of testimony literature.

The first aspect of a history of epistemology approach asks whether a philosophical claim made historically is justified. In other words, it engages with the actual philosophical space of the claim, "rationally reconstructing and evaluating" arguments, "using all the standard tools (e.g., examine the meanings of central terms, distinguish premises and conclusions, analyze the logical form of the argument, consider its formal cogency as well as the truth of its premises, and so on)." Importantly, it does so avoiding "excessive contextualization" and focuses instead on the epistemological issues at hand (Sturm 2011, 308–10).

This stands in stark contrast to most Islamic studies research in the anglophone academy. Islamic studies departments, despite their variety, do not often stray from the standard philological or socio-historical approach. Rarely is the intellectual and philosophical output of past Islamic scholars investigated for its own sake. Either the question of justification is wholly ignored for other socio-political questions, or the views are assumed to be unjustified without engaging in proper rational reconstruction and evaluation. This gap will be addressed by focusing on the traditional critical method from this vantage point, rationally reconstructing their views and arguments and evaluating them on their own merits.

The second aspect of a history of epistemology approach is the claim that many of the "problems of epistemology are perennial and that trying to reconstruct and evaluate" these historical views "is meaningful for current debates." (Sturm 2011, 308) While the first aspect of the history of epistemology approach also focuses on reconstruction and evaluation, it could be done without any attention to contemporary debates. This second aspect of the history of epistemology approach brings it more in line with philosophical epistemology itself since the epistemic questions themselves remain the real object of investigation. By stressing this second aspect, the research is both philosophical and historical.[30]

[30] It might be useful here to think of a spectrum. On one extreme end of the spectrum, the ideas are completely ignored. A more balanced approach might investigate the ideas, but only in an exegetical sense. A more philosophical approach might reconstruct and evaluate the justification of the views in question. Finally, the other end of the spectrum treats the historical views as relevant to current debates

The epistemology of testimony literature, like analytic philosophy more broadly, suffers from a severe case of historical amnesia. By focusing on the philosophical problems themselves, with almost no attention to either historical investigations into the same questions or parallel investigations in non-Western philosophies, the wheel is constantly being reinvented, many mistakes are made, and a lot of potential is lost. By assuming that the *manhaj al-naqd* is relevant, given the perennial epistemic questions it was constructed to address, this study hopes to seamlessly connect contemporary research in the anglophone epistemological tradition to ḥadīth studies across its rich intellectual history.

In summary, the research methodologies being relied on in this dissertation are geared to fit the domain of philosophical epistemology. This is because the *manhaj al-naqd* is a living epistemic system that continues to be used to this very day. However, given its long history, historical methods will also be used. The historical methods that will be used focus on the philosophical questions themselves, paying particular attention to how these questions and debates relate to our modern day.

and, as such, focuses not only on the ideas, arguments, and their justification but on the problem space of the area of inquiry.

CHAPTER IV

THE CENTRALITY OF TESTIMONY IN THE ISLAMIC INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

Islamic scholars often speak of the traditional method of ḥadīth criticism as being a unique feature (*khuṣūṣiyya*) of the Islamic intellectual tradition (ʿItr 1997, 44). Is there any truth to the claim that the Islamic tradition is unique in its robust treatment of testimony? Furthermore, is there any benefit in answering such a question?

Although a more robust reply to these two questions is beyond the scope of this dissertation, there is a benefit in providing a preliminary response. If the Islamic tradition is truly unique in this regard, researchers will want to know why. What are the factors and conditions that produced this concentration on testimony? Furthermore, if it is truly unique, what can we learn from such a philosophical tradition?

This chapter sets the stage for our subsequent analysis of *manhaj al-naqd* by focusing on the unique centrality of testimony in the Islamic intellectual tradition. By beginning our study with the emergence of testimony in Western philosophy, we begin with a better understanding of the epistemic phenomena under analysis. Does the Western tradition have a parallel millennium-old discipline? If not, when did it emerge? Why did it emerge?

When studying a historical tradition, it can be tempting to look at events in a deterministic fashion. Without the benefit of comparison, the imagination often fails to conceive of an alternative set of events, an alternative history. By analyzing the emergence of testimony in Western philosophy and comparing it to the Islamic tradition, we come to better understand both narratives, and we come to understand the truly unique nature of *manhaj al-naqd*.[31]

[31] Further studies will need to be executed focusing on comparing Islamic epistemology to Indian and Chinese philosophy, as well as other philosophical traditions.

Its uniqueness will also be highlighted by surveying various other Islamic sciences that are adjacent to ḥadīth studies where testimony is investigated. This second investigation will map out the vast contours of testimony in Islamic epistemology. Given that ḥadīth studies is the most robust investigation of testimony in the Islamic tradition, the existence of numerous other testimony-related inquiries in adjacent sciences tells of just how central testimony is to Islamic epistemology. Furthermore, this mapping out of the contours of testimony in Islamic epistemology serves as an introduction to various other fields that will be drawn from throughout our analysis of *manhaj al-naqd*.

4.1. Anglophone Epistemology and the Testimonial Turn

A common narrative in contemporary anglophone philosophy is the claim that testimony only began to be taken seriously as an object of epistemological inquiry in the 1990s. For example, on the cover of Shieber's, *Testimony: A Philosophical Introduction* (2015), we find, "The epistemology of testimony has experienced a growth in interest over the last 25 years that has been matched by few, if any, other areas of philosophy." [32] Greco (2021, vii) characterizes this new interest in the subject as "truly groundbreaking, articulating issues and defending positions that had been largely neglected, or not even recognized by traditional epistemology." This narrative of the emergence of the field will, from here on out, be referred to as the *testimonial turn*.

Credit for this uptake in interest is often attributed to C.A.J. Coady's (1992, 1) important work, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study*. For example, Gelfert (2014, 1–2) writes, "In the case of the epistemology of testimony, its recent emergence as a recognizable subdiscipline within contemporary epistemology can be traced back to the publication, in 1992, of C.A.J. Coady's influential monograph, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study*." Providing us with a brief autobiographical account of his earlier work on the subject, Coady writes:

[32] For more references alluding to the recent spike in interest in the epistemology of testimony, see also: Lackey (2008, 1).

> When I began reading papers on the subject, my audiences mostly reacted with incomprehension, or the sort of disbelief evoked by denials of the merest common sense. Gradually, the climate of thought has changed and there is now more sympathy for the view that testimony is a prominent and underexplored epistemological landscape, although what sort of feature it is and how largely it looms are still naturally matters for disagreement. (Coady 1992, vii)

While Coady's work is not itself essential to the present thesis, it nevertheless helps highlight the recentness of the phenomenon in question. Whether it was Coady's work or other works right before or after, something changed. [33] Key to the narrative of the *testimonial turn* is the dual claim that traditional epistemology largely ignored the domain of testimony, while in contrast, contemporary epistemology finds it fascinating.

Beyond this dual-pronged claim, key to the exposition of the *testimonial turn* is recognizing the *pervasiveness* of testimony in our day-to-day lives. Most of what we know as epistemic agents is a result of what others tell us; thus, testimony is ubiquitous. Lackey (2008, 1) eloquently characterizes this point in the first paragraph of her introduction:

> Testimony is an invaluable source of knowledge. We rely on the reports of those around us for everything from the ingredients in our food and medicine to the identity of our family members, from the history of our civilization to the limits and contents of our planet. If we refrained from accepting what others told us, our lives, both practically and intellectually, would be unrecognizable.[34]

Given testimony's centrality in our epistemic lives, contemporary anglophone philosophers have wondered why it previously received little to no philosophical investigation. To explain this perplexing question, many have turned to what they describe as the highly individualistic nature of the history of Western epistemology. Coady sets the stage for this analysis:

> By now it will, I hope, have become clear that we are greatly indebted to testimony at the level of both common sense and theory for much of what we usually regard as knowledge. The neglect of the topic cannot be because of its actual unimportance but it may have been because of a supposed unimportance. In the post-Renaissance Western world the dominance of an individualist ideology has had a lot to do with the feeling that testimony has little or no

[33] See Goldberg (2010, vii) for a slightly earlier date: "This insight is owed primarily to those working in the epistemology of testimony from the late 1970s through the early 1990s: A. Coady, M. Welbourne, and (as a critic) E. Fricker." Shieber (2015) mentions in his acknowledgments that he was introduced to the subject through Coady's and Fricker's works.

[34] For longer expositions of this same point with several examples, see: Coady (1992, 7–12), Gelfert (2014, 7–8), Faulkner (2011, 1–4), and Shieber (2015, 1–3).

> epistemic importance. It is a commonplace that the political, social, and economic thought and practice of the West have been profoundly influenced in recent centuries by certain ideas and ideals stressing the powers, rights, dignities, and autonomy of the individual person. (Coady 1992, 13)

This historical account can be characterized as the final piece of the puzzle of the dominant anglophone narrative about testimony. Therefore, the *testimonial turn* is not only a narrative about prolonged neglect, followed by an uptake of interest due to testimony's *pervasiveness;* rather, it is also a narrative about why it was neglected. Bimal Matilal and Arindam Chakrabarti further emphasize this point:

> The ideal seeker of knowledge in Western philosophy, at least since Locke, is a lonely figure. He does his job single-handed, finding out facts about his environment by direct observation, deducing, generalizing, and explaining on the basis of principles of inference which he has himself enunciated using his own 'natural lights.' (Matilal and Chakrabarti 1994, 1)

Proponents of this view contrast the social nature of testimony with the individualistic investigations of the period that preceded the *testimonial turn*. Gelfert (2014, 8) writes, "The beginnings of an answer to this question lie in the dual characterization of human beings as social as well as rational animals."[35] The conclusion we are to draw is that only when Western philosophy was able to break free from the myth of the purely autonomous individualistic epistemic subject was it able to fully appreciate the value of testimony.

There are parts of this compound narrative that stand up to critique and investigation, while there are other elements that are misleading. First, based on the historical research done thus far, one cannot unequivocally say that the epistemology of testimony in Western philosophy was neglected until very recently. A weaker thesis about the prominence of testimony in epistemological theorizing might be more appropriate. Despite a few important forays into the subject in the early modern and medieval periods, historical records have not produced examples of a more *robust* and *independent* treatment of the subject.[36] In contrast, anglophone scholarship on the subject has skyrocketed since the 1990s.

[35] The characterization of the early modern period as "individualistic" in its epistemology is widespread in the literature. However, for a more extended treatment tying it specifically to the *testimonial turn*, see: Gelfert (2014, 9–12).

[36] Important examples of this can be found in the writings of David Hume and Thomas Reid, which will be dealt with more thoroughly in later sections.

As for the claim that testimony is ubiquitous and essential to our epistemic lives, that point is undeniable. As many epistemologists have noted, it is one of the most dominant sources of how we come to believe and know things in our day-to-day lives. A life without testimony would be truly unrecognizable. This part of the narrative of the *testimonial turn* is unobjectionable. It is in the explanation given for why testimony has been neglected in Western epistemology until recently that the narrative begins to break down.

Contemporary anglophone epistemologists often cite early modern philosophers like Rene Descartes (d. 1650), John Locke (d. 1704), and David Hume (d. 1776) to highlight the individualistic nature of philosophy before the *testimonial turn*. For example, Coady (1992, 12) quotes Descartes, "And yet a majority vote is worthless as a proof of truths that at all difficult to discover; for a single man is much more likely to hit upon them than a group of people." Commenting upon this, Coady (1992, 13) goes on to say, "The confident individualism of this will be relevant to my discussion of the influences of individualist ideology upon the neglect of testimony." Coady finally ends the section with a longer quote from John Locke. The quote has been cited below in full despite its length because it is a useful example of what Coady has in mind when he refers to Locke's "individualist rhetoric."

> I hope it will not be thought arrogance to say, that perhaps we should make greater progress in the discovery of rational and contemplative knowledge if we sought it in the fountain, in the consideration of things themselves, and made us rather of our own thoughts than other men's to find it: for, I think, we may as rationally hope to be what other men's eyes as to know by other men's understanding… The floating of other men's opinions in our brains makes us not one jot the more knowing, though they happen to be true. What in them was science is in us but opiniatrety.[37] (Coady 1992, 13–14; Locke 1961, 1:58)

While characterizations of the epistemological investigations of the early modern period might accurately be described as individualistic, it would be a mistake to attribute the lack of a *robust* and *independent* epistemology of testimony to this fact. There are many reasons to reject this hypothesis. The most clear-cut evidence countering this theory is the absence of *robust* and *independent* testimonial investigations before the early modern period.

[37] Gelfert (2014, 7, 18–19) also quotes the same passage from Locke, as well as Aquinas, and Immanuel Kant (d. 1804). In fact, Locke's passage is widely quoted as being paradigmatic of the individualistic nature of the early modern period.

Several academic works have recently emerged that focus on the testimonial theories of central figures of the medieval era, such as Augustine of Hippo (d. 430) (Siebert 2014; 2018; King and Ballantyne 2009), Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) (Cross 2018; Siebert 2014; 2016; Yardley 2021), William of Ockham (d. 1347) (Pelletier 2019), and John Duns Scotus (d. 1308) (Cross 2018). Although these new and important works deserve their own analysis, for the purposes of this study, it will suffice to highlight a few points. First, the image that emerges of the medieval era is one where testimony does not have a central place in the philosophical investigations of the period, despite the more social nature of the era's epistemology. This point serves as strong counterevidence to the thesis that the *testimonial turn* is a result of the individualistic epistemologies that preceded it.

A possible response to this objection is simply to claim that the medieval period was itself highly individualistic. This brings us to a second lesson we can benefit from the emerging research on the epistemology of testimony in the medieval era, namely that testimony was widely accepted as a source of belief and sometimes even as a source of knowledge. In what sense, then, was testimony neglected in the medieval era?

It is important here to stress the difference between accepting the role of testimony as a valid source for our beliefs, epistemologically theorizing about testimony, and having a *robust independent* study of the role of testimony in our lives. The conflation of these three different questions has led to a lot of confusion among contemporary philosophers and historians working on testimony. Keeping these three questions separate will be essential for the main thrust of this section.

The portrait that emerges from this recent work on the epistemology of the medieval period is of an era that recognized and accepted the role of testimony in day-to-day life, as well as an intellectual milieu that theorized about the epistemology of testimony. While there is no evidence of robust literature on the epistemology of testimony, that hardly can be used as evidence to stress the individualistic nature of the medieval period. If medieval philosophers were not individualistic, then the *testimonial turn* has given us a flawed narrative.

In her recent extensive work on deduction, Catarina Dutilh Novaes (2021) investigates both the ancient Greek and medieval periods and argues for the dialectical origins of deduction. This important conclusion uncovers the social origins of deduction and thus can be used to further challenge the narrative of the *testimonial turn*. If the cause of the modern emergence of testimony as a subfield is due to a move from individualistic to social epistemology, then why do we not find a similar high interest in testimony in ancient Greek epistemology? It is important to stress once again that ancient Greek awareness of the centrality of testimony in our lives and their theorizing about the epistemology of testimony to some degree is not a form of counterevidence. The dispute is about the existence, or lack thereof, of a *robust* and *independent* concentration on the epistemology of testimony. Premodern Western philosophy simply did not produce a *robust independent* study of the role of testimony until very recently.

Sara Uckelman's (2012) research on medieval logic games can similarly be used to problematize the narrative of an individualistic medieval period. Uckelman (2015) refers to this phenomenon as "dynamic epistemology." What becomes clear from her research is the social nature of epistemology in the medieval period. Once again, we are left asking why a robust independent study of testimony did not emerge, given the existence of a strong social epistemology in the medieval period.

Advocates of the *testimonial turn* narrative might be able to respond to this inconsistency by explaining what factors might have prevented the emergence of a vibrant independent investigation of testimony but, as of yet, have failed to do so. In fact, Coady (1992, 16) admits that the premodern period does not fit nicely into the narrative. He nevertheless argues that their lack of interest in testimony corresponds to their focus on "knowledge proper," which itself is grounded in "self-evident first principles." This explanation is insightful and does more explanative work than Coady makes room for. It will play an important part in my own argument below.

Another reason for doubting the narrative of the *testimonial turn* is evidence of testimony's place in early modern philosophy. Despite the plethora of evidence available highlighting the individualistic nature of early modern epistemology, the conclusion that this entailed a rejection of testimony or that philosophers of that era

did not value testimony is wrong. In fact, as Joseph Shieber (2015, 50–62) has shown, many of the philosophers mentioned as paradigmatic cases of individualistic epistemology have themselves written on the importance of testimony in our lives.

This is not meant to question whether early modern epistemology emphasizes the individual; rather, it is only to stress that this did not translate into a total rejection of testimony and its importance in our lives. Thus, the correct image that emerges from traditional epistemology is one where testimony is recognized as an important part of our epistemic lives. However, despite that centrality, theorizing about testimony was limited when compared to contemporary anglophone philosophy.

Keeping in mind Shieber's exposition, the contradiction seems to have come full circle. Not only does the explanation of the *testimonial turn* not apply to the premodern period, but it also seems to not help us make sense of the early modern period either. The mistake here is due to the conflation of the three points mentioned above: accepting the role of testimony as a valid source for our beliefs, epistemologically theorizing about testimony, and having a *robust* and *independent* study of the role of testimony in our lives.

In conclusion, the narrative of the *testimonial turn* fails in several ways. It ignores the theorizing of medieval philosophers on the epistemic role of testimony. It also ignores the fact that both medieval and early modern philosophers valued testimony and accepted its role in our epistemic lives. The narrative conflates the weaker and more accurate thesis that traditional Western epistemology lacks a *robust* and *independent* study of testimony with a much stronger and false thesis that testimony was neglected or, worse yet, rejected. Finally, it fails to explain why ancient Greek and medieval epistemology also lack a *robust* and *independent* study of testimony despite their social natures.

At this point, I will offer an alternative thesis that explains the lack of a *robust* and *independent* study of testimony in the medieval and premodern eras. This thesis picks up on and expands Coady's explanation about why the premodern era does not fit nicely into the narrative of the *testimonial turn*. The Islamic tradition's extensive

literature on testimony further supports this alternative thesis and helps us make sense of its robust engagement with testimony.

In order for us to make sense of why philosophical traditions produce *robust* and *independent* studies of testimony, we must concentrate on why philosophers investigate certain phenomena at all. The answer to this question is tied directly to what philosophers find important. According to this alternative thesis, the fact that testimony is a ubiquitous source of our beliefs is not up for debate. We have evidence that everyone, premodern and modern, accepted testimony to be a common part of our epistemic lives. However, the acceptance of testimony in that trivial sense does not necessitate viewing it as an important object of philosophical investigation.

One reason for this disinterest in testimony, despite its commonness, is the point mentioned earlier by Coady (1992, 16): premodern philosophers were focused on "knowledge proper." Given that reality and keeping in mind the longstanding and widespread view that testimony does not generate knowledge, it makes sense why premodern and early modern philosophers were disinterested in theorizing about testimony. Shieber uses this point as an explanation for Locke's disinterest:

> For Locke, however, the reason to limit knowledge to intuition, immediate perception, and deductive inference is that Locke took knowledge to entail certain justification or warrant. Given this fact, then, it is clear that Locke's notion of knowledge is simply not coextensive with contemporary notions. For this reason, the more interesting question is not whether Locke believed testimony to be a source of knowledge, in Locke's more restrictive sense of "knowledge," but rather whether Locke recognized testimony as a source of evidence that would provide adequate grounds for belief. (Shieber 2015, 56–57)

Testimony was thus seen as generating some adjacent epistemic attitude, perhaps fallibilistic full belief or some credence below full belief. Given that much of traditional epistemology revolved around the question of what we know and what we are certain of, testimony would, therefore, not play a huge role in epistemological investigations.

A possible objection to this thesis might come in the form of highlighting exceptions to the view. Some of the medieval philosophers mentioned above argued that testimonial knowledge is possible (Siebert 2014, 77–119, 162–99). However, far from serving as a serious blow to the thesis, this point furthers the thesis's explanative

power. It is *because* some medieval philosophers argued that testimony could generate knowledge that they wrote on the topic and investigated it. All that is left to make sense of is why that didn't yield a more *robust* and *independent* study of the topic since that is what remains unique about the *testimonial turn*.

To make sense of this difference, it is instructive to consider the case of Islamic epistemology. As the rest of this dissertation will show, the Islamic intellectual tradition has shown unparalleled philosophical interest in testimony in the premodern, medieval, and modern eras. In fact, the Islamic tradition anticipated many of the contemporary debates in anglophone philosophy and put forward many original solutions to central problems in testimony. Therefore, unlike Western epistemology, Islamic epistemology has always had a robust philosophical interest in the study of testimony.

When comparing the Western history of testimony with the Islamic one, it becomes exceedingly clear that there are many similarities. For example, the conversations surrounding the possibility or lack thereof of testimonial knowledge exist in both traditions. As will be discussed later in the dissertation, Islamic philosophers were also primarily concerned with "knowledge proper." For example, Sunnī theologians were explicit that knowledge is synonymous with certainty (Al-Ghazālī 2016b, 65–67). Most of them held that pure testimonial knowledge is rare. Therefore, one is left wondering why a robust philosophical output on testimony emerged in Islamic and not Western epistemology.

The answer to this question is found in the subject matter of this dissertation, Prophetic testimonies, known as ḥadīth. There are two types of revelation in Islam: the Qurʾān and the ḥadīth corpus. Although both are sacred, it is the latter that historically gave rise to a robust investigation into the epistemology of testimony. Of course, the existence of a sacred text alone cannot be the differentiating factor. For one, many religious traditions have sacred texts and did not develop a similar body of epistemological literature. Secondly, the Qurʾān is the central sacred text in Islam, and it did not attract the same type of epistemological investigations.

The demarcating factor seems to be a combination of both the epistemic nature of the ḥadīth corpus, what will be referred to later in the dissertation as its *testimonial kind*, as well as the philosophical and social dilemmas that the early Muslim community faced. Against the backdrop of these two points, the importance, interest, and value afforded to revelation and to ḥadīth specifically gave rise to a specialization and subdiscipline of Islamic epistemology and resulted in an enormous and multifaceted library. This focus on the epistemology of testimony in the Islamic tradition has been ongoing for more than 1400 years.

Therefore, it is not merely the existence of a large corpus of Prophetic testimonies, some forty-six thousand of them, that is the main impetus for the robust investigation and study of the epistemology of testimony in the Islamic tradition.[38] Rather, it is their existence, the epistemological place afforded to them in Sunnism, as well as a number of social and philosophical dilemmas, that when combined, led to the emergence of this robust field. Jointly, these factors gave rise to several epistemological investigations, the development of an entire field of study dedicated to Prophetic testimonies, and eventually, the development of a formal set of axioms and rules to help scholars deduce when one is justified in accepting or rejecting testimonies attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ).

Islamic scholars hold that testimonial knowledge is possible. As will be discussed later, *successive group testimony* (*tawātur*) was almost always listed as an example of certain knowledge that is yielded through testimony. This sealed the fate of testimony and its role in Islamic epistemology because it was considered on par with deduction and sense perception. However, that alone would not make sense of the unique place of testimony in Islamic epistemology. As we've seen above, some medieval Christian philosophers also believed that testimonial knowledge is possible. Even if Islamic philosophers held that *successive group testimonies* yield certain knowledge that only accounts for some theorizing about the subject, not such a vast and robust engagement with it.

[38] The question of just how many testimonies are attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) is a notoriously vexing question. A moderate estimate of independent texts attributed to him is approximately forty-six thousand. This is the approximate number found in the well-known postclassical work, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl* (1985), which was compiled by ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī al-Muttaqī al-Hindī (d. 975/1567 CE).

It is in Islamic scholars moving beyond cases of testimonial certainty to deal with the practical concern of analyzing and managing a large body of probabilistic Prophetic testimonies that we find the real impetus for their robust and independent study of testimony. The ḥadīth corpus is almost entirely *non-successive* (*āhād*) and thus non-certainty-yielding. This practical concern initiated a tidal wave of theoretical investigations. The result of these investigations is a standalone discipline, more advanced in many ways than the contemporary focus of anglophone philosophy on the epistemology of testimony.

One might object that while the existence of the corpus of Prophetic testimonies might help us make sense of the enormous library of philosophical output in the Islamic tradition, it does not explain the impetus for the uptake in interest in testimony in contemporary anglophone philosophy. Given that the Western tradition lacked this raw material, what caused the shift? What important matter shifted the attention of Western epistemologists to the study of this phenomenon?

The cause of the emergence of testimony as a subfield in the Western tradition is likely due to the shift in contemporary epistemology to study and analyze our day-to-day lives. Premodern and early modern epistemology was less interested in the *mundane* and much more interested in the *ideal*, certainty, responding to skepticism, and questions concerning the justifiability of belief in God. This is what Robert Pasnau (2017, 3) calls *idealized epistemology*. It is only when anglophone philosophers turned their concentration away from ideal cases of certainty to the much more prevalent mundane cases of everyday knowledge and belief that we witness the emergence of a *robust* and *independent* study of testimony in the contemporary anglophone literature.

Thus, a precursor to the *robust* and *independent* study of testimony in Western epistemology was the turning away from ideal cases of knowledge to everyday knowledge. That earlier turn is likely a result of many things, including scholasticism having been greatly diminished during the Renaissance and Enlightenment. While the "new philosophy" still focused on ideal cases, it advanced a method that freed

intellectual thought from the confines of the church and thus allowed for the eventual deemphasis of ideal epistemology.[39]

It was also likely a result of secularism rising and replacing religion as the organizing principle in many parts of the West. It is a mistake to think of secularism as confined to the political realm; rather, it rearranged the intellectual furniture in a way that impacted all walks of life, including our epistemological concerns. These monumental shifts express themselves in the work of many philosophers and movements that were precursors to the independent study of testimony that we find in the 20th century and help us better understand why epistemology in that era focused on the mundane as opposed to the ideal (Asad 2003, 1–26).

Logical Positivism, with its distaste for metaphysics and its aim of putting philosophy in service of the sciences, is just one expression of that intellectual shift (Creath 2021, 21–24). With figures like Rudolph Carnap (d. 1970) and Williard Quine (d. 2000), philosophy shifts from being the "handmaiden" of theology to being in service of the sciences (Pasnau 2017, 19). Similarly, with G.E. Moore (d. 1958), we see the rise of the commonsense tradition and a rejection of idealism and skepticism. However, Moore's arguments against skepticism are substantively different from ancient and medieval responses. Moore believed that straightforward examples of knowledge in our everyday lives proved that knowledge and certainty were possible (Baldwin 2010, 20–25).

It is with the dislodging of religion from its central place in society and intellectual thought, as well as the subsequent turn to our everyday lives that we can make sense of why modern analyses of knowledge ultimately lead to a *robust* and *independent* study of testimony. The hypothesis of the *testimonial turn* simply cannot make sense of the intellectual history of the West, nor does it have any explanative power as to why the epistemology of testimony flowered in Muslim societies centuries prior. In contrast, the argument laid out above does make sense of all these facts.

[39] Pasnau's, *After Certainty* (2017), is a good resource for helping make sense of the changing epistemological climate of the early modern period.

Islamic philosophy anticipated many of these investigations not because it went through similar changes a thousand years prior to the West; rather, it did so despite not having experienced them. This is because the impetus for a renewed focus on testimony in the West was not these changes in and of themselves; rather, it was the emergence of a new body of material that needed to be investigated that served as the most proximate impetus. The testimonies that we rely on in our mundane epistemic lives, after having been imbued with new value due to all the aforementioned social and intellectual changes, were themselves the impetus for the uptake of interest in testimony. Islamic philosophy anticipated many of these investigations because it already had its own material, the ḥadīth corpus, which was already imbued with great value given its central role in the epistemology of the religion and thus served as an impetus for giving it a lot of philosophical attention. The nature of that subject matter, its epistemological value, and the social and philosophical dilemmas that presented themselves historically caused the emergence of a robust literature relating to it.

In conclusion, had it not been for the existence of a large corpus of Prophetic testimonies, it is likely that Islamic epistemology would have followed a similar trajectory to Western epistemology. In the following section of this chapter, the centrality of testimony in the Islamic tradition will become more apparent. Section 4.2 will map out the contours of the various areas of investigation taking place in the Islamic tradition pertaining to testimony. This will then prepare the reader for an introduction to ḥadīth studies in Chapter 5.

4.2. The Investigation of Akhbār in the Islamic Intellectual Tradition

4.2.1. Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Arabic term *khabar* (pl. *akhbār*) signifies the same epistemic source in Islamic philosophy as the technical term testimony does in anglophone epistemology. While the Arabic term *khabar* translates linguistically as "a statement," it conceptually functions similarly to the anglophone testimony. Therefore, the parallel investigations to the epistemology of testimony in Islamic philosophy are investigations into *akhbār*.

Although the theoretical and epistemic study of ḥadith is by far the most central, comprehensive, and independent study of testimony in the Islamic tradition, it is not the only area where the epistemology of testimony is investigated. This should come as no surprise since, as will be discussed later in this dissertation, the Islamic tradition does not have a standalone field of epistemology. For this reason, epistemological questions, more broadly, and testimonial questions, more specifically, are investigated under the banner of an assortment of different disciplines. This section will map out some of the central areas in the Islamic intellectual tradition where the epistemology of testimony is discussed.

One of the primary aims of this section is to show just how vast the study of testimony is in Islamic epistemology. This is important given the previous section that focused on the lack of such a focus in Western epistemology as well as the possible reasons for the emergence of this subdiscipline. Another aim of this section is to provide avenues for further research. Each of these areas deserves not only its own chapter but its own dissertation and literature. The final aim of this section is to provide some context about where the remainder of this thesis will be drawn from. Although this dissertation will primarily be focused on ḥadīth, it is impossible to silo off the Islamic sciences in this fashion. At times, we will need to draw from other fields that investigated testimony from other vantage points.

This section is divided into five parts. Each part corresponds to the five fields where *akhbār* and thus testimony is primarily discussed in the Islamic tradition: rhetoric (*balāgha*), theology (*kalām*), logic (*manṭiq*), legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), and law (*fiqh*). In each part, the most relevant areas of interest for the epistemology of testimony will be listed, and corresponding research in contemporary anglophone philosophy will be flagged. Ḥadīth studies has been deliberately left out because that will be studied more thoroughly in the remaining chapters of this dissertation. By the end of this section, we will be ready to take a deep dive into the primary focus of this dissertation, ḥadīth studies.

4.2.2. Testimony in the Books of Rhetoric (*Balāgha*)

Given that testimonies are generally communicated through a speech act, it is natural to find the epistemology of testimony discussed in adjacent fields focusing on the linguistic sciences and the philosophy of language. However, what we now refer to as the philosophy of language in contemporary philosophy was not studied in one discipline within the Islamic intellectual tradition (Germann and Najafi 2021, VI–VII). Rather, various aspects of the philosophy of language were studied within a wide assortment of disciplines, some of which overlap with testimony and some that extend beyond it.[40]

In the Islamic tradition, the science of rhetoric (*balāgha*) is one of the core disciplines where scholars explicate their philosophy of language.[41] Many of these works were importantly authored by scholars working in other fields associated with testimony, such as theology (*kalām*) or legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). This is important because their views in metaphysics, philosophy of language, and epistemology all overlap. However, one needs to read across disciplines to get a more holistic sense of their philosophical views and commitments. In these texts on *balāgha,* one finds that their views on the philosophy of language also overlap with their views on the nature of testimony. In this section, the works of Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, a famous rhetorician, theologian, logician, and legal theorist, who wrote several important works in *balāgha* as well as in many of the other fields that will be investigated below, will be relied upon.

There are at least three different types of testimonial investigations found in the books of *balāgha,* where the discussions directly relate to the epistemology of testimony. Although the three areas will be listed and summarized below, each of the three will be further investigated in Chapter 6 of the dissertation. These are not meant to be exhaustive, only to serve as examples of the overlap in the philosophical problem space of testimony. This will allow researchers in the future to abstract out and connect these

[40] Germann and Najafi (2021, VII) list some of the fields relating to the philosophy of language as logic, *adab*, legal theory, theology, and philology. Although the list mentioned includes some of the associated disciplines, it is not exhaustive. They have left out others, including works on rhetoric (*balāgha*), morphology (*ṣarf*), and various other linguistic sciences.
[41] In fact, when the "rational sciences" are listed, rhetoric is often enumerated as being one of them.

discussions from across disciplines. This abstraction and connection will allow for a more holistic understanding of any given scholar's views specifically, or trends in the Islamic tradition more broadly.

The first investigation relevant to the epistemology of testimony is the analysis and definition of the technical term *statement* (*khabar*). This analysis of *statements* (*akhbār*) usually occurs against the backdrop of distinguishing between various types of speech. Al-Taftāzānī (1991, 29–33; 2022b, 84–96) begins, for example, differentiating between a *statement* (*khabar*) vs. a *performative utterance* (*inshāʾ*). It is here, in the explication of what makes *statements* fundamentally different than *performative utterances*, that we find theorizing that relates to the epistemology of testimony.

This investigation into the analysis and definition of *statements* directly relates to contemporary investigations into the definition of testimony (Lackey 2008, 16–17).[42] The two areas share philosophical space. The analysis and definition of the technical term *khabar* in books of *balāgha*, although different, epistemically overlaps with the investigation into the necessary and sufficient conditions of testimony in the anglophone tradition. A contrast, comparison, and synthesis of these views will be one of the central areas of inquiry in Chapter 6.

A second investigation where the science of *balāgha* overlaps with the epistemology of testimony is the distinction between informational and non-informational forms of testimony. Al-Taftāzānī (2022b, 98) lists three different verses of Qurʾān and one verse of poetry where he argues the intent of the testimony is not informational. In one case, he argues that the testimonial act is an expression of the speaker's weakness and submissiveness, another an expression of their sadness, and a third as a way of inducing an emotional response.

[42] Lackey (2008, 14–36) summarizes three different views pertaining to the definition of testimony found in the anglophone literature. She calls them the broad view, the narrow view, and the moderate view, respectively. She then offers her own disjunctive view of testimony as an alternative. This will be investigated further in Chapter 6.

This distinction anticipates Lackey's (2008, 21–23) designation between the intent to convey information, being reasonably taken as conveying information, and neither intending to convey information nor being reasonably taken as conveying information. Although there are differences between the two traditions, the epistemic discussions overlap. There is a particular need to better flesh out the standard Islamic view on intention in testimonial communication.

Finally, a third investigation related to the nature of testimony is the question of *fāʾidat al-khabar*, literally, "that which is benefited from statements." Although this analysis is largely a question of philosophy of language, it does grant us insight into the Islamic tradition's view on testimonial exchange. It is particularly relevant to one of the central debates in the epistemology of testimony, between what can be characterized as the belief-transmission view and the belief-generation view.[43]

According to one view, the belief or knowledge of the hearer is generated after encountering the testimony that has been communicated. According to a second and much more radical view, the belief or knowledge of the speaker is actually transmitted from the speaker to the hearer in the testimonial exchange. This debate does not exist in this exact formulation in the Islamic tradition; however, there are various investigations that relate to the contemporary debate.

Given the limited scope of this section, the important philosophical questions concerning testimony in the books of rhetoric have been merely alluded to. Linguists and philosophers of language were aware that their investigations into the nature of *statements* and *performative utterances* overlapped with epistemological questions. In fact, Islamic scholars were aware that investigations into the philosophy of language more broadly often had epistemological implications. David Bennet (2021, 1–20), Alexander Key (2021, 77–100), Tony Street (2021, 101–28), and David Vishanoff (2021, 183–208) have already helped bring some of these epistemological considerations to light.

[43] See, for example, Lackey (2008, 4, 37–39, 72–73).

Despite emerging research into the broad area of philosophy of language in Islamic scholarship, there is a lot left to do in terms of comparing, contrasting, and synthesizing between contemporary work in anglophone philosophy of language, the epistemology of testimony, and the traditional Islamic linguistic sciences. This is particularly acute when it comes to the work of rhetoricians on testimony. This section was only meant to flag the importance of this area of research and encourage others to take up the task of uncovering the treasures buried therein.

4.2.3. Testimony in the Books of Theology (*Kalām*)

Most Sunnī books of theology (*kalām*) begin with a section on epistemology. [44] In these sections, it is common to find a list of the main sources of knowledge. When the main sources of knowledge are listed, the list varies from text to text, but all of them list the three core sources of knowledge: sense perception, reason, and testimony.[45] This is one of at least three areas in Islamic theological treatises in which we find treatments of the epistemology of testimony. In these lists, testimony is generally referred to as *true statements* (*al-khabar al-ṣādiq*).

Under this broad investigation into the sources of knowledge, theologians discussed and analyzed various forms of testimony epistemically. The main area of interest for them was the distinction between forms of testimony that yield certain testimonial knowledge (*al-yaqīn*), which Sunnī theologians deemed possible, and forms that yield opinion (*al-ẓann*), in other words, some level of credence above .5. Given that theological texts differed in not only the opinions of their authors but also the size and aims of the text, we find that some texts were more detailed and sought to give a fuller taxonomy than others.

[44] To be more exact, they begin with epistemological questions or an introduction that includes epistemological investigations. See, for example, al-Rāzī (2012, 23–30), al-Taftāzānī (1998, 1:187–288), and al-Jurjānī (1998a, 1:68–297; 1998d, 2:3–58).

[45] For examples of this tripartite explication in early Sunnī theology, see: Imām al-Māturīdī's (d. 333/944) book, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* (2001, 69–74). For a similar reference to the three sources of knowledge from theologians working a few centuries later, see: Imām al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) *al-Iqtiṣād* (2016a, 120–23), as well as Abū Muʿīn al-Nasafī's (508/1145) *al-Tamḥīd* (2006, 16–18). Finally, for similar categorizations in later theology works, see: al-Ījī's (756/1355) *al-Mawāqif* (1999, 38), as well as al-Taftāzānī's celebrated madrasa textbook, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid* (2020, 112–29). We will return to this classification in Chapter 6.

Ultimately, theological texts were more concerned with certain testimonial knowledge than with testimonies yielding credences or opinion. This is because, for Sunnīs, creed, and doctrine are propositions one is religiously obligated to know and have faith in. In addition to that obligation, they believe that salvation rests upon having knowledge and faith in these doctrines. Given these high stakes, the "epistemic risk" of getting it wrong had to be as minimal as possible.[46] Therefore, the treatment of epistemology at the beginning of these texts was partially in order to list out which sources could yield certain knowledge and which couldn't so that we can decipher what must be believed and to what extent. Since Sunnī epistemology held that certain testimonial knowledge is possible, they had to account for it in their epistemological introductions to theological treatises.

A second area where we find an explication of the epistemology of testimony in Sunnī theological treatises is in sections devoted to critiquing Shīʿī doctrinal claims related to the imamate (Al-Bāqillānī 1987, 431–77). These theological texts sought to show the falsehood of claims that the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) appointed his cousin ʿAlī (r) as his successor.[47] The arguments are multi-faceted, but they rest on the impossibility of a testimony made in front of thousands about such an important topic to have been transmitted by a singular transmitter or only a few. The fact that no widespread transmission about the imamate occurred is evidence of its falsehood. In fact, this subject seems to have played an important role and served as an impetus for further investigations into the epistemology of testimony.

In many ways, this discussion anticipates Goldberg's (2010, 154–84) coverage-reliability. The arguments are similar, given that according to Goldberg's view, if the social institutions and impetus to communicate are there, the lack of that communication is evidence of the unreliability of the report. Thus, these theological arguments rely on the lack of widespread reporting as evidence, similar to how the lack of coverage of a monumental political event by news stations might serve as evidence of the lack of its occurrence.

[46] See Steel (2010a) for what he calls inductive risk. I've slightly modified this term to refer to the risk I have in mind and am instead referring to the concept as "epistemic risk." Also, see Reed (2010; 2013) for his theory of stable invariantism which coheres well with the idea of epistemic risk.

[47] The symbol (r) will be used throughout this dissertation as an abbreviation for the Arabic: *raḍiya Allahu ʿanhu* (Allah be well pleased with him).

The third section where the epistemology of testimony comes up in theology texts has to do with the topic of Divine testimony. This topic comes up in two different areas in theological treatises. The first has to do with the Divine attribute of speech, and the second has to do with Prophetic miracles.[48] This latter section relates to the epistemology of testimony because miracles are often thought of in Sunnī theology as being akin to Divine speech. This topic, as well as the two that preceded it, will be further investigated in Chapters 6 and 7.

Unlike many of the other disciplines that overlap with the epistemology of testimony in the Islamic tradition, the field of Islamic theology will be more well-accounted for in the dissertation. This is because it, along with works in Islamic legal theory, provide the most sophisticated epistemological treatment of some of the issues discussed in contemporary anglophone philosophy. Furthermore, these two disciplines are most representative of Sunnī epistemology. Therefore, although theology will not be the focus of this study, the treatment of testimony in theological treaties will be substantively accounted for.

4.2.4. Testimony in the Books of Logic (*Manṭiq*)

Over the last few decades, the Western Academy has witnessed an uptake of interest in the history of Arabic logic.[49] While the thesis concerning its origins in the translation movement of the 9th and 10th century C.E. has not changed, new research pertaining to the continued development of Arabic logic thereafter has completely upended earlier opinions about the nature of the tradition. No longer is Arabic logic seen as a mere translation of Aristotelian texts, or at most, Aristotelian and Stoic concepts. Rather, new research has shown the truly unique contributions of not only towering figures

[48] For an example of theology texts tying the question of Divine speech to the epistemology of testimony, see al-Ghāzālī (2016a, 248–65). For an example of theology texts tying the question of Prophetic miracles to the epistemology of testimony, see, for example, al-Juwaynī (d. 487/1085) in *al-Irshād* (2009, 263–67) and al-Ghazālī in *al-Iqtiṣād* (2016a, 348–52).

[49] The term "Arabic logic" is the widely accepted term in English, referring to the logic tradition in Islamic philosophy. There are many reasons for this term being preferred by specialists in the English language over other terms that I will not rehash here. This term was chosen over its alternatives only so that it would not detract from the thesis of the section, which I believe is important for those interested in the logic tradition under investigation.

like Avicenna and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) but also the advancements found in logic texts of the later period, right up through the late Ottoman era.[50]

While it is well known that later works in Arabic logic moved away from Aristotle's (d. 322 BCE) *Organon* and focused more narrowly on the five predicables, definition, propositions and their immediate implications, and the formal syllogistic, there is another aspect that is often ignored; the importance of testimony.[51] When discussing the material of syllogisms, particularly when distinguishing between demonstration and other forms of inference, Arabic logicians often discussed the epistemic value of testimony. As mentioned above, according to Islamic scholars, certain testimonial knowledge is possible, but it is often associated with a narrowly defined category known as *successive group testimonies* (*mutawātirāt*). Apart from that unique kind, testimonies were seen as yielding *opinion* (*ẓann*), which corresponds to some credence above .5, but below full belief.

Although little has been written on the subject, it seems that the origins of this feature of Arabic logic also go back to Aristotle.[52] Building off research being published on the role of *doxa* and *endoxa* in Aristotelian logic, testimony in Arabic logic plays a similar role (Simpler 2008, 6–8, 22–33). At the most generic level, both logical systems account for the fact that the matter of most syllogistic forms is some type of received opinion.

In the Arabic tradition, this topic gets brought up when distinguishing between syllogisms that yield certainty, otherwise known as a demonstration (*burhān*), and those that do not. True knowledge in the Sunnī tradition is often thought of as being

[50] See, for example, the work of Khaled El-Rouayheb (2010), *Relational Syllogisms and the History of Arabic Logic*.

[51] These five areas of focus are often seen as relating to the classification of knowledge into two types: conception (*taṣawwur*) and assent (*taṣdīq*). Given that logic is about helping us through inference get from what we know to what we don't know and given that knowledge is either of the conception (*taṣawwur*) or assent (*taṣdīq*) variety, logicians investigated how we get from the five universal predicables to proper definitions and from propositions and their implications to the necessary conclusions of valid syllogisms. Thus, logicians in this tradition often referred to the study of the five universal predicables and propositions as *mabādiʾ*, which can be translated as fundamentals, principles, or axioms. In contrast, they referred to the study of definitions and the syllogistic as *maqāṣid*, which can be translated as the aims and goals of the discipline. See, as an example: Al-Najjār (2016, 35–36).

[52] The only work I know of on the subject is written by Deborah Black (2013). Young (2017) also investigates *endoxa* and its relationship to disputation and argumentation theory (*jadal*), as well as *ūṣūl al-fiqh*, at great length. However, he does not focus on Arabic logical works.

infallible and synonymous with complete certainty (Al-Ghazālī 2016b, 65–67). Islamic scholars working on logic understood that although some logical forms preserve that infallibility, they only do so if the material of the premises is also certain. They refer to the list of sources that qualify for demonstration as the "pathways to certainty" (*madārik al-yaqīn*) (Al-Ghazālī 2016b, 69–69). In other words, for a syllogism to entail certainty, it is not enough for it to be valid; rather, its premises must also be from sources that are themselves epistemically certain. This will be further investigated in later sections of the dissertation since it overlaps with several other epistemological areas, such as our sources of knowledge, the structure of knowledge, and theories of justification.

This type of enumeration of certain perceptions is usually subsequently followed with a list of sources for premises that do not qualify for demonstration. The list includes an assortment of terms that seem to be tracking much more than the *endoxa* vs. *doxa* difference. More research will need to be done to see whether these terms are unique to the Arabic tradition or whether their origins can be found in some of the commentaries on Aristotle's *Organon* that the Arabic translators had access to.[53] Alternatively, some or all the terms might have had their origins in the native genre of Islamic dialectical works (*jadal*) or perhaps could themselves have been a result of the influence of ḥadīth studies.[54]

Irrespective of their origins, most Arabic logical works list out different types of testimonies to be used in non-demonstrative syllogisms: widely known testimonies (*mashhūrāt*), praiseworthy testimonies (*maḥmūdāt*), uncontested testimonies (*musallamāt*), acceptable testimonies (*maqbūlāt*), opinions (*maẓnūnāt*), imagined testimonies (*mukhayyalāt*), estimative testimonies (*wahmiyyāt*) and others.[55] Some of the Arabic works on logic even categorize the aforementioned testimonial kinds according to how they are used. Their categorization seems to track Aristotle's books of the *Organon* quite well, Topics, Sophistical Refutations, and by some accounts, the Poetics as well. However, more work will need to be done to uncover why, in the

[53] Islamic philosophers were aware of some of the Greek commentators of late Antiquity, such as Alexander of Aphrophdisias (d. mid-third century C.E.) (El-Rouayheb 2010, 16).
[54] For an extensive study of Islamic dialectical works, see: Young (2017).
[55] See, for example: al-Ghazālī's, *Miʿyār al-ʿIlm* (2016c, 224–34); al-Qazwīnī's, *Shamsiyya* (1998, 231–32); and al-Taftāzānī's, *Tahdhib al-Manṭiq* (1912, 13–14).

Arabic taxonomy, there are so many different terms when it seems that Aristotle stuck more closely to the *doxa* vs. *endoxa* bifurcation.[56]

The role of testimony in Arabic logical works will not be relied upon in this dissertation. Although logic texts will play a role when it comes to epistemology more broadly, the taxonomy and role of testimonies in dialectic, disputation, and social reasoning will only briefly be discussed. However, this topic is not only ripe for research, but it also has exciting corollaries in contemporary philosophy. Comparing, contrasting, and synthesizing Arabic logic works and work being done in disputation and argumentation theory is possible.

Some contemporary philosophers have argued that in order to better understand the epistemology of testimony, we need to not only connect its investigation to the Aristotelian tradition but also to think about the role of testimony in everyday dialectic. According to this view, situating testimony within the social practice of asking for and offering reasons gives us a much better understanding of how to theorize about testimony, and that is exactly what we find in rhetorical and argumentation theory (Olmos, n.d.; 2006). This, of course, dovetails with the Arabic logic tradition, as well as the Islamic science of disputation and dialectic (*al-jadal/al-baḥth wa al-munāẓara*). It is also closely related to another science in Islamic philosophy, legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*).

4.2.5. Testimony in the Books of Legal Theory (*Uṣūl al-Fiqh*)[57]

Testimony in Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) is the second richest source of testimonial material found in Islamic philosophy. In fact, it would be difficult to

[56] Paula Olmos (n.d., 198–200) argues for a more nuanced reading of Aristotle's terms. If her point is taken seriously and Aristotle's works are read with a closer eye for these differences, the Arabic terms might end up being there in the original Aristotelian works themselves.

[57] There are several different translations for the Arabic term *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Literally, it translates to something like "the foundations of understanding." Legal theory, jurisprudence, foundations, or alternatively, principles of understanding are various conventions used to translate the technical term. More recently, it has been referred to as legal hermeneutics. However, I will, for now, avoid the term hermeneutics, given the confusion it can cause in contemporary Islamic scholarship, where it is often juxtaposed against traditional interpretive theories. I will be using the other translations interchangeably as needed.

summarize all the main areas where testimony plays a central role in *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Nevertheless, it is instructive to present a few core areas of investigation.

It is perhaps best to begin where the section on Arabic logic ended since the overlap between *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *manṭiq*, and disputation and dialectical theory is clear and apparent. In fact, some jurisprudential manuals begin with a primer on logic (Al-Ghazālī 2016b, 18–83). However, importantly, the connection between the disciplines is more fundamental than just a question of textual convention since these disciplines developed and flowered through dialectic, sharing "common origins, parallel development, and cross-germination." (Young 2017, 10–13)

It is precisely this science of asking for and giving reasons that reigned supreme in Islamic legal theory. So much so that later specialists, in their tripartite definition of the discipline, mention that two of the primary objectives of the science are the investigation of the sources of Islamic legal rulings and how to interpret and benefit from them (Al-Bayḍāwī 2008, 53–54). In other words, Islamic legal theory investigates which sources are valid when giving reasons and the rules associated with benefitting from those sources.

It is due to that fixation on the main sources of Islamic law that Islamic legal scholars theorized more robustly and universally about testimony. The four agreed-upon sources of Islamic law are all testimonial in nature: the Qurʾān, Prophetic testimonies (*al-sunna/al-aḥādīth*), consensus (*al-ijmāʿ*), and analogical reasoning (*al-qiyās*). Each of these sources usually receives its own chapter and treatment in texts authored about Islamic legal theory. Other non-agreed-upon sources are also testimonial in nature, such as testimonies of the Prophet's companions (*aqwāl al-ṣaḥāba*).

Of the various forms of testimony investigated in this discipline, Islamic legal theorists most comprehensively and philosophically analyzed Prophetic testimonies.[58] They often begin the chapter with a universal treatment of testimony as an epistemic source before getting to Prophetic testimonies themselves (F. al-D. M. Al-Rāzī 1996a, 4:213–391). This treatment includes defining the nature of *statements* (*akhbār*), as well as

[58] I do not mean this in the absolute sense, only from the vantage point of the epistemology of testimony.

mapping out the various epistemically relevant categories. These investigations will be alluded to and presented in more detail in the coming chapters.

There are, however, a few areas where testimony is treated in Islamic legal theory that will not be accounted for in the dissertation but are important for future research. The first relates to how the various legal schools differed from one another concerning Prophetic and non-prophetic testimonies when it comes to evidence (Al-Bayḍāwī 2008, 241–43).[59] Reconciling between sources of evidence is a well-known area of investigation in Islamic studies. In fact, it wouldn't be far-fetched to say that one of the core areas of disagreement between the legal schools has to do with how to reconcile Prophetic testimonies and other sources of Islamic law. These types of epistemological investigations overlap greatly with anglophone investigations into the epistemology of disagreement (Lackey 2017a).

Another area of interest for epistemologists in legal theory manuals is the overlap between the philosophy of language and testimony. These questions focus on what is understood by the speaker when they hear or read Divine and Prophetic testimonies. This linguistic investigation can be described as an epistemology of understanding or an epistemology of interpretation (Al-Bayḍāwī 2008, 80–143).[60] One example of these linguistic investigations is the analysis of congruent and counter-implicatures (*mafhūm al-muwāfaqa wa mafhūm al-mukhālafa*) (Al-Ghazālī 2016b, 495–512).

Finally, another important area of investigation has to do with the role of authority in Islamic law. Unlike theological investigations, Sunnism largely promotes a system of imitation (*taqlīd*) of authorities when it comes to legal opinions. This is directly tied to the epistemic risk associated with legal rulings vs. theological ones. Texts in Islamic legal theory often devote one or more chapters to investigations concerning the qualifications needed to deduce one's own independent legal positions (*ijtihād*) when one is obligated to do so for oneself vs. follow an authority (*taqlīd*) and associated

[59] In fact, reconciling between conflicting evidence usually gets its own chapter in legal theory manuals (Al-Bayḍāwī 2008, 235–46). The entire chapter is ripe for study and investigation. However, the conflicting evidence often involves Prophetic testimonies.

[60] Whether these investigations should be thought of as a type of hermeneutics, interpretation, or something else, will need to be deduced after further research. For now, I prefer the phrase "epistemology of understanding," following Rysiew and Goldberg (2007).

epistemic topics having to do with seeking out legal counsel and following it (Al-Ghazālī 2016b, 639–76; Al-Bayḍāwī 2008, 255–59; Al-Zarkashī 1992, 6:285–88; F. al-D. M. Al-Rāzī 1996b, 6:67–94). Islamic legal texts even developed an intricate system for intraschool levels of *ijtihād*, where one's qualifications might make it permissible to engage in intraschool reasoning but not outside of it.

This investigation overlaps greatly with contemporary work in the epistemology of testimony having to do with both authority and expertise (Lackey 2017a; 2017b; Zagzebski 2012). Under what conditions is it more rational to follow an authority or expert versus relying on one's own evidence or reasoning? This is also one of those areas in epistemology that has great practical significance, as contemporary debates around the role of scientists and medical experts have become one of the central debates in the political landscape (Adamson 2021, 1–2).

4.2.6. Testimony in the Books of Islamic Law (*Fiqh*)

The Islamic legal tradition (*fiqh*) is vast, and there are undoubtedly many areas of overlap between it and the epistemology of testimony. Given its derivative status from both theology and legal theory, it is inextricably linked to each respective field's overlap with testimony. Nevertheless, two unique areas do stand out as being important to those interested in the epistemology of testimony in Islamic philosophy.

The first area of interest has us pick up where we left off with testimonial investigations in *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Books in Islamic law often mirror and complement the sections mentioned before, having to do with *ijtihād* and *taqlīd*. However, legal texts are more concerned with the nature and etiquette of legal opinions (*fatwas*) given by Islamic scholars. There is an assortment of etiquettes, norms, and rules associated with giving legal opinions when asked to do so in one's capacity as an appointed *muftī* or even outside of such an appointment. These areas of investigation include whether one is obligated to engage in their own independent legal reasoning vs. following the testimony of another legal scholar, whether one is required to only testify to one's own *ijtihād*, which would require some form of inference, or whether they can rely on transmitting the opinion of another scholar (Al-Mashhūr 2009, 1:179–88), and finally,

whether they must mention whom they are transmitting from in such cases, as well as many other related matters (Al-Jifrī 2022).

The overlap between these questions and the epistemology of testimony is clear. Firstly, these various categorizations and positions rest upon a certain view about what is considered testimony and what isn't. For example, the question of whether one can testify to a legal position that they themselves are not convinced of is essentially the same question as whether belief is a necessary condition for testimonial exchange. Secondly, there is an overlap between the above-mentioned questions and norms of assertion (Goldberg 2015). Under what conditions are we normatively allowed to assert that we know something given the very real possibility of a variety of other positions that might be equally probable? Finally, there is an overlap with the knowledge and action principle (Meusburger, Werlen, and Suarsana 2017). Under what conditions can an individual act upon testimony they heard from another vs. being obligated to do their own independent reasoning?

The second area of interest has to do with formal testimony in courtroom settings. The literal linguistic translation of the English term testimony into Arabic is *shahāda*. However, this term is most often associated with formal courtroom testimonies and witnesses. There are several topics investigated in this area that would be of interest to someone studying the epistemology of testimony. One area that deserves attention is the role of hearsay in Islamic law. Like the legal systems of several other civilizations, including Western ones, hearsay, as a rule, is generally inadmissible in Islamic law. Hearsay is usually referred to in the Islamic literature as "testifying upon a testimony" (*al-shahāda ʿala al-shahāda*) (Al-Nawawī 2005, 573; Khālīl b. Isḥāq 1981, 270–71). Like the Western tradition, there are exceptions to the rule. However, a more thorough study is needed which focuses on these exceptions and the general rule. This will help us better understand what the implication is for the reliability of testimonial hearsay, especially since *transmission* (*riwāya*) seems to be similar in nature to hearsay and is widely accepted outside of courtroom settings.[61]

[61] We will return to the distinction between *shahāda*, *riwāya*, and *akhbār* in Chapter 6.

4.2.7. Conclusion

The main aim of this section was to list out the various areas where the epistemology of testimony is treated in the Islamic tradition, with the intention of highlighting just how central the epistemology of testimony is to Islamic philosophy. Although the technical term in the Arabic sources is *statements* (*khabar*, pl. *akhbār*), conceptually, what is being investigated in these sections is the equivalent of what is known in anglophone philosophy as the epistemology of testimony. This serves as evidence for the conclusions of the first section of this chapter. Given the absence of extensive treatment of testimony in Western epistemology, Islamic epistemology truly is distinctive. This will become much clearer when we move on to analyzing the largest treatment of testimony in Islamic epistemology, the ḥadīth corpus.

The list mentioned above is not exhaustive. The aim of this section is far more modest, namely, to list out areas that have a clear link to the epistemology of testimony outside of the discipline of ḥadīth studies. As has hopefully become apparent, each one of these areas requires its own independent study. It would be impossible to cover the epistemology of testimony in Islamic philosophy across the board. While some of the areas mentioned above will be engaged with throughout this dissertation, this is done out of pure necessity. Given the lack of a standalone subfield of Islamic epistemology, epistemological investigations occur in various fields. Thus, in order to fully understand the epistemology of testimony in ḥadīth studies, one must also look at testimonial investigations in adjacent fields.

Now that we've lightly mapped out how the epistemology of testimony relates to other adjacent fields, we can turn our attention to ḥadīth studies proper. Unlike the disciplines referred to above, ḥadīth studies is entirely dedicated to the study of testimony. This dissertation will, from here on out, focus specifically on the field of ḥadīth studies. Chapter 5 will present a historical analysis of the development of the epistemological system of ḥadīth scholars. By the end of the chapter, we will have narrowed down our area of investigation to the most central parts of their epistemic system.

CHAPTER V

ḤADĪTH AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EPISTEMIC METHOD

This chapter focuses on analyzing the emergence and historical development of the traditional method of ḥadīth criticism, often referred to as *manhaj al-naqd*. The brunt of this chapter will be relying on the historical narrative of ḥadīth scholars as a starting point and then drawing out from that material the various epistemological dimensions of the traditional method's development. While there will be some new historical material, particularly when it comes to the often-neglected postclassical era of ḥadīth studies, the main aim of the chapter is to highlight the epistemological side of the historical work provided by others.

Before moving on to the central theses of this section, a couple of clarificatory remarks are in order. Given the vast nature of the Islamic intellectual tradition and given the ultimate purpose of this chapter *vis-à-vis* the larger thesis of the dissertation, the scope of historical analysis has been limited in two important ways. While both limitations in scope relate to better defining which traditional method is being analyzed, they do so differently.

The first limitation of scope relates to identifying which group's critical method is being analyzed. Our focus will be on analyzing the *manhaj al-naqd* of Sunnī ḥadīth scholars. There are other traditional methods of ḥadīth criticism that are also worth investigating and highlighting. Chief among them is the methods employed by jurists (*al-uṣūliyyūn*), which we have already alluded to.[62] These jurists, despite being Sunnī, have their own methods that both overlap and differ with the traditional critical method

[62] As already mentioned in the literature review, there has been an uptake of interest in studying and analyzing the critical methods employed by jurists (*al-uṣūliyyūn*). See, for example, al-Khaṭīb (2017), Sarmini (2021a), al-Turkmānī (2018; 2020), Eido (2020), al-'Awnī (n.d.), and Correa (2014), as well as the edited anthology of al-Bakri and Snober (2022).

of ḥadīth scholars. Similarly, other non-Sunnī traditions also have their own critical methods. Most noteworthy in this regard are the Muʿtazila and the Shīʿa.[63]

This narrowing of focus is a double-edged sword. The main benefit of limiting the scope in this fashion is to truly concentrate on one philosophical tradition and set of views. If we were to expand the study to include the views of the jurists, the Muʿtazila, and the Shīʿa, not only would the dissertation become unmanageable in terms of size, but it would also be harder to come to clear conclusions. While these different groups have a lot in common, they are different enough that they deserve their own independent studies. Only after studying each independently would it make sense to study them together as one larger body of philosophical views.

The second limitation of scope relates to the nature of the historical work that is being analyzed. The aim of this historical analysis is not to construct a brand-new historical narrative; rather, the aim is to analyze the standardly explicated narrative in the ḥadīth studies field. There is a standard historical narrative, at least in skeletal form, of how ḥadīth studies emerged and developed over time. This narrative itself is the object of this chapter's historical and epistemic analysis. Before expanding on this a bit more, it is important to stress the limitations of such a choice.

The standard narrative ignores many other historical actors and views that might give a richer and more robust picture of the development of the traditional critical method. In fact, it is quite plausible that various views in the traditional critical method emerged as responses to these other actors or views, while other positions of the *manhaj al-naqd* were adaptations of views espoused by these other actors. Despite the importance of this point, a more robust historical analysis would require its own standalone dissertation. Given that this research project is primarily interested in the philosophical epistemology of the traditional critical method as it stands today, the historical elements of the project have been limited to certain aspects of its emergence and development.

[63] There has also been an uptake of interest in studying and analyzing the critical methods employed by the Muʿtazila and the Shīʿa. See, for example, Dann (2105), Ahmad Pakatchi (2020), and Serdar Demirel (2013) for their work on Shīʿism and the Shīʿī critical method. See El-Omari (2012), Melchert (2020b), Hüseyin Hansu (2020), Eido (2022), and Eido and Safi (2020) for their work on the Muʿtazila and their critical method.

As already mentioned in the research methodology section, in the historical portions of this thesis, we will be relying on two central methods. First, we will be relying on a diachronic, *longue durée* approach, often associated with what is known as the history of ideas. The history of ideas method focuses on identifying and analyzing underlying unit ideas that persist – in some form – throughout history and how they emerge. It also focuses on how compound sets of ideas, views, and traditions change or develop through debate and social and intellectual dilemmas. This first method will only be used in this chapter and will be the primary method of investigation.

Secondly, we will be relying on a history of epistemology method. This method focuses on rationally reconstructing and evaluating historical views and arguments. It takes epistemological questions as being largely perennial and relevant to contemporary debates. The history of epistemology method also avoids excessive contextualization since the objects of study are the ideas themselves. This dovetails well with the diachronic approach since it, in contrast to a synchronic approach, also avoids excessive contextualization. While the history of epistemology method will be employed in this chapter, it will also be employed in the chapters to come.

There are two central theses in this chapter. The first is what we now refer to as the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars developed as a result of epistemological concerns over the last 1400 years. This will be shown by analyzing the contemporary domain of epistemology and showing how the ideas that ḥadīth scholars identified and analyzed, the questions and problems that concerned them, as well as the methods that they developed to address those concerns, fall under the same domain. This will also be shown by highlighting the various dilemmas that ḥadīth scholars faced that served as impetuses for the emergence of these ideas, as well as their change and development over time.

The second central thesis is that the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars developed in two important ways: it grew more theoretical and more formal over time. Therefore, the central argument of this chapter is not only that the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars is an epistemic method that developed over time but that it is a method that has developed over time from being largely applied and informal to being theoretical and formal. While the reasons for that formalization directly relate to the dilemmas

mentioned above, they also relate to the nature of knowledge, science, and skills, which we will return to at the end of the dissertation.

By the end of this chapter, we will have identified the central part of the epistemological method of ḥadīth scholars, often referred to as the *criteria of authenticity* (*shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa*). These criteria represent the backbone of the traditional critical method of ḥadīth scholars. It is these criteria that will be the focus of epistemological reconstruction, analysis, and synthesis in the final chapter of the dissertation.

5.1. Applied and Informal Epistemology

There are two broad philosophical distinctions that will be used in the subsequent historical analysis. The first is the distinction between applied epistemology, epistemology, and metaepistemology. The second is the distinction between informal and formal epistemology. These two distinctions will be relied upon in order to shed light upon the epistemological developments in the traditional critical method of ḥadīth scholarship. Before proceeding with that analysis, it is useful to first provide a brief explication of these two distinctions.

While the differences between theoretical and applied philosophy are as old as Aristotle, the distinctions between applied epistemology, epistemology, and metaepistemology do not have similar origins (Wallace 2020). The terms emerged out of an analogy with the field of ethics, where applied ethics, ethics, and metaethics had become distinct categories (Chase and Coady 2019). So, too, in contemporary epistemology, the three categories have each emerged as investigating distinctly different subject areas (Lackey 2021a; Carter and Sosa 2022; McHigh, Way, and Whiting 2018; Chase and Coady 2019).

Epistemology is primarily concerned with the theory of knowledge, its scope, its structure, and its limits. In contrast, metaepistemology does not engage the well-known substantive debates in epistemology proper. Rather, it inquires into the assumptions and commitments made by those who engage in these epistemological debates. Three of the liveliest debates in metaepistmeology include whether there are objective

epistemic facts, the subject matter, and the domain of epistemology, and finally, the methodology of epistemology (Carter and Sosa 2022, 1). Applied epistemology, on the other hand, is a more ambiguous category. While Larry Laudan (2006, 2) has argued that it is concerned with "whether systems of investigation that purport to be seeking the truth are well engineered," to do so, a broader conception of the field will be relied upon in this study (Chase and Coady 2019, 6).

As Chase, Coady (2019, 6), and others argue, applied epistemology is best thought of as an overarching category. It is characterized by one of the many areas that make that investigation applied, including but not limited to a concern for relevance to the ordinary affairs of everyday non-philosophical life, addressing a non-philosophical audience, and being addressed to a specific issue arising in a specific context, as opposed to the other more timeless concerns faced by epistemology proper. This characterization of applied epistemology is much more inclusive.

It is these characterizations that will be considered when analyzing the epistemological work of preclassical, classical, and postclassical ḥadīth scholars. At one level, the entire enterprise can be characterized as an applied field if for no other reason than the fact that their epistemological investigations are focused on a section of testimonies and not testimony as a broad human category. However, as will be shown below, there are many other considerations that one must keep in mind.

As for formal epistemology, it has come into its own as a distinct method of doing epistemology, which relies on the "formal" tools of logic, mathematics, and probability theory (Weisberg 2021, 1; Hendricks 2006, 1). However, for the purposes of this dissertation, the meaning of formal and informal must be revisited. As Noveas (2011) has shown, the different ways logic is said to be formal cluster around two key aspects: forms and rules. It is then around these two clusters that she lists out an assortment of ways logic can be thought of as being formal: through its reliance on forms or through its reliance on rules.

This chapter will argue that ḥaḍīth scholarship in the early period was not only an instance of applied epistemology but was also informal in nature. Informal here is being used to mean not only the opposite of formal rules but also the opposite of formal

forms (Novaes 2011, 304). In both senses of informality, ḥadīth scholars of the early era were doing applied epistemology in their evaluation of ḥadīth. The thrust of my thesis is that over time, ḥadīth studies grew more theoretical and formal, and while it never ceased to be a type of applied epistemology, it did begin to engage with more timeless epistemological questions.

By the end of this chapter, it will be shown that ḥadīth scholarship, over time, abstracted out axioms that were then used in conjunction with epistemological rules to aid in the evaluation of ḥadīth. It is these axioms and the explicit rules they were relying on and continuously fine-tuning that represent their departure from the informal to the formal (Novaes 2007, 231–32). In other words, early ḥadīth scholars were engaging in informal discourse about the field, and as time passed, their discourse became more formal. By the time we reach the era of late classical ḥadīth scholarship, the critical method is so formal that it can be thought of as a type of epistemic apparatus (*āla maʿrifiyya*).

As Novaes (2007, 220) has shown, informal systems might themselves be implicitly formal and only be made further explicit, or they might undergo some type of transformative change. While this is both an important and relevant question for contemporary ḥadīth scholarship, it is beyond the scope of this present study. A much more manageable claim is being offered that the critical method of ḥadīth scholarship underwent formalization, regardless of whether it was merely being made explicit or undergoing some essential transformative change.

In summary, the argument being put forward in this chapter is that the evaluative work of ḥadīth scholars is epistemological, that it is a clear case of applied epistemology in the preclassical era, that it synthesizes with epistemology proper in the classical and postclassical era, and that it moves from informal processes of evaluation in the preclassical era to a more formal apparatus (*āla maʿrifiyya*) in the classical and postclassical era. One of the many consequences of these theses is that this present work can be seen as a natural outgrowth of this developmental trend. This dissertation represents a further merger of ḥadīth studies with epistemology proper and even engages lightly with questions of metaepistemolgy.

Furthermore, as Novaes (2007, 221–22) has shown, the formal need not only be thought of as a definite concept with sharp boundaries. Rather, formalization can come in degrees. Thus, this dissertation represents a still higher degree of formalization, both in terms of abstracting out forms as well as philosophically investigating the axioms and rules that traditional ḥadīth criticism is founded upon. In fact, formalization is such an integral part of this dissertation that it can be thought of as a third philosophical method in addition to analysis and synthesis. However, given the fact that it is derivative of the two, it was left out of the chapter on research methodology.

5.2. The Domain of the Epistemic

To make the case that the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars is an epistemic system, we must begin by investigating what makes something epistemic to begin with. The question of what makes a particular question or area of investigation epistemic is one of the central questions of metaepistemology. As noted above, this is a burgeoning subfield that studies the commitments and assumptions of those engaging in epistemological inquiry.

There are many ways that one can approach the question of what the epistemic domain includes and excludes. For the purposes of this dissertation, the question will be approached from a few different angles. The first is by looking at the goals and ends of epistemology. The second is by looking at what contemporary epistemologists say represents the subject matter of their field. The third is by looking at what contemporary epistemologists say are the central questions of epistemology. The fourth is by looking at what contemporary epistemologists say are some of the primary concepts studied and investigated in epistemology. Finally, the question will also be answered by relying on the chapters and sections found in works of contemporary epistemology to elucidate the connection between the work of ḥadīth scholars and contemporary epistemologists.

Knowledge, according to the standard view, is defined as "justified true belief" (Feldman 2003, 23).[64] The most contentious and central aspect of this analysis of knowledge is the criterion of justification. Many have understood justification as a normative concept. Here, too, there are reverberations from the analogy with ethics. Just as one *ought* to do some things ethically, there are epistemic *oughts* as well. Epistemologists have argued that these epistemic normative judgments relate to our ability to achieve our goals and ends (Foley 1987, 172–73). These goals can be articulated in a myriad of ways, but they often are articulated as "the dual goals of believing what is true and avoiding belief in what is false." (Fumerton 1995, 11)

On this articulation of the aims of epistemology, ḥadīth studies ends up being one type of epistemological investigation. When articulating the aim of ḥadīth sciences, what is often referred to as the fruit (*al-thamara*) of the discipline, authors identified it as "knowing which ḥadīth [should] be accepted and which [should] be rejected." (Sirājuddīn 2020, 15; Al-Bakri 2022, 50–52) As will be discussed later in this thesis, the idea of a *threshold of acceptance* is tied directly to the attributability of a statement to the Prophet (ṣ). This native Islamic epistemic concept serves as a normative threshold of probability of whether the testimony can be attributed to the Prophet (ṣ) truthfully. Thus, the science of ḥadīth studies ends up being a method for knowing when one should believe an attribution of a ḥadīth and when one shouldn't. Furthermore, that normative language is tied to the probability of the truthfulness (or lack thereof) of the attribution. This method has clear epistemically normative implications, and although the word justification is not used, it identifies a similar concept.[65]

As for its subject matter, epistemology is often characterized as a philosophical investigation into the theory of knowledge (Reed 2015, 550). It broadly focuses on what knowledge is, what we can know, and how we come to know what we know (Greco 2006, 1). It also focuses on the normative criteria by which we regulate the acceptance and rejection of beliefs and how those criteria impact what we are justified

[64] What Feldman means by "standard" here is debatable. Contemporary epistemologists seem to be relatively in agreement that these three conditions do not suffice. In other words, the three conditions are necessary but not sufficient.
[65] The comparison between justification and acceptance is expanded upon in Chapter 7.

in believing (J. Kim 1988, 381). The type of justification epistemologists have in mind is epistemic, in contrast to moral justification, and is tied directly to truth (Cohen 2016, 3). Alternatively, some have argued that epistemology should focus on describing our practice of epistemic evaluation and how far our evaluative practices enable us to reach our epistemic goals (Hookway 2003, 192–93). Therefore, in summary, epistemology as a field is concerned with philosophical inquiry into the subject matter of knowledge, belief, and justification, as well as the normative criteria and evaluative practices associated with each. These questions, along with responding to objections from skeptical challenges, have defined epistemology in the modern anglophone world.

As for the central questions of epistemology, they are directly related to its core subject matter. Thus, central to epistemology is defining what knowledge is (Hookway 2003, 185). This includes not only providing a precise definition but also analyzing knowledge and investigating the structure of knowledge. Similarly, central to epistemology is defining what belief and justification are. In fact, the investigation and evaluation of various theories of justification are really at the heart of most contemporary epistemological research (Hookway 2006, 96).

The normative question of what one ought to believe, as well as the adjacent, if not primary, question of inquiry, are also central to contemporary epistemology (Hookway 2006, 109). Therefore, identifying strategies for proper inquiry, assessing our evidence, and judging when we have performed enough investigation are key questions for the field of epistemology (Hookway 2003, 199). In summary, academic debates in contemporary epistemology have generally concentrated on the formulation, criticism, and defense of theories of knowledge, justification, and norms of inquiry.

As for the central concepts of epistemology, many have already been mentioned in the last few paragraphs. However, for further emphasis, we can mention them here again, as well as additional concepts not mentioned above. Epistemologists are concerned with epistemic terms like knowledge, belief, justification, truth, evidence, reasons, probability, what we ought to believe, certainty, rationality, inquiry, acceptance, rejection, and evaluation (Fumerton 2006, 1; Reed 2015, 555; J. Kim 1988, 383;

Hookway 2006, 95–96; Steel 2010a, 26). Although there are several other important terms in epistemology, these are key to the endeavor.

Finally, another means of narrowing down the domain of epistemology is by analyzing the chapters and sections found in introductions to epistemology, anthologies, handbooks, and guides, as well as collections of contemporary works and debates.[66] At one level, this type of evidence is unnecessary, for it has become clear, without a shadow of a doubt, that contemporary epistemologists take the epistemology of testimony seriously. In fact, it is one of the most vibrant areas of investigation in contemporary epistemology. Given that reality, ḥadīth studies should broadly be able to be subsumed under such an investigation.

However, the goal here is to drive home the point that testimony and its related investigations have now become both standard and central to epistemology proper. For one might concede that ḥadīth studies is a part of Islamic epistemology but object to the idea that testimony holds the same rank in anglophone philosophy. To preempt a response to this type of wrongheaded objection, it can be pointed out that we find sections on testimony in many contemporary works introducing epistemology *vis-à-vis* contemporary debates in the field.[67]

In addition to the point mentioned above, many of the areas of investigation that come up in ḥadīth studies emerge under other headings in contemporary epistemology. If one were to only take into consideration what is found in books written on testimony or chapters on the subject, one might overlook the anticipations and novel solutions found in ḥadīth studies that impact debates in other areas of contemporary epistemology. It is for this reason that it is useful to compare the areas of investigation in ḥadīth studies with texts introducing epistemology and contemporary debates in the field. Rather than introduce all relevant chapters and sections here, the chapters and sections will be tied to their relevant areas of investigation in ḥadīth studies as they come up.

[66] See, for example: Feldman (2003); Audi (2011); BonJour (2010); Goldman and McGrath (2015); Sosa (2017); Sosa et al (2000); Steup, Turri and Sosa (2014); Fantl, McGrath, and Sosa (2019); Bernecker and Pritchard (2014); Greco and Sosa (2006); and Fumerton (2006).
[67] See, for example, Audi (2011, 150–67).

This summary outline of the epistemic domain should help us in the rest of the chapter as we analyze the historical development of *manhaj al-naqd*. Although we've preempted the direct relationship to ḥadīth studies when it comes to the goals and ends of epistemology, as well as the chapters and sections found in works of contemporary epistemology, we have yet to draw a direct relationship to the subject matter, central questions, and primary concepts studied and investigated in epistemology. These areas will be tied together as many of the same questions, concepts, and subjects get brought up throughout the chapter and beyond.

5.3. A Preliminary Conception of Ḥadīth Studies

5.3.1. Ḥadīth as a Technical Term

The word ḥadīth is etymologically related to the Arabic verb "to speak" or "to tell." Therefore, it can literally be translated as "that which is spoken, said, or told." The term itself was used in the Qurʾān with that general linguistic meaning.[68] However, eventually, the term came to be stipulated as a specific type of statement. More will be said about this and its relationship to other terms in the section on the nature of testimony in the Islamic tradition.

When used in the strictest sense, the term ḥadīth usually refers to (1) statements attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ), (2) or to statements of his companions describing something he did, (3) or was present for and did not object to, (4) or to their descriptions of him (Al-Sakhāwī 2014a, 1:14). The key unifying feature being that all the categories of statements mentioned above are being attributed back to him in some sense. In some cases, they are things he said; at other times, they are things he did or was present for or descriptions of him.

The term ḥadīth is sometimes used in a more general sense and includes statements attributed to the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) or the generation that followed right after them. While specific terms eventually emerged to differentiate between a Prophetic statement and a companion or successor statement, in some

[68] The word ḥadīth is used in several places in the Qurʾān. See, for example: Q. 4:42, 78, 87, 140; 20:9.

contexts, the word ḥadīth subsumes them all. This is because the study of ḥadīth is concerned with that which is attributable back to the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ); therefore, sometimes the circle of investigation is increased to demarcate whom any given statement needs to be attributed back to. In order to isolate Prophetic statements from statements that didn't originate with him, they had to study all statements from that era.

Finally, it is important to highlight that the word ḥadīth is used to refer to both the statement (*matn*) being transmitted (sometimes referred to as the "text") as well as the individuals who transmitted that statement from generation to generation. This second part of any given ḥadīth is known as the *isnād* (the testimonial chain) and plays an important role in the traditional epistemological system (Sirājuddīn 2020, 20). Thus, any given ḥadīth is standardly understood as some statement (*matn*) attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ), along with the transmitters (*isnād*) who were involved in the transmission of that *matn*.

5.3.2. Ḥadīth as a Field of Inquiry

Over the centuries, ḥadīth studies (*ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*) in the Sunnī tradition developed into a broad area of inquiry, where statements from the earliest generation were being studied from various vantage points. If translated literally, the field is often referred to as "ḥadīth sciences," using the plural form. For example, some scholars focused on clarifying what certain obscure words found in the ḥadīth literature meant, others focused on interpretive and hermeneutical elements, while others focused on the correct spelling and pronunciation of the transmitters in the testimonial chains, and others focused on reconciling between ḥadīth that seemed to contradict one another.

This long list of "sciences" that ḥadīth scholars engaged in and continue to engage in can be best understood as falling into one of three broad categories. The first has to do with the transmission of the Prophetic statements themselves. Those working on collecting, compiling, attending auditions, and seeking out rare transmissions fall under the first category. The second category concerns those who, in addition to the first category, go above and beyond to focus on the authenticity of the attribution of the statements back to the Prophet (ṣ). This category also focuses on critiquing the

testimonial chains, inquiring into hidden defects (*ʿilal*) therein, as well as researching the reliability of the transmitters in these testimonial chains. The third and final category focuses on the meanings of the statements themselves, engaging with the texts interpretively and hermeneutically, as well as making sense of them in light of one another (Al-Bakri 2022, 106–7).

Historically, ḥadīth scholars came to refer to the first type of study as transmission (*riwāya*) and the second and third categories as understanding or comprehension (*dirāya*) (Al-Bakri 2022, 120–26). However, for our purposes, we will not follow this two-part transmission/comprehension distinction. Rather, we will retain the tripartite distinction because we will be focusing on the second category and isolating it for the purposes of analysis. This second category is fundamentally different from the first and third.

The first and third categories focus on transmitting the statements themselves as well as related philological and interpretative concerns, which is fundamentally different from the critical methods developed in the second category to evaluate the attribution of the statements back to their sources. As we will explain further below, the first and third dealt with the content of the statements, while the second focused on how we know whether the alleged source of the statement actually said what has been attributed back to them. This thesis will focus on the second category because of how it directly relates to the epistemology of testimony.[69]

Common questions in this second area include: What evidence must we have, or what criteria must be met in order to make such an attribution? How justified are we in believing said attribution to be true?[70] Does this evidence and criteria yield knowledge or probabilistic belief? What degree of belief is needed in order for us to use any given ḥadīth as evidence in law or in other domains?

[69] The first and third categories are also epistemological but in different ways. However, that is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
[70] Although the literal word for justification is not used, the concept functionally exists in the literature. We will return to this point in Chapter 7.

Before we move on to a historical assessment and reconstruction of this second area of inquiry, a broad and general conception of the first category is needed. The philosophical debates and the epistemic system that developed did so against the backdrop of the transmission of the corpus itself. To that end, a basic conceptualization of the corpus and its transmission is needed to understand the emergence and development of ḥadīth criticism.

5.3.3. The Ḥadīth Corpus

The broad ḥadīth corpus, as it stands now in 2023, is a vast collection of works. Each book includes statements, and some include their associated testimonial chains from the compiler to the source of the statement. For our purposes, what is of greatest concern to us is the compilations put together in the first six centuries after the life of the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) (d. 632 CE). It was during this period, particularly the two hundred years between 150 AH– 350 AH, that the core texts that make up the corpus were compiled. After this period, ḥadīth works continued to be compiled, but they are of a different nature and have little consequence on the essential parameters of this research project.

In the Islamic intellectual tradition, the period spanning the life of the Prophet (ṣ) (570 – 632 CE) and ending roughly at the end of the 6th century of the Islamic calendar (12th century CE) came to be known as "the era of transmission" (*ʿaṣr al-riwāya*).[71] In the first century after his passing, these statements were, for the most part, transmitted orally (Kuzudişli 2017, 76–80). There is evidence of some forms of formal and informal writing of ḥadīth taking place even in the Prophetic era; however, it was few and far between. There is a lot that can be said about why it was mostly oral transmission, but for the purposes of this dissertation, we can suffice by focusing on the fact that literacy was extremely low, and paper was not yet introduced, and as such, writing was a very costly and time-consuming endeavor.

[71] This "era of transmission" (*ʿaṣr al-riwāya*) is the period in which new ḥadīth were being transmitted and collected. While there is no hard cutoff date, it is a standard to hold that the central period of transmission ends within three centuries and continues thereafter in a much more diminished capacity (Eido 2016, 90). Some contemporary scholars hold that Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571/1176) is probably the last figure that can be included in the era of transmission.

It wouldn't be until the end of the first century and the beginning of the second century that transmitters of ḥadīth would focus on both the oral and written form when compiling and transmitting ḥadīth in an organized, focused, and deliberate manner. By the middle of the second century, literacy, paper, and book culture had swept the Muslim world, and it forever changed the transmission of ḥadīth. Ḥadīth experts traveled from one center of learning to another in search of transmitters that had a living chain they could reliably transmit (Kuzudişli 2017, 108–11; Snober 2022, 179–96, 216–19). The circles that focused on ḥadīth went from being skeptical of transmitters who needed their notes with them before the spread of paper and literacy to not relying on anyone who wasn't reciting their ḥadīth from a written collection after the spread of these new technologies.

The compilers of this early era did not attempt to collect all the ḥadīth in circulation in one work. Rather, during the era of transmission, ḥadīth scholars individually focused on collecting ḥadīth they could say they directly received the transmission of from someone they met, who directly received it from someone they personally met, from someone they personally met, back to the Prophet (ṣ). In other words, the works compiled in this era each uniquely had a testimonial chain from the compiler to the supposed source of each statement found within.

5.3.4. The Phases of Formal Compilation

In the first phase of formal compilation, scholars collected ḥadīth in the broadest sense in their compilations. These works included Prophetic statements, companion statements, and statements from the successor era. Furthermore, they organized the books according to chapters of religious law (*fiqh*). In other words, these texts were organized around chapters having to do with "purification" or "prayer." This is important because the early community that was compiling ḥadīth was interested in these statements primarily as evidence in religious legal opinions. It was even normal for the compiler to sometimes add his own legal ruling within these compilations, interspersed between his transmission of various statements. This relationship between law and ḥadīth is essential for our understanding of both the transmission of the corpus and the critical method that would later develop.

By the end of the second Islamic century and the beginning of the third, a second phase of transmission began, and with it, a new genre of compilation emerged. In this new genre, ḥadīth works were compiled in a manner that only focused on Prophetic reports. These ḥadīth works were not organized topically, nor were they focused on religious law; rather, they were ordered according to which companion had first narrated them (J. A. C. Brown 2018, 29–32).

Something important was changing in the intellectual climate as the boundaries between law and ḥadīth began to form. This newfound focus on ḥadīth, isolated from legal questions, was being advocated for by a new class of scholars that were either not convinced by the legal philosophies of other geographic regions or they were untrained or indifferent to the legal implications of the ḥadīth being transmitted. Or, at the very least, they saw their work as being non-legal in nature. This group came to be known as "the Partisans of Ḥadīth" (*Ahl al-Ḥadīth*) (Kuzudişli 2017, 120–24). More will be said about this development in the following section on ḥadīth criticism.

The third phase begins in the first half of the third century and thus partially overlaps with the second phase. What emerges in this third phase are compilations whose authors attempt to isolate and include only the most authentic and reliable reports. A few of these compilers organized their works according to major parts of the religion, not just law, and others focused on gathering the most authentic statements on law. The most famous of these works are the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* and the four *Sunnan* (J. A. C. Brown 2018, 32–35).

It is important to note that at each of these stages, the compilers were picking and choosing what to include. It is common to hear that they were only including a small percentage of what they actually knew or had received. In other words, this third phase was not unique because some ḥadīth were being left out, nor was it unique because authenticity was playing a role in the filtering process, rather what made it unique was that the compilers were *only* going to include the most authentic reports in their compilations.

By the end of the third century, the majority of authentic ḥadīths were already codified, and what had yet to be written was of a weaker epistemic status. The further one moves

out from this period, the weaker the new reports being compiled are.[72] The works compiled in the late fourth and fifth centuries are often said to be defacto a place of suspicion (*maẓinnat al-daʿf*). It is for this reason that the most important era of transmission is often seen as having ended by the 4th century, even if it continued into the middle of the sixth.

A lot more can be said about the development of the ḥadīth corpus and the literature associated with it. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, the investigation is more directly aimed at the critical methods employed by ḥadīth scholars in their evaluations and assessments of the corpus. Now that we have provided a very brief conceptualization of the corpus, we can turn our attention to the development of the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars.

5.4. The Emergence and Development of the Traditional Critical Method

One of the core theses of this dissertation is that the critical method of ḥadīth scholars (*manhaj al-naqd*) is an epistemological system in and of itself. However, that system, as we understand it today, developed over 1400 years. The remainder of this first chapter will focus on analyzing the history of the emergence and development of *manhaj al-naqd*, from its beginnings to the contemporary age.

The primary aim of this historical analysis will be to show how the *manhaj al-naqd* emerged and developed in its criticality in order to address the epistemological concerns of the community. A second aim will be to show how these investigations relate to the domain of the epistemic mentioned earlier in the chapter. Tying the two together is not just important for proving that the traditional method is epistemic, but it is also important for pointing out the perennial nature of some of these unit ideas and concepts. A third aim will be to highlight the development of the system from an informal system to a more formal system. A fourth aim will be to show how the system developed from an applied system, in the most literal sense of the word, to one that was being theorized about, then written about, and eventually synthesized with epistemology proper. The chapter will also focus on how these key stages of

[72] This is not meant in any absolute sense, rather it is a general rule of thumb.

development and change in *manhaj al-naqd* were often a result of various philosophical and social dilemmas that the community faced.

The four aims mentioned above play an important role in setting the background context of the system being philosophically analyzed in the non-historical portions of this thesis. In other words, this mostly historical chapter aims not only to analyze the *manhaj al-naqd* through its various stages of emergence and development, but it also strives to emphasize its continuity up through the present day. The contemporary version of *manhaj al-naqd*, which continues to be relied upon and used all across the world as an epistemic apparatus (*āla maʿrifiyya*), will then be further analyzed and reconstructed in the final chapter of this dissertation.[73]

Although there have been several analyses of the ḥadīth corpus itself, there has been no attempt to epistemically analyze the development of ḥadīth criticism in a diachronic fashion. However, as mentioned above, there are standard broad historical outlines provided by Islamic scholars concerning ḥadīth studies as a whole: the preclassical, classical, postclassical, and contemporary eras (Eido 2021). This classification will be incorporated into the present study as well as the idea of further subdividing these eras into various periods without embracing the actual demarcations of which years or events mark the end of one era or period and the beginning of another (ʿItr 1997, 37–70). Instead, the end of an era or period will be marked based upon clear shifts in the epistemic system and culture of ḥadīth criticism.

5.4.1. The Preclassical Era (1): The Companion Period

Just as the transmission of ḥadīth began shortly after the passing of the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ), so too did the phenomenon of ḥadīth criticism. The historical picture we have of the companions of the Prophet (ṣ) is not one of blind acceptance of authority, nor was it characterized by any type of gullibility. In fact, we have an assortment of historical reports of not only the companions criticizing one another but of their criticizing the central transmitters of the ḥadīth corpus. Even more surprising

[73] A secondary benefit of this research is that it serves the purpose of showcasing that the analysis, abstraction, synthesis, and development being offered in this dissertation is neither alien to the tradition nor anachronistic.

is the criticism leveled by students of those companions against their own teachers and other companions.[74] This is important because it gives us an idea of the critical nature of the community in which the corpus was being transmitted.

This early generation was far from naïve, blindly following those who came before them; rather, they engaged in substantive criticism and evaluation. A close study of this critical community allows us to abstract out which epistemological concerns they had when monitoring testimonies. An analysis of the reports indicates that they had two primary concerns.

The first concern of the companions was the possibility of error. The companions had full faith that all of that which the Prophet said was true, but they needed to know that the one transmitting the testimony from the Prophet was accurately conveying it, that they preserved what they had heard, and transmitted it precisely. Their concern was clearly epistemic as they sought to assess the truth of the transmission and avoid what was falsely being attributed to him.

Further analysis of their reports yields two types of errors that they were monitoring for. The first was the possibility of having misheard what the Prophet (ṣ) said, and the second was the possibility of not remembering accurately what one had heard. While we don't find any reports of the companions analyzing – in theory – the various ways one might err in their transmissions, we do find informal statements at the time of their objections that highlight their being aware of the underlying epistemic issue. A good example of this is a statement transmitted from ʿĀʾisha (r), which states quite clearly, "But [one's] hearing can err."[75]

We find other examples of the companions attempting to address this concern by asking the individual under evaluation to repeat what he has transmitted multiple times

[74] For examples of companions critiquing one another in this way, see: Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: *kitāb al-janāʾiz*, *bāb*: *al-ṣalāt ʿalā al-janāza fī al-masjid*, and *bāb*: *faḍl al-ṣalāt ʿalā al-janāza wa ittibāʿihā, and kitāb al-īmān*, *bāb*: *kawn al-nahī ʿan al-munkar min al-īmān*, and *kitāb al-ḥajj*, *bāb: mā yalzam man aḥram bi al-ḥajj*. Also, see al-Zarkashī's (1970) work on the subject.

[75] Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: *kitāb al-musāfirīn wa qaṣrihā, bāb: lā tataḥarrū bi ṣalātikum ṭulūʿ al-shams wa lā ghurūbahā*.

in different contexts so that they can monitor for any differences in the testimony.[76] This method was used to test the memory of the companion and thus to test the veracity of the attribution of the ḥadīth. We also have evidence of companions requesting a second individual to corroborate the Prophetic statement being brought before them. [77] Similarly, we find other companions asking those transmitting to swear to the veracity of what they were transmitting.[78]

These methods are aimed at getting at the truthfulness of the attribution of the ḥadīth to the Prophet (ṣ), otherwise known in ḥadīth studies as an inquiry into *thubūt nisbat al-ḥadīth*.[79] They sought to evaluate testimonies through various critical methods and practices. These methods and strategies were a type of epistemic inquiry into the reliability of the testimonial transmission.

All these attempts to account for the possibility of error occurred in light of the risk associated with transmitting a Prophetic statement. The companions understood what it meant for the Prophet to have said something, and as such, they warned their compatriots about getting it wrong. Serious consequences lay in the balance. Legal questions having to do with inheritance, criminal punishment, marriage, divorce, and ultimately salvation itself relied on whether the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) did, in fact, say what was being transmitted from him (Snober 2022, 59–63, 89–91). This epistemic

[76] See, for example, ʿĀʾisha's advice to ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr: Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-ʿilm, bāb: rafʿ al-ʿilm.*

[77] The most well-known incident in this regard is the story of ʿUmar with Abū Mūsa al-Ashʿarī. See: Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-ādāb, bāb: al-istiʾdhān.*

[78] This is documented as a practice of Imām ʿAlī, see: Abū ʿIsā Muḥammad al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī, kitāb al-ṣalāt, bāb: mā jāʾ fī al-ṣalāt ʿind al-tawba.*

[79] I am translating the technical phrase *thubūt nisbat al-ḥadīth* into English as "the truthfulness of the attribution of the ḥadīth" to the Prophet (ṣ). In contrast, *ʿadam thubūt nisbat al-ḥadīth*, would be "the falsehood of the attribution of the ḥadīth" to the Prophet (ṣ). Linguistically, the term *al-thubūt* is the verbal noun for *tha-ba-ta* and is often described as meaning *al-rusūkh* or *al-taʾakkud* or *al-taḥaqquq*. These meanings can be translated into English as sureness, firmness, certainty, or being verified. However, the technical phrase *thubūt nisbat al-ḥadīth*, while originating in these linguistic meanings, has shifted to mean the truthfulness or authenticity of the attribution of the ḥadīth to the Prophet (ṣ). In *uṣūl al-fiqh* works as well as contemporary ḥadīth studies, the phrase *thubūt nisbat al-ḥadīth* is oftened shortened to *al-thubūt*. Of course, the epistemic concept applies beyond the domain of Prophetic ḥadīth such that *al-thubūt* can be characterized as "the truthfulness of the attribution of a testimony to a source." Therefore, the inquiry into *al-thubūt* is an inquiry into the truthfulness or authenticity of attribution. From here on out, I will refer to *al-thubūt* as a shorthand for such an inquiry. Given the linguistic medium of this dissertation, I will often drop the definite article *al-* and simply refer to it as a question of *thubūt*. I am grateful to Dr. Issam Eido, Dr. Hamzeh al-Bakri, Dr. Jadallah Bassam, and Dr. Moustafa Fouad for their help analyzing this term. More will be said about this in Chapter 6 when investigating the definition of the technical term ḥadīth.

risk was present in the mind of all of those involved, and so it became incumbent on them to assess the evidence before them in order to conclude whether or not belief in the attributability of a statement was, in fact, justified (Steel 2010a).

Given the risk associated with transmitting ḥadith, most of the companions were reluctant to transmit more than needed. For the most part, the companions who transmitted the largest number of ḥadīth did so in private daily-life settings. These figures were generally individuals who lived many decades after the Prophet and passed on most of what they knew to relatives and those close to them. Generally speaking, the companions did not sit down to teach Prophetic testimonies in a formal way, rather they brought them up as needed, as evidence for how the Prophet did something, or when mentioning evidence for their own legal opinion on any given issue (Snober 2022, 42–44, 157; Kuzudişli 2022, 140–55).

Bekir Kuzudişli's important work, *Asbāb Īrād al-Ḥadīth* (2022, 73–140), shows that there were some formal attempts at transmission during the Companion period, what he calls semi-systematic narration.[80] However, this level of formalization does not seem to have expressed itself fully, and thus Kuzudişli describes these expressions as semi-systematic in contrast to the systematic transmissions of the era of compilation (*ʿaṣr al-tadwīn*). An exception to this rule is Abū Hurayrah (r) (d. 59/679), who was unique in his focus on collecting and transmitting ḥadīth. When compared with other companions, he is unique in the number of students he had and the very public nature of some of his transmissions.

This focus on students is important because the main students of each companion quickly become the standard by which all testimonies that originate from that companion are measured. It is these few students that are considered to be the most knowledgeable, and thus the most reliable, about what the companions transmitted from the Prophet (ṣ). If a sole transmitter not known to have spent much time with a

[80] Kuzudişli classifies ḥadīth transmission into systematic, semi-systematic, and non-systematic transmission. I have chosen different terminology, relying instead on a formal vs. informal distinction. However, Kuzudişli's classifications overlap with my own. Given the fact that formalization occurs on a spectrum, semi-systematic transmission can be seen as indicating a degree of formalization.

companion were to transmit an odd testimony from them, later ḥadīth scholars would evaluate it in light of its not being transmitted by those who knew that companion well.

The second issue of concern for the companions was the context of the statement being transmitted. While mishearing or being forgetful were primary issues, so too was not understanding the background context of the statement. Although this criticism based on context took many forms, one central form was differentiating what the Prophet usually taught as a standard versus what he advised in exceptional cases. This type of criticism is harder to epistemologically parse given its lack of being solely a question of whether the statement is attributable to the Prophet or not. It is quite conceivable that the Prophet said one thing in one context and said something else in another. So, the question here becomes less whether he said it but more why he said it and which statement should be acted upon.

At the earliest stages of the preclassical era, the proto-epistemic work of ḥadīth criticism was inextricably linked to the question of action. This is not to insinuate some type of strong separation between knowledge and action, but rather only to say that their epistemic investigations were driven by questions related to action (Hawthorne and Stanley 2008). Thus, the most pressing question in the mind of the early community was not simply whether the Prophet said it but whether we should act upon it. Therefore, ḥadīth were inextricably linked to their function as reasons for action. Ḥadīth that were to be acted upon were deemed acceptable, while ḥadīth that were not to be acted upon were deemed rejected (Al-Bakri 2021; J. A. C. Brown 2018, 26–32; Kuzudişli 2017, 120–24). This marriage between knowledge and action, reasons and evidence, ḥadīth and law, would continue until late into the preclassical era.

The companions sought to address this issue in various ways. Unlike the solutions enacted to address the possibility of error, which included asking the companion to repeat the transmission or asking for corroboration, in these cases, the companions sought to compare these testimonies to other authoritative sources. The companions and their early students would critique ḥadīth by comparing them to the Qurʾān or to

other well-known Prophetic statements.[81] Contradiction in light of other authoritative sources could mean that the ḥadīth under evaluation would be rejected and not acted upon.

The concern for the possibility of error endured throughout the centuries and became an essential feature of the epistemic apparatus (*āla maʿrifiyya*) of ḥadīth scholars. It was clear at the outset, even to those early companions, that speakers make mistakes when conveying what they have heard or seen. Those mistakes are often a result of poor memory or a lack of alertness on the part of the speaker. While it began as an informal concern during their era, as we shall see in the following sections, eventually, ḥadīth scholars further developed criteria to address the question of memory and precision (*ḍabṭ*) of hearing. Even today, in the 21st century, one of the core features of their critical method is a focus on the memory and precision of each narrator in the testimonial chain.[82]

As for the second concern, the concern for the context of the transmission, that too would endure but as a facet of law and jurisprudence. In later generations, this is sometimes glossed as the criterion of understanding (*fiqh al-rāwī*) on the part of the transmitter.[83] There are many reasons for this, but the primary reason seems to have been the concern that transmitting a statement without context and understanding, isolated from the broad corpus of Prophetic statements, might lead to mistakes and unintended consequences. This distinction between whether the Prophet said or did something and whether one should act upon it, what we can characterize as the question of knowledge and action, persisted for many generations.[84]

[81] An example of the companions critiquing ḥadīth by comparing it to the Qurʾān is the report of ʿUmar (r) rejecting the ḥadīth of Fāṭimah bint Qays (r). See: Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: kitāb al-ṭalāq, bāb: al-muṭallaqa thalāthan lā nafaqata lahā*.

[82] The critical method employed by the earliest generations is still fundamentally the same method being practiced today. Undoubtedly there were developments, but the underlying structure is the same.

[83] Another area where this concern is accounted for is under the heading of contradictory evidence or signifiers (*taʿāruḍ al-adilla*), as well the investigation into contradicting ḥadīth (*mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*) and difficult ḥadīth (*mushkil al-ḥadīth*). More will be said about this in Chapters 7 and 8.

[84] A good question to ask is when exactly a clean split finally occurred between ḥadīth and *fiqh*. Although there are many studies that point to a clear separation that developed in the third and fourth centuries, it might be an overestimation to believe that in that early period ḥadīth scholars saw their work as completely separate from jurisprudence (Al-Bakri 2021).

Finally, it is important to emphasize the critical nature of the community under epistemic analysis and evaluation. These were not individuals who were gullible or naïve; rather, they were hypercritical and were monitoring for errors. Snober (2022) makes a sustained case for this in his new monograph. This is similar to and can be synthesized with Goldberg's (2010, 137–40) exposition of the difference between uncritical and skeptical communities. Transmissions that pass through the latter are, by that fact alone, granted higher epistemic status. Critical, or as he puts it, skeptical communities "weed out" false testimonies. Even though the companions had not gotten together in any type of formal way to create this social structure, it is clear that it informally emerged for the purpose of evaluating what is truly attributable to the Prophet from what is not.

The methods that emerged were a direct result of the epistemic needs of the new community. Core ideas and concepts like reliability, risk, and acceptance emerged in response to the dilemma before them. The companions needed to know how to act; they also needed to know what they should or shouldn't believe. Furthermore, with the possibility of contradiction, they needed a method of reconciling between different testimonies.

In summary, in this first period of the preclassical era, we find an informal but rigorous epistemic system being employed by the companions and their students. Although there was no theoretical engagement with these questions, we know that they were aware of them implicitly, given some of their statements and, more importantly, given their strategies, methodologies, and evaluative practices. At this early stage, their evaluative practices were applied, informal, and developed as needed to match the epistemic needs of the community.

5.4.1.1. The Preclassical Era (2): Tribulations and Asking for One's Source

In the second half of the first century, after several companions had already passed away and their numbers had dwindled, forgeries and lies began to spread due to "trials and tribulations." In a now famous testimony attributed to one of the first great ḥadīth scholars, Muḥammad b. Sīrīn (d. 110/729), we are told, "They didn't use to ask about

the [testimonial] chain. Then, when the tribulation broke out, they said, 'Name for us your sources!'"[85]

This quote refers to a clear change in methodology on behalf of those transmitting ḥadīth. Muslim sources disagree as to which specific event served as the impetus for this change (Kuzudişli 2017, 89–93). However, whether the tribulation being referred to is the killing of the third Caliph, ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (r) (d. 35/656), or the fourth Caliph, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (r) (d. 40/661), or his son, al-Ḥusayn (r) (d. 61/681), or the attempt by al-Mukhtār b. Abī ʿUbayd (d. 67/687) to fight against the then ruling Umayyads in the year 65/685, it does not change the fact that something methodologically shifted to account for the new epistemic concern.[86]

During this 30-year period, 35-65 AH, there was a rise in tumult, and the early community witnessed the emergence of political and sectarian debates. Historical accounts mention that during this phase, various individuals began to concoct forgeries in support of their cause. With this influx of forgeries, the question of what one ought to believe became more complicated. Thus, given the emergence of this clear epistemological and social dilemma, solutions were needed. The transmitters of ḥadīth recognized this and sought to address the growing problem through new strategies and epistemic tools (Kuzudişli 2017, 89–93). This is how the *isnād system* (testimonial chain) was born.

With the emergence of this new social reality, ḥadīth scholars no longer limited their critique to failures in hearing, memory, and comprehension; they added to it the monitoring of lies and bias. As will be discussed in later sections of the dissertation, an epistemic analysis of the kind of testimony relevant in ḥadīth leads us to the conclusion that these variables together constitute the logical possibilities of how testimonies can end up being false.

[85] Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: *al-muqaddima*.
[86] While these are not the only recorded positions, they are some of the central ones. Ibn Rajab (2019, 51–53), for example, seems to indicate that the rebellion of al-Mukhtār is most likely the incident being referred to.

After this event, the *isnād* became essential to the transmission of Prophetic testimonies. Whereas previously, there was an assumption that all transmitters were honest, this new social reality meant that the assumption of sincerity was no longer tenable. Ḥadīth scholars began to require that transmitters name whom they had heard the report from. The idea was that if we know who the source is, we have the ability to come to know important qualities about them. Those things that we need to know about them are, first and foremost, their sincerity, then their precision, memory, comprehension, bias, and other topics that relate directly to the question of their reliability. The circle of epistemic evaluation had thus increased. Although all these epistemic factors are logically core to the concept of testimonial reliability, it is the dilemma of forgeries and sectarian strife that served as the impetus for the emergence of some of them.

This change inaugurates the second phase of ḥadīth criticism. Although ḥadīth criticism at this stage was still a relatively informal phenomenon, the first steps of formalization were beginning to take place. Those focusing on the transmission of ḥadīth recognized that the go-to critical practices in place to filter and evaluate reports during the companion period were no longer adequate in their day and age. The variables that needed to be monitored and accounted for were growing, as were the number of converts to the new religion, and a formal epistemic solution was put forward to address the new concerns.

One might ask whether the lack of such monitoring in the first phase is epistemically justifiable. The question can be further developed to include the absence of other formal epistemic tools that would later be adopted by ḥadīth scholars. These epistemic devices are, by ḥadīth scholars' own admission, important for proper epistemic evaluation. So, it seems that those who do not implement such formal analyses are uncritical, naïve, or gullible.

However, under closer consideration, this conclusion does not have any merit. As is evident from the historical narrative, ḥadīth scholars were evaluating testimonies based on the conditions of their society and community. It is much too strong of a claim to assert that hyper-formalized systems of analysis are necessary even when the concerns they are sensitive to are absent in a given society. The companions in the early era

sought to address the root causes of false testimonies that were actually in circulation, namely auditory or memory failure and poor comprehension of background contexts, not some theoretical category of false testimonies that did not exist. Their critical practices were part of their applied epistemology, not a theoretical investigation into the epistemology of testimony. This means that their focus on the limited questions of auditory, memory, and comprehension failure was not a theoretical answer to the logical possibility of how testimonial communication can fail; rather, it was a practical answer to a practical problem. There was no attempt to monitor or critique the sincerity of the transmitters because their honesty was a given.

There are several ways to ground this conclusion. Two types of arguments are best suited for this context. First, the risk associated with forging a ḥadīth is extremely high. If a companion were to be insincere, he could easily be contradicted or accused by another. Given the hypercritical nature of the companions when it came to holding each other accountable and given the willingness of companions to even go to war over disagreements, lying about something the Prophet said would have been a huge risk. Furthermore, the companions had sacrificed everything for the Prophet and would not risk all of that, including the possibility of being punished in the afterlife, in order to concoct a lie.

Secondly, the empirical data further supports this claim since we do not have any evidence of companions accusing one another of lying or of concocting forgeries despite the plethora of evidence that they did accuse one another of making mistakes. This is all the more surprising given the fact that the companion generation saw a number of conflicts and battles arise, pitting them against one another immediately after the Prophet's passing. They clearly had the impetus to lie, but we have no evidence of them accusing one another of doing so. When lying began to spread among non-companions a few decades later, the community immediately sounded the alarm.

To further drive this point home, it is useful to consider an epistemological point found in both the Islamic tradition and the anglophone tradition of philosophy. The background conditions and social environment of a testimony under evaluation can either support or defeat the proposition in question. Whether a testimony is corroborated or contradicted by others in the community can make all the difference

in the assessment. In fact, as was discussed earlier, Goldberg (2010, 154–84) has shown that even the lack of statements, one way or the other, can support or contradict the proposition under evaluation. This coverage-reliability is built upon the background conditions that give a hearer justification to reject a singular testimony about an important event in light of the institutions in place and other nomic considerations. Nearly 900 years prior to Goldberg's argument, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 435/1045) (1963, 2:546–47) anticipated and explicated a similar position. He highlights that if an individual were to communicate a proposition that a large group of other people was supposed to also have knowledge of, in front of them, and none of them object, despite the lack of a reason to remain silent, it is nomically necessary for such a testimony to be true.

This argument can be applied directly to the question of the sincerity of the companion generation. The stakes were extremely high; the companions were transmitting the core teachings of the religion and attributing those teachings to the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ). The fact that there is no evidence of the companions accusing one another of lying and insincerity is extremely strong evidence that the community itself was sincere. This isn't a pietistic argument; rather, it is a rational argument concerning the nomic nature of such incidents. We have several examples of the companions criticizing each other for having made mistakes that were rooted in either an auditory failure or a failure of memory. We also have many examples of the companions criticizing each other's comprehension. We also have companions who went to war with one another over political disagreements. Yet, we do not have any evidence of them accusing one another of lying despite the real force that such forgeries would give to their cause in any given conflict.

In summary, given the rise of the era of tribulations and the spreading of sectarian forgeries, ḥadīth scholars could no longer assume the sincerity of transmitters. The *isnād* (testimonial chain) emerged as a core epistemic feature of ḥadīth criticism as a response to lying and forgeries. This social shift from a community of relative trust and credibility to one of doubt and suspicion propelled experts to think about ḥadīth criticism in a more detailed manner. No longer were the variables of memory, mistakes, context, and law the only things to keep in mind. Now, given this new reality,

lying, forgeries, ethics, sectarianism, and many other issues would have to be addressed.

This significant development not only led to a new criterion for justified belief but also served as a criterion for inquiry. Ḥadīth scholars did not view their jobs as merely evaluating based upon the evidence immediately available to them; rather, they normatively required inquiry into the testimonial chain. Thus, inquiring about transmitters became a necessary step in the evaluative process of ḥadīth critics (Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 2003a, 1:141–48).

During each subsequent period and era, a class of scholars spearheaded the development and implementation of ḥadīth criticism. As for this early period of the preclassical era, at least two figures rose to prominence in the development of the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars. ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbī (d. 103/722) and Muḥammad b. Sīrīn are generally credited with inaugurating the start of ḥadīth criticism as well as beginning to delineate its determining principles (*ḍawābiṭ*) (Al-Dhahabī 1990, 172–73). With the two figures mentioned above, we begin to see evidence of a more formalized applied epistemology.

5.4.1.2. The Preclassical Era (3): The Gatherings of Mālik and Shuʿba and Journeying for Ḥadīth

The next epistemic inflection point is found against the backdrop of a growing interest in ḥadīth study. During the first few decades of the second century after the *hijra*, the study of ḥadīth went from being a primarily private affair to a much more robust public endeavor (Kuzudişli 2017, 109). This is best exemplified by what is known among ḥadīth scholars as gatherings (*majālis*) of ḥadīth, as well as what came to be known as "journeying" (*al-riḥla*) for ḥadīth.

One of the central ḥadīth transmitters of this period, Mālik b. Anas (d. 176/793), is a prime example of these phenomena. We have reports from his early days as a student detailing how he gathered ḥadīth from his teachers in Medina. An analysis of these testimonies illustrates that many of the ḥadīth he heard from his teachers, he heard in private settings, one on one, whenever the time would allow for it (Al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ 1983,

1:123). However, by the time Mālik himself was teaching, he would hold public gatherings of ḥadīth transmission in the Prophet's Mosque, where hundreds of students would be in attendance (Ibn ʿĀshūr 2007, 45).

Although some of the companions, like Abū Hurayrah (r), and some of the successors, like al-Zuhrī, held some public gatherings, they also regularly transmitted ḥadīth in more private one-on-one, daily-life settings. The emergence of *majālis* in Mālik's era was not only a question of frequency, where public gatherings increased in comparison to before; rather, the very acceptability of the means of transmission had shifted. Official and acceptable ḥadīth transmission became a public endeavor, not a private one.[87]

These public ḥadīth gatherings were also closely associated with the shift from oral transmission and private notes to the introduction of formal compilations intended for public consumption. Mālik's *Muwaṭṭaʾ*, one of the earliest formal compilations of ḥadīth, became known throughout the Muslim world and was read in his public gatherings. Furthermore, these public gatherings became associated with certain norms, including but not limited to how the teacher would prepare and present himself before the gathering, who would do the actual reading of the text, how the students would copy out the manuscripts, and how corrections would take place.

The norms associated with these public gatherings represent new methods for critically assessing the ḥadīth being transmitted, as well as posing new questions related to the epistemology of testimony. In other words, these norms served the practical applied purpose of making sure that what was being transmitted was accurate but also thrust the community into new epistemological investigations related to the theory of testimonial exchange. These developments further support the thesis of formalization. The move from private to public transmission served as a catalyst for a similar move from informal to formal ḥadīth criticism.

[87] See Kuzudişli (2022, 74) for an allusion to this point. In correspondence with him about the difference between more formal and systematic transmission in these two periods, between what can be characterized as the era of compilation (*ʿaṣr al-tadwīn*) and what preceded it, professor Kuzudişli, mentioned to me that ḥadīth could no longer be counted as being acceptably transmitted in informal ways after the era of compilation (*ʿaṣr al-tadwīn*), in contrast to the era that preceded it. Although the latter is uncontroversial, the former requires further research and analysis.

For example, some students copied out the text before attending the public reading and would use the public reading as a means to correct any mistakes found in their manuscripts. In other public gatherings, the instructors wouldn't allow for corrections to occur during the session, prompting students to seek out various manuscripts and do the editing before and after the session. These attempts at editing one's manuscript focused not only on getting the wording of the text right but also on differentiating between the central text of the ḥadīth and Mālik's own words or commentary in the session (Snober 2022, 211–15).

There were also discussions around the difference in epistemic status between Mālik reading his own work to students vs. students reading his work to him. This theoretical debate would carry on for hundreds of years to come as the *modes* of transmission increased in number and type.[88] In Mālik's own gatherings, he preferred having a student read aloud while he listened on, correcting and commenting when need be (Ibn ʿĀshūr 2007, 26). In other public gatherings, ḥadīth scholars preferred reading themselves while the students followed on.

The main epistemic question under consideration was and is whether a student's reading of Mālik's compilation, before him, in the presence of other students, held the same epistemic status as Mālik reading it himself to them. Mālik believed the two modes were epistemically equal, while other ḥadīth scholars disagreed (Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 2003b, 2:242–44, 262–63, 310). The terminology associated with the various modes of transmission also began to develop as ḥadīth scholars discussed whether certain formal terminology should be adopted to express how a speaker received the transmission they were testifying to.

The popularity of Mālik and his work led to students traveling from as far as Spain in order to attend his public gatherings. What makes this all the more striking is the existence of his work in those same lands. This means that the journey was not to find out what he was transmitting but to be present for the actual public transmission. This was closely associated with a desire to "shorten" the testimonial chain between the

[88] See, for example, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ṣuyūṭī's (d. 911/1506) (2016a, 4:212–347) long treatment of the subject in the classical period. This inquiry into the *modes* of transmission is generally referred to as the *methods of receiving and transmitting* (*ṭuruq al-taḥammul wa al-adāʾ*).

hearer and the central testifier. These shorter chains provided the students with corroboration of what they heard in their homelands, and it granted them a certain level of prestige (Snober 2022, 218).

Although Mālik is a prime example of these public gatherings, the phenomenon was not limited to him. Public gatherings of ḥadīth became a widespread phenomenon, and perhaps due to them, students began to travel from locale to locale to benefit from the major ḥadīth transmitters of that region. In some locales, the number of students increased so much that it required the designation of someone to repeat back what the scholar was transmitting to those farther back in the audience. This type of role, known as a *mustamlī*, eventually became a formal part of public ḥadīth gatherings.

Whether or not public gatherings first emerged and subsequently due to them journeying for ḥadīth became widespread, or vice versa, is not clear. Perhaps due to the growing number of students, ḥadīth scholars saw fit to hold public gatherings. Alternatively, it could be that these two features of the ḥadīth tradition emerged to address an entirely different dilemma.

By Mālik's period, a consensus was forming around the importance and need for ḥadīth *preservation*. More than a century after the passing of the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), the Muslim community faced the dilemma of the passing of the first generations of companions and successors. If serious and formal steps were not taken to preserve the ḥadīth corpus, it could have been largely lost. Due to this epistemological and social dilemma, public gatherings and journeying emerged to help address this gap.[89]

Even though there were some differences in the practices of these gatherings, there were also many shared customs and norms. Within a short span of time, a clear culture developed around ḥadīth transmission. A large part of this culture of customs and norms was aimed at increasing the accuracy of what was being transmitted and became a part of the larger epistemic system.

[89] In fact, as Kuzudişli (2022, 136) notes, an argument can be made that this impetus began well before Mālik's era, after the casualties of the battles of the Camel (*al-jamal*) (36/656) and Ṣiffīn (37/657) as well as the passing of the older companions.

This move from private to public gatherings of ḥadīth transmission was accompanied by a parallel development of public gatherings of transmitter evaluation and criticism. While the companions and older successors did engage in transmitter criticism, it was sporadic and done only when there was a need to address a particular ḥadīth under evaluation. In contrast, criticism in this period was abstracted out from the particulars of any given ḥadīth and began to apply more broadly than just to the transmitters in question. Furthermore, principles of transmitter criticism that could be used as a measuring stick for epistemic evaluation began to crystallize. All these developments occurred as a response to the epistemic needs of the community.

With the onset of public gatherings of ḥadīth transmission and the spread of students journeying for ḥadīth, ḥadīth scholars were met with new obstacles and new dilemmas. The number of individuals involved in the transmission of ḥadīth had increased greatly, and the individuals partaking in the process were no longer well-known figures from the critic's locale. In order to address this new reality, transmitter critics like Shuʿba b. al-Hajjāj (d. 160/777) instituted formal gatherings of transmitter criticism. He would sit to formally teach others about the reliability of those engaged in the transmission of ḥadīth. His sessions were not limited to evaluating specific ḥadīth; rather, they were about critiquing the transmitters themselves, as well as the principles through which one should critique transmitters (Snober 2022, 232–33; Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 2003a, 1:176).

For example, in one report from him, Shuʿba lists four reasons why someone's transmission should be rejected. According to the report, one reason is if a transmitter narrates from well-known individuals what their well-known students do not transmit from them. The second reason that their ḥadīth should be rejected is if they were known to make mistakes regularly. The third reason he lists is if the transmitter is accused of having lied or deceived in the past. The fourth and final principle he lists out is if a transmitter refuses to recant a transmission that others agree is a mistake (Ibn Abī Ḥātim 1953a, 2:31–32). These reasons listed by Shuʿba serve as an example of his theorizing about the reliability of transmitters. By listing them out in this way, isolated from any one ḥadīth or transmitter, he is further formalizing the normative criteria by which we should accept or reject a transmitter.

In a study of Shuʿba's transmitter and ḥadīth evaluation, Snober (2022, 239–55) lists several other methods and principles one can abstract from his stated opinions. The first method employed by Shuʿba was the testing of transmitters through what came to be known as "prompting" (*talqīn*). In this method, the critic prompts the transmitter under evaluation with a ḥadīth that he claims is theirs, knowing full well that it is not. The idea behind this method is to catch them in a mistake, either by having them lie or by having them make a mistake.

A second method he employed was asking the teachers of the transmitter in question whether they actually transmit that specific ḥadīth. In other words, he went above the transmitter under evaluation to test whether he was being honest about his source. This served as a type of quality control. If the transmitter's sources confirmed their transmission, his reliability score would go up.

A third principle employed by Shuʿba to critique both transmitters and their ḥadīth was to analyze the stakes of the content of the ḥadīth being transmitted. This is a theme that runs throughout Islamic epistemology and will be treated later in the dissertation. If a sole transmitter is narrating a high-stakes ḥadīth, like one that has legal or theological implications, and they aren't of the highest caliber, then, according to Shuʿba, the report should be rejected.

A fourth method he employed was to investigate the notes of the transmitter under evaluation. By comparing and contrasting his notes to what he said or by looking at the other ḥadīth he had written, Shuʿba could reach a judgment about the reliability of the transmitter. This is also a clear case of inquiry, as he would ask for their personal notes in order to test their reliability.

A fifth method he employed was using historical evidence to find fault in the transmission under evaluation. For example, he would cite the birth and death dates of supposed transmitters in the chain to point out the unlikelihood or impossibility of them having transmitted from one another. This later becomes a staple first step in ḥadīth evaluation. One analyzes the transmitters in the chain to make sure they could have even theoretically transmitted to one another. Once that bar is passed, the critic can move on to more nuanced areas of investigation.

Finally, Shuʿba paid special attention to the number of individuals in a testimonial chain, whether they increased or decreased from one transmitter to another. If one ḥadīth was being regularly transmitted back to a successor and at other times attributed back to the Prophet, this could be a sign of an error in the transmission. All these epistemic strategies helped Shuʿba assess and judge the reliability of the transmitter.

It is clear from the analysis mentioned above that Shuʿba was a part of further theorizing about and grounding the critical method of ḥadīth scholars. He was also part of a move to create tools to implement theoretical principles already embraced widely by ḥadīth scholars. As was mentioned earlier, ḥadīth scholars had already identified that a ḥadīth could be false due to auditory or memory failure, or it could be false due to deception and lying, or it could be false due to some hermeneutical or comprehension failure.

Therefore, the epistemic ideas themselves, the ideas of reliability, mistakes, memory failure, auditory capacity, and comprehension, had already emerged and been identified. However, the means of evaluating them practically were still nascent in the periods that preceded Shuʿba. These means of testing transmitters, as well as more broadly evaluating them, were tools to address these logical possibilities of falsehood.

However, ḥadīth critics, such as Shuʿba, were not only theorizing about what previous scholars had done, nor were they only creating tools to apply what earlier generations had agreed upon; rather, they were also addressing social and epistemological changes in their era. One such important development was the emergence of what became known as "obfuscation of the chain" (*tadlīs al-isnād*). These are cases where a transmitter intentionally does not mention whom he heard the ḥadīth directly from and instead mentions his teacher's teacher, thus dropping the individual between them. In order for this to be considered obfuscation, it needs to be that the more proximate transmitter could have actually met and transmitted from the individual further down the chain.[90] This does not count as an outright lie because the transmitter uses ambiguous terminology about the *mode* of transmission, such as "*from so-and-so*"

[90] Otherwise, if it is clearly impossible for them to have not met, then ḥadīth scholars would not classify it as an act of obfuscation. The fact that someone is evidently missing just means that the transmitter didn't mention the whole chain, not that he was trying to intentionally deceive or misdirect his audience.

(ʿ*an*). As this trend intensified in his period, resulting in an epistemic dilemma, so too did Shuʿba in his effort to track down and uncover those engaging in obfuscation. Here, we have clear evidence of the critical method of ḥadīth scholars developing to monitor and test for new problems that were arising (Snober 2022, 255-59).

Shuʿba is a clear example of serious and substantive developments in ḥadīth criticism. However, these developments were not limited to him. We have quotes from others impugning or impeaching the moral character or memory of transmitters. We also have quotes from them praising or endorsing the moral character and memory of others. During this period, a specific set of individuals emerged as leaders and experts in what later became known as transmitter criticism (*al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl*).

The emergence of these figures reflects something more developed than the mere existence of a critical community; there was now slowly emerging an expert class who dedicated themselves to keeping those engaged in ḥadīth transmission honest. They served as a type of formal quality control, evaluating and analyzing the condition of testimonies and transmitters alike (Snober 2022, 271–82). It is important to emphasize once more that this occurs simultaneously with the deliberate move to collect and transmit ḥadīth publicly. It's as if the two phenomena, transmission and criticism, went hand in hand. The increase in the number of individuals previously unknown in the transmission of the corpus resulted in the need for an expert class to critique these individuals and their transmissions. This dilemma served as an impetus for the emergence of a new specialization in ḥadīth studies and the further development and formalization of their epistemic system.

5.4.1.3. The Preclassical Era (4): The Emergence of Ḥadīth Criticism as a Specialty

Another inflection point occurred a few decades later (170 - 240 AH), and its results would come to have profound epistemological impacts on the Islamic philosophical tradition. As mentioned before, the early community transmitted not only Prophetic testimonies but companion testimonies and successor testimonies as well. Many of the early texts were of a genre that came to be known as *muṣannafāt* or *muwaṭṭaʾāt,* and they included not only testimonies from previous generations but also the legal

opinions of the compilers as well. In this fourth phase, the connection between law and ḥadīth was slowly coming undone as new texts emerged that focused solely on Prophetic testimonies and expanded the subject matter of the content of the compilation to include non-legal and non-theological material as well. This form of ḥadīth compilation is generally categorized under the genre of *masānīd*.

Ḥadīth scholars, by this point, had emerged as their own distinct group, known as "the Partisans of Ḥadīth" (*Ahl al-Ḥadīth*), which were defined in opposition to various other regional schools of law and theology. Debates raged between these various groups on topics concerning how religious law should be formulated, what should serve as evidence in theological disputes, how one should come to interpret and understand revelation, as well as the epistemic status and role of the ḥadīth corpus.

What makes this period particularly perplexing is that a clear impetus for the emerging fissures between the Partisans of Ḥadīth and other jurists and theologians was their legal philosophy. Any Islamic legal philosophy must, by its very nature, at least partially be constituted by some set of views on the epistemology of Prophetic testimonies. Therefore, while it might seem counterintuitive that a debate about legal philosophy ended up giving way to an epistemic division of labor between law and ḥadīth, that is exactly what happened. The study of ḥadīth became separated from law and came into its own as a standalone science. The legal philosophy of regional schools gave way to questions in legal epistemology, which gave way to the epistemology of testimony, which gave way to the birth of a standalone discipline of ḥadīth studies. While this did not entirely occur in the fourth period, it is evident that the hallmarks of this eventual division began in this period.

Many debates raged during this period. One debate that is directly related to the epistemology of testimony and serves as evidence of the growing theoretical nature of the study of ḥadīth concerns whether singularity in the testimonial chain disqualifies a report from being used as evidence as well as disqualifying it from being justifiably attributed back to the Prophet (ṣ). The singularity they had in mind was the existence of one sole narrator at any link in the testimonial chain. Such a link was considered too weak to be epistemologically sound by some theologians of that era, whereas the Partisans of Ḥadīth (as well as others) fought hard to say that although multiplicity

impacts the epistemic status of a report, it is not a necessary condition for its epistemic authenticity, nor should it be seen as a condition for acting upon its content (Al-Shāfiʿī 2020, 88–116).

During this era, a particular fissure formed between the Partisans of Ḥadīth and those that were often referred to as the "Partisans of Opinion" (*Ahl al-Raʾy*). The latter group refers to the early followers of Imām Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767) and the legal school of Iraq.[91] While the conflict between the two sides spanned a larger number of topics, it seemed to particularly revolve around how ḥadīth were being used to construct legal positions (Kuzudişli 2017, 120–24).

During this intellectual whirlwind emerged an individual who would take the side of the Partisans of Ḥadīth and yet articulate their message in a much more organized, philosophical, and ultimately formal manner. Muhammad b. Idris al-Shāfiʿī is often considered the first to author a standalone text in Islamic jurisprudence, and a large portion of his text deals with the epistemic status of Prophetic testimonies (Al-Shāfiʿī 2020). This towering figure not only championed the cause of the Partisans of Ḥadīth, but he also synthesized much of their methods with the methods of the other side, and more importantly, he began to formulate a clear vision of their epistemological foundations (F. al-D. M. Al-Rāzī 1986, 66).

His life deserves a long and thorough analysis; however, for the purposes of this thesis, two points concerning his intellectual project are important to highlight. Firstly, he is the first we have on record to articulate what came to be known as the *conditions of authenticity* (*shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa*) (Al-Shāfiʿī 2020, 88).[92] Secondly, he seems to, by virtue of his own disposition and interest in legal and theological investigations, have been able to succeed where many ḥadīth scholars before him had failed: articulating their epistemological system and theory of justification.

[91] This is true of at least one usage of this term. According to other usages, the Partisans of Opinion (*Ahl al-Raʾy*) applies to other schools as well.

[92] I am translating *shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa* as conditions and not criteria because of al-Shāfiʿī's usage in this context. While the term can be used to signify general criteria (*maʿāyīr*), it can also be used to signify conditions. The relationship between his articulation and the eventual formalized list of five criteria and conditions is a place of dispute among contemporary scholars. We will revisit this question in Chapter 8.

Imam Aḥmad b. Hanbal (d. 241/856), who is often considered the most prominent figure of the Partisans of Ḥadīth, is reported to have said about his teacher and friend, Imam al-Shāfiʿī, that the Partisans of Ḥadīth continued to lose debates to the Partisans of Opinion until al-Shafīʿī joined their ranks (Al-Bayhaqī 1970, 1:224; Ibn Abī Ḥātim 2003, 42; Abū Nuʿaym 1996, 9:98). The Iraqi legal school was infamous for its theological and rational foundations, and the people of ḥadīth found themselves philosophically and epistemologically outgunned. Al-Shāfiʿī's ability to synthesize, articulate, and debate their position earned him the mantle of "the defender of the people of ḥadīth." (Al-ʿAkrī 1988, 3:20; F. al-D. M. Al-Rāzī 1986, 66)

By the time we get to the fourth phase, transmitter criticism is in full effect. New methods are developed to test the memory of transmitters, while experts go out of their way to collect information on the moral character and memory of others. Certain individuals rise to the top as the pinnacle of this new specialization and are seen as reigning authorities on the memory and ethics of those in the transmitter circuit. Some of these authorities are also transmitters and compilers themselves, while others are known only for their transmitter evaluation. Thus, expertise becomes more crystallized as the emergence of subdisciplines and specializations becomes apparent.

A phenomenon that developed during this period is the emergence of cohorts of ḥadīth scholars and critics that work together, travel together and support one another in their epistemic objectives (Snober 2022, 307). It is important to highlight just how significant of a development this is. This development indicates not only an expert class that makes it their central focus to evaluate ḥadīth and ḥadīth transmitters but also the recognition by that expert class of the need to work together and to organize efforts between one another.

One of the central critics of this period was Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn (d. 233/848). Although there were many others, such as ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī (d. 234/849), Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/856), Isḥāq b. Rāhūya (d. 237/852), Abūbakr b. Abī Shayba (d. 235/850), Zuhayr b. Ḥarb (d. 234/849), Ibn Maʿīn serves as an excellent example of the type of epistemic shifts that occurred in this period. In fact, each of these figures deserves their own detailed treatment. However, for the purposes of this thesis, three elements of Ibn Maʿīn's critical process will be focused upon.

The first significant development of this period is the monitoring of new texts (*mutūn*) in circulation. In the early phases of ḥadīth gathering and compilation, it wouldn't be surprising to learn of new and reliable ḥadīth one had not heard of before, but by Ibn Maʿīn's era, this was seen as suspicious. Journeying for ḥadīth had become a hallmark of ḥadīth scholarship, and within a few decades, the Prophetic testimonies in circulation had become known. This was particularly true of ones that were generally agreed upon to be reliable. Critics like Ibn Maʿīn were very sensitive to the emergence of ḥadīth that they had not heard of before. Given their journeys and their focus on collecting ḥadīth, these scholars were sensitive to claims of new material (Snober 2022, 288–95).

The second important development is the monitoring of various forms of transmitter reliability. This was particularly important when it came to a transmitter's memory and precision. The reliability of a transmitter might shift according to several variables, and so Ibn Maʿīn and others began to take note of these variables when making evaluations. One might ask, why not focus on their total reliability score across the board? While the total sum might be useful at times, at other times, it wouldn't be helpful in anticipating the truth of attribution. For this reason, Ibn Maʿīn monitored the reliability of transmitters according to the time of their transmission, the place, whom they were transmitting from, and the content of the transmission (Snober 2022, 333–41). In doing so, he and other critics seem to have anticipated Lackey's (2008, 181–83) classes of positive reasons for distinguishing between reliable and unreliable testimony.

The variable of the time of the transmission is important because transmitters are not consistently reliable across their lifespans. For example, a transmitter might develop memory loss at an older age. Thus, knowing when someone transmitted from him is crucial. The place of transmission and the person they are transmitting from are also important due to the span of time spent in each locale or around a specific person. If a transmitter spent decades in one town or with a close relative that they transmit from, their reliability from that audience is different from their reliability score when it comes to a town they spent a few days in. Finally, as for the variable of the content being transmitted, some transmitters became specialists in certain types of testimonies. Their familiarity with that specific content in circulation is thus of a higher caliber than

their reliability in transmitting other matters. All these variables and perspectives allowed Ibn Maʿīn to give a more accurate evaluation of the transmitters under consideration.

The third important element of his critical process is his investigation of the written material, notes, and compilations that transmitters relied on. In other words, Ibn Maʿīn would not rely merely on their transmission of a given ḥadīth but would, at times, investigate and inquire into the written material they were transmitting from. Once he had access to their written material, he would look for evidence of whether their transmissions were consistent with their claim of attribution. He would monitor where that specific ḥadīth is located physically in their text in relation to other reports, all the while evaluating whether some of their written material is more reliable than others and so on and so forth (Snober 2022, 341–46).

As is evident by Ibn Maʿīn's critical tools, the fourth period's processes had continued to develop to match the social and epistemic needs, as well as the dilemmas of their era. Unit ideas like reliability needed to be further analyzed and developed. As transmitter critics did the hard work of evaluating individuals, it became apparent that reliability is a much more complicated epistemic concept. Similarly, as the content of the ḥadīth corpus, its texts (*mutūn*), had been largely identified over decades of journeying and collecting ḥadīth, the emergence of new texts could no longer be accepted without suspicion.

The applied epistemic system of ḥadīth critics was both practical and functional, and it also dealt with the subtlety and nuance of the content before them. However, this period also witnessed further formalization and theoretical investigations as well. It was in this period that many books on transmitter criticism were written.[93] For example, during this period, the *Tawārīkh* of Ibn Maʿīn were written, as well as many other works written by his contemporaries, that focused on documenting information

[93] One might understandably object to this as being representative of theoretical and formal epistemology given its applied nature. However, what is meant here is not that the content of the texts themselves represents a formal and theoretical development, rather, the very fact that this genre of texts emerges, isolating out a core subdiscipline is representative of this fact.

about the transmitters under evaluation. These texts also included the opinions of the authors and their teachers about said transmitters.

This subfield of transmitter evaluation in ḥadīth studies eventually came to be known as the subdiscipline of "impugnment and endorsement" (*al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl*). This genre and subclass is more broadly subsumed under the genre of literature that provides information on transmitters in the transmission circuit. This broad literature came to be known as "transmitter literature" (*kutub al-rijāl*). In fact, ḥadīth scholars did not limit themselves to writing about transmitters; rather, they began to compile books about various cases of ḥadīth evaluation, naming them and providing clear examples of them.

The crystallization of ḥadīth studies as its own field and the emergence of many subfields of specialization under it can be explained in similar terms. Some of these developments are natural consequences of the ideas being investigated, while others are due to practical considerations of the nature of the inquiry. Others can be explained as answers to the difficulties and dilemmas of the day. A body of experts, authorities, and specialists arose due to all these variables.

5.4.1.4. The Preclassical Era (5): The Pinnacle of Applied Criticism

The fifth phase of development in the preclassical era is often considered the golden age of ḥadīth criticism. In this stage, the major canonical collections of authentic ḥadīth were compiled. Just as there had been a move in the previous period to isolate Prophetic testimonies from the testimonies of others, so too, in this era, a new type of compilation emerged. During this era, works began to be compiled with the expressed purpose of only including authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) Prophetic testimonies (Kuzudişli 2017, 135–39; J. A. C. Brown 2018, 32–35). Authenticity, as will be discussed in more depth later, is an epistemic term and refers to the probability of the truth of the attribution of the statement to the Prophet (ṣ).

The authors of this genre were not merely collecting reports they had gathered, nor were they only including ḥadīth they believed were acceptable to act upon, rather they were gathering ḥadīth that had been evaluated and found to be of the highest epistemic

status. The works of Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī and Muslim b. al-Hajjāj, often referred to as the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*, are the paradigmatic examples of this genre. Not only did ḥadīth critics further develop the critical system and refine it, but some of them also applied it and only included in their compilations what met their criteria.

Their works not only differed from their predecessors when it came to the threshold of acceptance, but they were also examples of a brand-new genre of ḥadīth compilation. They, along with others, structured their works around the content of the testimonies as opposed to the transmitters themselves. While some previous compilers had done this with legal compilations, these new texts included the full gamut of topics. Given that they organized their compilations along all major themes, this genre came to be known as *jawāmiʿ*, literally, all-encompassing compilations (Sirājuddīn 2020, 13).

The result of this attempt to combine the most authentic of ḥadīth across the subject spectrum produced what would later come to be known as the central ḥadīth canon. This central status in the Islamic system wasn't taken on blind faith; rather, their works were put under extreme review and criticism, and only hundreds of years later, the conclusion was reached that they were the pinnacle of applied criticism.[94] Despite this amazing feat, these authors did not provide us with a road map of how they reached these evaluations and conclusions. Nor did they provide us with an explanation of why they included certain Prophetic testimonies and not others (Eido and Safi 2020).

Nevertheless, some of the ḥadīth scholars working in this era did provide us with initial writings on the subject. Muslim, in the introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, and al-Tirmidhī in his *ʿIlal*, provide the reader with some theoretical content. However, these were not meant to be robust standalone works; rather, they were brief treatments of a small number of topics.[95]

Despite their brevity, there does emerge from their content clear indications of the theoretical and formal nature of the discussions of the era. An excellent example of

[94] I am using the term canon rather loosely. Nevertheless, see Brown's (2007b; 2011) work for a robust and theoretical study of the canonization of the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* and the *Sunan* of Ibn Mājah.
[95] Muslim's book, *al-Tamyīz* (2009), can also be counted among the texts that provides some theoretical rules. However, the majority of the text provides examples and applications of ḥadīth criticism.

this is Muslim's engagement with the topic of the criterion of the feasibility of having met the transmitter you are claiming to have transmitted from. This debate relates to whether ḥadīth critics needed evidence that every individual in the chain actually met the individual they were claiming to have directly taken from or whether the possibility of them having met would suffice. This can be characterized as a debate about the normative criteria by which we regulate acceptance and rejection of ḥadīth. Muslim's engagement with this topic in his introduction isn't about one specific case; rather, he is engaging the topic theoretically as a rule or criterion for authenticity.[96]

During this period, the steady stream of transmitter literature and the works on impugnment and endorsement also continued. Ḥadīth critics began to author works that focused on unreliable or weak transmitters, the *ḍuʿafāʾ* genre, while other works focused on reliable ones, the *thiqāṭ* genre. These works not only documented the evaluations of past ḥadīth critics, but they also documented the evaluation of the authors themselves. Although most of these works seem to have been an applied form of epistemological criticism, we do have some examples of theoretical and formal questions being addressed.

The clearest example of this is found in Ibn Abī Ḥātim's work, *al-Jarḥ wa al-Taʿdīl*. He begins his text with what he refers to as the "degrees of impugnment and endorsement." In this short section, he lays out five distinct degrees. He begins with the highest degree of transmitters, the ḥadīth critics, who are known for their outstanding character, memory, and precision. They are not only excellent transmitters, but they are also reliable in their evaluation of others. He then moves on to those of a lesser degree, those who are reliable across the board in their transmissions but not in their evaluation of others. Following them are those who are generally reliable but make mistakes. The fourth category is those whose character is of good standing, but their errors are many and are thus generally not acceptable, except when the content is low risk. The fifth and final category is those who are rejected due to severe character flaws (Ibn Abī Ḥātim 1953b, 1:10).

[96] See Muslim's introduction for this discussion as well as Al-ʿAwnī's (1999) monograph on the debate.

This move to abstract out clear degrees and categories of reliability and to demarcate distinctions between them is a sign of the awareness of various levels of reliability and, thus, various levels of probability of truth claims. Furthermore, it is a sign of the continued theoretical development of transmitter discourse. Finally, it is also a sign that formal classifications began to be considered.

Further evidence of this formalization is the terminology being used by ḥadīth critics when impeaching or praising the character and precision of transmitters. Although certain terms were in circulation, no one had tried to classify them and tie them together. Shortly after demarcating the degrees of impeachment and endorsement, Ibn Abī Ḥātim moves on to designating categories and classifications for the terms used when impeaching or praising a given transmitter. He provides four categories of terms and then ties them back to the degrees of reliability. This attempt at standardizing the terminology being employed is an example of the formalization that was beginning to take place (Ibn Abī Ḥātim 1953a, 2:37).

However, apart from these brief examples of theoretical passages, Ibn Abī Ḥātim's texts, as well as the texts of others writing on transmitter criticism, are examples of applied epistemology. Even as formalization continued to grow and develop, the texts of this era were almost entirely applied. As mentioned before, works such as the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* are prime examples of this type of formalized but applied epistemological output. These texts were compiled with the expressed purpose of meeting certain epistemic thresholds based on implicit formal methods.

There are other types of texts written in the preclassical era that are also applied. One of the most important genres of texts that began to be produced in this era is the genre of hidden defects (*ʿilal*) (M. b. J. Al-Kattānī 2018, 147–48). These texts are similar to the canonical texts mentioned above in their application of formal tools but are different in that their purpose is to express the defects of certain ḥadīth or certain versions of a given ḥadīth. Similarly, texts in the genre of questions (*suʾālāt*) and biographical literature (*tawārīkh al-ruwāt*) also serve as examples of applied epistemological output during the late preclassical era (M. b. J. Al-Kattānī 2018, 128–34).

These themes of application, theorization, and formalization can at least partially be understood as a natural consequence of the emergence of certain epistemic ideas and the philosophical and social dilemmas that Islamic scholars faced. The emergence and identification of certain ideas result in further questions concerning the nature and implementation of those ideas. This requires further theorization. Thus, a circle of emergence, application, theorization, and eventual formalization is characteristic of the long history of ḥadīth criticism. For their part, the dilemmas either drive the emergence of new ideas or serve as an impetus for further development, theorization, and application.

In conclusion, the results of this era and those that preceded it are a gold mine of applied epistemic criticism. Although our analysis of these periods did uncover some evidence of theoretical abstraction and formalization, it is clear that the preclassical era is best described as being both applied and informal.[97] However, that was all about to change in the classical era as scholars attempted to understand what their predecessors had accomplished, to better systematize that inherited tradition, and to formalize the rules associated with it.

5.4.2. The Classical Era: Ḥadīth Sciences and Terminology

The sub-categorization of eras into preclassical and classical is something that is native to the Islamic tradition itself. The terminology used in the tradition is *ʿaṣr al-mutaqaddimīn* and *ʿaṣr al-mutaʾakhkhirīn*, literally, the eras of the early and late scholars. Each field of Islamic studies has a similar demarcation, even if there is no agreed-upon date across disciplines. Similarly, in each field, there is lively debate about what the cutoff date should be (Eido 2016, 81–136). For the present study, the cutoff date has been designated as around the turn of the 5th century after the *hijra*. The reasoning for this is based on an important epistemic shift that took place during that time frame. During that period, we begin to see ḥadīth scholars attempt to theoretically abstract out, formalize, and codify an epistemological system. It is this theoretical

[97] I've decided to continue to refer to this era as largely applied and informal even though there are clear examples of theorization and formalization within it. This is because theorization and formalization are ongoing processes and thus it is a question of degree (Novaes 2011). In contrast to the classical and postclassical eras, the preclassical era can be characterized as mostly informal and applied.

move that signifies the difference between the preclassical and classical eras in ḥadīth studies.

Before the turn of the 5th century, books of jurisprudence were already articulating a system of managing reports in a philosophical, holistic, and theoretical manner.[98] In contrast, ḥadīth scholars were busy, metaphorically speaking, working in the testimonial trenches. Rather than spend their time on purely theoretical abstraction, they spent their time and effort evaluating, filtering out, and critiquing actual ḥadīth. This difference between a more systematic theoretical articulation by those working within jurisprudence and the lack of any explicit, systematic theoretical articulation by those working within ḥadīth studies proper persisted throughout the 3rd and 4th centuries.[99] From this one vantage point, it would be apt to characterize the difference between ḥadīth scholars and jurists as one of applied vs. theoretical epistemology.[100]

Ḥadīth scholars often focused on the details of the testimonial chains, the reliability of their transmitters, comparing and contrasting reports, focusing on hidden defects (*ʿilal*), and ultimately concentrating on the question of the truthfulness of the attribution of the ḥadīth to the Prophet (ṣ) (*thubūt*). This focus seems to have been at the forefront of why they disagreed with other regional schools that were more general in their approach and who ultimately seemed far more concerned about whether one should act on the testimony under evaluation. Although it would be too broad of a brush to characterize ḥadīth scholars as uninterested in the question of action (*ʿamal*) or to characterize jurists as uninterested in the question of *thubūt*, nevertheless, it was slowly becoming clearer what each camp was primarily interested in.

[98] For an account of some of these discussions, see al-Khaṭīb (2017), Sarmini (2021a), al-Turkmānī (2018; 2020), Eido (2020), and Correa (2014), as well as the edited anthology of al-Bakri and Snober (2022).

[99] Unfortunately, the number of manuscripts that are extant from the 3rd century is limited. Apart from al-Shafiʿī's *Risāla*, we have another extant treatise from him, titled *Jimāʿ al-ʿIlm*. Beyond that, El Shamsy (2017) has documented what few extant treatises we have in this regard from Ibn Surayj (d. 306/919) and Abū Bakr al-Khafāf (d. early 4th/early 9th). Although no longer extant, we do know from bibliographic sources that the *Risāla* of al-Shāfiʿī received several commentaries from the likes of al-Ṣayrafī (d. 330/942), Abū al-Walīd al-Qurashī (d. 349), and Abūbakr al-Qaffāl (d. 365/975) (Al-Ḥabshī 2004, 2:950). Nevertheless, we have enough from the works of Abūbakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370/960) and Al-Qāḍī Abūbakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) to get a sense of the discussions that were going on in that period. Most importantly, al-Jaṣṣāṣ cites ʿĪsā b. Abān (d. 221/836) at length in *al-Fuṣūl fī al-Uṣūl*.

[100] I say this cautiously, since obviously from other vantage points legal scholars were engaged in applied epistemology as well. My real intent here is to contrast the theoretical vs. applied epistemology from this one vantage point.

While al-Shafiʿī's epistle might strike some as a counterexample, it ultimately does not weaken the thesis. For one, the *Risāla* is, first and foremost, a jurisprudential text, and al-Shafiʿī's most salient identity is, without a doubt, that of a legal scholar. Even though he was speaking on behalf of ḥadīth scholars, he was doing so as part of his broader legal philosophy.[101] Thus, his theoretical abstraction was limited to certain questions, not to the entire system of ḥadīth criticism. His defense of their epistemic system in the face of their opponents was not an attempt to produce an all-encompassing step-by-step guide of how ḥadīth criticism should be done. He was more interested in the legal ramifications of these debates and less so in theoretically abstracting out the intricacies of the ḥadīthic system itself.[102]

This applied epistemological phenomenon cloaked the work of ḥadīth scholars in a type of intangible genius that couldn't really be explained. It became common to draw a comparison between the ḥadīth critic and the goldsmith. Both can evaluate and assess that which is authentic from that which isn't, even if they can't fully explain to non-specialists how they do it. This theme of an almost otherworldly power would persist throughout the centuries to come and still has force in conversations to this very day (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 92). The lack of conceptual and theoretical tools to both distinguish and, at the same time, draw the connection between applied and theoretical epistemology further exacerbated this rift. One aim of this present study is to show how interrelated the two are and how they ultimately feed off one another.[103]

At the turn of the 5th century, a new type of ḥadīth scholar emerged, one who strives to organize and articulate the system of those doing more applied work. The cadre of scholars that make up this period are many. Beginning with al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 402/1012) and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, peaking with the likes of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAṣqalānī (d. 852/1448), and ending with the likes of Ibrāhīm al-Biqāʿī (d. 885/1480), Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497), and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ṣuyūṭī (d. 911/1506), their period spans nearly 500 years. It is over these 500 years that ḥadīth studies developed into a theoretical and formalized epistemic science.

[101] He wrote the text for the famed ḥadīth critic, Abdurrraḥman b. Mahdī (d. 198/814).
[102] For an interesting socio-historical investigation of al-Shāfiʿī's *Risāla*, see El Shamsy (2013).
[103] We will return to this comparison in Chapter 8 when we further analyze the difference between applied and theoretical knowledge.

However, one must not lose sight of the fact that the applied work of evaluating actual Prophetic testimonies continued during this period. In fact, many of the scholars known for their theoretical work were also masters of the applied craft as well. As discussed in the previous section, works on hidden defects (*ʿilal*) continued to be written during this era, as did biographical works and works in transmitter criticism. In fact, new genres of applied epistemology emerged with the likes of the *takhrīj* literature (M. b. J. Al-Kattānī 2018, 185–90). In these works, ḥadīth scholars take well-known texts in law, theology, exegesis, and other fields and not only cite the ḥadīth found therein but also engage in an epistemic analysis of the testimonies. We find similar analysis in the commentaries of ḥadīth scholars on collections of legislative ḥadīths (*aḥādīth al-aḥkām*), a genre that emerged during this era and was subsequently commented upon. Given the continuation of applied epistemic works as well as the emergence of more theoretical works, this period represents both applied and theoretical epistemology.[104]

The texts that best represent the theoretical abstraction and formalization alluded to above are sometimes referred to as ḥadīth terminology texts (*muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*) and other times simply as ḥadīth sciences texts (*ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*). Regardless of the name used for the genre, it emerged during this era as a clear subdiscipline of the field. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to offer a comprehensive analysis of the genre, it is important to say a bit about what is occurring philosophically and epistemologically within these texts.[105]

Central to these works is an effort to abstract out and articulate, in a theoretical fashion, what ḥadīth scholars in the preclassical era were doing epistemologically. In other words, the authors of this genre were taking the informal and implicit work of the first

[104] Apart from the genres of applied works mentioned here, one could also count the genres produced during this era on famous ḥadīth (*mushtahira*), or works on specific ḥadīth, be they based on one text, or on one subject (M. b. J. Al-Kattānī 2018, 112, 191). What makes these works and others applied, is the author's epistemic evaluation of the ḥadīth in the text.

[105] Contemporary scholarship on the subfield of ḥadīth terminology texts (*muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*) or ḥadīth sciences texts (*ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*) is relatively light. The two more substantive engagements with the topic are Eido (2016) and Al-Bakri (2022), each of which approaches their study from the vantage point of the preclassical vs. classical debate. Thus, they are closer to that literature than literature that aims to study the subfield itself. Two other relevant pieces are Hilali's (2020) article on definitions in this genre and Tadmuri's (2022) compilation of texts in this genre.

four centuries and making it formal and explicit.[106] Of course, in doing so, these authors recognized that the scholars of the preclassical era didn't always agree, and so they preferred certain opinions over others and sought to provide evidence for why certain positions are stronger than others. In fact, they even sought to epistemically ground certain agreed-upon practices and positions in both rational and scriptural evidence.

Furthermore, the authors of these texts aimed to provide a taxonomy of the technical terminology used by scholars of the preclassical era, as well as terminology in circulation right up to the period of authorship. It is for this reason that this genre is often referred to as ḥadīth terminology (*muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*). Beyond gathering the terms and organizing them, scholars sought to define the terms and map out the differences in how terms were used across generations. These definitions were sometimes descriptive, meaning that the authors were conceptually analyzing what past authors intended. At other times, their stipulations were normative, meaning that authors were making a case for how terminology ought to be used. Thus, one finds clear differences in how various scholars of this genre defined terms and stipulated new meanings for them (M. al-D. ʿAwwāma 2020; Hilali 2020).

One of the criticisms this genre is susceptible to is that it reads like a dictionary of terms.[107] However, this is deeply mistaken since the authors were much more interested in the concepts behind the terms than the terms themselves. More importantly, the authors were clearly concerned with how these terms relate to one another and, ultimately, how they tie back to the question of the epistemic evaluation of *thubūt*. The fact that some contemporary scholars teach this discipline in this dictionary style, void of its philosophical nature, is more a problem of pedagogy than of anything inherently blameworthy in the genre itself.

[106] As mentioned earlier, we need not take a position on whether said move from implicit to explicit is transformative, or whether the implicit rules themselves were formal in some way.

[107] Another common objection leveled against the genre is to charge it with simplifying a more difficult process. This objection coheres well with Mustafa Macit Karagözoğlu's (2017a) article on the shift from the preclassical to the classical eras (his convention and periodization differs from my own). He argues that ḥadīth scholars developed various devices and rules to make the discipline more accessible to non-specialists. While my findings do not necessarily contradict this point, I argue for a more robust explanation of this development. Simplification for pedagogical reasons is a clear aim of some of these texts, however, it is more than just that. I will return to this question throughout the dissertation, particularly in the last section of Chapter 8.

Many of these texts became key teaching manuals used as introductions to the field. Most of the manuals were either taught individually in mosques or in specialized schools for ḥadīth. The paradigmatic example of this is the most important text of the genre, a text often lovingly referred to as, *The Introduction* (*al-Muqaddima*) of Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān b. al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1246).[108] Its content was used by its author as a teaching text in the famed ḥadīth specialization school in Damascus, Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafiyya. While this text is still taught to this day, nearly 800 years later, even more important is the fact that essentially all texts of this genre after it are in some way related to it or responding to it. Ḥadīth scholars after Ibn al-Ṣalaḥ were either summarizing what he wrote, commenting on what he wrote, versifying what he wrote, or writing glosses on those other texts (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 2015, 11–22).

The actual epistemological questions investigated in these texts are numerous. However, the various investigations are of different levels of importance and centrality to the field. Ḥadīth scholars of the classical era often define the study of ḥadīth criticism (*dirāya*) as a science concerning the rules through which one comes to know the status of a ḥadīth.[109] They often identify the aim of the discipline as coming to know which ḥadīth should be accepted and which should be rejected. Given this definition and aim, the key investigation in these texts relates to the rules associated with evaluating a ḥadīth's attribution to the Prophet (ṣ). The most central set of rules associated with this system is known as the *criteria of authenticity* (*shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa*) (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 58).

While these criteria were not new inventions of the classical era, they were, for the first time, being made explicit and then further refined. Ḥadīth scholars were building upon and expanding the criteria already laid out by al-Shafiʿī in his epistle. They also sought to develop, based on these criteria, a more robust and fine-grained approach to the question of epistemic acceptance (*qabūl*). They also strove to delineate and define the criteria enumerated by scholars in the field more clearly. One of the central theses of this dissertation is that they ultimately developed a refined epistemic apparatus (*āla*

[108] According to Dr. ʿItr's critical edition, the actual name of the text is, *ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth* (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 2015).
[109] For example, see: Ibn Ḥajar (1984, 2:225); Al-Sakhāwī (2014a, 1:14); and al-Munāwī (2020, 130). Also, see al-Bakrī (2022, 38–41) for a study of the historical development of these definitions.

maʿrifiyya) through which they could evaluate ḥadīth. In fact, this dissertation represents an attempt to not only analyze the apparatus itself but to further build upon it by investigating its rational and epistemological foundations.

Towards the end of this era, the texts of this genre became more and more refined, and eventually, their authors compared and contrasted the positions of ḥadīth scholars with those of the jurists, thus centralizing where discussions on this topic were taking place.[110] In fact, parts of these texts were taken directly from the books of philosophical jurisprudence, while others were more native to the field itself.[111] In other words, we find a type of symbiosis between ḥadīth studies texts and jurisprudential texts on the question of the epistemology of ḥadīth.[112] In summary, it is clear that part of the function of these texts is to introduce people to what ḥadīth scholars are doing in a systemized, theoretical, and formal manner.

The question of why the subfield of *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* emerged, as well as the theorization and abstraction that came along with it, can be answered in several different ways. For the purposes of this dissertation, it is important for us to stick to epistemological explanations. The first explanation is to point to the circle of application, theorization, and formalization mentioned in the previous section. It is natural for applied informal epistemologies to eventually give way to theoretical investigations and for that abstraction and investigation to loop back to application.

However, a second reason that deserves emphasis is the clear contradictions in epistemic evaluation between different groups and individuals assessing the reliability of ḥadīth. Several groups differed in how they approached ḥadīth. We've already alluded to the jurist vs. ḥadīth scholar methodological differences. Closely related are the Partisans of Ḥadīth vs. the Partisans of Opinion debates.

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[110] Examples of this are many. One only needs to look at the advanced textbooks, al-Ṣuyūṭī's, *Tadrīb al-Rāwī* and al-Sakhāwī's, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth* to find good examples of this.

[111] A good example of this type of benefitting of ḥadīth scholars from jurisprudential texts are the sections on forgeries. Ibn Ḥajar mentions that one of the first authors of this genre, al-Khaṭīb, took this section largely from the books of the theologian and legal theorist, al-Bāqillānī (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 1984, 2:845).

[112] A good example of philosophical positions flowing the other direction, from ḥadīth scholars to legal theorists, is the evidence that we have that the grand shaykh of al-Bāqillānī, the founder of the school itself, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, was largely influenced in his positions on this question from al-Shāfiʿī in his *Risāla* (Ibn Fūrak 2022, 268). We will return to the relationship between the two fields shortly.

There were also epistemic tensions between the Muʿtazila and Sunnī ḥadīth scholars. This latter rift peaked just before al-Ḥākim, as alluded to by al-Ḥasan al-Rāmahurmuzī (d. 360/971) in his important work, *al-Muḥaddith al-Fāṣil bayna al-Rāwī wa al-Wāʿī* (2016, 313–15). Al-Rāmahurmuzī writes this text, at least partially, as a type of call for a division of labor between those who were transmitting ḥadīth vs. those who were experts in law or theology. Prior to al-Rāmahurmuzī's work, Ḥarb b. Ismāʿīl al-Kirmānī (d. 280/894) had written his book, *Kitāb al-Sunna* (2014), which heavily criticized the Muʿtazila and their methodology. In response, Abū al-Qāṣim al-Kaʿbī al-Balkhī (d. 319/921) wrote *Qabūl al-Akhbār* (2018), which heavily criticized the Partisans of Ḥadīth and their methodology. Against the backdrop of this tension, al-Rāmahurmuzī argues for this division of labor. While al-Rāmahurmuzī clearly opposed al-Kaʿbī's attack against Sunnī ḥadīth scholars, he recognized that al-Kirmānī was not free from error and had essentially caused the public dispute.

Tensions such as these between methodologies serve as an impetus for the explication of each side's views. Thus, these debates and dilemmas gave way to *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* works as a representation of the methodology of ḥadīth scholars. Furthermore, even among the ḥadīth scholars themselves, the differences in epistemic and methodological views required analysis and investigation. By the period of al-Ḥākim, the main ḥadīth corpus had been collected. By the period of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, the era of transmission had ended. It is only natural for scholars of this era to collect, analyze, and compare the various methodologies of evaluation of those that preceded them. When views are collected and compared, differences emerge, and theoretical abstraction is inevitable.

Over this 500-year period, *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* works helped develop a standardized map of the field, and great progress was made in ironing out certain difficulties from the preclassical era. But this genre was not the only serious epistemic development of the era. Another important development was the emergence of encyclopedic works on transmitter criticism, such as the works of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī (d. 742/1342), Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAṣqalānī.[113] These new works in transmitter literature focused on gathering the statements of the earlier critics and

[113] See: al-Mizzī (1983); al-Dhahabī (1963); and Ibn Ḥajar (1995).

building upon them. The authors of these encyclopedias would, at times, gather older opinions and add their own analysis, while others condensed and summarized those who came before them. Some of these encyclopedias focused on only the most authentic of transmitters, others on the weakest of them, while others were focused on the transmitters of certain canonical collections.

When it came to the morality, ethics, and uprightness of the transmitters, there was not much these new compilers could offer besides gathering the evaluation of earlier critics. Sometimes, they would find that all past critics had impeached a given transmitter or the opposite; all of them only had the highest praise for them. The compilers of these new encyclopedias were keen to mention whatever it was that they found. If, however, they found that critics disagreed when evaluating the character of a given transmitter, the compilers would try and adjudicate between them. Nevertheless, the amount of new epistemic work these later critics could do when it came to character evaluation was limited, given that character evaluation is not possible without having met the person in question.[114]

Most of the epistemic work of these classical critics was focused on the question of memory and precision. Since the testimonies conveyed by the transmitters still existed after their death, the compilers could compare their testimonies with the testimonies of other transmitters, and through that process, they could further evaluate their memory. Did their transmissions match the transmissions of those who were known to be reliable? Or were they regularly transmitting testimonies imprecisely? The compilers provided this new information to their readership, along with judgments made by past critics concerning their memory and precision.

Ḥadīth critics also built upon Ibn Abī Ḥātim's degrees of reliability and classification of *impugnment and endorsement* terminology. A relatively popular version formally presents the degrees as twelve, six degrees of endorsement, and six degrees of impugnment (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 1991, 74–75). They also began to theoretically

[114] It is important to remember that some of the scholars of the classical era were living past the era of transmission. Although testimonial chains would continue for a few more centuries with some strength, and continue in a different sense till this day, the chains that were under evaluation were the ones that connected the major compilations to their testimonial source.

abstract out what types of things a transmitter might be impugned for and ranked them accordingly (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 88–89). This resulted in the emergence of these incredibly useful encyclopedic works that are still relied upon to this day. Ḥadīth scholars could use these works to, at the very least, get an initial impression of the evaluation of transmitters in each chain by looking them up in these classical encyclopedias.

Both types of texts, the *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* works and the comprehensive *al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdil* encyclopedias, were natural progressions in the development of the science. They served the practical purpose of making the field accessible to new students and new practitioners. But they also represented a further theorization and formalization of the field as the science was developing to address new problems and to systematize disparate views and disparate works.

Despite these new advancements, new philosophical problems were looming. Transmitter critics would often disagree in their assessment of a given transmitter. How should ḥadīth scholars evaluate a ḥadīth when ḥadīth critics themselves disagreed over the reliability of one of its transmitters? Furthermore, some critics would mention why they were impugning a given individual or endorsing them, while others wouldn't. Should that matter, and why? Should ḥadīth critics adopt a principle of credulity when it comes to unknown transmitters, or should they require positive reasons that indicate the transmitter's reliability (Al-Ṣuyūṭī 2016a, 4:17–49)?

One way transmitter critics sought to address some of these concerns and dilemmas was by turning their critical eye inward toward the critics themselves. During this period, transmitter critics began to not only evaluate one another but to rank one another based on the output of their criticism. Some began to be seen by their peers as too lax, while others were too strict (Al-Dhahabī 1990, 171–72). This helped address the question of how to deal with conflicting evaluations on any given transmitter. Although there wasn't a clear mathematical equation on how to resolve this, various details were taken into consideration, one of them being the strictness or laxness of the critics themselves.

Importantly, the emergence of this peer review system seems to have solved a deep epistemological concern, namely that this system of transmitter critics could be characterized as being unjustified since it ultimately yields a vicious circle. If transmitter critics were being turned to for their evaluation of transmitters, who was evaluating the critics themselves? Should we just accept their judgments because they are experts in the field? Is it enough to say that critics were acceptable if they themselves were endorsed by another critic? Although these were positive initial steps in addressing the apparent circular logic, something more was needed to break the vicious circle.

Ultimately, two answers can be given to this circularity objection. The first response to this objection is that there are central authorities who are not granted credence through the attestation of another critic; rather, their credence and authority are drawn from their being widely known in the community for their reliability, piety, scholarship, and memory. These individuals became the gold standard (Al-Ṣuyūṭī 2016a, 4:17–18). A second feature of the system is the evaluation of transmitter critics and peer ranking alluded to above. Although one being endorsed might have been enough to get them in the metaphorical door, one's own criticism of transmitters was then itself evaluated by other critics. The result is a complex social web of epistemological criticism. Ḥadīth critics were not only evaluating ḥadīth, but they were also evaluating each other and evaluating the evaluations of each other. Depending on these evaluations, one's criticism might be completely rejected or seen as being too lax or too strict. Given these two considerations, it is clear that while the positive reasons afforded to this critical system are partially testimonial, they are not entirely so (Lackey 2008, 185–87). Once we can show that the reliance on these critics is not fully testimonial, the vicious circle is repelled. Thus, the traditional critical system of ḥadīth scholars is a virtuous circle, as opposed to a vicious one.[115]

Finally, it is important to note that during this era, the critical methodology of ḥadīth scholars was no longer seen as being representative of any one legal school or approach to law; rather, it was seen as a system in and of itself for evaluating the reliability of testimonies. Two types of evidence can be presented for this assertion. The first is the

[115] A third means of breaking the vicious circle will be mentioned in Chapter 7.

existence of numerous commentaries and glosses on ḥadīth terminology texts, all of which convey the critical method of ḥadīth scholars by scholars of various legal backgrounds. The Ḥanafī legal school, most closely associated with *Ahl al-Raʾy*, had numerous scholars from its ranks write commentaries and glosses on the central teaching texts of the ḥadīthic approach.[116] The second type of evidence we can offer is the near absence of negative polemical literature in the late classical era. This is in stark contrast to the preclassical era.[117]

The legal schools had, by this point, already formalized and were seen as not being impacted by the theorizing of ḥadīth scholars. Instead, one could metaphorically put on their ḥadīth hat or their legal hat, and depending on which they were wearing, they could evaluate the epistemic status of attribution or the jurisprudential consequence of a given statement. The critical method of ḥadīth scholars became the default way of evaluating the veracity and probability of attribution, whereas various jurisprudential methods were focused on action and law.

Before ending the analysis of this era and moving on to the next, a common objection must be responded to. Contemporary critics of the ḥadīth terminology genre specifically, and the classical period more broadly, complain that this formalization was a result of the influence of philosophical jurisprudence, logic, and scholastic theology on ḥadīth studies. This accusation is intended as a criticism of the whole era, charging them and their work with a level of inauthenticity or, at the very least, of misdirected energy.[118]

This is a strange accusation given that the juristic and ḥadīthic systems developed together, not separate from one another. In fact, if anything, the juristic concern for ḥadīth preceded the system eventually developed by ḥadīth scholars, which

[116] One can easily deduce this by scanning al-Ḥabashī's (2004, 2:2012–18) famous encyclopedia listing out commentaries, glosses, and abridgments. If one looks at the entry on Ibn Ḥajar's *Nukhba*, one will find countless examples.
[117] Al-Rāmahurmuzī's text, *al-Muḥaddith al-Fāṣil*, can be seen as the embodiment of this division of labor. While the tensions endured in the first few decades of this era, they were relatively non-existent by the end of the era.
[118] This line of criticism is representative of a wide body of literature from one section of contemporary ḥadīth scholarship. For an example of this type of criticism, see the works of al-ʿAwnī (1996), al-Malībārī (2003a; 2003b), Abū Samḥa (2012), al-Saʿd (2018), and al-Muḥammadī (2021). We will return to this debate at the end of Chapter 8.

concentrated heavily on the truthfulness of the attribution of the ḥadīth to the Prophet (ṣ) (*thubūt*) itself as a standalone question (Al-Bakri 2021). Furthermore, for many hundreds of years, those working on ḥadīth proper saw the question of action (*ʿamal*) as inextricably linked to what they were doing. How can ḥadīth studies as a field, and ḥadīth scholars within a very narrow time frame, be analyzed in an anachronistic fashion as though they operated in a vacuum? They were indeed influenced by others, but they also influenced others as well. Ḥadīth scholars themselves saw no problem with this development, and it is strange for contemporary scholars to problematize it as foreign to the ḥadīthic tradition, as opposed to a natural outgrowth of it.

Furthermore, this objection is structurally flawed because it avoids counterexamples and responses by unjustifiably limiting what counts as ḥadīth studies and who counts as a ḥadīth scholar. Proponents of this objection essentially have 10-15 figures in mind from the mid-2nd century until the mid-4th century. Anyone outside of this limited period, or anyone not on that short list, is, according to them, *by definition*, not a ḥadīth scholar and not part of the ḥadīth system. As we have shown, this is a type of question beginning. The work of ḥadīth scholars before this period is ignored, the work of scholars working on ḥadīth parallel to these figures is ignored, and the work of scholars after this period is ignored.

If anything, classical scholars are the rightful heirs of their preclassical predecessors, and they sought to make explicit what was implicit in the preclassical era and build upon it. Some contemporary critics want us to believe that any formalization of the system of the preclassical era is, by necessity, not the same. But this is only because they have defined ḥadīth scholarship and ḥadīth scholars as 10-15 people working in an applied and non-theoretical way and thus, *by definition*, claim anything other than that is alien to it.

These critics are faced with the two horns of the following dilemma. The first horn of the dilemma is that they cannot tell us what criteria, apart from some arbitrary list, qualifies a scholar to be a ḥadīth scholar. Should they attempt to formally present us with the rules of the scholars they have in mind, they'll be doing the same thing that they criticize classical scholars for doing. The second horn of the dilemma is that they cannot rely only on the fact that there are methodological differences between their list

of scholars and others because that much is trivially true of all scholars. Thus, their criticism fails.

A more fair and healthy analysis would investigate the historical development of the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars, pointing out which investigations were there from the very beginning, which were later added, and why, presenting to us the final synthesis. Eido (2018a, 1:107–10) does this in his distinction between original (*aṣīl*), extended (*mumtadd*), and borrowed (*dakhīl*) investigations and technical terms in ḥadīth studies.[119] Eido's distinction is based upon the relationship of the technical terms and investigations to the main subject matter of the discipline. There are essential and core terms and investigations, then there are secondary ones that are logical extensions of the primary ones, and finally, there are tertiary ones that have less bearing on the discipline under investigation. One of the key aims of this chapter is to show how these core ideas emerged, developed, and interacted with one another across the vast history of ḥadīth studies.

By the end of the classical era, the groundwork for ḥadīth studies had been firmly set. The literature produced during this era on ḥadīth terminology and adjacent genres theoretically conveyed to the world the genius of early ḥadīth scholarship. The applied and informal ḥadīth criticism of the preclassical era had been abstracted out and rearticulated in a theoretical and formal epistemic system to be studied and further investigated. Although many texts had been written, a few central texts would become the go-to texts of the discipline. Their popularity is visible in the number of commentaries, glosses, and abridgments that they received.

The most central of them is: *ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth* of Ibn al-Ṣalaḥ (2015), a thousand-line versification of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's work titled *Al-Tabṣira wa al-Tadhkira fī ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*, written by al-Ḥāfidh al-ʿIrāqī (d. 806/1404) (2006), *Nukhbat al-Fikar* of Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAṣqalānī (2019), as well as his own commentary on it, *Nuzhat al-Naẓar*, and finally a short introductory poem in the field by Shiḥāb al-Dīn b. Faraḥ al-Ishbīlī (d. 699/1300) (2002), often referred to by its opening line, *Ghārāmī Ṣaḥīḥ*. By the time of the death of Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ṣuyūṭī (d. 911/1506), by which we've marked the

[119] Although the Arabic term, *dakhīl*, might be more literally translated as foreign, the English term, borrowed, is more appropriate in this context.

end of the classical era, there were already around 40 commentaries and glosses on these texts alone (Al-ʿIrāqī 2006, 38–47; Al-Ḥabshī 2004, 2:1218–19, 1273–77, 2012–18). In the generations to come, many more glosses and commentaries would be written on these texts, thus documenting a clear continuity of the intellectual tradition right up to the modern day.

5.4.2.1. The Periodization of the Classical Era: Al-Ḥākim, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, and Ibn Ḥajar

Before moving on to the postclassical era, it is important to point out a common periodization of the classical era. The standard demarcation of periods in the classical era takes the works of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and Ibn Ḥajar as markers for the end of one period and the beginning of the other. Thus, the first period runs from al-Ḥākim (d. 402/1012) to Ibn al-Ṣalāh (d. 643/1246), while the second runs from Ibn al-Ṣalāh to Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1448). The third and final period runs from the works of Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1448) until the passing of Imām al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1506). This demarcation between the four figures is standard in the Islamic intellectual tradition since each of them reflects an inflection point in how the field is organized, theorized, and presented.

If we were to consider the variable of epistemic ideas, their emergence, and development as being the difference between the end of one period and the beginning of the other, the historical periods mentioned above would require some further explanation. Take, for example, the standard narrative of the absence of any presentation of the five *shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa*, as a codified list, in al-Ḥākim's, *Maʿrifat ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth* (2003), in contrast to its centrality in Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's *al-Muqaddima* (2015). However, this is problematized by the fact that al-Shāfiʿī had already listed out these conditions two centuries prior.

Furthermore, the standard narrative usually mentions that in Ibn Ḥajar's *Nuzhat al-Naẓar* (2019), the epistemological conversations are expanded to include definitions of *successive group testimony* (*tawātur*), knowledge, certainty, and related matters. While this is technically true, there are other important *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* texts in the early period of the classical era that are more epistemically robust, like al-Khaṭīb's, *al-Kifāya* (2003a, 1:88–92). While al-Khaṭīb does not address all the topics raised in Ibn

Ḥajar's works, his analysis is more robust in this theoretical sense than Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's *Muqaddima*.

One of the reasons for this is the overlap between *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* works and *uṣūl al-fiqh* works. Al-Khaṭīb was drawing from both the works of *uṣūl al-fiqh* as well as the work of ḥadīth scholars. As already mentioned above, al-Shāfiʿī had already laid out the conditions of authenticity two centuries before al-Ḥākim, and yet al-Ḥākim did not mention them in that manner in his work. Furthermore, as will be shown in Chapter 8, the questions of knowledge, certainty, and *successive group testimony* (*tawātur*) were already being investigated and debated in al-Shāfiʿī's time. Thus, it doesn't make sense to demarcate the periods of the classical era into three based on the emergence of these inquiries among ḥadīth scholars.

In response to this difficulty, an alternative theory can be suggested that retains the standard narrative but also shifts and adds nuance to the explanation. An added benefit of this theory is that it also coheres well with standard explanations about the difference between the books of al-Ḥākim, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, and Ibn Ḥajar. A general refrain of the standard narrative is to highlight the "structure and layout" of *Maʿrifat ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*, *al-Muqaddima*, and *Nuzhat al-Naẓar*. According to this alternative theory, the classical era can continue to be demarcated into the same three periods; however, it is the theoretical *structure and layout* of the subfield of *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* that was going through change and development.

The change and development alluded to above was not merely aesthetic or pedagogical; it was also epistemic. The dominant feature of al-Ḥākim's period was an absence of more theoretical, epistemological investigations. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ ushered in a new period when he highlighted and centered *shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa* and reorganized the work to fit a more epistemically cohesive structure. Ibn Ḥajar further reorganized the field, beginning with questions of knowledge, certainty, and *successive group testimony* (*tawātur*).

The fact that many of these investigations were already present in earlier *uṣūl al-fiqh* texts does not hurt this alternative theory. For one, this is a theory about the development of *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* texts, not a theory about the emergence of these

ideas and investigations. Secondly, the relationship between the two fields is one where their subject matter and investigations strictly overlap (*ʿumūm wa khuṣūṣ min wajh*) as opposed to any other logical relation.

Furthermore, the fact that some of these investigations were found in the works of al-Khaṭīb, who belongs to the demarcated period of al-Ḥākim, also does not hurt the theory. Because the theory is not about emergence; rather, it is about the theoretical structure and layout of *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* as a subfield. While it is true that al-Khaṭīb, who belongs to the earliest period of the classical era, sought to include more theoretical investigations in *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* works, it was not a dominant feature of the subfield in al-Ḥākim's period.

Finally, there is another positive feature of this proposed theory, it centers *theoretical epistemology* in *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* works.[120] On this theory, some of these investigations are seen as being original (*aṣīl*) to *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth,* while others are extended (*mumtadd*). This is in stark contrast to competing theories of their all being foreign and borrowed (*dakhīl*). The *structuring and layout* theory argues that the later works were a return to theoretical epistemology and not a borrowing of it.

5.4.3. The Postclassical Era (1): Theoretical Abstraction and Epistemology

Many contemporary ḥadīth scholars have come to describe the period stretching from the passing of Imām al-Ṣuyūṭī in 911 after the *hijra* until the 14th century (early 16th until late 19th CE) as a period of stagnation and decline. Scholars will often gloss this decline as meaning either a decrease in ḥadīth specialization or the lack of any new development in the field (Al-Ṣuyūṭī 2016b, 1:106; ʿItr 1997, 69–70). However, there has not been enough academic research done on the commentaries, marginalia, and manuscripts of this era to verify this widely accepted assertion. In fact, an epistemological analysis seems to indicate otherwise. This era will be referred to as the postclassical era.

[120] I am referring to it as theoretical epistemology only to stress its contrast with applied epistemology. The characterization of the preclassical era of ḥadīth scholarship as applied epistemology should be uncontroversial. Here, I am arguing that *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*, as a subfield, represents the emergence of theoretical epistemology in the classical era. It would have sufficed to characterize it as epistemology; however, I've added "theoretical" to highlight the distinction.

For the purposes of this thesis, the postclassical era is split into two periods. The first spans from 911 after the *hijra* until the beginning of the 12th century (early 16th until late 17th CE), while the second spans from the 12th century right up to the turn of the 14th century (late 17th CE until the late 19th). This demarcation is based upon epistemic debates that occurred in the 12th and 13th centuries. These debates serve as an inflection point in our philosophical and historical analysis. As we will see shortly, the intellectual dilemma and related debates of that period mark a strong shift away from certain core positions of the critical method of ḥadīth scholars. In contrast, while the 10th and 11th centuries offered new developments, they flowed more seamlessly from the end of the classical era.

We ended the first section pertaining to the classical era with a short explanation of the central teaching texts of the *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* genre. In this first period of the postclassical era, spanning the 10th and 11th centuries of the *hijra*, these texts received another approximately 25 commentaries and glosses (Al-ʿIrāqī 2006, 38–47; Al-Ḥabshī 2004, 2:1218–19, 1273–77, 2012–18). This is in addition to other texts that were authored in the period but did not necessarily get the same type of uptake.

Of these non-derivative texts, one, in particular, played an important role in the literature going forward. In this period, ʿUmar al-Bayqūnī (d. 1080/1670) authored his now famous poem, *Al-Manẓūma al-Bayqūniyya* (Sirājuddīn 2020). It received three commentaries in the 20 years between the end of the author's life and the beginning of the next period (Al-Ḥabshī 2004, 2:506–10). More importantly, it received many more commentaries and glosses in the following periods.

It is with texts like these that we find evidence that contradicts the narrative of stagnation and decline. Although a more thorough study is beyond the scope of this thesis, three different areas where growth and development are found can be highlighted. These examples point to further theoretical engagement with the material and formalization. In fact, the theoretical nature of these questions is substantive enough that it serves as evidence of a move from applied epistemology to epistemology proper.

As noted above, the core distinction between epistemology and applied epistemology is fluid. To address this difficulty, one can list and then contrast different ways that epistemology can be applied vs. purely theoretical. For our purposes, the highest bar we can set for what makes an investigation purely epistemological, as opposed to applied, is a move away from discussions that strictly have to do with ḥadīth to broader, less context-specific investigations.[121]

These contextless and timeless topics were enumerated above when explicating the epistemic domain. At that time, we referred to what contemporary epistemologists say is the subject matter of epistemology, its central questions, and its primary concepts. These are topics like the theory of knowledge, what knowledge is, what we can know, and how we come to know what we know. It also includes concepts such as belief, knowledge, truth, evidence, reasons, certainty, inquiry, acceptance, and justification. It is precisely these types of discussions that occurred in the commentaries and marginalia of *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* texts in the postclassical era as authors tried to make sense of the underlying philosophical questions they were commenting upon. Furthermore, an analysis of these discussions shows that they were occurring at a synthesis point between investigations in ḥadīth studies, *kalām*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and *manṭiq*.

One example of the emergence of this theoretical trend in *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* texts can be found in the discussions around whether testimonial knowledge is possible and under what conditions it obtains. This question arose out of the investigation of two kinds of ḥadīth, *successive group testimony* (*tawātur*) and testimonies that are "surrounded by signs" (*muḥtaff bi al-qarāʾin*). Raḍiyy al-Dīn Ibn al-Ḥanbalī (d. 971/1564) (2018, 47–49), for example, not only engages with the standard classification of testimonial knowledge (*ʿilm*) vs. opinion (*ẓann*) but also engages with the idea of fallibilist knowledge in contrast to certain knowledge.[122]

[121] According to this measuring stick, the *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* works of the classical era were still largely applied since they were focused on ḥadīth centered investigations.

[122] The actual term being used is tranquility (*ṭumaʾnīna*). Tranquility seems to indicate something closer to psychological certainty. However, the context of the passage cited above relates to fallibilistic knowledge in contrast to psychological certainty.

In another text, Munlā Ḥanafī (d. 935/1529) (2021, 49–51) moves beyond the normal epistemic analysis of *tawātur* and its conditions to investigate whether it is truly non-inferential (*ḍarūrī*) or whether it relies on a hidden syllogism (*qiyās khafiyy*). Even more surprising is his pushing back against the standard position that *successive group testimonies* must originate in sense perception at the end of the testimonial chain. He not only argues that the content can originate in other sources of knowledge, such as inferential or basic reason and inspiration, but he also rebuts objections usually put forward against *successive group testimonies* that bottom out in inference.[123]

A second example of this theoretical trend has to do with the relationship between ḥadīth as a category and statements (*akhbār*). While many of the earlier treatises might have limited themselves to whether the two terms were analogous or not, these new texts took the conversation a few steps further. One of the interesting philosophical problems addressed here is whether the ḥadīth corpus can be said to be made up of statements (*akhbār*) when statements in the technical sense must be truth evaluable. Given that the corpus includes many performative utterances (*inshāʾāt*) as well, this was an area that needed further investigation and analysis (Al-Ajhūrī 2016, 88–89; Munlā Ḥanafī 2021, 44–45).

A third and final example of the theoretical development of *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* texts in the postclassical era is their meta-focus on how to understand the rules and axioms under investigation. Aḥmad Ibn al-ʿAjamī (d. 1087/1677) (2016c, 2:26–27), for example, in his gloss on al-Ṣuyūṭī's much celebrated *Tadrīb al-Rāwī,* engages with the question of whether these rules are universal or particular. Most likely, what he had in mind was their inductive nature as opposed to their deductive nature.[124] Munlā Ḥanafī (2021, 35–36) goes further than Ibn al-ʿAjamī by not only affirming that they are not the same as deductive rules but also criticizes Islamic philosophers for overstating just how universal their own rules actually are. We will return to this debate at the end of Chapter 8.

[123] A more detailed analysis of these various kinds and principles will be carried out in Chapter 8.
[124] These passages need further exploration. One possible interpretation is to connect them to another popular characterization of ḥadīth studies as an inductive science as opposed to a deductive science. We will return to this characterization and explore it in Chapter 8.

These three brief examples are meant to indicate that the literature on ḥadīth studies began to branch out beyond the normally limited areas of investigation to more theoretically adjacent questions. This theoretical move shows clear evidence of ḥadīth scholars leaving questions of applied epistemology, regardless of their formal and theoretical nature, to questions that were no longer just about ḥadīth, to contextless and timeless questions about epistemology proper. This shift warrants the demarcation of this period epistemically and highlights the development of the field from this vantage point.

In fact, this shift has been the cause of tension in the field historically, and that tension has endured until this very day. We find in these texts a concern about the shift to questions about knowledge, certainty, and *successive group testimony*, as authors argued about whether such investigations should even be in these texts. This present study not only argues that they do belong in these texts, but they are also a natural development of this science.

The informality and applied nature of ḥadīth criticism in the early periods does not entail a fundamentally different system than the one being investigated in this period.[125] Given that the later system was ultimately an abstraction of the earlier form, the roots are the same. The core difference is that the earlier system was implicit and not theorized about in any type of self-reflective way. As time passed and new tools were developed, ultimately, ḥadīth scholars began to theoretically investigate the tools they were using. It only makes sense that once ḥadīth scholars began to abstract out these applied rules and theorize about them, they'd begin to move beyond the subject at hand, the ḥadīth corpus, to more theoretical questions about the nature and justification of knowledge gained via testimony, and eventually to questions about epistemology as a field.

Another aspect of this development is that many of these figures were also well-versed in other theoretical sciences like *kalām, manṭiq,* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*. These sciences had themselves gone through development and growth when it came to these

[125] This does not necessitate a view either way on whether the formalization that took place included a type of transformation or whether it was merely a type of explication of what was always implicitly present. This question requires further research and study.

epistemological questions. Given that ḥadīth studies and these other disciplines share epistemic and philosophical space on specific questions, these scholars were faced with various concepts and terms that needed to "satisfactorily cover" all the sciences in which they were being investigated. This point coheres well with Broad's (1947) theorization around synopsis, synthesis, and speculative philosophy.

The above is not meant as an absolute rejection of the narrative of decline. Rather, what is intended is a more limited thesis. The theoretical investigations found in the commentaries and glosses on ḥadīth terminology did not decline; in fact, they developed into new theoretical territory. In contrast, it seems that the applied investigations stagnated and declined. If one were to compare the output in applied ḥadīth analysis between this period and the period of Ibn Ḥajar, one would find a substantive decline. But the same is true if one were to compare Ibn Ḥajar's period with that of al-Bukhārī. Therefore, the decline was a decline in application, not in the field across the board. This particular point will be important to return to since it is of great consequence for how ḥadīth studies is perceived in the contemporary era.

5.4.3.1. The Postclassical Era (2): Authority and the Knowledge Action Question Revisited

In the second period of the postclassical era, the previous stability found in the division of epistemic labor was shattered. As discussed during our analysis of the preclassical era, early debates between the Partisans of Ḥadīth (*Ahl al-Ḥadīth*) and the Partisans of Opinion (*Ahl al-Raʾy*) significantly revolved around the role of ḥadīth criticism and the role of ḥadīth in legal epistemology. It took a few centuries for the Islamic legal schools (*madhāhib*) to be codified, but once that had occurred, the traditional critical method of ḥadīth scholars (*manhaj al-naqd*) became primarily an investigation into the authenticity of the attribution of Prophetic testimonies (*thubūt*), as opposed to one concerned with the question of action (*ʿamal*). Despite this long and often contentious history, the resulting division of epistemic labor allowed for a lot of progress in both the legal and testimonial fields (Hallaq 2005).

Around the middle of the 12th century, a new epistemic trend emerged. It begins in the Arabian Peninsula, particularly in Yemen and the Ḥijaz, but quickly spreads to the

Indian subcontinent. A hallmark of this reformist trend is casting off the yoke of authority (*taqlīd*) granted to the Islamic legal schools. Although proponents of this trend differ greatly, what unites them is their elevation of evidence (*adilla*) and their criticism of following legal authorities.[126] Given that the ḥadīth corpus is the primary source of revelatory legal injunctions, this movement is often characterized as a revival of the earlier Partisans of Ḥadīth view.[127]

However, upon closer inspection, this characterization is incorrect. The original Partisans of Ḥadīth did not object to the authority of legal scholars as much as they objected to the role of ḥadīth in the legal epistemologies of specific legal schools (*madhāhib*) as well as to their methodology of ḥadīth criticism. Nevertheless, this reformist movement becomes closely associated with ḥadīth studies and breathes new life into the old debate as to whether the study of ḥadīth is about action (*ʿamal*) or knowledge of the truthfulness of attribution (*thubūt*).

The upheaval caused by the reformists did not totally shift the trends found in the first period of the postclassical era. Nearly 50 commentaries and glosses were written on the ḥadīth terminology works of al-Ishbīlī, al-ʿIrāqī, Ibn Ḥajar, and al-Bayqūnī during the 12th and 13th centuries (Al-ʿIrāqī 2006, 38–47; Al-Ḥabshī 2004, 2:506–10, 1218–19, 1273–77, 2012–18). This continuity is important to not lose sight of. Although the reformists quickly gained a lot of support across the Muslim world, many traditional scholars maintained the old distinctions and offered rebuttals against their objections (Al-Sindī 1959; Traboulsi 2002).

[126] Although a thorough analysis of this debate is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it seems, at first glance, that the reformists objected to expert testimony as a type of evidence. In other words, they limited what type of evidence counted as true evidence. Beyond that, they seemed to have strong opinions about inquiry. Finally, this discussion, although not entirely the same, overlaps with Zagzebski's (2012) work on authority.

[127] The individuals included in this reformist push vary greatly in their geographic location and in their own philosophical affiliations. By lumping them together, I do not mean to characterize them as one unit; rather, I only wish to highlight that they do have some shared epistemic concerns. Figures as diverse as Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1101/1690) and Muḥammad b. Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1206/1792) in the Arabian peninsula, or Muḥammad al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 1182/1769) and Muḥammad al-Shawkānī (d. 1255/1840) in Yemen, or Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Sindī (d. 1161/1748) and eventually the Ahl-i-Hadith movement founded by Sayyid Ahmad Shahid (d. 1247/1832), Syed Nazeer Husain (d. 1320/1903) and Nawab Siddiq Hassan Khan (d. 1308/1891) in India, are all united under a pro hadithic evidence, *anti-taqlīd* umbrella. For more on this period and these debates, see: Iṣḥāq (1955); Haykel (2003); Crawford (2014); El-Rouayheb (2017); Dallal (2018); Brown (2018), Baig (2020); Zaman (2021); and Dumairieh (2021; 2022).

The dilemma around *taqlīd* of the *madhāhib* and the resulting polemical environment is most clearly perceived in the Indian subcontinent, where the debates around the authority of *madhāhib* had divided the intellectual class along party lines. However, the epistemic question concerning the justification afforded to expert testimony was not the only development of this period. At the very peak of this intellectual conflict, Abdulḥayy al-Laknawī (d. 1304/1887) would make a significant contribution to the genre of transmitter criticism.

Up until the 13th century, there was no evidence of any theoretically robust standalone works on transmitter criticism. While critics did investigate the field theoretically in biographical dictionaries, *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* works, and a few short epistles, it did not mature into its own genre. A good example of these initial contributions can be found in a critical edition of the four most well-known epistles on the subject published by Abū Ghudda (1990). While these epistles do signify some theoretically interesting developments, they do not represent a more robust treatment of transmitter criticism.

Al-Laknawī's (2000) *al-Rafʿ wa al-Takmīl* is the first thorough standalone text on the subject. The text addresses a plethora of issues. It begins with an investigation into the moral questions surrounding transmitter criticism (Al-Laknawī 2000, 53–67). In other portions of the text, he investigates some of the subtle personal and ideological feuds that led to unjust criticism (Al-Laknawī 2000, 69–70, 78, 409–32). These sections share many similarities with contemporary investigations into the pathologies of testimony, particularly testimonial injustice (Gelfert 2014, 209–11; M. Fricker 2009). He also investigates the qualifications that a critic must have in order to partake in transmitter criticism (Al-Laknawī 2000, 68–78). While these investigations are not new, he is the first to treat them so robustly in one text.

As for the main portions of the text, they can be categorized into a few core investigations. The text includes a thorough investigation into which types of criticism should be accepted or rejected and specifically focuses on the question of whether knowledge of a critic's reasoning and evidence is necessary in order for their criticism to be accepted (Al-Laknawī 2000, 79–110, 264–331). It includes a section that focuses on when critics disagree in their endorsement or impugnment of a particular transmitter, which we can connect to the epistemology of disagreement literature (Al-

Laknawī 2000, 111–27, 262–63). This section also investigates the differences between transmission (*riwāya*) and testimony (*shahāda*) (Al-Laknawī 2000, 111–13). A third section further develops the theory around degrees of *al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl* as well as the technical terminology associated with each (Al-Laknawī 2000, 129–86).

The text is also filled with other investigations that are of epistemic value. Al-Laknawī dedicates space to the question of inquiry in testimony. He presents the technical terminology used by ḥadīth scholars to differentiate an epistemic evaluation before inquiry and after (Al-Laknawī 2000, 187–90). As will become clear later in the dissertation, this idea of inquiry into other testimonial chains and the search for hidden defects (*ʿilal*) is an essential part of the traditional critical system. According to the traditional critical system, one cannot justifiably believe a ḥadīth is authentic without having done the necessary amount of inquiry, and given the difficulty involved with doing just that, ḥadīth scholars developed language to differentiate between an initial assessment and a more robust justified evaluation.

Finally, a good portion of the text is dedicated to the critical terminology of specific ḥadīth critics (Al-Laknawī 2000, 199–230, 253–61, 388–405). This, like many of the investigations mentioned above, is not completely new. However, what is new is that al-Laknawī (2000, 225–29, 332–38, 339–50) presents his analysis of a few earlier works on transmitter criticism. In these sections, he not only provides the reader with the technical language of that specific critic, but he also introduces the reader to the text and how to use it.

In the introduction to his text, al-Laknawī (2000, 49–51) mentions what drove him to author it. He describes the intellectual state of his period as having fallen into decline when it comes to ḥadīth studies and points to the numerous errors scholars of his period are making when evaluating ḥadīth and ḥadīth transmitters. His perception was that social and intellectual conditions had reached such a bad state that it required the authoring of a work that could serve as a guide to the subfield of *al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl*. This explanation provided by the author coheres well with the other impetus for change and development mentioned above, the dilemma around *taqlīd* of the *madhāhib*, since that debate only highlights the weakness of ḥadīth studies on both sides of the intellectual aisle.

Before moving on to the next era, something must be said about the geographic variable in these broad assessments of ḥadīth criticism and the narrative of stagnation and decline. As many have previously noted, ḥadīth scholarship in this period seems to have shifted geographically to the Indian subcontinent while having previously been more centered in Egypt (M. Zaman 2021; Baig 2020). However, contemporary scholars assert that despite the uptake of ḥadīth sciences in the Indian subcontinent, it was generally *fiqh*-related or focused on commentaries and thus does not contradict the narrative of decline.

Putting aside whether that assessment bears out after careful research, the trend of Islamic sciences seeing an uptake in one location at a specific point in history is clearly true. Whether or not the narrative of decline ends up being true, very little research has been done on the works of this period from the subcontinent to assess just how much theoretical or applied work was being done.[128] Therefore, while it might be acceptable to cautiously say we don't have much evidence of literature of the applied epistemological variety during this period, it would be premature to judge that to be the case as a matter of fact.

5.4.4. The Contemporary Era: The West's Early Encounters with Ḥadīth

Demarcating the starting point of the contemporary era from the end of the postclassical era is a difficult task. Like the previous eras and periods analyzed, what might at first seem to us like a new shift or development in *manhaj al-naqd* ends up having begun a few decades prior. Although this era has already been discussed in the literature review, it is useful to revisit the discussion here. Furthermore, having just concluded our historical analysis of the postclassical era, it is useful for us to stress the difference between it and the contemporary era.

A popular view holds that the contemporary age of ḥadīth studies begins with the reformist trends discussed above (Kızılkaya 2019; J. A. C. Brown 2018, 277–302). They stress that the questions of *taqlīd* and *ijtihād,* as well as the relevant debates around the authority of Islamic legal schools, are a turning point between the classical

[128] The only works that I am aware of on ḥadīth in the region are the works of Iṣḥāq (1955), Baig (2020), and Zaman (2021).

and contemporary era, thus leapfrogging what was dubbed above as the postclassical era. However, this view runs into difficulties when analyzing the last century or more of ḥadīth scholarship. The last hundred years of ḥadīth studies are substantively different from the postclassical era, and as such, it does not make sense to lump them together.

Instead of drawing the demarcating line at the turn of the 12th century of the *hijra*, it makes much more methodological and epistemic sense to draw it at the turn of the 14th century. The contemporary era of ḥadīth studies began with a multi-pronged engagement with the West at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century (Kızıl 2020; İ. Hatiboğlu 2015; Eido 2021). The reverberations that resulted from that engagement are many, and due to them, we find a significant shift in the content and style of the research and output in the field.

In the literature review, a skeleton timeline and analysis of parts of the contemporary era were laid out. For the purposes of this chapter, rehashing those points will be avoided. Beyond wanting to avoid redundancy, focusing too heavily on the contemporary era is not in line with the purposes of this chapter. This chapter was intended to be a diachronic, *longue durée*, historical analysis of the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars. Two chief theses were laid out at the beginning of this chapter. The first is the claim that the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars developed as a result of epistemological concerns over the last 1400 years. The second claim is that this development occurred in two ways: the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars grew more theoretical and more formal over time. These two theses have already been argued for, and evidence for them has already been provided.

The only matter that remains is to show that this epistemic system continues to endure even in the contemporary era. This point should be uncontroversial; however, there are a couple of points that can be offered as evidence for its truthfulness. For one, the writing of glosses and commentaries on *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* texts from the classical and postclassical eras continues in the contemporary era and is evidence of this fact.[129]

[129] See, for example, Sirājuddīn's (2020) commentary on *al-Bayqūniyya*. Also see Tadmurī's (2022, 288–91, 299–302) list of contemporary commentaries on *al-Bayqūniyya*, as well as contemporary works on Ibn Ḥajar's *Nukhba* and al-ʿIrāqī's *Alfiyya*.

Other scholars in this era have chosen to write newer texts, but their innovations are more about restructuring and reorganizing the text, as opposed to any significant break in content from the past. Instead, these new texts represent further development in the field. Apart from stylistic differences, there are also new sections that are dedicated to responding to orientalists. [130] These newer texts fit seamlessly into the historical account of development due to epistemic needs and various social and philosophical dilemmas.

The second point that can be offered as evidence for the claim that there is philosophical continuity between the postclassical and contemporary eras is the attention that has been paid to producing critical editions of traditional texts. The fact that such care was and is afforded to producing critical editions of these classical and postclassical texts and that these editions are then used as textbooks in contemporary seminaries is sufficient proof for the claim that there is substantive continuity between these eras.[131]

5.4.4.1. The Periodization of the Contemporary Era: Orientalism, al-Albānī, and the Modernists

Before concluding this chapter, it is important to say a few words about the periodization of the contemporary era. Drawing on the skeleton outline we provided in the literature review, it can be argued that there are three central epistemic inflection points. Each of these points can serve as the end or beginning of a new period.

The first period of the contemporary era can be said to have begun with the work of figures like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (d. 1316/1898), Syed Ameer Ali (d. 1348/1929), Ṭāhir al-Jazāʾirī (d. 1338/1920), Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (d. 1332/1914), Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1323/1905), and Rashīd Riḍā (d. /13541935). It was the awareness and knowledge that these figures had of orientalist attitudes toward ḥadīth that ushered in

[130] See, for example, the works of al-Khaṭīb (2006) and ʿItr (1997). Also, see Tadmurī (2022, 268–93) for a long list of contemporary works beginning from the 15th century.
[131] The traditional curriculum of beginning with something like *al-Bayqūniyya*, then moving on to a commentary on it, then *al-Nuzha* of Ibn Ḥajar, then *al-Muqaddima* of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, and finally *Tadrīb al-Rāwī* of al-Ṣuyūṭī or *Fatḥ al-Mughīth* of al-Sakhāwī is still extremely popular and widespread. Numerous critical editions of each of these texts have been published. For background on the rise of critical editions and manuscript editing in the contemporary era, see El Shamsy (2020).

a new era. Thus, the dilemma of orientalism serves as the demarcation of the first period of the contemporary era and signifies the beginning of the era itself.

The next inflection point comes with the scholarship of Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (d. 1420/1999), whose work, as mentioned earlier, dominated the field for many decades. His scholarship reinvigorated the postclassical debate around *taqlīd* and *ijtihād*, but it also centered ḥadīth in the debate. It is common in contemporary circles to hear both supporters and critics of al-Albānī credit him with a reinvigoration of the study of ḥadīth. Although there were many other important figures that preceded him, like Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (d. 1371/1952), and ʿAbdurraḥmān al-Muʿallimī (d. 1386/1966), al-Albānī is unique in his popularity. Unlike other figures who are well-known by specialists, al-Albānī became a household name. This is not to say that his contemporaries agreed with him; far from it. In fact, arguably, it is because of al-Albānī's radical views, which were rejected by many, if not most of his contemporaries, that the debates during this period shifted. Thus, the dilemma resulting from al-Albānī's views signifies the beginning of the second period of the contemporary era.

The third and final period of the contemporary era can be said to have begun with the emergence of modernist figures such as Mohammed Arkoun (d. 1431/2010), Nasr Abu Zayd (d. 1431/2010), Mohammed Abed al-Jabiri (d. 1431/2010), Jamal al-Banna (d. 1434/2013), Muhammad Shahrur (d. 1440/2019), Hassan Hanafi (d. 1442/2021), Abdullah Laroui, and Abdolkarim Soroush. These figures promoted various forms of ḥādīth skepticism that shifted the debates away from the question of *taqlīd* and *ijtihād* to the question of the authenticity of the corpus itself. These figures, as well as countless others, led to an array of responses and apologetics. This third period of the contemporary era is the period in which we live today.[132]

[132] See Appendix B, Figures B.1 and B.2 for a diagram of the four eras, as well as major developments in theorization and formalization.

CHAPTER VI

MĀHIYYAT AL-KHABAR AND THE NATURE OF TESTIMONY

At the outset of Chapter 6, two preliminary points are in order. The first relates to a methodological shift in the dissertation. The second relates to presenting an initial conception of the epistemology of testimony literature.

In Chapter 5, a cohesive narrative of the development of the epistemic system of ḥadīth scholars was presented. This required a diachronic, *longue durée*, history of ideas analysis of the field, where foundational epistemic unit ideas were identified, and their emergence, development, and relation to one another in a broader epistemic tradition was investigated. It also required a history of epistemology model, where the justification of the epistemic system at various stages of development was evaluated. While Chapter 5 included some amount of philosophical reconstruction, the brunt of that task is taken up in Chapter 8. Similarly, while philosophical synthesis was employed, it was limited by the desideratum of faithfulness to the explicit positions of classical and contemporary ḥadīth scholars. In this chapter, an important methodological pivot will take place.

In Chapters 6 and 7, this study will engage directly with the work of contemporary anglophone philosophers on the epistemology of testimony. This will require a considerable shift away from historical methodologies to philosophical epistemology proper. Although this was not entirely absent in previous chapters, various forms of analysis and synthesis will be the standard methodological tools in Chapters 6 and 7.

This methodological shift entails another substantive change that must be highlighted. In Chapters 6 and 7, I will be responding and synthesizing from the vantage point of my own views. This differs significantly from the more historical work of epistemic

analysis and reconstruction.[133] By the very nature of this type of engagement, the views I offer are my own. Although my views are largely inspired by and grounded in the Islamic tradition, they will not always be re-articulations of views already present in the central texts.[134] There are at least two reasons for this. Firstly, there are often several views to choose from, and I will thus be advocating for the view I believe to be most justifiable. Furthermore, there will not always be relevant material in either tradition that corresponds directly to the other; therefore, I will provide my own view on those particular topics.

Contemporary anglophone scholarship on the epistemology of testimony can be classified in several different ways.[135] One way is to classify it according to various central questions that are asked and investigated. For example, Leonard (2021), when introducing the epistemological problems of testimony, lists seven distinct questions. He identifies the questions of reduction, generation vs. transmission, evidence vs. non-evidential assurance, individualism vs. anti-individualism, expertise and authority, group testimony, and the nature of testimony as being the central areas of interest.

However, a more organized way of introducing and investigating the field is to divide the questions according to what they have in common. For this reason, Chapter 6 is a philosophical investigation into the nature of testimony (*māhiyyat al-khabar*) as a source of knowledge.[136] This will be followed by an investigation into testimonial justification (*qabūl al-akhbār*) in Chapter 7.[137] I follow Lackey (2008, 16) in the nature

[133] This is not to say that my views are absent from the historical portions of the dissertation. Historical research is often influenced by the views of the researcher. However, the desideratum of faithfulness to the explicit positions of classical and contemporary ḥadīth scholars limits how much of my own views are used in their representation.

[134] This should not be read as a claim that there is one Islamic tradition. Rather, my point is that there are clear views and sciences one works with and through. In this work, my starting point is the works of contemporary ḥadīth scholars, which I've shown to have been largely an outgrowth and development of the preclassical era. From that starting point, I branch out to other fields, be they linguistic, jurisprudential, or theological. I treat the Sunnī intellectual tradition as a type of philosophical school, that allows one to draw from its sciences, works, and scholars on any given topic.

[135] Arguably, one could make a stonger claim: The subject-matter and definition of the epistemology of testimony can be classified in a number of different ways.

[136] The Arabic "*māhiyyat al-khabar*" more precisely translates into English as "the essence of statements." However, as we've already noted, it is important to choose terms and phrases that are more native to the philosophical tradition when possible.

[137] The Arabic "*qabūl al-akhbār*" more precisely translates into English as "the acceptance of statements." As will be discussed further in Chapter 7, the epistemological term "acceptance" is the native concept in Islamic philosophy that functions the way justification functions in anglophone epistemology.

vs. justification classification, but I also build upon it in several ways.[138] For now, it will be important to highlight how this chapter on the nature of testimony differs significantly from her own.

Her work on the nature of testimony focuses on two primary investigations. The first is focused on the definition of testimony. The second is focused on the epistemic status of testimony, rebutting the standard belief-transmission view and instead advocating for her statement view. Each of these two investigations receives its own section in this chapter. In each case, I will provide a summary and analysis of her work, and then I will add to that a summary and analysis of Goldberg's work.[139] Finally, I will present my own views as I compare, contrast, object, respond, and synthesize between them. For the Islamic philosophy side of my engagement, I will draw primarily from the books of *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* as my starting point. I will secondarily draw from other works in rhetoric, legal theory, and theology as needed.

Therefore, this chapter differs from her own by more robustly engaging with Goldberg's views, as well as in its engagement with the Islamic tradition and my own views inspired by it. It also differs in the addition of two new investigations. The first addition, an investigation into the difference between pure and hybrid forms of testimonial knowledge, is alluded to in her work but not substantively engaged with. The second addition is an investigation into testimonial kinds, which is altogether new. Given these new additions, the chapter not only engages both philosophical traditions but also provides new research that is useful to each.

6.1. What Is Testimony?

There are two distinct questions when it comes to the epistemology of testimony. The first question asks, "What is testimony?" This is an investigation into the definition of testimony (Lackey 2008, 16–17). This definition might take any number of forms;

[138] Lackey also uses the term "metaphysics" of testimony to refer to its nature. I prefer the term "nature," which she also employs.
[139] Both Lackey (2008) and Goldberg (2010; 2015) have published extensively on the epistemology of testimony. Although I will at times draw from other parts of their work, I am primarily concentrating on their main works in the field.

however, it is ultimately asking about the conditions required for a subject (S) to testify to the proposition (*p*).

In contrast, the second question asks, "What is the difference between good and bad testimony?" This question concerns the epistemic evaluation of testimonies as being either adequate and acceptable or inadequate and rejected (Lackey 2008, 16–17). The question concerning the epistemic evaluation of testimony can only be asked after one already knows what testimony is. Only after one has analyzed what testimony is can they subsequently inquire into which testimonies are acceptable and which are not.

6.1.1. A Summary of the Anglophone Views

Lackey summarizes three different views pertaining to the definition of testimony found in the anglophone literature. She calls them the broad view, the narrow view, and the moderate view. She then offers her own disjunctive view of testimony as an alternative. I will present each definition as well as a fifth definition from Goldberg. I will then provide a brief analysis of the differences between the five. After the analysis and summary of the views found in the anglophone tradition, I will present views found within the Islamic tradition and then move on to an engagement between the two. Ultimately, although I will be advocating for one of the Islamic definitions of testimony, I will also be synthesizing it with important investigations found in the anglophone tradition, as well as building upon it and responding to common objections.

6.1.1.1. The Broad View[140]

According to the broadest definition of testimony, it is understood as "tellings" or utterances that communicate the thoughts of the testifier. This view places no real restriction on a statement for it to be characterized as testimonial. The only condition is that the statement be representative of the thought of the testifier.

[140] See: Lackey (2008, 19–33).

Definition: S testifies that *p* if and only if S's statement that *p* is an expression of S's thought that *p*.

6.1.1.2. The Narrow View[141]

On the narrower definition of testimony, it is directly tied to the question of evidence. This excludes statements that are *not* evidence of some matter of fact. Furthermore, this view necessitates that the evidence concerns some disputed question. This excludes statements that *are* evidence of some matter of fact, but that fact is not disputed. Finally, the view necessitates that the testifier has the relevant competency, authority, or credentials to testify to that fact. It thus excludes everyday testimony completely. It also excludes cases where the speaker testifies to some matter of fact but does not have the relevant authority.

Definition: S testifies by making some statement that *p* if and only if:

1. S's stating that *p* is evidence that *p* and is offered as evidence that *p*.
2. S has the relevant competence, authority, or credentials to state truly that *p*.
3. S's statement that *p* is relevant to some disputed or unresolved question (which may or may not be whether *p*) and is directed to those who need evidence on the matter.

6.1.1.3. The Moderate View[142]

In contrast, the moderate view lessens the requirement by not stipulating the variables as matters of fact. Instead, it stipulates the same variables found in the narrow view, except this time as either intentions of the speaker or as being understood by the speaker as such. In doing so, the moderate view has moved the conditions from the realm of objectivity to the realm of subjectivity. According to the narrow view, the statement must actually, as a matter of fact, be evidence of some disputed fact. Similarly, according to the narrow view, the testifier must actually, as a matter of fact, have the relevant competence and authority. The moderate view lessens the burden

[141] See: Lackey (2008, 14–19).
[142] See: Lackey (2008, 23–25).

significantly by not requiring that these conditions apply as a matter of fact but only requires that they seem that way to one or both parties.

Definition: S testifies by making some statement that *p* if and only if:

1. S's stating that *p* is offered as evidence that *p*.
2. S intends that his audience believe that he has the relevant competence, authority, or credentials to state truly that *p*.
3. S's statement that *p* is believed by S to be relevant to some question that he believes is disputed or unresolved (which may or may not be whether *p*) and is directed at those whom he believes to be in need of evidence on the matter.

6.1.1.4. Lackey's Disjunctive View[143]

All the attempts at defining testimony so far have done so through necessary and jointly sufficient conditions. This means that all the conditions must be met, and if they are met, then this is an actual case of testimony. Lackey's view is substantively different in that it separates speaker and hearer testimony. Thus, on her view, the necessary conditions for speaker testimony are not the same as the necessary conditions for hearer testimony. This decoupling is done to include cases that are excluded in the earlier views. By arguing that the conditions that constitute speaker testimony are not the same as those that constitute hearer testimony, she is able to capture previously ignored cases in her definition.

Another significantly unique feature of Lackey's definition is that it characterizes testimony as an act of communication. In contrast, all the views up to this point have characterized testimony as a statement. This change results in the inclusion of cases of communication that are not verbal utterances, like the nodding of the head and other bodily communication.

Definition: S testifies that *p* by making an act of communication *a* if and only if (in part) in virtue of *a's* communicable content:

[143] See Lackey (2008, 27–36).

1. S reasonably intends to convey the information that *p* or
2. *a* is reasonably taken as conveying the information that *p*.

6.1.1.5. Goldberg's View[144]

Goldberg largely embraces Lackey's disjunctive view. Although he does not detail out a precise definition of testimony, it can be gleaned from his engagement with her definition. The only real substantive difference is his requiring that speaker testimony aim to attest to the truth of the proposition being communicated. According to Lackey's view, the speaker need not be attesting to the truth of the proposition if they reasonably intend to convey the information. Goldberg's view thus excludes cases like the recitation of a soliloquy to oneself if one is not attesting to the truth of what is being said.

Thus, if we want to reconstruct Goldberg's view, we can rearticulate the definition as follows:

Definition: S testifies that *p* by making an act of communication *a* if and only if (in part) in virtue of *a's* communicable content:

1. S performs an act of communication through which she aims to be attesting to the truth of *p* or
2. *a* is reasonably taken as conveying the information that *p*.

6.1.2. The Islamic Tradition's Terminology

The Islamic tradition employs several different terms to refer to testimony. How the terms relate to one another requires both historical and philosophical analysis. Several of the core terms will be analyzed in the various sections of this chapter. For the purposes of this section of Chapter 6, we will suffice with an exposition of two core terms, ḥadīth and *khabar*.

[144] See: Goldberg (2015, 78–79).

The rationale behind beginning with ḥadīth is self-evident; the dissertation is focused on ḥadīth studies and the critical method of ḥadīth scholars. As for the term *khabar*, the rationale behind beginning with it is due to the fact that the Islamic tradition conventionally came to employ this term as the genus for different species of testimonies (Al-Qarāfī 2001, 1:90–91). Thus, *khabar* (pl. *akhbār*) is the technical term in Arabic for the epistemic source of testimony.

The following sections will begin with a brief linguistic analysis of the two terms and their relation to one another. This will be followed by an investigation into *khabar* (pl. *akhbār*) in the Islamic tradition and some of the key definitions associated with it. Afterward, we will return to the term ḥadīth as employed by ḥadīth scholars and analyze its most well-known definition. Finally, the section will conclude with a comparison between the two traditions, synthesizing, critiquing, and highlighting differences between them.

6.1.2.1. A Linguistic Definition of Ḥadīth

A widespread feature of Islamic texts is their dual-definition approach to technical terms. The first type of definition is referred to as a linguistic definition (*taʿrīf lughawī*), while the second is usually referred to as a terminological definition (*taʿrīf iṣṭilāḥī*). Works in ḥadīth terminology often investigate various linguistic and terminological definitions for the word ḥadīth.

In the Arabic language, the word ḥadīth can grammatically function as an adjective or as a type of verbal noun.[145] When functioning as an adjective, the linguistic meaning describes a noun as being "new." However, when functioning as a verbal noun, it carries the meaning of a statement. It is this second linguistic meaning that is relevant to ḥadīth studies, and it is this meaning from which the terminological definition is stipulated.[146]

[145] In the technical terminology of Arabic grammarians, the word ḥadīth can either function as a *ṣifa mushabbaha* or as an *ism maṣdar*.
[146] This point is uncontroversial. However, it should be noted that the adjective meaning is also often cited. This seems to be a result of theological and metaphysical discussions around the true nature of speech.

A more strictly linguistic Arabic-to-English translation might render the word ḥadīth as "a telling," "a saying," or some other approximate English term. However, ḥadīth scholars ultimately tie the Arabic word ḥadīth linguistically to another Arabic term, *khabar* (pl. *akhbār*). This second term translates both linguistically and terminologically into English as a statement. Given that ḥadīth scholars will sometimes just define the word ḥadīth as being linguistically synonymous with a statement (*khabar*), investigating its definition is tied directly to ḥadīth studies proper.[147]

In fact, the term *khabar* is more epistemically fundamental. There are two ways we can make a case for its being more epistemically fundamental. The first is to draw attention to the fact that it is the term employed by Islamic scholars when discussing the core sources of knowledge along with sense perception and reason (Al-Taftāzānī 2020, 113). Secondly, as mentioned above, Islamic scholars refer to *akhbār* as the highest genus of testimonial utterances (Al-Qarāfī 2001, 1:90–91). Therefore, the true mirror term and concept in the Islamic tradition to the anglophone "testimony" is the term *khabar* (statement).

Given this reality, the anglophone definitions of testimony must ultimately be compared to and synthesized with the Islamic tradition's definitions of the term *khabar*. This is not to say that there is no use in putting the anglophone tradition's definitions of testimony into conversation with the definitions of the term ḥadīth. Rather, what will be argued below is that the term ḥadīth came to represent a species of *akhbār*. Therefore, the Islamic tradition's true epistemological views concerning the nature of testimony are better represented through the analysis of *akhbār*.

6.1.3. The Nature of Statements (*Māhiyyat al-Khabar*)

6.1.3.1. A Summary of the Views[148]

Classical *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* texts do not usually provide a definition of the technical term *khabar*. However, we find long explications of the term in the fields of

[147] In order to get a sense of classical and contemporary scholars' treatment of this subject, see: al-Ṣuyūṭī (2016c, 2:35–38); Ibn Ḥajar (2019, 41); and ʿItr (1997, 37–38).
[148] For a good overview of the views found in the Islamic tradition, see: Al-Aṣfahānī (2017, 521–22); al-Ījī (2004, 2:376–86); and al-Taftāzānī (1991, 28; 2022a, 87–96; 2022b, 166–85).

jurisprudential philosophy, rhetoric, and theology, and we find some engagement with the definition in postclassical *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* texts. There are many definitions mentioned; however, four types of views dominate the literature. Despite some slight variations, these four views represent the most well-known and discussed definitions.

Before discussing the views, themselves, it is important to clarify what is being defined. Their analysis is focused on the content being conveyed. In other words, they are defining what a statement is more than they are analyzing the conditions of testimonial communication. Given this project's aim of comparing the two traditions, this is an important distinction between the two. One can isolate for analysis the statement being communicated, the communication itself, or testimony as an epistemic source.

For the sake of ease and organization, we can order the four views according to the following division: Either statements are definable, or they are not definable.[149]

1. The first view is that statements are not definable.
2. The second view defines statements as being fundamentally speech that is truth evaluable.
3. A third view holds that statements cannot be limited by truth evaluability and thus posits a middle category between truth and falsehood.
4. Finally, the fourth view employs a classic division to define the nature of statements as hinging on relations external to the speech in question that either correspond to it or do not correspond to it.

6.1.3.2. Statements Are Not Definable

According to the first view, statements are not definable. This view argues that, ultimately, a statement is a basic concept. Given that basicness, there is no definition that will suffice and succeed. Any attempt at defining a statement ends in circularity.

[149] The relationship between definability and analyzability is important but beyond the scope of this thesis. In this investigation I've opted for definability, however, when it comes to knowledge (*al-ʿilm*), I've opted for analyzability.

According to proponents of this view, the most common example of this circularity is the reliance on truth evaluability. They express this circularity in the following way: The term truth is defined as "a *statement* that corresponds to reality." If we require knowledge of a statement to define truth, and we require knowledge of truth to define a statement, we have fallen into a vicious circle.

Although this view has a few notable proponents, ultimately, the arguments for it are successfully repelled. As we will see below, truth and falsehood need not be used in the definition. Furthermore, the type of basicness alleged by the view can be ceded to without accepting that it necessitates indefinability.

6.1.3.3. Statements as Truth Evaluable Speech

According to the second family of views, statements are ultimately speech that is truth evaluable. Statements, according to this view, are different from their performative counterparts, primarily in their truth evaluability. A full exposition of the Islamic philosophy of language is beyond the scope of this thesis; however, the Islamic system theoretically anticipated performatives, which are referred to as *inshāʾ (pl. inshāʾāt)*.

Much of the debate internally among proponents of this view concerns how to make sense of the relationship between truth evaluability and statements. This is largely due to the objections of the indefinability camp mentioned above. Finally, this view has a hard time making sense of declarative sentences that are intended as performatives. The clearest example of this in the Arabic language is the past tense: "I have sold you" (*biʿtuka*), which is often used as a performative. In other words, this declarative sentence is often used to initiate a sale as opposed to referring to some sale in the past.

The role of intentionality in defining statements was largely rejected by Muslim philosophers of language, with a few notable exceptions. If the intentionality of the speaker does not play a part in the designation of speech as a statement or as a performative, then how do we make sense of statements that function as performatives? How would we be able to differentiate between *biʿtuka,* which signifies the past tense verb, and *biʿtuka,* which is used as a performative?

6.1.3.4. Beyond Truth Evaluability

The third view, most famously held by Abū ʿUthmān al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869), rejects the position that statements are either true or false. This view also rejects another widely held view that belief plays no part in the definition of statements. He argues that while a statement might correspond to reality or not, it also might be believed to correspond to reality or not by the speaker. Furthermore, he says that a speaker might not hold any belief about the statement that he is testifying to. Thus, he concludes that there are six types of statements.

This classification alone doesn't render his position unique since everyone agrees that these categories are possible. The real difference is found in his view that true statements are testimonies that correspond to reality and are believed by the speaker to correspond to reality. He also holds that false statements are testimonies that do not correspond to reality and are not believed to correspond to reality. Finally, he holds that the remaining four cases are neither true nor false. It is through this third category, those neither categorized by truth nor by falsehood, that the uniqueness of his position becomes evident.

This view is largely rejected by most Islamic scholars despite it being mentioned in the taxonomy of views. The inclusion of beliefs into the equation creates a whole host of problems. For one, it fails to make sense of several cases of justified belief. As will be shown later in this chapter, the speaker need not believe the content being communicated for the hearer to be justified in believing it. Furthermore, it has no real argument for it other than scriptural interpretation, and those interpretations are disputed.

6.1.3.5. Defining Statements Through a Classic Division of Speech

The fourth and final view relies upon a division of speech (*kalām*). According to the thinnest form of this division, speech is classifiable into statements and performative speech. This division is based upon the following distinction: If a given act of speech has a relation external to it that either corresponds to it or not, then it is a statement

(*khabar*). On the other hand, if a given act of speech does not have a relation eternal to it, then it is a performative (*inshāʾ*).

This view escapes some of the central arguments against the truth evaluability view mentioned above. By avoiding the usage of truth in the definition, it escapes the criticism of circularity. Furthermore, it coheres well with other parts of the broader metaphysical system.

Although it is beyond the scope of the dissertation to give a more robust treatment of the metaphysics of speech, it is important that it at least be introduced. Sunnīs adopted a unique view of speech where they distinguished between internal and external verbal speech.[150] External verbal speech is largely represented by utterances, although, as we will see below, it includes a wider set of communicable acts.

Internal speech (*kalām nafsī*), on the other hand, is said to be a meaning that subsists within the speaker.[151] According to this view, internal speech is different from knowledge, thought, or the will. The external verbal speech communicated by the speaker expresses the internal speech subsisting within them. Tracking the difference between internal speech, external verbal speech, the written word, and the external world, as well as how they relate or correspond to one another, is common in the Islamic sciences.

Despite the attractiveness of this view and its popularity, there are still some objections to it that need to be addressed. However, these objections are not insurmountable. In what follows, I will be defending a new version of this view as part of my larger account of the nature of testimony as an epistemic source. Some of the adjustments I propose are based on discussions in the anglophone tradition, while others are an attempt to answer objections and inconsistencies found in both. Ultimately, I find this family of views best suited to define that which is being communicated. As for an account of testimony as an epistemic source, further additions will be needed for a

[150] See, for example, al-Taftāzānī (2020, 178–88).
[151] This seems to have a few commonalities with speaker meaning in the contemporary philosophy of language literature. However, this requires further research.

more robust account. Before moving on to the view that I will defend, we must return to the definition of the term ḥadīth.

6.1.4. The Terminological Definition of Ḥadīth[152]

As mentioned above, a more literal translation of the word ḥadīth into English could be rendered as "a telling." However, ḥadīth scholars generally tied the term linguistically to *akhbār*. Thus, outside of the context of ḥadīth studies, the terms could be used synonymously.

After an initial linguistic analysis, *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* texts move on to explicating a terminological definition (*taʿrīf iṣṭilāḥī*) of the word. When discussing a technical term, you begin with the linguistic meaning of the word, choosing the linguistic meaning that best relates to how it is used in its technical sense. You then move on to articulating the stipulated definition within the science. The technical and stipulated definition tends to be narrower.

The most common terminological definition of a ḥadīth is: "That which is attributed to the Prophet (ṣ), be it speech, action, tacit approval, or description." As is evident, the definition hinges on the concept of attribution. This is because a transmitter of ḥadīth is ultimately stating something about the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ), which he is attributing to him.

"Attributed to the Prophet" is meant to exclude attributions to others, for example, a companion or successor. In this way, ḥadīth represent a much narrower category than statements. They, too, are ultimately truth evaluable but are only statements of attribution to the Prophet.

To be more specific, we can render an analysis of the difference in the following manner. The normal account of a testimonial act is as follows:

S testifies that *p* by making an act of communication *a*.

[152] The definition I am using here is the standard and popular definition found in both classical and contemporary works of ḥadīth terminology. See: al-Sakhāwī (2014a, 1:14–15) and ʿItr (1997, 37–38).

On this account, *a* is a statement that is conveyed through some verbal or non-verbal form. Although this analysis could be used in reference to the work of ḥadīth scholars, it runs the risk of convoluting two important but distinct testimonies.

In a standard ḥadīth investigation, the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) is claimed to have testified to some fact through some means of communication. Up until this point, the analysis is the same. However, there is a further testimony looming in the background of the work of ḥadīth scholars: The transmitter is testifying through some means of communication to the fact that the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) testified to some fact through some means of communication.

Thus, we could render it as follows:

> S testifies that *p* by making an act of communication *a*, where *p* represents an attribution of *p-2* to S-2.

The analysis grows in complexity when we recognize that there are testimonial chains of several transmitters doing the same thing.

Having now provided a definition and analysis of the term ḥadīth, we can tie it to two other terms we have already introduced: the terms *dirāya* and *thubūt*. The technical and terminological meaning for *dirāya* that we have chosen for this study is the ḥadīthic investigation into the authenticity of the attribution of statements back to the Prophet (ṣ).[153] As mentioned in Chapter 5, the inquiry into *thubūt* is an inquiry into the truthfulness of attribution; thus, it is an investigation into whether any given ḥadīth's attribution is truthful or not. However, given that such a judgment will often be probabilistic (*ẓannī*), it is usually characterized as an investigation into the authenticity of its attribution (*ṣiḥḥat al-nisba aw ṣiḥḥat al-iḍāfa*). Thus, the ḥadīthic investigation into *dirāya* is the investigation into *thubūt*. This investigation is ultimately an investigation into the truthfulness or authenticity of speech, actions, tacit approvals, or descriptions that have been attributed to the Prophet (ṣ).

[153] As already mentioned in Chapter 5, the term *dirāya* can be used to mean more than one type of investigation. However, for the purposes of this study, we've limited it to one.

6.1.5. Testimony and Statements as One Epistemic Source

It is evident that the anglophone tradition and the Islamic tradition are analyzing one shared concept but are using different terms to refer to it. In the anglophone tradition, the term testimony is used to refer to a source of knowledge akin to sense perception, reason, memory, and introspection. In contrast, in the Islamic tradition, statement (*khabar*) is used to refer to that same source. Al-Aṣfahānī (2009, 273) mentions in his entry for the trilateral root, *kh-b-r*, that the form *khubr* refers to "knowledge which is known through statements." In other words, *khabar* is a statement, and *khubr* refers to that which is known through a statement.[154] However, as a matter of usage, the form *khabar* is used to signify a statement, as well as to indicate the epistemic source itself.

If the difference between the two philosophical traditions is merely one of language and terminology, the disagreement would be verbal and would not require further analysis. Whether the epistemic source or the content being communicated is called testimony or statement, if the account of the nature of the content and the source is the same, there is no real difference. However, as can be seen in the various views concerning the nature of testimony and the nature of statements, not only is there a substantive disagreement between the two traditions, but there are also substantive disagreements within each of the two traditions.

The classic division definition is the closest to giving us an accurate depiction of testimony when it comes to the content being communicated. While it requires some adjustment to respond to possible criticisms found in both traditions, it is ultimately salvageable. In the remainder of this section, some of the key points of disagreement and my views concerning them will be addressed. I will then present a new version of the classic division definition that I believe is resistant to the common objections and represents a more defensible account of the testimonies being communicated. Finally, I will build off that definition to provide an account of the nature of testimony as an epistemic source.

[154] I was not able to find any corroborative evidence for this usage.

6.1.6. Verbal vs. Non-verbal Communication

One of the most valuable contributions of Lackey's view is in its recasting of the nature of testimony as a form of communication. The impetus for this, according to her, is that many views limit testimony to verbal or written statements. On her account, she seeks to include acts of communication that are non-verbal (Lackey 2008, 25–26).

The basic premise of her argument is that we communicate with one another in several different ways. We communicate when we nod our heads to one another, when we sign a message to a friend, or when we express ourselves in various other non-verbal manners. Taken at face value, all definitions, except for Lackey's and Goldberg's, exclude non-verbal forms of testimony.

Lackey's point here is unsaleable. Consider a familiar case:

> You and your spouse are getting ready to go out to dinner. You are all set to go when the phone rings. You pick up the phone, and it is a work call. While you are on the phone with your boss, your wife gestures with her index finger first to herself and then towards the door while holding the car keys in her hand. It is clear to you that she is signaling that she is going to be waiting outside in the car. You walk out of the room before she leaves. If, after finishing your call, she actually is out in the car, did you justifiably believe or know that she would be there? How did you know it?

It seems clear that you knew, or at least justifiably believed, that she was outside in the car. Importantly, it is clear that you relied on no epistemic source other than testimony to come to believe that fact.

Given the known sources of knowledge, only testimonial belief or knowledge can account for your doxastic state. To deny that this is a form of testimony because it is non-verbal will require you to create a separate category for this source of knowledge. Suppose you call such a source non-verbal communication; it seems entirely unclear why this category and the category of verbal testimony should be separate. They both include you coming to believe or know from another person. They both include some

communicative act that signifies to you some statement of fact. Given these considerations, a truly robust theory of testimony must include non-verbal communication.

Beyond the need for the inclusion of non-verbal communication when analyzing testimony at the natural level, there is a specific need for it in the context of ḥadīth studies. We see hints of the recognition of this fact in the writings of ḥadīth scholars. For example, al-Sakhāwī (2014b, 2:351–52) alludes to the importance of this in the context of ḥadīth transmission. In some contexts, the transmitter is not actually verbally uttering words; rather, a student is uttering the teacher's transmission in front of him. However, the other students listening in will be citing the main teacher as the transmitter, not the student doing the reading. On the normal account of testimony, which limits itself to verbal utterances, one could not attribute the transmission to the teacher. In ḥadīth studies, this *mode* of transmission is known as presentation (*ʿarḍ*) and is a generally accepted form of transmission. We cannot make sense of such cases without a more inclusive view of statements.

Another context in ḥadīth studies that elucidates the necessity of non-verbal communication being a part of the analysis of testimony is the case of concatenated (*musalsal*) transmissions. There are various forms of *musalsal* transmissions, but the type that is relevant to this argument are those where the physical actions of the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) are transmitted from one person in the chain to the other. Al-Sakhāwī (2014c, 3:432–41) refers to several physically transmitted *musalsal* testimonies, like the clasping of the speaker's hand to that of the hearer, putting one's hand on their head, taking the student by the hand, or counting to five on one's hand, and many more. Without a proper analysis of testimony that allows for non-verbal communication, these cases get left out of the definition.

But how do we amend the classic division definition to include non-verbal communication? After all, it also relies on the concepts of statements and speech. In my estimation, there are four possible paths forward. Two of the paths do not require the changing of any wording in the definition; rather, they only require changing how we explicate the language used in the definition. The third and fourth paths require a change in the wording.

As for the first possible amendment, it requires that we broaden the concept of speech (*kalām*), which serves as the dividendum. While it is true that the grammatical and technical definition of speech according to Arabic linguistics is verbal, the word in its broader linguistic form includes non-verbal communication. Speech, linguistically, is often defined as a communicative act through which benefit is achieved (ʿAbdulḥamīd 2018, 15–16). Alternatively, it is defined as that which is self-sufficient (Al-Fayrūzabādī 2005, 1055).

It should be stressed here that the argument is not that Islamic scholars had this broader definition of speech in mind when defining statements. In fact, the opposite is clearly true. In several glosses where this definition is mentioned, Islamic scholars explicitly say that the type of speech intended is "the speech of the grammarians" or "verbal speech."[155] However, the broader definition of speech is found in accounts analyzing speech in the more natural sense in the Islamic tradition. Given the clear philosophical need for a more robust view of testimony and given the ease through which one can achieve this by interpreting the division differently, this is an attractive solution.

A second solution is to respond by pointing out that Islamic scholars mentioned that while the category of statements applies literally to the verbal, it can figuratively be applied to the non-verbal (F. al-D. M. Al-Rāzī 1996c, 1:215–17). Unlike the first response, here we would be ceding that the definition literally applies to utterances and only figuratively applies to non-verbal communication. Although this is an acceptable view, this entails downgrading the status of non-verbal communication to the figurative. It also requires the use of figurative language in the definition.

The third possible solution is to substitute out the dividendum. Instead of having speech (*kalām*) be the object of division, we could substitute it with signification (*dalāla*). Arabic logic and philosophical jurisprudence texts already have a relatively standard distinction between verbal and non-verbal signification (S. al-D. M. Al-Aṣfahānī 2017, 178–79; T. al-D. ʿAlī Al-Subkī and Al-Subkī 1984, 1:204–5; Al-Najjār and Al-Damanhūrī 2016, 39–42). In fact, the Islamic tradition has a robust system of semiotics that runs throughout its various sciences.

[155] Although some leave it ambiguous, when they do clarify, they specify it as verbal. See for example: al-Farhārī (2012, 98) and Jandī (1911, 1:50).

Therefore, a possible alternative definition would be:

> Signification (*dalāla*) is classifiable into statements and performatives. This division is based upon the following distinction: If a given act of signification has a relation external to it that either corresponds to it or not, then it is a statement (*khabar*). On the other hand, if a given act of signification does not have a relation external to it, then it is a performative (*inshāʾ*).

Although this initially seems like an acceptable solution, it creates more problems than it solves. For one, signification, while classifiable into verbal and non-verbal species, includes cases that might not fit as cases of pure testimony. According to the standard Islamic classification of signification, both verbal and non-verbal signification can be further subclassified into conventional (*waḍʿī*), natural (*ṭabʿī*), and rational (*ʿaqlī*) signification. Several problems loom if we accept natural and rational signification into the definition of testimony. At the very least, we end up with cases that are not purely testimonial, which would be an undesirable conclusion given the desideratum of isolating the phenomenon of testimony as a source of knowledge.

The fourth possible solution is to substitute out the dividendum of speech (*kalām*) with *bayān*. The term *bayān*, linguistically, signifies the meaning of "clarification." (Sayyid Aḥmad 2022, 43) However, in this context, the word is being used to signify something closer to "expression." (Al-Jāḥiẓ 2002, 1:81; Al-Shāfiʿī 2020, 14–15) This substitution works as a solution because non-verbal expressions are explicitly mentioned as a type of *bayān* (Al-Jāḥiẓ 2002, 1:82). However, the term is used in the Islamic philosophy of language literature to signify other more restrictive meanings, like its usage as one of the three core subfields of rhetoric (Al-Taftāzānī 2022b, 73–74, 553–55). Therefore, in order for this solution to work, the technical term *bayān* must be used with a broader meaning.

Thus, based on this broader meaning of *bayān*, a possible alternative definition would be:

> Expression (*bayān*) is classifiable into statements and performatives. This division is based upon the following distinction: If a given act of expression

> has a relation external to it that either corresponds to it or not, then it is a statement (*khabar*). On the other hand, if a given act of expression does not have a relation external to it, then it is a performative (*inshāʾ*).

This fourth alternative seems to be the most convincing solution. The reason for choosing this solution over the others is three-fold. First, the third solution solves one problem but creates others. Second, avoiding a figurative interpretation is important, given this is supposed to be an account of the nature of testimony. Finally, although one could argue that *kalām* non-figuratively includes non-verbal communication, this view does not have any explicit evidence for it in epistemic works in the Islamic tradition.

There is another upside to the fourth solution: metaphysical consistency. As mentioned above, Sunnī theologians hold a view about speech that distinguishes between internal (*kalam nafsī*) and verbal speech (F. al-D. M. Al-Rāzī 1996c, 1:177). The external communicative verbal act articulates the internal meaning. Therefore, true speech is the *kalam nafsī*.[156] If this is correct, then all external forms of expression serve a similar purpose, clarifying and signifying the true internal speech of the subject. If this is the case, it makes little sense to grant verbal communication a higher epistemic status above sign language or other forms of bodily communication.

Finally, we must attempt to address why all the other views, particularly the Islamic views, did not address non-verbal communication in their account of testimony. Any number of possible responses could be given. However, the most convincing is the simple fact that verbal communication is the standard form of expression and communication. Secondly, the Islamic sciences developed against the backdrop of revelation. Given that the Qurʾān and ḥadīth are accessible to Islamic scholars in their verbal form, it made sense that their theorizing would be limited to the verbal domain. However, given that this dissertation is aiming for a more abstract natural analysis of testimony, it makes sense to include the other domains.

[156] There is an ongoing debate in the tradition whether the word speech is a homynym, referring to both internal and external speech in a real sense, or whether the internal form is real speech, and the external just refers back to it (Al-Juwaynī 1996b, 2:277).

6.1.7. Speaker vs. Hearer Testimony

While Lackey's disjunctivist view is appealing, it ultimately falls prey to the same indictment she has of other prevalent views in the anglophone tradition; it confuses the nature of testimony with the epistemology of testimony (Lackey 2008, 16). The impetus behind separating speaker testimony from hearer testimony is the realization that the conditions set by the moderate and narrow view are ultimately too stringent. By requiring conditions having to do with whether the testifier has the authority and competence to testify on a matter, whether the testimony is being offered as evidence, or whether it concerns a disputed question, we have left out a whole host of clear instances of testimony.

Lackey proposes to solve this problem in two crucial ways. First, she drops many of these conditions from the definition. Second, she splits the definition into speaker vs. hearer testimony. This disjunctive move allows her view to isolate cases that might count as testimony for a speaker and not for a hearer and vice versa. But does this go far enough?

I believe the answer is no. As Lackey herself mentions, we are not interested in testimony as a linguistic phenomenon; that type of investigation would take place in the domain of the philosophy of language. We are interested in testimony as an epistemic source, and thus, the investigation falls within the purview of epistemology (Lackey 2008, 14).

As mentioned above, Lackey highlights that our interest should be focused on the domain of the epistemic, but when it comes to her disjunctive view, she seems to walk that back. When emphasizing the need for a disjunctive view, she differentiates between "testimony as an intentional act on the part of the speaker and testimony as a source of belief or knowledge for the hearer." (Lackey 2008, 27) Herein lies my objection: Either our analysis of testimony is limited to it as an epistemic source, or we must accept that our analysis includes non-epistemic dimensions of testimony. Given that this is an epistemic analysis, the goal should be the former, and thus, the disjunctive definition should be abandoned.

If our interests are truly focused on understanding testimony as an epistemic source, then the only cases that matter to us are cases that do have a receiving end of the testimonial act, the epistemic subject. Although the conditions of speaker testimony will be important to us in our epistemic evaluation of whether justified belief and knowledge can be generated, they don't help in giving an account of what testimony as an epistemic source is. This is because all cases of speaker testimony could, in theory, end up being cases of hearer testimony, while the opposite is not true. According to Lackey's own view, speaker testimony requires someone to receive it and then to reasonably take the testifier as having conveyed the information for it to qualify as hearer testimony. If it doesn't get uptake, according to her analysis, it is speaker testimony but not hearer testimony.

A plausible response to this objection would be to stress that the disjunctive view allows us to include cases where there isn't a hearer, but there is a speaker who fulfills the conditions. But why should speaker testimony that does not get any uptake matter to us if we are giving an account of testimony as an epistemic source? Speaker testimony is relevant to us in testimonial exchanges, but only if there is an actual epistemic subject that is receiving the information. Even then, those speaker conditions are not what make the communication testimonial; they are what help it meet various standards of justification.

These criticisms against the disjunctive view apply to Goldberg's view as well. For one, he embraces the disjunctive definition, and therefore, the same arguments apply. Secondly, his speaker testimony conditions are higher than Lackey's. Goldberg (2015, 79) requires that the speaker attests to the truth of the proposition, whereas Lackey only requires that the subject reasonably intends to convey it.

Therefore, we can express a more robust account of testimony as an epistemic source and testimonially-based belief in the following manner:

> Definition: S believes or knows testimonially if and only if: S believes or knows *p* based on a statement that signifies *p*. Where a statement is an expression that has a relation external to it that either corresponds to it or not.

6.1.8. Non-informational Expressions vs. Testimony

The most relevant objections to the view proposed above are objections that apply to the broad view as well. The objections all share a similar line of reasoning; unless we impose some type of condition on the speaker that they intend to convey information and/or require that the content can be reasonably taken as conveying information, then we risk including cases where no information is being conveyed. Lackey (2008, 21–23) mentions a few different cases that express this objection against the broad view.

In one case, we are asked to consider walking down a street when our friend says, "Ah, it is a beautiful day!" as a conversation filler (Lackey 2008, 21). The rationale here is that this declarative sentence is no different from a sigh and so does not express information. Lackey argues that because it does not express information, it should not be a case of testimonial communication.

Although this might at first seem plausible, it ignores a subtlety that renders it unacceptable. Suppose that, unbeknownst to us, someone is videotaping this exchange across the street. Suppose further that 100 years later, the recording is watched by the great-grandson of the cameraman. If the great-grandson can make out the statement, "Ah, it is a beautiful day!" and comes to believe that on the day of this recording, it was a beautiful day, then his belief would clearly be testimonially-based.

In another case, Lackey (2008, 21) asks us to imagine a friend stating, "Ned sure has a sense of humor" while laughing at a joke that Ned just shared with a group of friends. The rationale here is that the expression is a normal polite expression; it was not meant to inform the group of friends that Ned is funny, nor is anyone learning that Ned is funny from the statement.

This, too, seems initially plausible but fails when the case is shifted only slightly. Suppose that a few weeks later, you are having lunch with the friend who made the statement about Ned. During your casual conversation with him over lunch, he tells you that he doesn't like Ned, he is boring, and he doesn't have any good qualities. At this point, you respond, "But you do enjoy his sense of humor." You can communicate this information because of the statement that he made a few weeks prior. A good test

is to ask whether your friend would be able to deny that he actually did assert that proposition. It would be very strange for him to deny that he did, in fact, assert that Ned is funny and that the words that came out of his mouth were meant to be taken as an empty, polite expression. Therefore, even if a statement is made as a polite response, it is quite plausible for it to generate belief in someone who receives it.[157]

Lackey (2008, 22) offers the following case as the third and most decisive case against the broad view. According to this case, you are at a theatrical play in which one of the actors proclaims, "Life has no other meaning for me!" The rationale here is that, once again, no information is being communicated. The proclamation doesn't represent the true thoughts of the speaker, and everyone knows that the play isn't real.

This case also fails to provide the decisive blow intended. Firstly, it doesn't seem clear to me at all that just because the theatrical play is not a story about real life, that it is then necessarily not conveying information. How do we know that the character in the play is distraught, except through the character's testimony of that fact? It seems that this case is confusing conveying information about the real world with conveying information in the absolute sense. An analysis of testimony that only allows us to be testifying when we are testifying about things in the actual external world, in the most real possible sense, is greatly impoverished and fails to make sense of our testifying in a more speculative sense.

Secondly, suppose that someone was strolling in an alley outside the theatre and overheard the statement through a window. Not knowing that the building is a theatre, he comes to believe that there is a distraught man inside. How else does he come to believe that the man is distraught except through the testimony that he conveyed?

Lackey's response to this line of reasoning is to claim that the epistemic subject is not justified in believing that there is a distraught man having an argument inside.[158]

[157] A follow-up objection might argue that the friend's statement that Ned was funny was a polite expression and that he didn't, in fact, mean it. In other words, he was lying. However, notice how this is no longer a question about whether our having believed that he did think Ned is funny is a testimonially-based belief, and is now instead a question of how justified we are in believing it.

[158] The views I attribute here in this paragraph to Lackey are taken from my discussing these objections with her directly. For more on her usage of justification, see: Lackey (2008, 8–11).

However, what she means by justification and what I have in mind are different. According to Lackey's view, justification is that which, when added to truth, belief, and a Gettier condition, yields knowledge.[159] According to this understanding of justification, Lackey is right; it seems that many of these cases end up unjustified. However, the type of justification I have in mind is of a thinner variety, where justification indicates that the subject has fulfilled their normal epistemic duties and is thus blameless. Therefore, according to Lackey's view, the subject is blameless, but their beliefs are unjustified, while on my view, the subject is both blameless and justified.[160]

One last case mentioned by Lackey (2008, 31) can be used as an objection. She describes a case where a friend sings in a soprano voice to us, "I have a soprano voice." She argues that the statement does not qualify as speaker testimony because the singer doesn't intend to convey information through the statement's linguistic signification. Furthermore, it is not hearer testimony because the speaker cannot reasonably be taken to be communicating that information through the statement's linguistic signification. Instead, according to her view, the hearer is coming to learn that she has a soprano voice through her hearing of the soprano voice. In other words, she comes to know through her sense perception and not through testimony.

Disqualifying this case from being a type of speaker testimony doesn't harm my view because my view is only focused on testimony as an epistemic source. In other words, on my view, the case still counts as testimony if it gets uptake. If we take a step back from the specifics of the case at hand, a theme begins to emerge: All one would have

[159] A Gettier condition refers to the famous epistemic challenge laid out by Edmund Gettier in 1963. Gettier criticized the by-then-standard justified true belief (JTB) analysis of knowledge. Using two cases, Gettier (1963) is able to show that sometimes justified true belief is not sufficient for knowledge since epistemic luck can also be a factor. Many epistemologists have attempted to solve this problem, but there is no agreed-upon solution. Therefore, epistemologists will often say that knowledge is justified true belief with a Gettier condition, where the "Gettier condition" functions as a stand-in variable for some solution to the Gettier problem.

[160] The case can also be shifted to further challenge Lackey's view. Suppose that it isn't a theatre but an apartment. Furthermore, suppose that one of their friends is there as an onlooker watching them rehearse but actually is distraught. According to this new case, the fact being believed is true, and it seems that the passerby is justified in believing that there is someone distraught in the apartment. Through this augmentation of the case, it becomes a standard Gettier-like case. If this is true, then this serves as a counterexample against Lackey's view. Or, at the very least, it shows some of the difficulties associated with adding the "reasonably taken as conveying" qualification.

to do is show how cases that wouldn't count as speaker testimony could still be cases of hearer testimony.

Suppose that, along with the two of you, there is someone nearby who is deaf. She can read your friend's lips as she sings, "I have a soprano voice," and comes to believe that she has a soprano voice. How did she come to believe this fact? It is clear that she came to believe it through the testimony of the singer.

In the Islamic tradition, we find a treatment of the distinction between informational and non-informational forms of testimony in the books of rhetoric. As mentioned in Chapter 4, al-Taftāzānī (2022b, 98) lists three different verses of Qurʾān and one verse of poetry where he argues the intent is not informational. In one case, he argues, it is an expression of weakness and submissiveness; in another, it is an expression of sadness; and in a third, it is a way of inducing an emotional response.

We can glean from this section that the idea is not that these examples can't be received testimonially; rather, the idea is that the speaker did not intend to communicate the statement. al-Taftāzānī (2022b, 97–98) distinguishes between the speaker who intends to inform the hearer and the one who is merely uttering a statement. This latter type is very similar to what Lackey has in mind.

This analysis by Al-Taftāzānī and others does not, however, serve as proof that the Islamic tradition advocates for a disjunctivist view, nor any further conditions on hearer testimony. It merely necessitates that Islamic scholars were aware of the difference between speaker and hearer testimony. As already argued above, these statements that were uttered without intent to inform can nevertheless serve as a vehicle for belief through their informational signification by either the hearer in the exchange or a third party.

To recap, Lackey's objections are intended to be directed against the broad view. Given my own view that S believes or knows testimonially if and only if S believes or knows *p* based on a statement that signifies *p*, these objections also seem to apply. However, what I've tried to show by slightly augmenting the cases she's presented or by introducing cases of my own, is that these objections end up failing because any

given case only needs to have a third party introduced or for it to be shifted slightly in order for it to be acceptable. Furthermore, these new cases shouldn't just be acceptable on my view; they are acceptable even on Lackey's own definition of hearer testimony. If hearer testimony obtains if *a* is reasonably taken to have communicated *p*, it seems quite reasonable that the hearer took the speaker to have communicated *p* in all these counter scenarios.

Therefore, Lackey's cases, and ultimately her speaker conditions on testimonial communication, as well as her "reasonably taken to be conveying qualification" on hearer testimony, fail to stand up to scrutiny. This means that our analysis of the nature of testimony should focus on the possibility of epistemically significant testimonial belief irrespective of any speaker conditions as well as irrespective of any qualification of reasonability. If S believes or knows *p* based on a statement that signifies *p*, that is sufficient for it to be considered a case of testimonial belief or knowledge. However, if we are interested in analyzing and understanding testimony in cases where it yields testimonial belief, another question emerges concerning the degree to which S believes or knows *p* based on the statement that signifies *p*. In other words, under what conditions does a subject have pure testimonial belief, and under what conditions does a subject have hybrid testimonial belief?

6.2. Pure vs. Hybrid Forms of Testimonial Belief[161]

The first section of Chapter 6 focused on defining testimony as an epistemic source. An adjacent question that has yet to be seriously investigated is the difference between pure cases of testimony and hybrid cases. The idea here is simple: we, as epistemic agents, can come to believe or know things based on one source of knowledge. But it

[161] One investigation found in the Islamic tradition that overlaps with this section is the division of *akhbār* in *uṣūl al-fiqh* texts into *akhbār* which one must believe are true (*yajibu taṣdīquhu*), must believe are false (*yajibu takdhībuhu*), or which could be true and could be false and so one should suspend judgment (*yajibu al-tawaqquf*) until one has more information (Al-Ghazālī 2016b, 212–18; Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī 1963, 2:546–51). Although I have benefited from this investigation and will be using some of the classifications in this section, the aim of the section is different, and thus, the classifications are different. A second investigation in the Islamic tradition that also overlaps with this section is found in *kalām* texts and relates to the difference between rational (*ʿaqlī*) and transmitted (*naqlī*) evidence (Al-Taftāzānī 1998, 1:281). A third category is posited between these two categories that is said to be a composite (*murakkab*) of the both rational (*ʿaqlī*) and transmitted (*naqlī*) evidence. This analysis and classification will be heavily relied upon and synthesized with a number of other views in this section. We will also return to this investigation in Chapter 7 when we discuss the question of reduction.

is also true that sometimes, we can come to believe or know things based on multiple sources of knowledge. While sometimes the line between pure and hybrid cases can be clear, at other times, the epistemic difference is harder to make sense of.

This section will begin with an outline of Lackey's comments on the subject that are interspersed throughout her work. I will then move on to posit that there are two separate factors that are key to this investigation. The first has to do with separating between the testifier and the proposition being testified to. The second factor relates to the epistemology of understanding.

6.2.1. Lackey's Analysis

In her well-known work on testimony, *Learning from Words* (2008), Jennifer Lackey provides an analysis of pure and hybrid testimonial knowledge. Albeit brief, she employs several useful distinctions that I will build upon and synthesize with the Islamic tradition. There are also other sections of her work that she does not directly draw on for her analysis of the topic that I will make use of in my own analysis. Finally, there are other distinctions that she stipulates, which I will critique and argue against.

The first type of distinction she makes differentiates between testimonially-based beliefs and beliefs merely triggered by testimony (Lackey 2008, 93). To make sense of this distinction, imagine that you are sitting with friends late one evening, and you begin to doze off. One of your friends says to you, "Wake up! Your brother is here." Upon hearing the voice, you become alert, and standing in front of you is your brother, and thus, you come to know that your brother has arrived. In this case, even though testimony triggered your belief, your belief is not testimonially-based. Rather, your belief is based on your sense perception when you see your brother before you. Lackey ties this distinction directly to the question of what makes a belief testimonial.

Another distinction she makes, which she doesn't tie to the question of pure vs. hybrid testimonial knowledge, is between epistemic support that bolsters our belief in a testifier's reliability vs. epistemic support that bolsters our belief in the content being

testified to (Lackey 2008, 86).[162] The first type of epistemic support bolsters the general testimony, while the latter bolsters the particular proposition. According to her terminology, the latter provides independent epistemic support for that which is being testified to. On the view I will argue for below, this point is central to the analysis of pure vs. hybrid forms of testimonial belief.

A third distinction made by Lackey (2008, 96) proposes that in hybrid cases, non-testimonial sources might offset epistemic defects or provide more epistemic support. According to her view, if the subject relies on background information to either offset epistemic defects or to further bolster the reliability of the testifier, then the knowledge is not purely testimonial in the strictest sense. Although this distinction is useful, I will argue against her conclusion.

6.2.2. A Spectrum of Testimonially-Based Beliefs

My first intervention is to provide a spectrum of testimonially-based beliefs. At one end of the spectrum are beliefs the hearer already has before encountering the testimony. Whether those beliefs are occurrent or dispositional should not ultimately matter.

Suppose that you know that you were born on a Tuesday. That belief is not occurrent for you this evening, meaning you are not presently thinking about it, nor is it something you currently have a believing attitude about. You receive a call from your talkative uncle, who spends the night sharing old stories from the past with you. One of the many things he mentions is, "You know, you were born on a cold Tuesday morning." This leads you to have an occurrent belief that you were born on a Tuesday. It would be strange to say that your belief in your being born on Tuesday is based on your phone call with your uncle this evening. We can call these cases overdetermined cases.

[162] Although Lackey does not tie this exact discussion to the question of pure vs. hybrid testimonial belief, it is clear that her view assumes a relationship given the third distinction which will be mentioned below.

Similarly, someone's testimony might cause you to believe something you previously did not believe, but that belief might still not be testimonially-based. This is like the case mentioned above, where your friend's testimony merely caused you to become alert, which initiated your seeing your brother standing in front of you. The mere fact that your friend's testimony casually triggered your belief is not sufficient for it to be considered testimonially-based.[163] We can use Lackey's term for this type of belief, casually triggered testimony.[164]

A third type of belief is based both on testimony and another source of knowledge. This type of case involves an epistemic subject relying on testimony and inference, or testimony and sense perception, or testimony and introspection, or some other combination. It is important to emphasize that the difference between this type of testimony and the previous cases is that the epistemic subject relies to some extent on the content of the testimony being communicated for their belief. We can augment Lackey's term here and call this a case of hybrid testimonial belief.[165]

The fourth and final case is that of pure testimonial belief. In this case, the epistemic subject is coming to believe the content through the signification of the testimonial communication. It would be too strong of an argument to say that inference or sense perception play absolutely no role in testimonial belief; rather, the argument is only that there are clear epistemic differences between cases of pure perception, pure reason, and pure testimony.

In conclusion, we have laid out four types of cases found on what we can call a *spectrum of testimonial belief*, which can be reduced to three degrees of testimonial

[163] Robert Audi (1997) refers to these cases as *incidentally* generated.

[164] Al-Subkī (1999, 2:309), in his commentary on Ibn al-Ḥājib's epistle in *uṣūl al-fiqh*, refers to a similar phenomenon. He differentiates between knowledge that is gained through the *khabar* and that which the *khabar* only serves as a vehicle for, since knowledge of it is based in inference through some other means. Whether, al-Subkī, Ibn al-Ḥājib, and other commentators had in mind overdetermined cases, casually triggered cases, or both, is not entirely clear.

[165] As already notes above, in the Islamic tradition, the term composite (*murakkab*) was used in a similar context. However, it is important to note that their analysis was one of evidence (*dalīl*). It is the evidence that is said to be *murakkab*. To complicate things further, some Islamic scholars seemed to just mean that the syllogism can either be a composite of purely rational (*ʿaqlī*) premises, or a composite of a rational (*ʿaqlī*) premise and a transmitted (*naqlī*) premise (F. al-D. M. Al-Rāzī 2012, 29). Notice that on this slightly different exposition, all evidence ends up being composite, since all evidence, according to the definition they've stipulated, is made up of premises. Due to this difficulty, I've come to prefer Issam Eido's translation of hybridity as *hajīn*.

belief. Overdetermined and causally triggered cases are ones where testimony plays no substantive role. Hybrid cases are ones where testimony and another epistemic source are significantly responsible for the resultant belief. Pure cases of testimony are ones where testimony is the only significant epistemic source responsible for the belief. The next important question in the analysis is to make sense of the difference between cases of hybrid and pure testimonial belief.

6.2.3. Reliability of the Speaker vs. the Content

One of the useful distinctions Lackey (2008, 86) makes is the difference between epistemic support, which bolsters the reliability of the testifier and thus bolsters the general testimony, and epistemic support, which bolsters the particular proposition being testified to. Lackey refers to the latter as independent epistemic support for the belief in question. Therefore, although an epistemic agent might be relying on something other than testimony for their belief, more analysis is required to conclude what that additional epistemic support is bolstering. Although Lackey herself does not tie this distinction directly to the question of pure vs. hybrid cases of testimony, in my estimation, it touches on the very essence of the division.

In the Islamic tradition, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's (1963, 2:546–51) division of *akhbār* also seems to entail such a view. Although his division is focused on testimonies one knows to be true vs. testimonies one knows to be false vs. testimonies one does not know to be true or false, his subclassification of the first two possibilities supports this thesis. Al-Baṣrī subclassifies testimonies that are known to be true or known to be false as being known through either intrinsic (*bi amr ghayr munfaṣil ʿanhā*) or extrinsic (*bi amr munfaṣil ʿanhā*) means.

Al-Baṣrī's division of intrinsic and extrinsic variables can then be synthesized with other works, like that of al-Taftāzānī (2004, 2:418), where he differentiates between variables that relate to the *khabar* or to the speaker (*al-mukhbir*), or to that which is being testified about (*al-mukhbar ʿanhu*). Although neither al-Baṣrī nor al-Taftāzānī indicates the view I am arguing for, we can use their conceptual distinctions to build out the view. Therefore, relying on their distinctions, we can differentiate between

intrinsic and extrinsic factors, where factors having to do with that which is being testified to are extrinsic, and factors having to do with the speaker are intrinsic.

Having now clarified these distinctions, we can assert that the real dividing line between pure vs. hybrid forms of testimonial belief is whether the second epistemic source bolsters the reliability of the speaker or the content being testified to. In all these cases, we must assume a second or third epistemic source. If there isn't a second epistemic source, and one is relying on testimony alone, then it is obviously a case of pure testimony. The possibility of a disagreement only emerges when a second epistemic source plays a significant role in the resulting belief. Given the reality of these cases, the distinguishing marker is whether the second epistemic source is strengthening the reliability of the speaker or the truth of the proposition.[166]

But why should evidence that bolsters the reliability of the speaker be considered intrinsic as opposed to extrinsic? Cases of testimonially-based beliefs are, by their very nature, cases where the epistemic subject believes *p* based upon the communication of the speaker. It would be very strange to count testimonial belief as hybrid simply because one has evidence of the reliability of the speaker. This view would entail that one only has pure testimonial belief when they have no relevant non-testimonial evidence about the speaker. Such conditions are highly unlikely.

A distinction mentioned by Islamic theologians is useful to us here.[167] They differentiate between proximate premises (*muqadimāt qarība*) and distant premises (*muqadimāt baʿīda*). This classification is brought up when distinguishing between rational (*ʿaqlī*) and transmitted (*naqlī*) evidence.[168] The idea behind this classification is that even transmitted evidence relies ultimately on distant inferential evidence, like the case of the truthfulness of Prophecy being proven through inference. It would be strange to say that relying on a Prophetic testimony as evidence is not purely testimonial because the truthfulness of the Prophet is proven through inference. The

[166] Alternatively it could be weakening the reliability of the speaker or the reliability of the proposition. Therefore, it isn't a question of indicating truth or falsehood, rather it is the nature of how it supports the testimonial source.
[167] See, for example, Al-Rāzī (2012, 29); al-Khūnajī (2022, 151–53); al-Tilimsānī (2010, 91–93); and al-Taftāzānī (1998, 1:281–82).
[168] What is intended by rational (*ʿaqlī*) here is something closer to inferential, and so I will use that instead.

reliance on distant inferential premises and evidence does not render the belief in the proximate proposition non-testimonial because the two questions are different. There is the question concerning the truthfulness of the speaker, which is the distant proposition, and then there is the question of the proximate proposition being testified to by the Prophet (ṣ). It is that proximate proposition that is said to be testimonially-based.

Consider the case of inference. In a standard deduction, the epistemic subject uses premises that they already believe in to yield a conclusion based upon those premises. Would we consider the conclusion of a syllogism a hybrid case of inference because one of the premises is based upon sense perception?

The hybridity that is entailed by relying on evidence of the speaker's reliability in testimonial belief or on one's sense perception in a premise used in inference is not the type of hybridity intended. While this alternative type of hybridity is not epistemically trivial, it is not epistemically significant in the right way.[169] As Audi (1997) argues, the fact that we use our sense perception in testimonial belief *vis-à-vis* our hearing does not mean that testimony is *inferentially dependent* on sense perception. Instead, he argues, it is *operationally dependent* on sense perception. While Audi's distinction is being made in relation to the reduction debate, it further bolsters my argument.

Irrespective of which view one holds in the reduction debate, it would be very strange to call a belief non-testimonial simply because you are relying on some form of epistemic support for the reliability of the testifier. As we will see in the following chapter, the entire reduction debate revolves around whether we need reasons to be justified in believing testimony. To require the absence of reasons in order for any given case to be a case of pure testimony is to assume that nonreductionism in all cases must be true. Furthermore, it has collapsed the two different questions, what some Islamic theologians dubbed the proximate and the distant premises, into one.

Consider a case where your childhood friend of 20 years has never lied to you once. The two of you are at a local café, drinking coffee, when he informs you that he will

[169] We will return to this question in Chapter 7 when we discuss the question of reduction.

be moving to another state for work. You believe him. It would be quite strange to think that you know that he is moving due to testimony and induction. The testimony side is clear, but what about the induction side? According to the view that any epistemic support that bolsters the reliability of the speaker renders it hybrid, this would be a hybrid case. Twenty years of you experiencing the truth of your friend is, without a doubt, a type of inductive inference. But on this view, no case is going to avoid this type of definition of hybrid testimonial belief. This view renders the meaning of hybrid testimonially-based beliefs trivial, and it is ultimately begging the question in the reduction debate.

In contrast, if the epistemic support is bolstering the content being testified to, then it becomes apparent why it would be characterized as being hybrid. Consider a case where a young child runs out of his house panting. His neighbor asks him what's wrong, and he responds that he accidentally dropped a candle in the house, causing a small fire. At that very moment of hearing the testimony, the neighbor looks up and sees smoke emerging from the window. Is the smoke bolstering the reliability of the speaker or the fact that there is a fire inside the house? It is clearly the latter. The neighbor does not believe there is a fire simply because the boy told him; rather, it is because he told him and because he saw the effects of the fire.

This point coheres well with the previously mentioned investigation by Islamic theologians into proximate and distant premises when distinguishing between rational and transmitted evidence. We already covered the case of distant premises and how they do not impact the fact that a belief is testimonial. Proximate premises, on the other hand, do seem to impact whether the evidence is purely transmitted or not. If the evidence one has for the proximate proposition is partially testimonial and partially inferential, such that one premise in the syllogism is testimonial and the other inferential, then the belief in question is a composite of the two. Islamic scholars call this type of evidence a composite (*murakkab*) of both inferential and transmitted evidence. If the evidence is composite, then it follows that the belief is hybrid and not pure.

Given this analysis, Lackey's (2008, 96) view concerning offsetting epistemic defects vs. epistemic support for the reliability of the speaker must be either rejected or refined.

The simple fact that there is evidence or cause to believe a testifier in this case, as opposed to others, cannot in and of itself disqualify the testimonial belief from being pure. Similarly, further epistemic support for the reliability of a testifier cannot in and of itself lessen the purity of the resulting testimonial belief. If the offsetting of epistemic defects signifies the truth of the proposition, then and only then can it be considered hybrid.

It is useful here to consider two further distinctions found in the Islamic tradition concerning ḥadīth. The first distinction concerns statements that are said to be "surrounded by signs" (*muḥtaff biʾl qarāʾin*). Although in the Islamic tradition, this topic is usually raised as an example of the possibility of nomic certainty *vis-à-vis* testimonial knowledge, it is important to draw attention to the fact that the cases they had in mind were of two types.

The first type are hybrid cases where the reliability of the testifiers is not sufficient in yielding knowledge, but contextual signs further bolster the proposition, and thus, the combination of the signs and the testimony yield certain knowledge (Al-Ghazālī 2016b, 205–7). In fact, in some of the scenarios posed, one is encouraged to think of the signs independent of the testimony and the degree of credence they yield for the truth of the proposition. A further indication of this point is that this phrase is used to describe the statement itself, not the transmitter.

Another type of testimony that is said to be "surrounded by signs" (*muḥtaff biʾl qarāʾin*) is mentioned in the books of *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*. In this case, the types of "signs" they are using as examples all have to do with the reliability of the transmitters. Among the types of signs that Ibn Ḥajar (2019, 52) mentions are testimonies that have been accepted by the community of scholars to be reliable, the standing of the compilers in the field of ḥadīth, the skill of the transmitter in differentiating between reliable and unreliable testimony. Notice how all these examples bolster the reliability of the transmitter, not the proposition directly. Evidence for this can be found if one attempts to isolate out the signs from the testimony. Do the signs themselves give credence to the proposition independent of the testimony? The answer is clearly no.

Consider in contrast another distinction found in the ḥadīth tradition, corroborations.[170] When investigating any given ḥadīth, ḥadīth scholars sought to gather all similar testimonial chains and similar content. This epistemic work had many functions, but for the sake of the current investigation, let us limit ourselves to one aspect: seeking out corroborations. Suppose the case of a relatively unreliable transmitter midway through a testimonial chain testifying to a ḥādīth that he claims to have received from his teacher. Considered on its own, this version or path (*ṭarīq*) of the ḥadīth might be unacceptable. But what if the ḥadīth evaluation process turns up two other colleagues of this unreliable transmitter who also testify to having heard their teacher transmit the ḥadīth in question? The corroborative paths are not bolstering the proposition; rather, they are bolstering the reliability of the unreliable transmitter. Further support for this analysis can be found in the fact that ḥadīth scholars referred to this phenomenon as *mutāba*ʿ*āt*, literally chains or transmitters who followed the individual under analysis (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 73–74). Note how the term describes the transmitter and not the statement itself.

An obvious objection to this second case is the fact that the other transmitters are themselves engaging in testimony, and so this cannot, on those grounds alone, be considered hybrid. In response to this objection, I will first say that I am not convinced that the corroborative evidence is purely testimonial. Rather, it seems closer to some form of inference with testimonies in the premises of the syllogism. But even if we were to cede to the epistemic support being testimonial, it does not detract from the case; the very nature of testimony allows for evidence to support the reliability of the testifier, whatever that evidence might be.

6.2.4. The Role of Interpretation

A final area of investigation related to hybrid forms of testimonial belief is the role of interpretation. Hearers do not always understand the proposition conveyed via verbal utterance in the standard sense. Any number of variables might shift what goes into the hearer's understanding and interpretation of what is being testified to. As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, this area of investigation could be referred to as

[170] There are two central types of corroborations in ḥadīth studies, *mutāba*ʿ*āt* and *shawāhid*.

understanding, interpretation, or hermeneutics. Following Goldberg and Rysiew (2007), I will use the phrase "the epistemology of understanding."

This is relevant to the hybrid vs. pure testimony question because the more that inference is needed in understanding what is being said, the more it seems like you are not coming to believe the proposition in question solely based upon testimony. But what will be the dividing line? Just how much inference renders a testimonially-based belief hybrid?

While Lackey (2008, 29–30) does not end up addressing this question head-on, she does list cases that she takes to be standard and pure instances of testimony:

1. Where *a* is the utterance of a declarative sentence such that it expresses the proposition that *p*, *a* conveys the information that *p*.
2. Where <*p*> is an obvious (uncancelled) pragmatic implication of *a*, *a* conveys the information that *p*.
3. Where an act of communication *a* expresses the proposition that *q*, and it is obvious (either to everyone in the exchange or to a normal competent speaker) that <*q*> entails <*p*>, *a* conveys the information both that *q* and that *p*.

The intent behind this list is not to be exhaustive but only to bring to light that testimonial communication sometimes yields beliefs that are not literal understandings of the content being testified to.

This is an area where the Islamic tradition already has a robust taxonomy of terms and concepts associated with it. Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) focuses on several investigations, one of them being the rules associated with what can be understood from testimony, non-literally.[171] While they did not directly tie this investigation to the question of hybrid testimonial belief, it nevertheless is relevant to it.

[171] These sections are standard in any *uṣūl al-fiqh* text, see, for example, al-Ghazālī (2016b, 495–512).

For instance, al-Gazālī (2016b, 498) cites an objection against these common implicatures as being ultimately reducible to deduction or analogical argument. To this objection, al-Ghazālī cedes that in the specific case before him, that is correct. However, he notes, it does not require thought or reflection; rather, it is immediately understood from the statement. Therefore, he argues that it is ultimately still testimonial. This distinction is compelling.[172]

Therefore, the view that seems most sensible to me is to draw the demarcation around how much thought and reflection are needed. If there is little to no reflection needed, it doesn't make much sense to declare it hybrid because reason plays some background part in understanding the content of the testimony. If that were the case, we would be hard-pressed to find any cases of pure testimony. However, if thought and inference are required, such that the subject must psychologically and occurrently hold prior beliefs from which he deduces new beliefs, then it is a case of hybrid testimonial belief.

6.3. Testimonial Kinds: The Source Factor

6.3.1. Introduction

The thirteenth-century Muslim jurist, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1285), famously began his multivolume work, *al-Furūq*, explicating the essential difference between several kinds of *statements* (*akhbār*). Al-Qarāfī's work, whose title translates literally as, *The Book of Differences,* focuses on the subtle distinctions between foundational principles, as well as demarcating the rationale behind various branch topics. He opens the first chapter by informing his readers that he spent eight years in search of the essential difference between two specific types of *statements* (*akhbār*), *shahāda* and *riwāya,* and was only met with replies highlighting the various norms associated with each category.[173] He rightfully points out that these norms ultimately stem from some essential difference and, therefore, do not really answer the question.

[172] Here, too, Audi's (1997) work is instructive. Although Audi's investigation is tied to the reduction debate, the questions are philosophically adjacent to one another. Al-Ghazālī and Audi both seem to be differentiating between a conscious inferential process, where the subject is relying on prior beliefs as premises from which a new belief is being generated and an implicit or subconscious reliance. In this latter case, the subject is not actually psychologically relying on prior beliefs.

[173] I've intentionally left the two technical terms, *shahāda* and *riwāya*, untranslated in the first few pages of this section in order to avoid confusion and not disrupt the flow of the argument. I introduce translations for the two terms in subsection 6.3.2.

While contemporary anglophone epistemologists have designated the term testimony as a catch-all phrase for a source of knowledge akin to reason, sense perception, introspection, and memory, the Islamic tradition has often glossed that specific term as a subset of a higher genus, *statements* (*akhbār*), with the most frequently referred to species of the set being *shahāda* and *riwāya*. However, despite there being several terms employed to represent subsets of the larger category in question, it is a lot less clear what essential difference there is between them (Al-Qarāfī 2001, 1:90–91).

Al-Qarāfī (2001, 1:75–77) claims to have eventually found an answer to his puzzle in a work of philosophical jurisprudence written by Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Māzirī (d. 536/1141), some 100 years prior. In al-Māzirī's (2015, 475) work, he presents the key distinction as being the scope of the statement. According to his view, cases of *shahāda* are claims about a specific individual or group, whereas cases of *riwāya* attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) are general and broad, applying to the whole community.[174] Each author goes on to build upon this distinction and highlights its importance, as well as explaining why the norms for each shift accordingly.

As is relatively clear by the distinction made above, the focus of their analysis is a comparison between *shahāda* and *riwāya* in the formal sense, not the natural sense.[175] This is not surprising, given that the objects of their investigation are formal in nature and given that idealized epistemology was common in the pre-modern era.[176] However, it seems much more likely that the formal distinction between the two is just

[174] Interestingly, al-Ghazālī (2016b, 241) also mentions this exact explanation, although very briefly, in his much-celebrated text, *al-Mustaṣfā*. Al-Ghazālī dies in 505/1111 and al-Māzirī in 536/1141. It is theoretically possible that al-Māzirī benefitted from al-Ghazālī's text or that the two of them benefitted from some earlier text. Without additional evidence, it is not clear where the idea originates and with whom it originates.

[175] I am generally following the distinction between formal and natural forms of testimony laid out by Coady and Lackey (2008, 14): "What C.A.J. Coady calls natural testimony. Unlike formal testimony, the paradigm of which is a statement offered under oath in a courtroom or commission of inquiry, natural testimony is to be encountered in such everyday circumstances as exhibit the social operations of mind: giving someone directions to the post office, reporting what happened in an accident, say that, yes, you have seen a child answering to the description, telling someone the result of the last race or the last cricket score." Audi (1997) has the same distinction; he however characterizes it as the difference between formal and informal testimony.

[176] This distinction was also not lost on Islamic scholars as they often noted in passing the difference between *sharʿī* cases and *ʿādī* cases (Al-Khūnajī 2022, 152; Al-Taftāzānī 1998, 1:282). The former being cases pertaining to specific (religious) contexts, and the latter being more general everyday contexts. Thus one classification found in the Islamic tradition ends up being between general (*ʿām*) and specific (*khāṣṣ*) testimony. This distinction coheres well with the natural vs. formal distinction alluded to above.

one part of the puzzle, with the underlying essential difference applying to both formal and natural instances of *shahāda* and *riwāya*.

Interestingly, in the anglophone tradition, there doesn't seem to be any such genus-species distinction when it comes to the study of the epistemology of testimony. While these distinctions might exist on a linguistic level, the way these linguistic distinctions impact the epistemic has been largely ignored. In the Islamic tradition, these distinctions are key, and they are particularly important to ḥadīth studies, which focuses almost exclusively on cases of *riwāya*.

In the following subsection, I will begin with an analysis of the conceptual difference between these terms and then move on to offer my own view about them. Only then, after having made that argument, will I move on to synthesize it with other conversations in the anglophone tradition. I will use that philosophical synthesis to argue for the epistemic value of the distinction.

More specifically, I will first argue that the essential difference between *shahāda* and *riwāya*, as well as other species of *statements* (*akhbār*), is the source of knowledge upon which the speaker's belief rests. This is an argument about the nature of testimony, that testimony comes in many forms, and that these technical terms from the Islamic tradition are tracking these differences. This argument is not merely historical, for these categories exist irrespective of what any given philosophical tradition might call them.

The second argument concerns the epistemological value of this distinction. As I will argue below, given the unique external nature of testimony, the epistemic source of the content being communicated is key to its analysis. In other words, this distinction in species is not just an interesting relic of intellectual history; rather, it is an intuitive distinction that helps us make sense of how the reliability of testimony is thought about and managed in our intellectual lives.

I will then move on to explicating the division itself. My argument will be that this division directly impacts the reliability of the speaker and thus impacts justified belief and knowledge. In the fourth section, I will show how this division helps us better

understand the hearer and speaker competency condition in the anglophone tradition and the condition of precision (*ḍabṭ*) found in the ḥadīth tradition. After making this distinction clear, analyzing it, and arguing for it, it will prepare us for the final section of Chapter 6, which will focus on the belief-generation vs. belief-transmission debate in the epistemology of testimony.

6.3.2. The Epistemic Source of the Speaker

The three most common sources of knowledge mentioned in the Islamic intellectual tradition are the intellect (*al-ʿaql*), the senses (*al-ḥawāss*), and *true statements* (*al-khabar al-ṣādiq*) (Al-Taftāzānī 2020, 112–13).[177] While some Muslim jurists, theologians, and philosophers mentioned other sources, such as introspection (*al-wijdān*) or Divine inspiration (*al-ilhām*), the first three are always included in the taxonomy. This is most likely due to their centrality in topics related to theology and jurisprudence (Ramaḍān Efendī, Al-Kastalī, and Al-Khayālī 2012, 120).

In the anglophone tradition, the term testimony is used to refer to a source of knowledge akin to sense perception, reason, memory, and introspection.[178] In contrast, in the Islamic tradition, *statement* (*khabar*) is used to refer to that same source. As already mentioned in Chapter 6, the category *statement* (*khabar*) has another, perhaps more fundamental role, in the Islamic philosophy of language literature, as it is often juxtaposed against performatives (*inshāʾ*). However, as a matter of usage, the term *khabar* is used both to signify the linguistic category as well as the epistemic source itself.

Thus, the sources of knowledge are articulated based on the vehicle through which knowledge reaches the subject. In the case of reason, it is through the intellect (*al-ʿaql*) of the subject. In the case of sense perception, it is through his senses (*al-ḥawāss*). Finally, in the case of testimony, it is through the true statements of others (*al-khabar al-ṣādiq*). Therefore, the traditional Islamic taxonomy of sources of knowledge, the

[177] Islamic scholars sometimes use the term, "causes of knowledge" (*asbāb al-ʿilm*), other times, "pathways of knowledge" (*ṭuruq al-ʿilm*), and other times, "sources of knowledge" (*maṣādir al-ʿilm*). I've decided to use sources of knowledge because it is also commonly used in the anglophone tradition.
[178] See, for example, Lackey and Sosa (2006); Lackey (2008); and Gelfert (2014).

intellect (*al-ʿaql*), the senses (*al-ḥawāss*), and *true statements* (*al-khabar al-ṣādiq*) end up being analogous to reason, sense perception, and testimony.

According to traditional Islamic epistemology and philosophy of language, there are various species or kinds of *statements* (*akhbār*). Given the variety of testimonial kinds, Islamic scholars often sought to make sense of the differences between them. It is against this backdrop that *shahāda* and *riwāya* are often contrasted against one another and analyzed.

The context Muslim theologians, jurists, and philosophers had in mind when discussing *shahāda* is formal court cases or formal cases being brought before some type of governmental ruler or bureaucrat. Similarly, when they discussed *riwāya*, they had in mind the formal practice of transmitting Prophetic statements (ḥadīth). This seems to have resulted in their focusing on formal differences, such as the scope of the speech act, as opposed to highlighting the epistemic origins of each species.

However, if we ignore the formal contexts from each term, the differences referred to above do not hold. While it is true that *shahāda* is formally associated with a specific speech act and attitude on the part of the speaker and entails a certain scope, it may lose these features in more informal and natural settings. Similarly, formal instances of *riwāya* are associated with certain norms and have certain implications when it comes to the context of Prophetic testimonies, but most, if not all, said restrictions might fade away in more informal and natural instances. Given this difference between formal and natural instances of *shahāda* and *riwāya*, it cannot be the case that the features mentioned above are responsible for the initial division, nor are they sufficient in explaining all the differences in norms associated with each term.

Instead, I propose that the essential difference between *shahāda* and *riwāya* is found in how each species is epistemically grounded in the speaker. If the epistemic source of the speaker is their own sense perception, it is an instance of *shahāda*, which we can translate as *sensory testimony*. In contrast, if the epistemic source of the speaker is itself testimonial, then it is an instance of *riwāya*, which we can translate as *transmission*. If the epistemic source of the speaker is inferential, neither of these terms is used.

In the Islamic tradition, testimonies that are substantially grounded in the inference of the speaker are referred to by a few different names and are not usually compared and contrasted to *sensory testimony* (*shahāda*) and *transmission* (*riwāya*). Nevertheless, they are flagged as their own species, particularly in the formal case of a jurist or expert authority issuing a legal opinion. For this reason, one of the most common terms used in the Islamic tradition for this species is *opinion (raʾy)*. Here, like in the previous two cases, the essential difference is the source of knowledge and the cognitive process of the speaker. The legal opinion being issued by a jurist or expert authority is generally going to be the result of some type of inferential process on their part.

Thus, in the Islamic tradition, *sensory testimonies (shahāda)* are a species of *statements (akhbār)* that are grounded in the speaker's sense perception. *Transmissions (riwāya)* are a species of *statements (akhbār)* where the speaker has received the content testimonially. *Opinions (raʾy)* are a species of *statements (akhbār)* that are substantially grounded in the speaker's inferential process.

Having now introduced the central thesis of this section, it is helpful to return to the initial taxonomy of sources to see how this distinction coheres with the broader system. Some Muslim theologians sought to explain the relationship between reason, sense perception, and testimony in a way that can help us better make sense of the distinctly unique role of testimony. They explain this relationship by employing a classic division in how each source relates back to the subject under epistemic evaluation. According to this division, sources of knowledge are either external or internal to the subject. As for sources that are internal to the subject, they are further divided according to whether they are associated with that which is doing the perceiving (the rational soul), or they are an instrument of that which is doing the perceiving (the senses). According to this division, testimony is distinct in its external nature to the perceiver (Al-Taftāzānī 2020, 113).

Testimony is indeed fundamentally different from other sources of knowledge because it is the only source that significantly relies on another epistemic agent. Other sources of knowledge, such as sense perception or reason, rely on non-agential external stimuli or rely on other epistemic agents in a non-significant manner. Therefore, any epistemic

analysis of testimony as a source of knowledge requires an analysis of not only the hearer but of the speaker as well.

There is a significant overlap in these distinctions between the Islamic tradition and contemporary anglophone epistemology. As mentioned in Chapter 4, recent work on social epistemology, particularly on the social aspects of the epistemology of testimony, has highlighted the importance of investigating the epistemology of social interactions.[179] Islamic epistemology seems to have anticipated many of these points and built upon them in interesting and unique ways.

Furthermore, there is an overlap between the testimonial-kinds-thesis being advocated for in this section and the anti-individualistic epistemology advocated for by Sanford Goldberg (2010), which extends the area of investigation beyond the hearer to the reliability of the cognitive process of the subject's informant. While it would be anachronistic to talk about traditional Islamic epistemology as being externalist, the various distinct species of testimony track the different cognitive processes of the informant. Given the nature of testimonial exchange, a hearer's knowledge, justification, and other epistemic properties are directly impacted by the epistemic properties of the speaker. The epistemic properties of the speaker are, for their part, a result of their own cognitive process and epistemic source. In this way, the central thesis of this section is thoroughly anti-individualistic.[180]

When it comes to reason and sense perception, the subject's belief is ultimately grounded in either their own sense perception, reason, or some hybrid of the two. However, when it comes to purely testimonial knowledge, the beliefs that are a result of the propositional content being communicated from the speaker to the hearer are not ultimately grounded in the hearer's sense perception or reason. For it to be considered purely testimonial, it must significantly rely on the propositional content communicated from the speaker to the hearer. This much should be uncontroversial.

[179] See, for example, Gelfert (2014, 8); Goldman and Whitcomb (2011).

[180] The anti-individualistic component of the thesis coheres well with externalism. However, my objective here isn't to make a case for externalism; rather, it is to highlight the importance of the epistemic source of the speaker. How one chooses to make sense of that according to their theory of knowledge is beyond the scope of this section. We will return to the externalism/internalism debate in Chapter 7, where I will make the case for a more hybrid approach.

More controversial is the claim that this conclusion only gets half of the answer right. Given the social nature of testimony, there are at least two epistemic agents involved in the testimonial exchange. Thus, a thorough epistemic analysis of the testimonial exchange must also investigate the epistemic origins and cognitive process of the content being communicated by the speaker. This, I contend, is an important distinction that helps us better understand the complexity of testimony in our lives.

Before moving on to the next section, there is one possible objection that deserves engagement. In the case of *transmission (riwāya)*, a speaker conveys content they themselves received testimonially. Therefore, by the very logic used to craft the initial division, *transmissions (riwāya)* themselves must ultimately be grounded at the end of the chain in a person's sense perception or reason. Thus, the *transmission (riwāya)* category loses any importance and explanatory significance.

My response to this objection is to concede the point that testimonial chains do ultimately, as a matter of fact, bottom out non-testimonially.[181] However, what is not conceded is that this fact entails the vacuousness of the category. Just because *transmissions (riwāya)* will eventually be grounded in some speaker's non-testimonial source does not mean that a hearer will always be able to access the first speaker in the testimonial chain.

Furthermore, even if *transmissions (riwāya)* are grounded upstream in other sources of knowledge, the epistemic analysis of the entire communicative act must include one subset of that act, the *transmission (riwāya)*.[182] Therefore, even if one were to concede that a *transmission (riwāya)* is only as strong as the original source's testimony, the more proximate link in the testimonial chain could render the entire testimony weaker for any number of reasons. This is precisely the case in which ḥadīth scholarship

[181] There is a case to be made for a type of testimony that does not bottom out in sense perception, reason, or any of the other well-known sources of knowledge. However, that case relates to Divine testimony and will require a longer analysis and explication, which is beyond the scope of this section. We will return to the case of Divine testimony in Chapter 7.

[182] This line of objection is undesirable for another reason. Its logic is transferable to the entire category of testimony itself. For one could argue, given that testimonial chains are ultimately grounded in other sources of knowledge like reason or sense perception, that testimony itself is a useless and vacuous category. This is of course not the intent of those who would argue against it since they would like to maintain the category of testimony while arguing that there is nothing epistemically useful in the rest of the classification.

flourished. Islamic scholars were certain of the reliability of the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ); therefore, their epistemic method focused on evaluating transmitters further down the testimonial chain.[183]

Up until this point, I've limited myself to light historical and conceptual analysis of testimonial kinds. The first two subsections served the purpose of laying out the contours of the problem, the area of investigation, and sketching out a way forward. I'll now be turning my attention to making an epistemic case for these distinctions, as well as showing how they can aid epistemologists in making sense of testimonially-based exchanges. The remaining subsections will focus on how these distinctions can help us analyze speaker reliability and competency. In the final section of Chapter 6, we will rely on this distinction to help us undermine the belief-transmission view in the literature.

6.3.3. The Reliability of the Speaker's Epistemic Source

Building off the previous section, I propose that this testimonial-kinds-thesis has epistemic significance. Call this epistemic significance the *Testimony Grounding Principle*:

> TGPB: The reliability of *H*'s testimonially-based justified belief in *p* depends in part on the epistemic source of the speaker.
>
> TGPK: The reliability of *H*'s testimonially-based knowledge in *p* depends in part on the epistemic source of the speaker.[184]

It is perhaps useful to think of this principle as related to Jennifer Lackey's (2008, 181–83) three classes of inductively based positive reasons. In addition to contextual features, kinds of reports, and types of speakers, we could add the epistemic source of speakers as a class of reasons that help us distinguish between reliable and unreliable

[183] The justificatory account of the reliability of all Prophets, including the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ), relies on the role of miracles and their signification. An explication of this argument is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
[184] I've articulated the principle twice to account for the differences between justified belief and knowledge.

testimony. Whether these reasons are about the class itself or about a given speaker and their relationship to that class, the epistemic source of the speaker gives us a better understanding of the reliability of the testimony under evaluation.

In this subsection, I employ Keith DeRose's (1992) famous bank case, although slightly different from how he conceived it. Instead of using the case to show how our intuitions about knowledge change based on high-stakes cases, I will use my version of the case to showcase how a speaker's reliability and, thus, their justification are impacted by testimonial kinds.

> BANK CASE D: Mike and Lucy are driving back to campus on Friday afternoon after a short vacation with their parents. Before getting on the highway, Mike wants to stop at the bank and deposit some cash. Unfortunately, given the time of year and the out-of-order ATM, the bank is very busy. He is just within his lease's grace period, so he needs to make the deposit by Saturday, or else he risks a heavy fine. Lucy, on the other hand, needs to get back to campus as soon as possible so that she doesn't miss an important student government meeting. After noting that the bank will be open on Saturday, Lucy encourages Mike to make the deposit then. Mike has no previous knowledge about his bank opening on Saturdays, but he is aware that this Saturday is a holiday, and he considers Lucy to be a reliable testifier.

DeRose's bank case was meant to highlight how context and practical concerns might shift the stakes for us as epistemic agents. BANK CASE D is no different. The stakes for Mike are high; he risks a heavy fine, perhaps even a bad credit rating. Given these stakes, it seems that Lucy's testimony, despite her general reliability, is not going to be sufficient. This is because Lucy's general reliability includes cases of testimony that are simply too varying and heterogeneous. How did Lucy come to know what she was testifying to? Is it based on her having heard it from the bank manager, or is it based on experience and induction?

This heterogeneity in testimonial kinds impacts Lucy's reliability. Lucy's reliability through *transmission (riwāya)* from the bank manager is not going to be the same as her reliability through *sensory testimony (shahāda)* or through *opinion (raʾy)*. I don't

mean to say that as a class of testimonies, one is always stronger than the other; I only mean to say that, among other factors, the epistemic origins of the testimony impact its reliability.

Given this impact on Lucy's reliability, Mike's justification shifts accordingly. Whether or not Mike has justified belief or knowledge ends up being impacted by the cognitive process of the speaker, which is represented by these testimonial kinds. This is true irrespective of whether one adopts an internalist, externalist, or hybrid approach.

6.3.4. The Role of Competency in Reliability

There is almost universal agreement in contemporary epistemology that a speaker's sincerity and competency directly impact their reliability (Lackey 2008, 73). While tracking sincerity might be straightforward, competency is more complicated. Is the competency of a speaker only related to the subject area of the content being transmitted? How exactly do non-specialists track the competency of a specialist? Are there other adjacent concepts and variables to consider?

One of the earliest debates in Islamic intellectual history relates to whether legal competency (*fiqh al-rāwī*) is required in the *transmission (riwāya)* of Prophetic testimonies (Al-Sakhāwī 2014b, 2:161–62; Al-Ṣuyūṭī 2016c, 2:166–68).[185] The standard view among ḥadīth scholars is that a speaker's uprightness/probity (*ʿadāla*) and precision (*ḍabṭ*) directly impact their reliability.[186] In ḥadīth studies, the "uprightness/probity" criterion relates not just to sincerity but to other ethical and moral considerations as well.[187] Whereas the "precision" criterion relates to the memory of the speaker, their auditory capacity, and their ability to repeat things as they first heard them. Thus, according to the traditional critical method of ḥadīth

[185] In Chapter 5, we referred to the question of *fiqh al-rāwī* as the criterion of understanding. Here, I am referring to it as the criterion of legal competency. The first translation, understanding or comprehension, is more in line with the linguistic meaning of *fiqh*. However, the meaning used here, legal competency, is more in line with the intended criterion. I used the first translation given the context of the chapter and I am employing this translation as a more technical usage of the term.

[186] See, for example, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (2015, 11–12); Ibn Ḥajar (2019, 58). We will return to these criteria in Chapter 8 and provide a much more thorough analysis.

[187] The term sincerity was not employed in the Islamic tradition in this context. Instead, the term uprightness or probity (*ʿadāla*) was employed. The condition serves a very similar purpose to the sincerity condition in the anglophone literature.

scholars, uprightness/probity (*ʿadāla*) and precision (*ḍabṭ*) are necessary conditions for reliability, whereas legal competency (*fiqh al-rāwī*) is not. Why did precision win out over competency?

Here, the TGP is instructive. Prophetic testimonies (ḥadīth) are *statements* (*akhbār*) made by his companions about things he said, did, tacitly approved of, or descriptions of him (Al-Sakhāwī 2014a, 1:14). These Prophetic statements (ḥadīth) were then passed on from generation to generation. In light of the TGP division, all of these *statements* (*akhbār*) are cases of *transmission (riwāya)*. In other words, most hearers in the chain are having content passed on to them by a speaker whose own content is testimonially grounded.[188] Given that most speakers in the chain are merely transmitting content they heard from those before them, legal competency seemed irrelevant to ḥadīth scholars who were instead focusing on preservation.[189] The majority position held that as long as one's auditory capacity functions properly, their memory is reliable, and they have the ability to repeat what they have heard, that suffices.[190]

A direct implication of this debate is its impact on the necessary conditions for the links in the testimonial chain. Islamic scholars debated whether children *ceteris paribus* were reliable enough as hearers and whether they were reliable enough as speakers to partake in justified testimonial exchange. Although a more fine-grained analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis, ultimately, Islamic scholars argued that children qua children were reliable enough as hearers to yield justification. In contrast, they held that children were not reliable enough as speakers to yield justification (Al-Sakhāwī 2014b, 2:160–61, 305–9).

They grounded the reliability of children as hearers in the variables associated with precision (*ḍabṭ*), which they argued were developed enough in children above the age

[188] This is not true of all transmitters in all testimonial chains of ḥadīth. Given the definition of what a ḥadīth is, it includes cases where a companion is transmitting something he has seen or witnessed. This presents a problem for the testimonial-kinds-thesis. However, an easy solution would be to say that the Islamic tradition's referring to the domain of ḥadīth as being a type of *transmission (riwāya)* was meant in the general sense (*min bāb al-taghlīb*). This requires further research and analysis.
[189] See al-Ghazālī (2016b, 241) for an explicit argument in this regard.
[190] What is meant here is that legal competency (*fiqh al-rāwī*) is not required, not that precision (*ḍabṭ*) alone is sufficient. Of course, precision (*ḍabṭ*) is not sufficient for reliability. As we have mentioned above, ḥadīth scholars also required uprightness/probity (*ʿadāla*).

of seven to justify their "bearing" (*taḥammul*) of testimonial content. In contrast, they grounded their argument against the reliability of children as speakers in their lack of moral development. They argued that children didn't fully understand the implications of moral accountability before puberty. Thus, while children above the age of seven are generally reliable in terms of their precision (*ḍabṭ*), they are not reliable when it comes to their uprightness/probity (*ʿadāla*).

If we were to shift our analysis from a formal setting to a more natural one, the speaker criteria would likely match the hearer criteria. If children are no longer testifying to the attribution of a Prophetic statement, it would only make sense that the rigorous standards would be eased. Take, for example, an inverted form of the famous child objection case:[191]

> INVERTED CHILD OBJECTION 1: Mary's daughter, Kathryn, comes home from elementary school and seems a bit down. Upon asking her why she seems upset, Kathryn informs her mother that she witnessed a teacher shove one of her classmates. Mary immediately calls the school principal and demands that they do something.

Mary's response is reasonable. Despite Kathryn's young age, Mary has every reason to trust that she saw something violent occur. Even if there is some reasonable explanation, the fact that Kathryn witnessed the shove seems reliable enough. What if Kathryn instead transmits something she hears at school?

> INVERTED CHILD OBJECTION 2: Mary's daughter, Kathryn, comes home from elementary school and seems a bit down. Upon asking her why she seems upset, Kathryn whispers to her mother a few expletives which she overheard a teacher shout at one of her classmates. Mary immediately calls the school principal and demands that they do something.

[191] Al-Sakhāwī (2014b, 2:160–61) cites both al-Nawawī and al-Mutawallī as permitting the testimony of children if grounded in sense perception.

Again, it seems reasonable for Mary to trust what Kathryn heard and transmitted to her. However, what if Kathryn instead conveys to her mother the conclusion of an inference that she has made?[192]

> INVERTED CHILD OBJECTION 3: Mary's daughter, Kathryn, comes home from elementary school and seems a bit down. Upon asking her why she seems upset, Kathryn tells her mother that her teacher hurt one of her classmates. Mary asks Kathryn to elaborate, and Kathryn replies that she saw the teacher firmly tell her classmate to stay after class. Later at recess, Kathryn asks her classmate what happened, and instead of answering, she cries and runs back inside. At this point, Mary isn't sure what to do.

This last case is fundamentally different from the first two. Although it is possible that Kathryn's judgment is correct, her conclusion is far from airtight. While Mary might be willing to accept the judgment of a reliable adult in such a circumstance, she has good cause to be reluctant when it comes to a child. If she were to call the school and demand action, clearly, the administration would need to treat this case much more gently than the previous two cases. We generally doubt the reliability of the inferential capacity of children in this age bracket. And children lack the experience to pick up on cues that are learned over the years that help us assess such ambiguous situations.

Ultimately, the main distinction between the three cases is the epistemic source of the speaker. Although many of us might not describe children as being reliable, if we consider their ability to convey things as they see or hear them, it seems much harder to disqualify them from the larger pool of adults. It is only when we are discussing more complex inferential capacities that it seems appropriate to refer to them as unreliable. Therefore, in order for us to distinguish between reliable and unreliable speakers, we must know the epistemic source of the content that they are communicating.

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[192] An objection that might be raised here is to challenge the existence of any purely sensory or testimonially-based knowledge. I do not however believe that this objection presents a serious problem for my argument because one can benefit from these distinctions in a general way without making an absolute assertion about their metaphysical make up. One could say, "pure testimony," or "pure perception," is just testimony and perception that rely on inference less than hybrid cases or cases of inference proper. Robert Audi (1997) makes a similar point in his distinction between inferential dependency and operational dependency.

6.4. Belief-Generation vs. Belief-Transmission

6.4.1. Overview

One of the most interesting debates in the anglophone testimony literature has to do with the nature of testimonial communication. According to one view, the belief or knowledge of the hearer is generated after coming into contact with the testimony that has been communicated. According to a second and much more radical view, the belief or knowledge of the speaker is transmitted from the speaker to the hearer in the testimonial exchange.

In her groundbreaking work on this question, Lackey (2008, 4) calls the two views the statement vs. transmission view, respectively. To avoid ambiguity and confusion, I will refer to the first view as the belief-generation view and the second as the belief-transmission view. These two descriptors, generation vs. transmission, go to the heart of the difference over the nature of testimonial communication. The debate, at its most metaphysical level, is a debate over whether belief or other epistemic attitudes are being generated in the speaker or whether the hearer is taking on or receiving the belief or knowledge of the speaker.

6.4.2. Belief-Transmission

In Lackey's (2008, 37–39) analysis and rejection of the belief-transmission view, she lists three central components of the view. The first is that statements are vehicles for transmitting beliefs. The second, perhaps stronger thesis is that testimony is a process through which the speaker transmits their own belief to the hearer as well as other epistemic properties. Finally, the third component is that beliefs, not statements, are the bearers of epistemic significance.

She then goes on to elucidate two dimensions to the view, a necessity thesis and a sufficiency thesis:

> TEP-N: For every speaker, A, and hearer, B, B knows (believes with justification/warrant) that *p* on the basis of A's testimony that *p* only if A knows (believes with justification/warrant) that *p*.

> TEP-S: For every speaker, A, and hearer, B, if (1) A knows (believes with justification/warrant) that *p*, (2) B comes to believe that *p* on the basis of the content of A's testimony that *p*, and (3) B has no undefeated defeaters for believing that *p*, then B knows (believes with justification/warrant) that *p*. (Lackey 2008, 39–40)

6.4.3. Belief-Generation

In contrast, according to Lackey's (2008, 72) belief-generation view, which she refers to as the Statement View of Testimony (SVT), the statement is at the center of the testimonial communication. On her view, it is the statement that carries the significant epistemic properties, and it is the hearer's coming into contact with it that could result in the generation of belief in the hearer. In other words, statements are not merely vehicles for the speaker's belief.

Lackey (2008, 72–73) lists three important conclusions that follow from her view. First, unlike the belief-transmission view, on her view, a hearer can generate beliefs that the speaker does not have through the speaker's testimony. Second, the hearer's belief can fail to be as justified as the speaker's belief. Finally, on her view, sincerity and competency are not sufficient in guaranteeing justification, in contrast to the prevailing view of testimony.

She goes on to provide a more formal version of this view:

> SVT: For every speaker, A, and hearer, B, B knows (believes with justification/warrant) that *p* on the basis of A's testimony that *p* only if (1) A's statement that *p* is reliable or otherwise truth-conducive, (2) B comes to believe that *p* on the basis of the content of A's statement that *p*, and (3) B has no undefeated defeaters for believing that *p*. (Lackey 2008, 75)

6.4.4. Generation vs. Transmission in the Islamic Tradition

There does not seem to be any analogous debate in the Islamic tradition. However, there are enough adjacent topics discussed to give us a good idea of which of the two views is more coherent with the Islamic tradition.[193] As I will show below, I think it is

[193] A broader study will need to be done to analyze and interpret all of the relevant literature. For example, ḥadīth scholars like al-Bukhārī (1983, 55) do indicate that it is not normatively permitted to transmit that which one knows is false. However, my interpretation of such statements, given the context, is that they had very specific cases in mind, the case of forgeries of Prophetic testimonies. Thus, al-Bukhārī was stating that it is normatively prohibited to transmit a forgery being attributed to the Prophet, while knowing that it is a forgery. But that prohibition does not exclude cases where you are

quite clear that on the standard analysis of testimony in the Islamic tradition, the belief-generation view is much more in line with the Islamic system. Furthermore, I personally hold it to be the stronger view and thus will be arguing for it regardless of the exegetical question.

6.4.5. What Is Benefitted from Testimony

One of the early questions investigated in rhetoric books is the question of *fāʾidat al-khabar*, literally, that which is benefited from statements. Although this analysis is largely a philosophy of language analysis, it does grant us insight into the Islamic tradition's view on testimonial exchange. Ultimately, the evidence from these chapters supports the belief-generation view.

According to the standard analysis, a few typical questions are raised. The first question differentiates between *fāʾidat al-khabar* and that which is entailed by it (*lāzimuhā*). The majority position is that *fāʾidat al-khabar* is the judgment (*al-ḥukm*) being represented by the statement, while what is entailed by it is the speaker's knowledge of the judgment.[194] These two matters are said to be the resulting benefit of testimony (Al-Taftāzānī 2022a, 191–94; 2022b, 97–102).

At first glance, this might seem to support the belief-transmission view. However, upon further inspection, it is clear that it does not. The word "knowledge" above is not employed to mean any type of assent on the part of the speaker; rather, it refers to a conception of the meaning of the proposition, as explained by al-Taftāzānī (2022b, 102). The fact that the belief or knowledge of the speaker is not mentioned as a direct benefit of testimony serves as evidence that their view of testimony did not include a process of transmitting beliefs.

uncertain. Similarly, that normative prohibition doesn't seem to be an epistemic rule that applies to all cases, but seems more limited to ḥadīth and revelation related testimonies. My grattitude to professor Issam Eido for pointing out this particular example from al-Bukhārī.

[194] For example, al-Taftāzānī (2022b, 101) writes, "*Fāʾidat al-khabar hiya al-ḥukm. Wa lāzimuhā kawn al-mukhbir ʿāliman bihi*."

Finally, all throughout this section, the language employed alludes to what the hearer understands from the signification of the statement itself.[195] Thus, the analysis of testimony is one where the hearer generates a belief based upon what he understands from the signification of the communication used. There is no passing on of epistemic properties from the speaker to the hearer.

6.4.6. Revisiting Testimonial Kinds

As noted above, statements can be subcategorized based on the epistemic sources of the speaker. I will argue in this subsection that one particular testimonial species, *transmission* (*riwāya*), serves as strong evidence against the belief-transmission view. In fact, the belief-transmission view, if correct, would entail that most of our beliefs about the past are unjustified.

Before proceeding with the argument, it is important to distinguish between two types of the belief-transmission thesis, a strong and weak version. The stronger version holds that every speaker, regardless of where they may fall in a testimonial chain, must believe or know the content being communicated (Lackey 2008, 37–41). Whereas according to the weaker view, only the original source of the testimonial chain must believe or know the content being communicated.

The TGP allows us to isolate cases where both the stronger and weaker versions of the belief-transmission view are false. In cases where a speaker's epistemic source is testimonial, otherwise known in the Islamic tradition as *transmission* (*riwāya*), it seems clear that they can serve as mere instruments in the passing on of information, preserving it from one link in the chain to another. Whether the speaker suspends judgment or believes the contrary, *transmission* (*riwāya*) allows him to pass on content to the hearer, who can then justifiably believe or come to know based on his testimony.

> LIGHTS OUT: Jared just moved out of his childhood apartment downtown into his first place outside the city. On his second day in his new home, while still moving his furniture, the electricity cuts out. The building manager who

[195] For example, al-Taftāzānī (2022a, 191) writes: "(*Wa yusammā hādhā*) *ishāratan ilā al-ḥukm al-mustafād min al-khabar*."

was helping Jared move in tells him not to worry and that power will be restored before sunset. Jared's old place in the city would regularly get power outages, and their building manager would often reassure them that it would be restored shortly, only for that not to be the case. Due to his past experience and his unfamiliarity with the new manager, he isn't sure whether to believe that the power will be restored before sunset or not. Thus, Jared suspends judgment. A few hours later, Jared's neighbor asks him if he's heard from the manager when to expect the power to be restored. Jared informs his neighbor that the manager said that the power would be restored by sunset. Given the neighbor's long history with the manager, she comes to believe that it will indeed be restored by then.

The neighbor justifiably believes that the power will be restored before sunset based on the transmission she receives from Jared, who himself has suspended judgment on the matter. If the neighbor has reasons to believe that both the manager and Jared's transmission from the building manager are reliable, and they, in fact, are, it would be peculiar to deny that she is justified in believing that the power would be restored before sunset.

One objection to this line of reasoning is to deny that it is an instance of testimonial exchange due to the lack of an assertion. However, this objection can be repelled by pointing out that Jared is, in fact, making an assertion by attributing the information to the building manager. Whether the testimonial chain is made up of five or 50 *transmitters*, they are asserting the attribution of that content either to the original source or, at the very least, to the proximate link connecting them to the source.

According to the standard account of testimony: S testifies that *p* by making an act of communication *a*. On this account, *a* is a statement that is conveyed through some verbal or non-verbal form. However, in LIGHTS OUT and cases like it, something beyond the normal analysis is taking place. This case is like the case of Prophetic testimonies; there are at least two different testimonies to consider. Thus, we can render this exchange in the same manner: S testifies that *p* by making an act of communication *a*, where *p* represents an attribution of *p-2* to S-2. Thus, the first objection fails.

Another objection to this line of reasoning is to deny that this is an instance of testimonial exchange because the *act of testifying* is conditioned on several variables that relate back to the content of the statement, as well as the attitude of the speaker. As such, while LIGHTS OUT might, in fact, result in true cases of justified belief or knowledge, it would not count as a genuine instance of testimonial belief or knowledge.

This objection rests upon the assumption that testimonial knowledge is restricted to instances of *testification*.[196] Of course, this type of objection is guilty of begging the question. However, if one were to, for argument's sake, accept that testimony is restricted to *testifying*, cases like LIGHTS OUT would still need some type of theoretical and epistemological explanation. Otherwise, a portion of what we come to believe or know would be left unexplained. Given that one of the greatest impetuses behind the epistemology of testimony has been its prevalence in our lives and a simultaneous lack of corresponding theory to make sense of it, this result would be both unfortunate and undesirable. Furthermore, it would leave these objectors with a diminished theory of knowledge.

A likely conclusion to this response's line of reasoning would be the invention of a new term to describe this non-testimonial source of knowledge. In that case, a term such as *transmission* (*riwāya*) should be suitable. However, if this is the real nature of the dispute, then the disagreement is dangerously close to being verbal. The second objection has resulted in an acceptance of LIGHTS OUT as a case of justified belief or knowledge through *transmission* (*riwāya*) while insisting that it be referred to as something other than testimony.

The objection is still substantive in that it entails that *sensory testimony* (*shahāda*) and *transmission* (*riwāya*) are not two species of some larger set. But it is not entirely clear why these two acts of communication, in which content *p* is conveyed to the hearer, are not two forms of the same act. The rationale seems to be that the act of *sensory testimony* (*shahāda*) and the act of *transmission* (*riwāya*) are so fundamentally

[196] By testification, I mean any view that is going to require some type of intentional attitude on the part of the speaker in order for their act of communication to be considered testimonial. Those who advocate for the belief-transmission view are, by definition, associating testimony with testification.

different that the relation between them is disjoint. This, however, misses the point; one can easily concede that the two acts are disjoint while maintaining that they are both strictly included in the larger set of acts of communication.

Take, for example, Lackey's (2008, 35–36) disjunctive definition of testimony:

> **DVNT:** S testifies that *p* by making an act of communication *a* if and only if (in part) in virtue of *a's* communicable content, (I) S reasonably intends to convey the information that *p* or (2) *a* is reasonably taken as conveying the information that *p*.

It is quite clear that formal acts of *sensory testimony* (*shahāda*) are included in this definition. The real test is whether LIGHTS OUT can also be included in either of the disjuncts. By moving away from characterizing the epistemic source of testimony as a particular speech act, Lackey grounds the definition in both the *intention to communicate* and in the *conveyance of information*. Thus, Jared only needs to *intend* to communicate with his neighbor what the building manager said, or his neighbor needs to take his utterance as reasonably *conveying* its propositional content. The case of LIGHTS OUT suffices both sides of the disjunct.

Thus, the TGP has helped us disprove the stronger thesis through the counterexample of LIGHTS OUT. However, what about the weaker thesis? Those who hold the weaker thesis claim that it is only the first speaker in the testimonial chain who must believe or know the content of the testimony (2008, 41). If the first speaker in the chain does not believe the content in question, it is posited that the hearer further downstream will not have properly justified reasons to believe the content being *transmitted*.

While proponents of the weaker thesis are on to something epistemically significant, they've ignored the epistemic source of the speaker and have thus misdiagnosed the problem. I submit that cases where a lack of knowledge or justified belief on the part of the speaker prohibit justifiable testimonial exchange are due to the epistemic source upstream and not the absence of belief on the part of the speaker. The real issue is not whether the speaker has justified belief in the proposition asserted but what type of source the original testimony is epistemically grounded in.

Lackey's (2008, 48) CREATIONIST TEACHER has already made the case that the belief of the testifier need not follow the evidence for it to yield testimonial knowledge for the hearer. The TGP not only allows us to better understand the case of CREATIONIST TEACHER, but it also allows us to propose counterexamples to the belief-transmission view where the testifier is following the evidence and yet testifies to the contrary of their belief. Take, for example, the case of DETROIT ONCOLOGIST:

> DETROIT ONCOLOGIST: Ahmad is an oncologist who works at a cancer center in the Metro Detroit area. A young couple comes into his office to ask about a new miracle cancer drug for their child that has just been granted FDA approval. Despite the long debate over the efficacy of the drug, ultimately, the FDA found the evidence convincing and has given the drug manufacturers the green light. Ahmad, having specialized in cutting-edge cancer research, is not just familiar with the range of scholarly opinion on the topic but with the studies and the rationale for and against the miracle drug. Given Ahmad's interpretation of the findings of the studies undertaken before FDA approval, he is not convinced that the drug works. He believes the FDA rushed to judgment, and while the drug might not be dangerous, it is not useful either. However, he also recognizes that many other oncologists, researchers, and the FDA disagree. Furthermore, he is sensitive to the fact that cancer patients and their families are often left with few options. Thus, he tells the couple that the drug has been shown to be effective and could help cure various types of cancer. Based upon his answer, the couple not only comes to believe that the drug works, but they also go on to rely on it as a primary means of treatment for their child.

Is the couple justified in believing that this new drug has been shown to cure cancer? According to the weaker belief-transmission view, the answer is no. However, this doesn't seem right.

Ahmad is the original testifier in this case; he is not transmitting someone else's testimony since he, himself, has direct access to the evidence for and against the new drug. The relationship between Ahmad's testimony and the truth of the matter is not

accidental. Ahmad is aware of the rationale of the other physicians and the alternative interpretations of the studies of the drug, which hold that it is indeed effective. Furthermore, Ahmad recognizes that experts can disagree over the interpretation of evidence. Nevertheless, he is not convinced of the efficacy of the drug and does not believe it can cure cancer.

He communicates to the couple that the drug can, in fact, cure cancer based upon these alternative interpretations of the findings, all the while disagreeing with their rationale. The fact that Ahmad calls to mind these other interpretations of the studies undertaken means that the connection between the couple and the truth of the matter is not severed. If it turns out that the miracle drug works, the couple knew this to be the case given their rational trust in Ahmad and given Ahmad's reason-based conclusion. The result is that the rationale Ahmad is basing his testimony on comes apart from his belief in the content. Therefore, the couple does, in fact, justifiably believe that this miracle drug cures cancer, even though their source, Ahmad, did not believe it to be the case.

How can the TGP help us make sense of DETROIT ONCOLOGIST? Does the initial speaker's epistemic source help us make sense of why DETROIT ONCOLOGIST or other similar cases can serve as counterexamples to the necessity thesis concerning belief? DETROIT ONCOLOGIST and similar cases involve a substantial level of inference on the part of the initial speaker, otherwise known in the Islamic tradition as *opinion* (*raʾy*). Given that this inferential process allows for rational disagreement and given that the testifier is aware of an alternative rational interpretation of the findings, the tether between the initial speaker and the truth of the matter is never fully broken. Whether or not they are convinced by that rationale becomes irrelevant. In such cases, our reason allows us to "hold" more than one set of arguments in mind, even if we take one to be true and the rest to be false. In contrast, knowledge gained from our sense perception does not allow for the same type of rational disagreement and multilayered reasoning. The TGP has thus helped us disprove both the stronger and weaker versions of the belief-transmission view.

By relying on testimonial kinds, a case has been made against the belief-transmission view of testimony. The belief-transmission view ends up not being able to account for

a large swath of our testimonially-based beliefs. Arguably, it makes historical knowledge through testimony highly unlikely, if not impossible.

CHAPTER VII

QABŪL AL-AKHBĀR AND TESTIMONIAL JUSTIFICATION

As mentioned at the outset of Chapter 6, there are two separate and primary areas of investigation in the epistemology of testimony: the nature of testimony (*māhiyyat al-khabar*) and testimonial justification (*qabūl al-akhbār*). Various questions and debates are associated with each. In Chapter 6, we looked at the question of defining testimony as an epistemic source, pure vs. hybrid forms of testimonial belief, testimonial kinds, and the belief-generation vs. belief-transmission debate. Each of these philosophical questions helps us better understand the nature of testimony as an epistemic source of knowledge.

In Chapter 7, we will be turning our attention to testimonial justification. Having laid out a robust framework of what testimony is, we can set our sights on "what is required for testimony to serve as an epistemically adequate source of belief?" (Lackey 2008, 16–17) In other words, in this chapter, we want to investigate the difference between good and bad forms of testimony. The mere fact that we have testimonial beliefs does not necessitate that those beliefs are justified, nor does it necessitate that testimonial knowledge is possible.

The literature on the epistemology of testimony has focused on several key questions in this regard. Some investigations have focused on expert testimony, others on authority, while others have focused on evidential vs. non-evidential views of testimonial justification (Leonard 2021). However, the question that has by far been the most rigorously debated is the question of reduction. For this reason, it will be the focus of Chapter 7.

In order to adequately address the reductionism vs. nonreductionism debate from within the lens of Islamic philosophy, we will need to first give a rough account of the

core features of the Islamic tradition's epistemological system. Furthermore, we will need to address a question that looms large and is inextricably linked to the reduction debate: the philosophical difference between the metajustificatory system of internalists vs. externalists.[197] Only then, after a proper account of these two areas has been accomplished, can we move on to engage with the question of reduction.

Given that many of the questions and debates covered in the literature on testimonial justification occupy philosophical space that is upstream to the epistemic questions focused on by ḥadīth scholars, the primary justificatory questions considered by ḥadīth scholars have been delayed until Chapter 8. Therefore, Chapter 7 serves the purpose of not only tackling head-on one of the central questions of the contemporary literature on the epistemology of testimony but also reconstructing the background epistemic system that ḥadīth scholars are operating from.

As shown in Chapter 5, the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars started out as an informal and applied epistemic system. Over time, due to the epistemic needs of the community, as well as philosophical and social dilemmas, it grew more formal and theoretical. By the time of postclassical commentaries and glosses on ḥadīth terminology texts, some of the investigations had moved away from the specific context of ḥadīth to more timeless and contextless questions that applied across the board. Therefore, theoretical and purely epistemic investigations became more standard in the later works, as they laid the groundwork for the standard ḥadīth-centered questions.

This chapter further builds upon that tradition. While some might bemoan the importing of purely theoretical questions into the texts of ḥadīth scholars from the theological, jurisprudential, or logical literature, in reality, it is a very natural development and a welcome synthesis that only strengthens the discipline. Thus, our foray into these purely epistemic questions should not be seen as alien to ḥadīth studies; rather, it is in a long tradition of connecting the field to purely theoretical epistemological questions. Furthermore, no one in the field will deny the timeliness of responding to ḥadīth skepticism, and this type of work ultimately helps do just that.

[197] See Gelfert (2014, 125) for an explicit statement of this fact.

There is one question that's been added to Chapter 7 that is not part of the standard investigations of the anglophone tradition, the question of Divine vs. human testimony. Given the centrality of revelation in Islamic philosophy, understanding how Divine testimony is justified is central to Islamic epistemology. Secondly, as will be elucidated in that section, understanding the testimonial justification of Divine testimony will also help us better understand the reduction debate from within the Islamic epistemic frame.

7.1. An Introduction to Islamic Epistemology

As mentioned earlier in the dissertation, the Islamic tradition does not have a standalone field of Islamic epistemology (D. L. Black 2013, 120).[198] This fact is relatively common among other philosophical traditions (Pasnau 2017, 1). In fact, epistemology didn't really come into its own as a standalone field in the anglophone tradition until the 20th century.[199]

This, of course, does not mean that Islamic scholars did not discuss epistemological questions. As has been shown throughout this dissertation, there are a great number of epistemological investigations scattered throughout the Islamic philosophical tradition. What Islamic scholars did not do is gather all these related questions from across the vast tradition into one field or narrow library of texts. Nor did they separate out its questions into one single chapter or consecutive chapters the way they did with

[198] As already noted in Chapter 4, the closest thing we do find to a standalone investigation of epistemology is in the introductory sections of *kalām* texts, where a significant percentage of the introductory material is epistemological. Ahmad (2018) argues that these introductory sections signify the emergence of epistemology in Islamic philosophy. Although I agree that it is indicative of more attention being paid to epistemology as its own domain, the exclusion of several topics that are investigated elsewhere leads me to believe that these introductory chapters are only investigating epistemological questions that directly relate to theology, as opposed to epistemology as its own domain. If that is the case, it does not signify the emergence of epistemology as a standalone domain because that had always been the case. Islamic scholars have always investigated epistemological questions in several different fields as they pertain to the field under inquiry. Thus, the introductory sections of advanced *kalām* texts can better be seen as an expression of further refinement and attention given to epistemic questions having to do with theology.

[199] What I have in mind is the introduction of epistemology as a concentration or area of specialization in contemporary academic philosophy departments. As Jan Woleński (2004) has argued, the centrality and focus on epistemology in the Western tradition is modern and post-Cartesian. While epistemic questions have long busied philosophers of all traditions, the focus and emphasis given to it in Western philosophy is a modern phenomenon. It is important to note that despite the fact that epistemological questions were given heightened attention during the Enlightenment, the epistemological domain did not emerge as its own standalone field till much later. The term itseful only became used and popularized in the 19th century and it only became a standalone field in the 20th century.

questions in metaphysics.[200] Instead, epistemic questions would often be treated at the beginning of these texts in the introduction or scattered throughout the early chapters.[201]

In contrast, over the last seven decades, a clear academic subdiscipline of epistemology has developed in anglophone philosophy. Although it is a fluid field, there are typical standard questions that are asked, investigated, and researched. New topics are often added, but there are a few questions that are essential to epistemology qua epistemology.[202]

It would be far beyond the scope of this dissertation to attempt to tackle the breadth of epistemological questions found in either of the two traditions; rather, this section will address some key questions that are central to the subject matter of the dissertation. These questions are the fundamental building blocks of the Islamic epistemic system. There are certain questions that are so central to how we understand epistemology that they impact all other epistemic views.[203]

Three primary questions found in both traditions have been chosen: The first question is an analysis of knowledge, where some of the key definitions of knowledge found in the Islamic tradition will be surveyed. The second is an account of the structure of knowledge, where a summary of the standard foundationalist view found within the Sunnī intellectual tradition will be provided. The third question relates to the changing threshold of justification and acceptance found within the Islamic intellectual tradition. The introduction to Islamic epistemology will then end with an investigation into a

[200] It is standard in many Islamic theology books of the postclassical era, to begin with a chapter on ontology (*al-umūr al-ʿāmma*) which is then followed by two chapters explicating a philosophy of matter (*al-jawāhir wa al-aʿrāḍ*). See, for example: al-Ījī (1999).
[201] See, for example: al-Rāzī (2012, 23–30); al-Taftāzānī (1998, 1:187–288); and al-Jurjānī (1998a, pp. 68–297; 1998d, pp. 3–58).
[202] This assertion is uncontroversial and evident. However, one can refer to the following texts for a clearer characterization of the field: Sosa et al. (2000); Feldman (2003); Fumerton (2006); BonJour (2010); Audi (2011); Goldman and McGrath (2015); Sosa (2017); Fantl, McGrath, and Sosa (2019).
[203] I came to this conclusion through a type of reverse analysis. As I attempted to elucidate a ḥadithic or Islamic response to the question of reduction, I realized that there are several questions that occupy epistemological space before it that must be explicated in order to address the question at hand. This was most evident when I sat with professional anglophone epistemologists to discuss the traditional method of ḥadīth criticism. Their questions about background epistemological views, highlighted the need for this type of exposition. I thank professors Jennifer Lackey, Baron Reed, and Sanford Goldberg for their constant support and patience throughout this project.

unique but central feature of the tradition, what I've come to call *epistemic source coherence*.

Before moving on to the first question, it is important to say something about how this chapter differs in form from the previous chapter. A large part of Chapter 6 was symmetrical between the two traditions. In other words, both the anglophone and Islamic views on a given matter were presented, and then they were compared, contrasted, synthesized, and then the most appealing position was argued for. In Chapter 7, there will be less comparing and contrasting. Instead, the focus will be more on summarizing the views of the tradition most relevant to the topic at hand.

There are two central reasons for this. First, many of the investigations in this chapter are not uniquely testimonial. Given their secondary and tertiary status, *vis-à-vis* testimony, engaging them in the same manner, would jettison the dissertation in directions that are not central to the thesis. Second, like the investigation into testimonial kinds, each of the two traditions provides investigations into questions that the other might have theorized less about.

Despite this difference in form between the two chapters, there will still be key interventions and synthesis between the two traditions. Just as we ended up using a taxonomy unique to the Islamic tradition in the section on testimonial kinds to help make sense of questions raised in the anglophone literature, so too in the following sections, we will rely on questions and distinctions in one tradition, to help make sense of questions in the other. Nevertheless, such investigations will be limited in order to focus on the primary interests of this thesis, which are ultimately ḥadīthic and testimonial.

7.1.1. The Analysis of Knowledge

One of the central questions investigated in both traditional and contemporary epistemology is the question of providing an analysis of knowledge. In the Islamic intellectual tradition, definitions of knowledge are found in texts across the various sciences but are more acutely treated in works of *kalām*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and *manṭiq*. In

this section, a summary of the varying trends found within two of the sciences, *kalām* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, will be provided.[204]

Like the taxonomy of views concerning statements (*akhbār*), the Islamic tradition's views on analyzing knowledge can be categorized into two types. One group claims that knowledge (*ʿilm*) is basic and thus unanalyzable. The second group claims that *ʿilm* is ultimately analyzable, even if they disagree on a definition and how difficult it is to define it. We will limit ourselves to a few of the most popular views.[205]

7.1.1.1. Knowledge Is Basic and Unanalyzable

One view, advocated for by al-Rāzī (2012, 24–25) and others, is that knowledge is unanalyzable and basic. Al-Rāzī argues for this position by pointing out that we know, by necessity, that fire burns and the sun illuminates. Therefore, knowledge of the true reality of knowledge must also be known by necessity. Otherwise, he argues, we would not have known by necessity these facts about fire and the sun.

Al-Rāzī is essentially arguing that knowledge of fire burning, or the sun illuminating, is an instance or particular of the more general universal category of knowledge. Given that we know these facts by necessity, we must also know the reality of knowledge by necessity as well. This view has received some support, as well as a lot of criticism in the tradition. One area that is ripe for research is to compare it to the knowledge-first arguments of Timothy Williamson (2000) and others.

[204] There are a few different reasons why I've chosen to avoid the definitions found within Arabic logic texts. Some of the key reasons are: the metaphysical commitments of the definitions found therein, as well as a trend among many Sunnī authors of suspending their own epistemic or metaphysical commitments when engaging with logic texts, thus creating ambiguity about what their personal view is. There is also the issue of knowledge being treated as a more broad category and attitude in logic texts, one that includes a whole host of attitudes, whereas it is more narrowly defined in theology and jurisprudential manuals. Of course, if one were to attempt a more thorough analysis of the Islamic epistemological tradition, one would have to engage with these texts as well. Given the fact that definitions of knowledge are not of primary interest to the dissertation, I've decided against including too many different views.

[205] This tripartite taxonomy and survey of views became polular in the postclassical Islamic theology literature. See, for example: al-Jurjānī (1998a, 1:68–93).

7.1.1.2. Knowledge Is Analyzable

The traditional taxonomy of definitions of knowledge in traditional theology texts distinguishes between those who advocated for a definition that they thought was sufficient in conveying the essence of knowledge and those who thought that was too tall of an order to accomplish (Al-Jurjānī 1998a, 1:64–93). Those who felt it was too difficult to define ultimately relied on a division to isolate it out from adjacent attitudes that they wished to exclude (Al-Ghazālī 2016b, 38–39). In this section, we will begin with this division and briefly list three different versions of it. We will then cover the most standard definitions that were said to have encapsulated the true nature of knowledge.

The first distinction that is made in the division is between a belief (*iʿtiqād*) that is firm (*jāzim*) and that which is not. Firmness (*jazm*) seems to be representative of full belief. This becomes much clearer when contrasted with cases that were said not to be firm. A belief that is not firm and yet whose truth is considered preponderant by the agent is said to be opinion (*ẓann*).[206] *Ẓann* is, by its very nature, an attitude or belief that allows for credences. Doubt (*shakk*) is said of the attitude that holds the affirmation and denial of the proposition to be equally true. In contrast, conjecture (*wahm*) refers to the attitude of the subject when they hold that the falsehood of the proposition is more likely than its truth.

Islamic scholars who sought to define knowledge were quite clear that knowledge would have to be a firm belief. In other words, when defining knowledge, one must exclude opinion, doubt, and conjecture from being instances of knowledge. But they also recognized that an epistemic agent might believe something firmly that could ultimately be false. They sought to exclude that possibility from the definition by stipulating that knowledge is true firm belief.[207]

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[206] It is important to draw to the reader's attention to the fact that the term *opinion* was used previously in the context of testimonial kinds. However, there, it is a direct translation of the Arabic term (*raʾy*), which refers to testimonies grounded in inference. However, here, the Arabic term does not actually translate literally as *opinion*. The literal translation is closer to *assumption*. However, the technical term for the attitude among those who work on the history of philosophy is *opinion*, and so I have used that convention.

[207] The language used in the Islamic tradition would be a firm belief that corresponds to reality (*muṭābiq li al-wāqiʿ*).

However, there was yet again another adjacent attitude that they needed to exclude: imitation (*taqlīd*). They were aware of cases where the epistemic subject believes firmly (with full belief) in the truth of a proposition, and that proposition is actually true, but the subject only came to believe it through imitating the beliefs of another or by taking it on mere authority. Therefore, Islamic scholars sought to exclude these cases by adding another condition to the definition, but they disagreed about what that additional condition should be.

One group of scholars defined knowledge as true firm stable (*thābit*) belief (Al-Jurjānī 1998a, 1:74). Another group defined it as true firm belief from a cause (*li mūjib*) (F. al-D. M. Al-Rāzī 1996c, 1:83–84). A third group defined it as true firm belief from a sign (*ʿan dalīl*) (Al-Bājūrī 2007, 40). Alternatively, one might translate that last definition as true firm belief from evidence (*ʿan dalīl*). As mentioned earlier in the dissertation, there is a complex theory of semiotics that runs throughout the Islamic philosophical tradition. The word *dalīl* is from the same root as the word discussed earlier: signification (*dalāla*).[208]

Although all these definitions differ from one another, they are all trying to account for the same phenomenon. As mentioned earlier, these definitions are produced through a division. The division begins with belief as its dividendum and then seeks to exclude cases that are not knowledge. However, a problem arises in that Muslim scholars elsewhere clearly state that knowledge is *not* a type of belief. How can they begin with the genus of beliefs as the dividendum and then also hold that knowledge is not a type of belief? They go as far as stating that the etymological root for the word belief ʿ - *q* – *d* refers to a state that is essentially different and diametrically opposed to the state of ʿ - *l* – *m*. They describe the first as some type of grasping or tying and the second as being total clarity or discernment (Al-Ghazālī 2016b, 39).

A solution to this puzzle can be found in the fact that the word *iʿtiqād* in Arabic is a homonym. Although the most popular usage for the term is to refer to the genus of beliefs, it can also be used to signify something broader: a judgment (*hukm*). With this second reading, these definitions are not meant to insinuate that knowledge is a type

[208] Some have chosen to translate *ḍalīl* as indicant.

of belief, only to say that it belongs to the larger genus of judgments (Al-Taftāzānī 2022b, 89). Thus, the real dividendum is not beliefs; rather, it is judgments.

Therefore, knowledge, according to these definitions by division, is a type of judgment. According to the first definition:

Definition: Knowledge is a true, firm, and stable judgment.

According to the second definition:

Definition: Knowledge is a true firm judgment from a cause.

According to the third definition:

Definition: Knowledge is a true firm judgment from a sign (or from evidence).

Before moving on to the next family of views, a few more points must be highlighted about these definitions. The clearest difference between these definitions and the traditional anglophone definition is the absence of the condition of justification. The traditional analysis of knowledge in the anglophone tradition is as follows:

Definition: Knowledge is justified true belief (Feldman 2003, 15).[209]

Instead, in these definitions, we get other conditions like stability, a cause, a sign, or evidence. Interestingly, many of these substitutes have their own parallels in the anglophone tradition. However, given the limited space allotted to this investigation in this dissertation, it should suffice to focus on the difference between the traditional anglophone account and these definitions.

In the Islamic theological tradition, knowledge (*ʿilm*) was almost always thought of in the infallible sense (Al-Ghazālī 2016b, 65–67; Al-Jurjānī 1998a, 1:64–93; Al-Taftāzānī 2020, 113). Most often, knowledge was glossed as a synonym for certainty.

[209] As mentioned in Chapter 6, contemporary epistemologists will add a fourth Gettier condition in order to account for the types of cases he presented as a challenge to the JTB analysis of knowledge.

This was intentional, as they understood the term could be used to denote many other attitudes and states. For example, in the Arabic logic tradition, the term was considered more inclusive of other attitudes.[210] However, as will be argued at more length below, given the context of theology, they conceived of knowledge as certain and infallible.

Their interest in infallible knowledge helps us make sense of the aim of the definitions but not the particular terms used as conditions. If one looks at the longer discussions in the glosses concerning these definitions, one finds that these conditions were meant to achieve equality between the definition and its referent. In other words, to exclude what needed to be excluded and include what needed to be included.[211] Each of the variants was used to address a certain problem in the standard division.

Stability as a condition was meant to exclude the case of a true firm judgment grounded in imitation. The commentators alluded to the fact that a firm judgment based on imitation could be induced to doubt. Therefore, stability was required by some as a condition that meant the attitude would not fluctuate because it was infallible.[212]

In contrast, the distinction between sign/evidence on the one hand and a cause on the other highlighted another epistemic concern. Both views, like the stability view, held that knowledge should be infallible and not grounded in imitation. Therefore, they understood the condition, be it a sign, evidence, or a cause, as being of the type that is infallible. The difference between the views was not about infallibility; rather, the difference between the two definitions was an attempt to include non-inferential knowledge. On the view that held evidence or a sign as a condition of the definition, their definition excludes non-inferential basic knowledge that does not rely on any type of evidence or signification. Therefore, the condition "cause" was suggested as an alternative to include non-inferential knowledge (Al-Jurjānī 1998a, 1:81–82).

While this family of views is popular and widespread in the literature, it has a relatively serious flaw. According to the standard analysis of knowledge by most postclassical

[210] See, for example: al-Qazwīnī (1998, 97).
[211] This is standard in definitional theory. In Arabic, this is referred to as the definition being: *jāmiʿ māniʿ*, literally, inclusive/exclusive.
[212] This is found in almost every analysis of knowledge in the Islamic tradition that relies on a division to isolate what knowledge is from what it isn't. See: al-Jurjānī (1998a, 1:74).

theologians, knowledge can be classified into conception (*taṣṣawwur*) and assent (*taṣdīq*), or what might be referred to as propositional knowledge. The key distinction between the two types of knowledge is the existence of a judgment in the latter and the absence of it in the former. With conception (*taṣṣawwur*), the subject has the known object before the mind without holding any judgment about it. This type of knowledge, by its very nature, is excluded from this family of definitions.

If knowledge is a type of judgment, whether that judgment is a result of a cause, a sign, or evidence, or is stable, it, by definition, excludes cases that lack a judgment. Therefore, the preceding definitions were definitions of propositional knowledge (*taṣdīq*) and not of knowledge in the absolute sense (*al-ʿilm al-muṭlaq*). Given this serious flaw, Islamic scholars suggested another family of definitions that were inclusive of *taṣawwur*.

> Definition: Knowledge is a discernment (or manifestation) that cannot be negated (Al-Taftāzānī 2020, 112; Al-Jurjānī 1998a, 1:84–89).[213]

In this second family of definitions, both *taṣawwur* and *taṣdīq* are accounted for. There is no mention of belief nor any mention of a judgment. Furthermore, the infallibility of the knowledge in question is clearly accounted for in the definition. In contrast, the earlier definitions were ambiguous and required you to read that into the definition.

It is important to note that this second class of definitions is also missing any language about justification. Like the first family of views, this is because only infallible certain knowledge is counted as knowledge. Therefore, justification is tied to the very idea of certainty.[214]

In the next two subsections, we will unpack both how that certainty is maintained and how justification works outside of cases of certain knowledge.

[213] The standard articulation of this family of definitions usually defines knowledge as an attribute that necessitates a discernment (or manifestation) that cannot be negated. I've decided to drop off the language of, "an attribute that necessitates," due to metaphysical questions that are beyond the scope of this dissertation. What concerns us is primarily the epistemological question.
[214] This view, as outlined by Fumerton (1995, 69–73), is standard in many epistemological systems.

7.1.2. The Structure of Knowledge

Many accounts of Sunnī epistemology begin with an analysis of knowledge, then move on to providing a definition and, at times, a critique of other definitions. After these initial investigations, they often move on to classifying knowledge into evident (*badīhī*) and inferential (*istidlālī*) forms of knowledge (F. al-D. M. Al-Rāzī 2012, 24–25; Al-Jurjānī 1998a, 1:98–104; Al-Taftāzānī 2020, 126–27). The term evident here is a reference to non-inferential knowledge, knowledge that does not require inference, evidence, or thought.[215]

As mentioned earlier in the dissertation, when discussing the matter of a syllogism, Islamic scholars will often refer to a list of sources that, when used with a valid syllogism, confer upon it the special status of demonstration (*burhān*). In other words, if the premises of the syllogism are not only valid in form but are drawn from this list, then it qualifies as a *burhān* and thus yields certainty. They called this list "the pathways to certainty" (*madārik al-yaqīn*). These certain perceptions are said to be evident, and upon them, all inferential knowledge is built.

According to one enumeration of these pathways, there are six types: first principles (*al-awwaliyyāt*), internal senses (*al-mushāhadāt al-bāṭina*), external senses (*al-maḥsūsāt al-ẓāhira*), empiricals/experiences (*al-tajrībiyyāt*), successive group testimonies (*al-mutawātirāt*), and testimonies "surrounded by signs" (*al-khabar al-muḥtaffʿbiʾl qarāʾin*). Each of these six pathways is said to yield certain knowledge, which, if used as premises in a valid syllogism, yields certain conclusions (Al-Ghazālī 2016b, 67–69, 206). Importantly, the six types themselves are said to be known to be true immediately (*bi al-ḍarūra*). This is similar to what Feldman (2003, 50) calls immediately justified beliefs, justified basic beliefs, or non-inferentially justified beliefs.

These immediately justified beliefs are the basic building blocks for other non-basic justified beliefs (mediately justified beliefs or inferentially justified beliefs). Therefore, the latter is justified on the basis of the former, while the former is not

[215] A similar distinction is sometimes used synonymously and sometimes differently: necessary/immediate (*ḍarūrī*) knowledge and mediate (*naẓarī*) knowledge.

justified on the basis of any other belief. How these immediately justified beliefs are justified will be discussed later in the chapter.

However, for now, it is sufficient to say that it is certainly the case that they are not justified through some type of inference, evidence, or belief due to the looming threat of an infinite regress. If an epistemic agent always needs reasons for their reasons, then those reasons will need reasons, and so on and so forth. The result of this evidential chain is an infinite chain of reasons. Therefore, the chain must terminate at some point with a justified basic belief.

To make their case, Islamic scholars often formulate a more precise argument: One must accept the existence of immediate conceptions and immediate propositional knowledge because if all knowledge is mediated, then it would always require that other conceptions or propositional knowledge precede it. In that case, the evidential chain is either an infinite regress of reasons or is circular (F. al-D. M. Al-Rāzī 2012, 24).

Given what we have laid out up to this point, the Sunnī epistemic system can quite clearly be described as foundationalist. Foundationalism can be expressed through the following two claims:

> F1: There are justified basic beliefs.
> F2: All justified nonbasic beliefs are justified in virtue of their relation to justified basic beliefs.[216]

The exact argument for and the nature of the justification of basic beliefs will be revisited in the section on internalism and externalism. Before moving on to address that question, two more important aspects of the Islamic epistemic system deserve our attention.

[216] I've relied on Feldman's (2003, 52) analysis of foundationalism.

7.1.3. Thresholds of Acceptance

The traditional account of knowledge in the anglophone tradition is knowledge as justified true belief. As mentioned above, the technical epistemic term justification is not present in the various traditional definitions of knowledge found in the Islamic tradition. Instead, we find, in at least some of the definitions, a different condition. In some cases, the condition is stability; in others, it is a cause, and in others, it is a sign or evidence. However, in all these cases, Sunnī scholars clearly state that for them, knowledge is certainty.

As for the anglophone tradition, the history of the epistemic term justification is much more recent than might be assumed. While it is true that Plato (d. 348 BCE) in the *Theaetetus* does provide a definition for knowledge as "true belief with an account," that "account" (*logos*) is not explicated in the relevant passage as justification. In fact, on one of the explanations of what an account is, it ends up being described as a sign, which is similar to one of the definitions of knowledge mentioned earlier (Chappell 2022).

Justification as a condition doesn't truly emerge until Chisholm's 1957 work, *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study*.[217] Before that, AJ Ayer (1958) articulated the third condition as "the right to be sure."[218] Interestingly, Chisholm (1968, 8), in the passage where he suggests justification, provides an assortment of other terms as synonyms, including acceptable, reasonable, and credible. In fact, it is the term "acceptable" that Chisholm begins with and only later substitutes it with "justified."

In the Islamic tradition, the word "acceptance" (*qabūl*) is widely used, while the word justification (*al-taswīgh* or *al-tabrīr*) is not generally used in this context.[219] The clearest usage of the term "acceptance" in its epistemic sense, is found in ḥadīth

[217] See the fifth print of the text: Chisholm (1968).
[218] Ayer's book was first published in 1956, but the edition I'm working off of is printed in 1958.
[219] The absence of the term justification in the Islamic definitions of knowledge should already be clear from our analysis of the various families of definitions. Even the term I'm arguing for here, "acceptable" (*maqbūl*), is largely used in the context of testimonies. As will be discussed below, in the context of inference used in doctrinal beliefs, a different term is employed. For evidence of the term "acceptable" (*maqbūl*) being used more broadly, beyond the limited subject area of ḥadīth, see: al-Ghazālī (2016c, 230).

studies, where Prophetic testimonies are deemed either acceptable (*maqbūl*) or rejected (*mardūd*) (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 51). As mentioned earlier, this term is also used in logic texts when listing out a taxonomy of the types of testimonies that might be used as premises in inference. More will be said about the usage of the term in ḥadīth studies in Chapter 8.

Another context where the concept of acceptability is employed conceptually, even if it is not mentioned literally, is in the context of doctrinal belief. There is a long debate in the Sunnī theological tradition concerning the obligation for all believers, even laypeople, to know and have faith in the core doctrines of Islam. A problem arises when knowledge is glossed as true firm belief from evidence if what is intended is certainty. Clearly, a layperson, regardless of how much evidence they have, will not be able to repel all objections and doubts. In fact, even if they learn a structured syllogistic demonstration, they still will not be able to have the robust web of beliefs that are necessary to prove the premises of the syllogism. It is in this context that Islamic scholars talk of what "suffices" (*yakfī*) the lay believer (Al-Bājūrī 2007).[220]

This concept of sufficiency functions similarly to the concept of acceptance. The idea is simple: What is the threshold that suffices or is acceptable for the lay believer to have reached? According to the majority position of Sunnī scholars, a general proof (*dalīl ijmālī*) suffices (Al-Sanūsī 2019b, 134; Al-Bājūrī 2007, 40). In other words, the type of infallible knowledge required for the specialist is not required for the non-specialist, and this lower level is acceptable. Alternatively, one could say a layperson is justified in his belief with that level of proof.

In conclusion, although the technical epistemic term justification is not used literally in Islamic epistemology, it exists conceptually in two different ways. The first is when it comes to the requirement of certainty. When infallibility is required, one is not justified without it. However, when it comes to degrees of knowledge and belief below certainty, terms such as acceptance and sufficient are employed. These thresholds are dictated by the context and domain. We have seen an example of this when it comes to the beliefs and faith of laypeople. We also alluded to the employment of such terms

[220] Islamic scholars differ over whether imitation (*taqlīd*) "suffices." For more context, see: al-Sanūsī (2019a, 141–90; 2019c, 148–65).

and concepts when it comes to ḥadīth studies, which we will return to and further build upon in Chapter 8. For the purposes of this chapter, this initial explication of thresholds of acceptance should suffice.

7.1.4. Epistemic Source Coherence

One of the most important aspects of Islamic epistemology is the idea that truth and certainty yielded by one source of knowledge cannot contradict another epistemic source that has also yielded certainty. According to this view, this type of contradiction is rationally impossible.[221] I've come to refer to this view, broadly speaking, as *epistemic source coherence* (Al-Ghazālī 2016c, 288).[222] I have not been able to find a corollary to this investigation in contemporary anglophone epistemology.[223]

In the Islamic tradition, it is often referred to against the backdrop of comparing sacred texts to independent rational conclusions. Islamic scholars noticed that there are, at least at face value, contradictions between sacred texts and the conclusions of inference. They also noticed that sometimes sacred texts seem to contradict one another. But this presents a problem: If our epistemic sources and faculties are able to yield certain knowledge, how can certain knowledge contradict certain knowledge? Similarly, if God's revelation is always true, how can revelation contradict certain knowledge deduced through reason, or how can it contradict itself?

[221] Although it is not standardly formalized in this type of way, *epistemic source coherence* does seem to be grounded in the law of non-contradiction. If by testimony one knows that *p*, then one cannot by deduction know that -*p*. It is important to stress that on the standard Sunnī view, knowledge is certainty.
[222] In the Islamic literature, this topic is often investigated under the heading of contradictory evidence or signifiers (*taʿāruḍ al-adilla*). Although these sections cover all types of disagreement, even instances of testimony contradicting testimony, or inference contradicting inference, there is also an investigation into when sources themselves disagree with one another. For a standalone work on the subject, see: al-Ghazālī: (1940). Similarly, see the somewhat derivative work: Ibn al-ʿArabī (1986, 646–48). The topic is more standardly discussed in chapters of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. See, for example: al-Bāqillānī (1998, 3:259); al-Juwaynī (1996a, 1:434–36, 530; 2009, 358–60; 2017b, 2:1142–45); al-Ghazālī (2016b, 712–13); and al-Rāzī (F. al-D. M. Al-Rāzī 1996d, 5:399–400).
[223] Coherentism as a view in anglophone epistemology is not focused on the coherence of sources, rather it is focused on the coherence of beliefs as a metajustificatory structure, in contrast to traditional foundationalism. However, I will argue that there is room for this alternative type of coherentism, a coherentism of epistemic sources, that all support one another and lend to the justification of basic justified beliefs.

One of the core ways that Islamic scholars addressed this is by differentiating between what they called *qaṭʿī* vs. *ẓannī* sources.[224] These two terms will be left untranslated for now because, as will become apparent, each word is used differently depending upon the context and application. This classification was used to differentiate between various forms of rational arguments as well as various forms of testimonial evidence.

As for the context of rational inference, Islamic scholars wanted to differentiate between an argument that was not only valid and sound but also yielded a certain conclusion and that which was probabilistic. As has been mentioned previously, they called formally valid deductions, with sound premises, that were made up of material that was a result of one of the pathways of certainty (*madārik al-yaqīn*), demonstration (*burhān*). As for any other valid formulation of inference that didn't reach this level of certitude, they referred to that as *ẓannī*. This form of the classification, as applied here, can then be translated as a certain (*qaṭʿī*) vs. probabilistic (*ẓannī*) conclusion.[225]

The case of testimony is a bit more complicated. When it comes to testimony, Islamic scholars differentiate between the authenticity or truthfulness of its attribution (*thubūt*) and its signification (*dalāla*).[226] One question that can be asked is how certain we are that a given statement is correctly attributed to its source. A second question we might ask is how certain we are of the meaning that we understand from the content of that testimony.

As a result of these two different classifications, when it comes to testimony, Islamic scholars differentiated between four different possibilities. A testimony might be certain (*qaṭʿī*) or probabilistic (*ẓannī*) when it comes to its attribution to its source (*thubūt*). In contrast, a testimony might be *qaṭʿī* vs. *ẓannī* when it comes to its meaning. This latter distinction should not be translated into English as certain vs. probable; rather, the distinction intended is closer to whether the meaning of a testimony is unequivocal (*qaṭʿī*) or equivocal (*ẓannī*).[227] The idea is that testimonies that signify

[224] This is a standard distinction made in *uṣūl al-fiqh* texts. See, for example, al-Juwaynī (2017b, 2:1158).
[225] An alternative translation might be definitive (*qaṭʿī*) vs. indefinitive (*ẓannī*).
[226] As will become apparent, signification (*dalāla*) here refers to the meaning of the content of the testimony. This is the domain of what we have been calling *the epistemology of understanding*.
[227] Even this translation is merely a first pass. There are several different linguistic possibilities that philosophers of language and jurisprudence laid out in the Islamic tradition that are beyond the scope

meanings that are unequivocal and unmistakable should be treated epistemically different than testimonies that signify meanings that are equivocal and thus allow for an assortment of valid interpretations.

If two testimonies seem to contradict one another, the first question asked is whether their attribution to their source is certain or probabilistic (*qaṭʿī al-thubūt aw ẓannī al-thubūt*). The second question asked is whether their signification is unequivocal or equivocal (*qaṭʿī al-dalāla aw ẓannī al-dalāla*). Based upon the answer to these two questions, priority is given to testimonies that are certain in their attribution (*qaṭʿī al-thubūt*) and unequivocal in their signification (*qaṭʿī al-dalāla*).

Furthermore, Islamic scholars held that Divine or Prophetic testimonies could never contradict one another if they are certain in their attribution and unequivocal in their signification. Testimonies whose attribution is probabilistic might contradict because there is a possibility that they are not, as a matter of fact, truthfully attributable to God or the Prophet (ṣ). Similarly, testimonies whose signification is equivocal might contradict because the meanings of the testimony are probabilistic. It might only contradict on one reading and not on another.

If we return to reason and inference, Islamic scholars argue that certainty-yielding demonstration cannot contradict Divine or Prophetic testimonies that are certain in their attribution (*qaṭʿī al-thubūt*) and unequivocal in their signification (*qaṭʿī al-dalāla*). This is due to the unitary nature of truth. Simply put, truth cannot contradict truth.

Beyond these cases of certainty and unequivocality, there is room for contradiction, disagreement, and ambiguity. I've chosen to call this view *epistemic source coherence* because, ultimately, their focus is on the coherence of the epistemic sources themselves. One must keep in mind that for them, these sources are reliable and aim at the truth, and thus, when certain, truth cannot contradict truth.[228]

of this dissertation. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, this translation should suffice to convey the intended meaning.

[228] Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it seems that a case can be made for using *epistemic source coherence* to repel skeptical attacks.

Beyond this initial and essential point, disagreement is possible. There is ample opportunity to find overlap and synthesis in these investigations with the contemporary epistemology of disagreement literature in the anglophone tradition.[229] However, the possibility of disagreement must be understood in light of the above distinctions, which are key to Islamic epistemology and to the Islamic epistemology of understanding.

7.2. Internalism vs. Externalism

7.2.1. A Brief Summary

In the previous section on the structure of knowledge, we articulated the foundationalist makeup of the Islamic epistemic system. Where foundationalism is the claim that:

> F1: There are justified basic beliefs.
> F2: All justified nonbasic beliefs are justified in virtue of their relation to justified basic beliefs.

However, we did not address the nature of the justification of those basic beliefs. It is this question that is at the heart of the internalist vs. externalist debate in the anglophone literature. Since the 1980s, this question has been central to the field of anglophone epistemology.

A simple way to introduce the question is to think of a skeptical attack against one's most basic beliefs, which are often referred to in the Islamic tradition as the "pathways to certainty" (*madārik al-yaqīn*) or certain perceptions.[230] If a skeptic were to challenge you about your justification in believing your perception or your knowledge of first

[229] See, for example: Christensen and Lackey (2013), as well as Lackey (2017a). The disagreement literature in anglophone epistemology while relevant to this investigation, is focused on how different epistemic agents disagree, and whether there can be rational disagreement between them. The Islamic literature is more detailed and occupies philosophical space that is further downstream, as it is dealing with various forms of disagreement. As for the question of *epistemic source coherence*, the disagreement I have in mind is self-reflexive. Can one's own epistemic sources disagree with one another? Can such disagreement ever be rational?

[230] It is important to note, however, that these beliefs in the Islamic tradition are certainty-yielding. We will need to expand the scope to discuss all basic beliefs, even those that are probabilistic for the rest of this dissertation.

principles, what type of response can you provide them? By the very nature of them being basic, there is no other belief that they are relying on. If there is no evidence, belief, or argument that justifies the belief, what does? This is precisely what the internalist and externalist camps hope to answer.

7.2.2. Various Versions of the Debate

According to Richard Fumerton (1995, 60–69), there isn't one singular internalism vs. externalism debate; rather, there are various versions of the debate. Keeping track of the various versions of the debate is important because any one view might fall on one end of the spectrum or the other of the various versions. In this section, we will give a brief synopsis of the various versions of the debate.

Fumerton (1995, 60–62) calls the first version of the dispute "internal state" internalism. On this account of the debate, internalists hold the view that epistemic properties are solely found as internal characteristics of the epistemic subject. Fumerton formally articulates this version as, "The internalist, on this view, maintains that *S's* knowing that *P*, or having a justified belief that *P*, consists in *S's* being in some internal state."

This is then contrasted with the externalist position on this version of the dispute. The externalist in this dispute is committed to a view that at the very least, justification and knowledge involve states external to the epistemic subject. Therefore, he need not deny that internal states play a part.[231]

A second version of the dispute revolves around what is known in the literature as "access internalism." (Fumerton 1995, 62–66) Internalists on this view are committed to the thesis that one must have "access" to the conditions that constitute justified belief or knowledge. On a stronger version of the view, "in order for *S* to be justified in believing *P*, *S* must actually have access to the conditions that constitute that justification." In contrast, on a weaker version of access internalism, "in order for *S* to be justified in believing *P*, *S* must be able to access the conditions that constitute his

[231] Of course, a stronger version of externalism might hold that epistemic justification is solely external and that one's internal state, or at least positive reasons, have nothing to do with justification.

justification." The difference between the stronger and the weaker version revolves around the ability to access vs. accessing, as a matter of fact.

On this version of the dispute, externalists deny both the stronger and weaker claims of access internalists. Externalists argue that there is no condition of accessibility. In fact, the epistemic subject can be justified or have knowledge and have no access at all.

The third and final version of the dispute has to do with the role of naturalizing epistemology. Fumerton (1995, 66–67) argues that this is the most useful way to understand the internalism vs. externalism debate. On this view, the debate is an argument over the reducibility of epistemic concepts to nomological ones.

Externalists, according to this view, are ultimately trying to explain epistemology *vis-à-vis* nomic scientific concepts like reliability and causation. In contrast, internalists, on this view, argue for certain *sui generis* epistemic concepts that are ultimately irreducible to any scientific concepts.[232] There will still be different versions of internalism and externalism on this view, but ultimately, the thread that runs through each side has to do with the question of naturalization.

Before moving on to the Islamic tradition's place in this debate, a clarificatory remark is due about which types of beliefs are at stake. Given how this debate is broadly construed, it often seems that the debate only impacts the justification of basic non-inferential beliefs. If this were the case, regardless of our position and justification, our inferential beliefs would remain intact.

However, this conclusion is false. The most obvious reason for this is the fact that our inferential beliefs are the product of non-inferential beliefs being ordered as premises in some inferential process. Therefore, according to foundationalism, if our basic beliefs are unjustified, our inferential beliefs will also be unjustified.

[232] Scientific here should be understood as relating to non-epistemic concepts.

Another more subtle reason is made evident by Fumerton's (1995, 36) principle of inferential justification:

> "To be justified in believing in proposition *P* on the basis of another proposition *E*, one must be (1) justified in believing *E* and (2) justified in believing that *E* makes probable *P*."

We've already discussed how the first part of Fumerton's principle would be impacted by the internalism/externalism debate. However, the second part of the principle is just as threatened by the question of the justification of basic beliefs. To simplify the argument, deduction, as a form of inference, is often said to be a question of form and matter. If the form is correct, then the inference is said to be valid. If the matter is true, along with the form, the conclusion is said to be sound. However, this is assuming that we are entitled and justified to believe that the form yields the conclusion, which is generally called truth-preservation. But this entitlement is susceptible to skeptical attack, which means that the very form of deduction entailing true conclusions requires some type of justification. Therefore, the internalism/externalism controversy, while being primarily about the justification of basic non-inferential beliefs, impacts inferential beliefs as well.[233]

7.2.3. Externalism in Islamic Epistemology

Although it would be anachronistic to assert that Islamic epistemology is either externalist or internalist, there are hints of each found within the tradition. As for the more externalist threads running through the Islamic tradition, three are most relevant to this present study. All three emerge against the backdrop of repelling skeptical attacks.

As mentioned previously, it is standard in Islamic theology texts to begin with a discussion of epistemology. It is also standard in sections on epistemology to discuss epistemic sources as well as groups who are skeptical of one or more of those

[233] Although not articulated in the exact same manner, I am indebted to Fumerton (1995, 67–68) for mentioning a similar point at the end of his explication of the various forms of the internalist vs. externalist dispute.

sources.[234] It is in these sections that Islamic scholars give us some idea of how externalist their thinking is.

The first externalist element found in their epistemology is their reliance on concepts like reliability and causation. As we've already discussed, according to one analysis, knowledge is true firm belief from a cause. In the sections where Islamic scholars set out to repel skeptical attacks against unmediated beliefs, they rely on the idea that our epistemic sources are largely reliable (Al-Taftāzānī 1998, 1:218; Jandī 1911, 1:38). Given that Islamic scholars in these contexts do not attempt to justify these beliefs by anything internal to the subject and given that concepts like causation and reliability are concepts relied on by externalists, it seems quite plausible that their metajustification for non-inferential beliefs is externalist (Feldman 2003, 81–84, 90–93).[235]

To further support this claim, we can turn to their bifurcation between our knowledge of the proposition or conception and our knowledge of whether that instance of sense perception or reason is veridical (Al-Ghazālī 2016b, 65–66). The idea seems to be that the lack of second-order knowledge about the first-order knowledge does not render the first unjustified. This coheres well with other desiderata found in the tradition, like the problem of non-specialist knowledge and faith in God's existence. Given that Islamic scholars want to maintain that the faith of non-specialists is valid, despite their not being able to repel skeptical attacks, it would seem necessary to first separate out the two beliefs.[236] Secondly, it would be necessary to hold that a lack of certainty about whether this instance of belief in God's existence is a true form of knowledge does not impact the fact that the subject knows that God exists. To hold otherwise would render the faith of most non-specialists invalid.

[234] See Abdurrahman Mihirig's (2022) study of these discussions.
[235] To further support this point, see McGinnis (2008). Although Avicenna is not a Sunnī theologian, nor is he representative of ḥadīth scholars, he is both impacted by and ultimately impacts Sunnī epistemology. While I do not agree with all of McGinnis's conclusions, his assessment is that there is a level of naturalization in the Islamic epistemological system. If that is the case, then according to Fumerton's third version of the debate, the Islamic system is externalist.
[236] As cited earlier, see Al-Sanūsī (2019a, 141–90; 2019c, 148–65) for a more robust treatment of the subject.

Finally, probably the most clear-cut expression of externalism found in the Islamic tradition is found in statements by Islamic theologians that such skeptical attacks do not even require a response. In other words, one need not have any reasons for their belief in non-inferential beliefs. We are told that the responses they do offer to such skeptical objections are just a matter of form or dialectic, whereas, in actuality, such matters do not epistemically even require an account (Al-Taftāzānī 1998, 1:216–19; Al-Ījī 1999, 149–50; Al-Juwaynī 2017a, 113–15).

It would be far too strong of a statement to claim that Islamic epistemology is externalist. However, it is not far-fetched at all to state that there are clear externalist threads found within Islamic epistemology. If we were to draw the line between internalism and externalism at whether one requires any external conditions, then by this definition, their views seem quite clearly externalist. However, to get a clearer picture, we must also consider the internalist aspects of their system.

7.2.4. Internalism in Islamic Epistemology

There are at least two different ways that Islamic epistemology might be said to be internalist. The first has to do with the view that the justification of non-inferentially justified beliefs is ultimately rooted in infallibility. As we discussed above, knowledge is often glossed in the Sunnī Islamic tradition as certainty. The various pathways to certainty are ultimately providing the epistemic subject with direct access to that which is known.[237] That direct access is said to be infallible. Therefore, it is the infallibility that is doing the justificatory work. And it is the direct access that the subject has that renders it internalist.

A second way in which Islamic epistemology can be said to be internalist is through the standard classification of knowledge into assent (*taṣdīq*) and conception

[237] Muslim theologians differed over how to explicate the metaphysics of knowledge. Some held that there is nothing other than the subject and the known object. On this form of perceptual realism view, the relation between the two is knowledge. Others held that there is an attribute called knowledge, and between that attribute and the known object is a relation. This second view is the more dominant view among Sunnīs. There are still other views which are beyond the scope of this dissertation. See, for example: al-Jurjāni (1998b, 6:3–4).

(*taṣawwur*).[238] This classification provides the groundwork for an internalist metajustificatory system. If the epistemic subject can directly grasp that which is known conceptually, then it is that direct grasping that ultimately renders both the non-inferential and inferential beliefs justified.

Fumerton (1995, 69–85) mentions both infallibilism and the acquaintance theory of non-inferential justification as two common ways to make sense of internalism. Thus, in order to bring forward the internalist threads in Islamic epistemology, one can draw a link between Fumerton's articulation of acquaintance theory and the Islamic theory of conception (*taṣawwur*). Fumerton (1995, 75) suggests that: "One has a non-inferentially justified belief that *P* when one has the thought that *P* and one is acquainted with the fact that *P*, the thought that *P*, and the relation of correspondence holding between the thought that *P* and the fact that *P*. No single act of acquaintance yields knowledge or justified belief, but when one has the relevant thought, the three acts together constitute non-inferential justification."

This is not to suggest that Fumerton's argument is anticipated fully in Islamic epistemology. Rather, this is only meant to draw a link between his view and the existence of the elements of his argument in the philosophical language of Islamic scholars. It is clear in how Islamic scholars use their explication of thought (*naẓar*),[239] as well as assent (*taṣdīq*), and conception (*taṣawwur*), that it can be used to justify non-inferential basic beliefs.[240] As Fumerton (1995, 75) goes on to say, "When everything that is constitutive of a thought's being true is immediately before consciousness, there is nothing more that one could want or need to justify a belief."

One final matter requires explanation. The relation between the subject and the known object will make all the difference between characterizing an epistemology as internalist or externalist. If it is a relation between the subject and his own thoughts, then it is clearly internalist. However, if the relation is between him and the external

[238] See, for example: al-Rāzī (2012, 23–24) and al-Taftāzānī (2011, 96–103). This topic requires further research and analysis since the very idea of classifying knowledge in this manner is disputed. Furthermore, even if one accepts the classification, how to analyze thought and deduction based upon this classification is also disputed.
[239] The Arabic term *naẓar* is used in several different ways in the Islamic tradition. At times it is used to mean inference, at other times to mean inquiry, while at other times it seems to signify thought.
[240] See, for example, al-Jurjānī's (1998a, 1:227–32) analysis of thought (*naẓar*).

world, the internalist dimensions are joined by an external dimension. This, too, is an active debate in the Islamic tradition, with various camps or individual scholars falling on either side of the debate. Although the metaphysics of traditional Sunnī epistemology is realist in that they hold that knowledge is a relation between the subject and the object known in the external world, there are other views that hold that that which is known is internal to the subject (Al-Jurjānī 1998b, 6:3–18).

7.2.5. A Case for Dualism

Given that this dissertation is not focused on the internalism vs. externalism debate, this will have to suffice as a summary of the views from within the Islamic system. There is still a lot of work that can be done explicating the various views and looking for other arguments found in the Islamic tradition. However, one last thing can be said about the debate that will help propel us into the question of reduction.

Another view found among contemporary epistemologists is dualism. This view unites both the internalist and externalist tendencies. This seems to me to be the most convincing view, as each of the camps addresses one side of a two-sided coin. Externalists make the case that our epistemic sources are reliable. In doing so, they are able to make sense of the conditions under which knowledge occurs. Internalists, by contrast, are able to help us make sense of what justifies us having certain beliefs and not others.[241]

The two sides are thus addressing two different questions. However, a true analysis and understanding of knowledge is going to have to make sense of both sides. Without having any internal account of why we have one belief or another, it seems spurious to claim that we are justified in our beliefs. Similarly, without an explanation of how our beliefs adequately represent what is beyond our own minds, how can we evaluate whether an epistemic subject has justified true belief or knowledge? Thus, the middle road seems to be dualist, where we accept both internalist and externalist conditions.

[241] Although there are many versions of dualism, I am drawing on Lackey's (2008, 9–12) characterization.

This dualist view helps us make sense of the existence of both externalist and internalist threads in the Islamic epistemological system. Although Muslim scholars do not seem to have tackled the same question head-on, as we have seen, there are clear examples of the anticipation of certain contemporary views in the Islamic literature. Therefore, dualism has the added positive consequence of helping us make sense of the diversity of views found within the Islamic tradition.

7.3. Reductionism, Nonreductionism, and Hybrid Accounts

7.3.1. A Summary of the Debate

With all the preliminary investigations out of the way, we can focus on the most central question in the epistemology of testimony, the question of reduction. Recall that we began with an explication of the nature of testimony as an epistemic source; we then moved on to the difference between pure testimonial belief and hybrid testimonial belief and, finally, onto the debate between the belief-transmission view and the belief-generation view. We now turn to the question of what is required for a hearer to successfully acquire justified belief or knowledge through testimony. In other words, when is testimonial belief going to be acceptable and considered justified, and when is it going to be unacceptable and unjustified? This question is fundamentally similar to the main question asked by ḥadīth scholars: When is a ḥadīth acceptable (*maqbūl*), and when is it rejected (*mardūd*)? However, as will be outlined below, their investigations were concentrated on downstream philosophical questions, in contrast to the anglophone tradition, which is concentrated on upstream philosophical questions.

In the contemporary anglophone literature, there are two central camps with regard to this question: reductionists and nonreductionists. More recently, a third hybrid camp has also emerged. Each of these camps of views has a different understanding of how testimonial belief can be justified and under what conditions. It is important to stress that the majority of those working on this question accept that there is such a thing as justified testimonial belief or testimonial knowledge; however, they fundamentally disagree about its epistemic analysis.

Reductionists argue that justified testimonial belief or knowledge is ultimately reducible to non-testimonial sources. According to reductionists, testimony is not epistemically basic. In other words, the justification of testimonial belief and knowledge is ultimately a product of sense perception, inference, and memory. To clarify further, reductionists hold that positive reasons are necessary for acquiring justified testimonial belief or knowledge, and those reasons are non-testimonial.

In contrast, nonreductionists argue that justified testimonial belief or knowledge is not reducible to any other epistemic source. Rather, nonreductionists hold that testimonial belief and knowledge are epistemically basic. In other words, while reductionists argue that testimony is not basic and, thus, in order to acquire justified testimonial belief or knowledge, one must ultimately rely on other more basic and fundamental epistemic sources, nonreductionists argue that testimony itself is basic and does not need other epistemic sources to do the justifying for it. Therefore, for nonreductionists, positive reasons are not necessary for acquiring justified testimonial belief or knowledge.

Dualism unites the two views. Dualists argue that reductionism alone cannot grant us justification, and nonreductionism alone cannot grant us justification. Rather, to acquire testimonial knowledge or justified testimonial belief, we need to unite between the two views. This might at first glance seem contradictory since one side requires positive reasons and the other does not, and one side views testimony as epistemically basic, and the other does not. However, after we have built out each view a bit more, it will become clear what the dualists have in mind. This initial summary is merely a first pass at the debate; as will become apparent below, there are various sub-views that render a position reductionist, nonreductionist, or a hybrid between the two. But before moving on to a more robust explication of the views, it is useful, to begin with the historical origins of the debate.

7.3.2. The History of the Debate

The reductionism vs. nonreductionism debate is often said to have its origins in the philosophical writings of David Hume (d. 1776) and Thomas Reid (d. 1796). Hume (2007b, 82) writes, “The reason why we place any credit in witnesses and historians,

is not derived from any *connexion*, which we perceive *a priori*, between testimony and reality, but because we are accustomed to find a conformity between them."

This "conformity" that Hume refers to is inductive inference. The epistemic subject perceives that the testimonies of person *x* regularly conform to reality. On that basis, the subject concludes that person *x* is reliable. With that induction-based belief in mind, the subject can come to justifiably believe or know some matter based on person *x's* testimony.

As Gelfert (2014, 121) has argued, Hume was not advocating for some type of prolonged track record system on behalf of all hearers for them to gain justification. Rather, Hume was merely analyzing how testimonial justification works. As for analyzing the mundane day-to-day testimonies that we regularly process, Hume (2007b, 81) makes a case for a broader type of argument. "Were not the memory tenacious to a certain degree; were they not sensible to shame, when detected in a falsehood: were not these, I say, discovered by experience to be qualities, inherent in human nature, we would never report the least confidence in human testimony." Elsewhere, he writes further clarifying this point, "When we receive any matter of fact upon human testimony, our faith arises from the very same origin as our inferences from causes to effects, and from effects to causes; nor is there anything but our experience of the governing principles of human nature, which can give us any assurance of the veracity of men." (Hume 2007a, 1:78)

Thus, Hume is suggesting that the source of our justification, when it comes to everyday testimony, is our knowledge of human nature. In these cases, one relies on their understanding of the practices associated with giving and receiving information, as well as the norms related to it. Therefore, Hume argues that we rely on background knowledge about the conduciveness of our social environments for the acquisition of knowledge through testimony, the general probity of speakers, and their inclination to the truth. This background knowledge, however, is a result of our experience, not some type of evident *a priori* truth. In this way, his view reduces testimonial justification to other epistemic sources.

In contrast, Thomas Reid (1983b, 87) argues that testimony is akin to other basic sources and need not reduce: "There is a much greater similitude than is commonly imagined, between the testimony of nature given by our senses, and the testimony of men given by language. The credit we give to both is at first the effect of instinct only. When we grow up, and begin to reason about them, the credit given to human testimony is restrained and weakened, by the experience we have of deceit. But the credit given to the testimony of our senses, is established and confirmed by the uniformity and constancy of the laws of nature."

Reid argues that the reductionist account of Hume, which requires reasons, is untenable, particularly if we analyze our epistemic lives as children.

> The wise author of nature hath planted in the human mind a propensity to rely upon human testimony before we can give a reason for doing so. This, indeed, puts our judgement almost entirely in the power of those who are about us in the first period of life; but this is necessary both to our preservation and to our improvement. If children were so framed as to pay no regard to testimony or authority, they must, in the literal sense, perish for lack of knowledge. (Reid 1983a, 281)
>
> I believed by instinct whatever they told me, long before I had the idea of a lie, or a thought about the possibility of their deceiving me. Afterwards, upon reflection, I found they had acted like fair and honest people, who wished me well. I found that, if I had not believed what they told me, before I could give a reason for my belief, I had to this day been little better than a changeling. And although this natural credulity hath sometimes occasioned my being imposed upon by deceivers, yet it hath been of infinite advantage to me upon the whole; therefore, I consider it as another good gift of Nature. (Reid 1983b, 87)

Ultimately, Reid builds his nonreductionist view on two related principles. The first, the *principle of veracity*, claims that humans have a "propensity to speak truth." The second, the *principle of credulity*, claims that humans have a "disposition to confide in the veracity of others, and to believe what they tell us." According to Reid, these two principles together render our reliance on testimony rational and confer justification upon our testimonial beliefs (Gelfert 2014, 63). However, importantly, Reid is not claiming that we need to have reached this conclusion for us to be justified; rather, the mere fact that it is true confers justification upon our related beliefs.

Therefore, on Reid's view, testimony is a *sui generis* source of justification. If other conditions are met, it can, on its own, justify the hearer's belief or knowledge. It is important to qualify the assertion with the requirement of other conditions being met. Because both Reid and other nonreductionists believe testimony to be fallible, their

argument is not about testimony always yielding justified belief or knowledge; rather, their argument is that it doesn't need to rely on non-testimonial reasons.

In summary, the historical version of the reduction debate gives us clarity about the origins of this ongoing philosophical investigation. On one end of the debate is Hume, whose view reduces justified testimonial belief and knowledge to background knowledge about human nature, which is itself a result of our prior experience. On the other end of the debate is Reid, whose view holds that testimony is akin to sense perception in its irreducibility as a basic source of knowledge. They both agree that testimony is a vital source of knowledge; they, however, disagree on how to make sense of its justification.

Although the historical debate between Hume's reductionism and Reid's nonreductionism is still often cited, those who ascribe to each view have developed and slightly shifted the philosophical problem space of the debate. Given that one of the desiderata of this thesis is to put contemporary Islamic philosophy into conversation with contemporary anglophone epistemology, it is important to highlight some of these developments. In what follows, some of the core elements of reductionism and nonreductionism in the contemporary literature will be laid out and analyzed.

7.3.3. Contemporary Reductionism

Although still advocated for by some contemporary epistemologists, reductionism is nowhere near as popular as nonreductionism in the contemporary literature (Lackey 2008, 142). Epistemologists disagree on how to interpret Hume's position. Some read him as advocating for a very strong form of reductionism that requires the tracking and checking of every speaker the hearer is going to testimonially trust and rely on. Others read him as advocating for lighter conditions, as referred to above. On this reading, Hume is merely arguing for the necessity of background knowledge about human nature and our epistemic environments (Gelfert 2014, 119–22).

Building upon this point, a contemporary reductionist, Elizabeth Fricker writes:

> In claiming that a hearer is required to assess a speaker for trustworthiness, I do not mean to insist, absurdly, that she is required to conduct an extensive piece of MI5-type "vetting" of any speaker before she may accept anything he says as true… My insistence is much weaker: that the hearer should be discriminating in her attitude to the speaker, in that she should be continually evaluating him for trustworthiness throughout their exchange, in the light of the evidence, or cues, available to her. This will be partly a matter of her being disposed to deploy background knowledge, which is relevant, partly a matter of her monitoring the speaker for any tell-tale signs revealing likely untrustworthiness. (E. Fricker 1994, 149–50)

Van Cleve (2006, 69), another contemporary reductionist, writes: "My view… is that testimony gives us justified belief and reflective knowledge not because it shines by its own light, but because it has often enough been revealed true by our other lights. On this point, I find myself uncharacteristically on the side of Hume rather than Reid."

Contemporary reductionists seem to all share two theses. The first is what Lackey (2008, 144) calls "the *Positive Reasons Thesis*: justification or warrant is conferred on testimonial beliefs by the presence of appropriate positive reasons on the part of hearers." These reasons are the ones doing the "justificatory" work on behalf of testimony. However, the reasons must be non-testimonial. The reasons must be based on sense perception, memory, or inference. If the reasons are themselves testimonial, you end up with either an infinite regress or a vicious circle. This brings us to the second thesis that reductionists have in common, the *Reduction Thesis*. The idea behind the *Reduction Thesis* is simple: because testimonial beliefs are ultimately justified by non-testimonially grounded positive reasons, testimonial justification is said to reduce to other epistemic sources or to the justification of those other epistemic sources.

Beyond these two central ideas in the contemporary literature, there is disagreement about how to make sense of reduction. What precisely is doing the justificatory work? On one view, to justifiably accept a speaker's testimony, the hearer must already have non-testimonially based positive reasons that the "institution of testimony" is generally reliable. What I mean by the "institution of testimony" is the fact that human testimonial communication, more often than not, is reliable. According to this view, without such a previously held reason, testimonial beliefs would be unreliable. This view is known as global reductionism (Lackey 2008, 145; Gelfert 2014, 104–10; Leonard 2021, 5–6).

On the opposing view, often referred to as local reductionism, to justifiably accept a speaker's testimony, the hearer must already have non-testimonially based positive reasons that the specific speaker testifying is reliable (Lackey 2008, 148; Gelfert 2014, 110–19; Leonard 2021, 7–11). From one vantage point, this is a much higher bar than the global view. On the global view, sense perception, memory, and inductive inference are required to give us reasons to rely on the institution of testimony, whereas, on the local view, they must give us reasons to rely on the specific person testifying.

However, local reductionists are, from another vantage point, lowering the bar. One of the serious criticisms of global reductionism by both nonreductionists and local reductionists is the impossibility, or at the very least, the unlikelihood of being able to have the appropriate threshold of experiences to provide one with the evidence needed to have justifiable reasons for such an overarching and heterogeneous category. By focusing on the local and particular testimonies of one individual, the threshold needed drops to a manageable level (Lackey 2008, 145–47; Leonard 2021, 8–9).

Another popular element of local reductionism is the requirement to monitor each instance of testimonial communication. Therefore, the reliability of the speaker, in the most general sense, does not suffice to grant the hearer justification. Rather, they must monitor the speaker for trustworthiness throughout the exchange. Fricker writes (1994, 149–50), "… she should be continually evaluating him for trustworthiness throughout their exchange, in the light of the evidence, or cues, available to her. This will be partly a matter of her being disposed to deploy background knowledge which is relevant, partly a matter of her monitoring the speaker for any tell-tale signs revealing likely untrustworthiness."

We can then summarize the reductionist view with the following condition:

> R: The hearer has sufficiently good non-testimonial positive reasons to accept the speaker's testimony.[242]

[242] I have relied on Lackey's (2008, 145) articulation of this point.

These reasons can then either be understood as pertaining globally to the reliability of human testimony, or locally to the individual speaker's reliability and the various reasons present during a testimonial exchange.

7.3.4. Contemporary Nonreductionism

Nonreductionism is the more popular of the two views among contemporary epistemologists (Lackey 2008, 154). One can conceive of it as a rejection of the reductionist theses. Therefore, while reductionists maintain that one needs positive non-testimonial reasons to be justified in believing based upon testimony, nonreductionists deny the *Positive Reasons Thesis*. By denying the *Positive Reasons Thesis*, they, by necessity, deny the *Reduction Thesis* (Lackey 2008, 155).

Similar to what we find in Reid's writings, contemporary nonreductionists view the reductionist thesis as highly impractical and overburdensome. Instead, nonreductionists advocate for what Gelfert (2014, 101) calls a *Presumptive Right Thesis*: "A hearer has the epistemic right to believe testimony merely on the ground that it has been asserted." One can think of this thesis as being a contemporary re-articulation and combination of Reid's principles of veracity and credulity.

For the nonreductionist, testimony functions justificatorially the way perception functions (Gelfert 2014, 61–64). If one agrees with the idea that perceptually seeing *p*, *ceteris paribus*, is sufficient for them to be justified in believing *p*, then they should agree with a parallel view when it comes to testimony. Therefore, hearing *p*, *ceteris paribus*, is sufficient for justification to believe in *p*.

However, contemporary nonreductionists have added a no-defeater condition to the *Presumptive Right Thesis*. Although they maintain that the presence of positive reasons is not necessary to acquire justified testimonial belief or knowledge, the absence of negative reasons is necessary (Lackey 2008, 155–57). This is an important adjustment to avoid charges of irrationality, gullibility, or naiveté. For example, Audi (2011, 142) states, "Gaining testimony-based knowledge requires only having no reason to doubt the credibility of the knowing attester..."

It is not difficult to see that, at one level, the reductionist vs. nonreductionist views map squarely onto the internalism vs. externalism debate. The fact that reductionists require positive reasons coheres well with the internalist thesis that requires internal justification for non-inferential justified beliefs. Similarly, the fact that nonreductionists reject the positive reasons requirement and instead rely on the *Presumptive Right Thesis* coheres well with the reliabilism of some externalists. This doesn't mean that the two debates map onto one another exactly, as though there is no difference between the two questions; rather, only that each view coheres well with the other. To see how the two questions further map onto one another, it is useful to take a closer look at a thoroughly externalist, nonreductionist view of testimony.

Sanford Goldberg (2010) presents a summary of what he calls Orthodox Reliabilism and then advocates for an even more radical externalist view. According to Goldberg, Orthodox Reliabilism is a combination of two other doctrines, Process Reliabilism and Process Individualism. Goldberg seeks to argue against the Orthodox Reliabilist view by showing that Process Individualism is false, substituting it out with his "*extended hypothesis*." (Goldberg 2015, 5)

Process Reliabilism, on its own, is a version of externalism. Giving a thorough analysis of it and other competing externalist views is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, at this juncture, it suffices to say that according to Process Reliabilism, "doxastic justification is a matter of the reliability of the cognitive processes that are responsible for the production of the belief." Therefore, the very fact that the cognitive processes are reliable confers justification on the epistemic subject for accepting their basic non-inferential beliefs (Goldberg 2010, 44).

What Goldberg (2010, 36) has dubbed Process Individualism is the doctrine that the cognitive processes in question "all take place within that subject's own mind/brain." Therefore, the reliability of the cognitive processes of perception, inference, or testimony that occur within the mind of the subject confers justification. It is essential to keep in mind that core to the externalist doctrine is the idea that the very fact that they are reliable is what justifies accepting beliefs through these cognitive processes. This is true irrespective of whether the epistemic subject is aware of their reliability or not.

Goldman, as an advocate for Process Individualism, writes:

> Clearly, the causal ancestry of beliefs often includes events outside the organism. Are such events to be included among the "inputs" of belief-forming processes? Or should we restrict the extent of belief-forming processes to "cognitive" events i.e., events within the organism's nervous system? I shall choose the latter course, though with some hesitation. My general grounds for this decision are roughly as follows. Justifiedness seems to be a function of how a cognizer deals with his environmental input, i.e., with the goodness or badness of the operations that register and transform the stimulation that reaches him… A justified belief is, roughly speaking, one that results from cognitive operations that are, generally speaking, good or successful. But "cognitive" operations are most plausibly construed as operations of the cognitive faculties, i.e., "information-processing" equipment internal to the organism. (Goldman 2008, 340)

Commenting on this passage, Alston (1995, 12) writes: "This seems to me just the right thing for a reliabilist to say on this point. If the epistemic status of a belief is a function of the reliability of the process that generates the belief, it is the reliability of the *psychological* process that is crucial."

In a later work, Goldman (1986, 50) is even more adamant: "One thing we do not want to do is invoke factors external to the cognizer's psychology. The sorts of processes we're discussing are purely internal processes."

Goldberg's (2010, 2–5) objection is against Process Individualism. While he accepts Process Reliabilism, he argues that Orthodox Reliabilists have gotten the analysis of testimonial justification wrong. In fact, Goldberg argues that it is his view that is consistent with Process Reliabilism, not Process Individualism.

Goldberg's "*anti-individualism*" rests upon what he calls the *extended hypothesis*. According to *anti-individualism*, "the relevant cognitive processes – those that must be in the focus of an assessment of a testimonial belief's doxastic justification – include not only those that take place in the subject's own mind/brain, but also those "upstream" processes that were implicated in the production of the testimony." (Goldberg 2010, 63) His characterization of this view as anti-individualistic is based on his rejection of Process Individualism, which, as we have seen, limits the cognitive processes under assessment to those that take place within that subject's own mind/brain. As for characterizing the view as extended, this is because his view "extends" the cognitive processes under evaluation to include the cognitive processes

of the speaker, those "processes implicated in the production of the testimony." (Goldberg 2010, 4)

In summary, according to nonreductionism, the *Presumptive Right Thesis* confers justification upon testimonial beliefs. On this view, testimony ends up being a basic justified non-inferential belief. How is this basic belief justified? According to the standard nonreductionist view, through some variation of externalism. As we have seen above, one type of externalist answer is that the actual matter-of-fact reliability of the cognitive process of the hearer is what confers justification. The hearer need not know or believe anything about that reliability; the mere fact that it is reliable suffices as long as there is an absence of defeaters. Finally, according to Goldberg's *anti-individualism* view, the reliability that confers justification is not merely the cognitive process of the hearer but also the cognitive process of the speaker.

7.3.5. Hybrid Theories and Dualism

As has become evident from the discussion above, the externalism vs. internalism debate looms large in the question of testimonial reduction. Concerning this point, Gelfert (2014, 125) writes, "Certain theoretical positions in the reductionism/anti-reductionism debate are best understood in relation to the more general internalism/externalism debate in epistemology." However, there is no true one-to-one correspondence between externalism and nonreductionism, nor between internalism and reductionism. Nevertheless, each view coheres well with some of the intuitions of the other. Internalism and reductionism place great value on the subjective attitude and state of the epistemic subject as well as his critical approach to beliefs. In contrast, externalism and nonreductionism place great value on objective reality, irrespective of the subject's internal state.

In response to these diverging views, a family of hybrid views has emerged that attempts to unite between the intuitions of both externalists and internalists. These views attempt to maintain the conditions set on both the epistemic subject and the actual state of affairs (Gelfert 2014, 125–42; Leonard 2021, 13–14). There are several views that have attempted to do this; we will focus on one.

Jennifer Lackey (2006) has defended a view that she refers to as *dualism*. On Lackey's view, both reductionists and nonreductionists get part of the epistemic analysis right and another part wrong. She argues that reductionists put the weight of justification on the hearer in the testimonial exchange. As mentioned above, one must have positive reasons in order to be justified. Those positive reasons are reasons the hearer has about the testifier, the testimony, and the general context of the exchange. However, reductionists put no such qualifications on the speaker (Lackey 2008, 176).

In contrast, nonreductionists put the weight of justification on the speaker. They require that the speaker's testimony be reliable in order for the hearer to acquire testimonial knowledge. However, they put no positive reasons requirement on the hearer to yield justified testimonial belief or knowledge (Lackey 2008, 176–77). It is important to qualify the requirement with "positive reasons" because many nonreductionists do require the absence of a defeater. Defeaters function as reasons the speaker might have to *not* believe the testimony in question. Therefore, the no-defeater condition functions as a type of negative reason.

Lackey's view is a combination of both reductionism and nonreductionism. Through her combination of conditions for both sides of the testimonial exchange, her view is characterized as being hybrid or dualist in its approach. Explicating just how that combination takes place, Lackey (2008, 177) writes:

> "D: For every speaker, A, and hearer, B, B knows (believes with justification/warrant) that *p* on the basis of A's testimony only if:
>
> (D1) B believes that *p* on the basis of the content of A's testimony,
> (D2) A's testimony is reliable or otherwise truth-conducive,
> (D3) B is a reliable or properly functioning recipient of testimony,
> (D4) the environment in which B receives A's testimony is suitable for the reception of reliable testimony,
> (D5) B has no undefeated (psychological or normative) defeaters for A's testimony, and
> (D6) B has appropriate positive reasons for accepting A's testimony."

Conditions (D2) – (D5) are similar to those that might be found in a nonreductionist view. Note that conditions (D2) – (D4) all have to do with the objective reliability of the process as a matter of fact and have nothing to do with the reasons or any subjective element having to do with the hearer. (D5) is a no-defeater condition that both sides would find acceptable in order to preserve rationality. (D1) is a condition that is supposed to assure that the belief is actually testimonial and not based upon some other source. It is condition (D6) that renders Lackey's view closer to reductionism. By necessitating positive reasons, she has rejected the nonreductionist view that the subject need not have any reasons in order to justifiably believe or have knowledge in that which is testified to.

If we compare reductionism, nonreductionism, and dualism, Reductionsim can be summarized as combining the *Reduction Thesis* and the *Positive Reasons Thesis*. In contrast, nonreductionism rejects both the *Reduction Thesis* and the *Positive Reasons Thesis*. Finally, Lackey's dualism ends up affirming the *Positive Reasons Thesis* while rejecting the *Reduction Thesis* (Lackey 2008, 178). She can resist the *Reduction Thesis* because, on her view, positive reasons alone cannot confer justification. Rather, she necessitates objective reliability through conditions (D2) – (D4).

Lackey's dualism is also different from reductionism in another way. The positive reasons outlined in (D6) end up being substantively different from the positive reasons alluded to in the reductionist view. This difference is important to stress because it is an area where reductionism has been greatly criticized and an area whose possibility has serious doubts in the contemporary literature. For example, Mark Owen Webb (1993, 263) writes: "The cause of the trouble seems to be the requirement that our beliefs based on the testimony of others be based on beliefs in us about the reliability of testimony. This higher-level requirement… places too great a burden on the believing subject, since it requires of him all kinds of knowledge about people, their areas of expertise, and their psychological propensities, which knowledge most subjects simply lack."

Lackey's dualism is able to escape this objection in two different ways. The first is through her designation of the above conditions as being necessary but not sufficient. On the reductionist view, the *Positive Reasons Thesis* is supposed to be both necessary

and sufficient. (D6) is necessary but not sufficient (Lackey 2008, 180–81). Thus, on their view, the positive reasons alone carry all the justificatory weight, whereas on Lackey's dualist account, the positive reasons share the justificatory weight with not only the other conditions mentioned but also any number of other possible variables.

The result is that on her view, the necessary condition for positive reasons merely serves the purpose of rendering it "at the very least, not irrational for her to accept the testimony in question." (Lackey 2008, 181) Therefore, the positive reasons need not get the subject across the justification finish line. This greatly lessens the burden alluded to by Webb and others.

Another substantive way that Lackey's view of positive reasons differs from many reductionist accounts is that she avoids the global vs. local dilemma that we covered above. Her account adopts the strengths of local reduction by not necessitating an overarching global reduction that objectors have pointed out is highly improbable. However, she also avoids many of the pitfalls of local reductionism by not requiring that the positive reasons be about the specific speaker in the testimonial communication.

About this point, Lackey (2008, 181) writes, "More precisely, even if a hearer, B, has not observed the general conformity of prior reports of a speaker, A, and the corresponding facts, B may have observed a general conformity of other relevant reports and facts. In particular, there seem to be at least three classes of inductively based positive reasons that are available to epistemic agents for distinguishing between reliable and unreliable testimony."

Lackey (2008, 181–83) goes on to list the three classes of inductively based positive reasons as contexts (and contextual features), different kinds of reports, and different kinds of speakers. The idea here is that although the hearer might not have observed the general conformity between a specific speaker's reports and the truth, they may nevertheless have observed the conformity (or lack thereof) of similar contexts to the truth, or similar kinds of reports to the truth, or similar kinds of speakers to the truth. This background inductively based knowledge can then serve to fulfill the positive

reasons condition of dualism. These types of reasons allow Lackey's view to avoid the substantive objections to standard forms of reductionism.

The upshot of these considerations is that ordinary hearers are confronted with a plethora of epistemically relevant positive reasons that come in a variety of forms. Such reasons are often not explicitly recalled, but they nonetheless play a crucial role in our epistemic lives as we tacitly discriminate between and evaluate pieces of incoming information and compare such input with our background beliefs. This point is borne out by noticing just how difficult it is to construct a case in which a speaker truly fails to have any relevant positive reasons for accepting a given report (Lackey 2008, 183).[243]

Now that we have summarized the debate and discussed its historical dimensions, as well as explicated contemporary versions of reductionism, nonreductionism, and dualism, we can turn our attention to the Islamic tradition, particularly to the case of ḥadīth.

7.3.6. Reductionism in Islamic Epistemology

The question of reduction in the epistemology of testimony is a debate that is foreign to Islamic philosophy. Nevertheless, there are certain native debates and views in the Islamic tradition that cohere more with reductionism than nonreductionism and others that cohere more with nonreductionism than reductionism. Ultimately, I will argue that the epistemology of ḥadīth scholars is a hybrid view, but before articulating that position, I will highlight how various views in the Islamic tradition tend one way or another.[244]

In order to search for comparable views to reductionism in the Islamic tradition, one needs to focus on the key doctrines associated with reductionism. Reductionism, as can be gleaned from the discussion above, focuses on the hearer in testimonial communication. According to reductionism, it is the hearer who carries the epistemic

[243] This is precisely why Lackey (2008, 168–75) resorts to an imaginary case about alien testimony.
[244] Eido and Safi (2020) have argued something similar, however, I will be taking a different approach here.

weight in the analysis of what qualifies as justified belief or knowledge. This is what Lackey (2008, 144) calls the *Positive Reasons Thesis*.

However, it goes beyond merely requiring hearer criteria. On the reductionist view, the hearer criteria end up at least partially being non-testimonial. Given the requirement of non-testimonial positive reasons, the justification of testimonial belief is said to reduce to non-testimonial reasons. This is what Lackey (2008, 144) calls the *Reduction Thesis*. Lastly, while a purely reductionist view might require a no-defeater condition, it cannot require any type of externalist condition.[245]

A cursory analysis of the epistemic work of ḥadīth scholars, as well as their requirements, yields quite a lot of evidence of a more reductionist view. This section's analysis will be limited to five different ways one might say that the epistemic system of ḥadīth scholars is reductionist. The first three are found in *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* texts and feature prominently in the *manhaj al-naqd*. They are the necessary conditions of authenticity (*shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa*), the requirement of non-testimonially-based evidence in transmitter criticism, and the requirement of at least one endorsement (*taʿdīl/tazkiya*) for a transmitter to be deemed acceptable. The last two reductionist elements are found in *kalām* texts and provide further theoretical context from within Sunnī epistemology. They are the reductionist classification of epistemic sources of knowledge as well as the view that transmitted (*naqlī*) evidence ultimately relies upon reason.

As has already been alluded to in the dissertation, ḥadīth scholars ultimately articulated five necessary conditions for a Prophetic testimony to be considered authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 58). Although we will analyze these conditions in greater detail in Chapter 8, for now, it is important to point out how they contribute to a more reductionist understanding of the critical method of ḥadīth scholars.

The five conditions serve as a type of criteria for ḥadīth scholars to evaluate any given Prophetic testimony. If a ḥadīth's testimonial chain is contiguous, the transmitters of the chain are reliable to a certain degree, and there are no hidden defects that emerge after the ḥadīth critic engages in inquiry, comparing and contrasting the ḥadīth under

[245] If one were to require externalist conditions, in addition to the reductionist ones, that would simply be, on this classification, a hybrid view.

evaluation with other related testimonies, then they are justified in making an epistemic judgment on the ḥadīth in question. Furthermore, they are justified in believing and stating that the ḥadīth is authentic.

Ḥadīth scholars, per this classical system, are required to engage in inquiry to investigate the Prophetic testimony. They are obligated to look for any breaks or omissions in the chain, to look up the transmitters in the biographical dictionaries, to seek out information about their reliability, and to gather and contrast other variant traditions to the testimony under consideration. All these requirements can be thought of as reasons that the ḥadīth scholar is required to have for him to be able to justifiably accept a Prophetic testimony as authentic.[246]

These reasons not only cohere well with the *Positive Reasons Thesis*, but they, in fact, are also much more formal and arguably of a much higher standard than conceived of in the anglophone literature. In other words, reductionism, in its various forms, allows for more general evidence to serve as reasons for accepting testimony, whether on the global or local view. The *shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa* are anything but general; rather, they are specific and formal and thus set a higher bar.

This brings us to another way one can view the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars as being reductionist. One of the questions regularly discussed in the books of ḥadīth studies is whether transmitters are de facto considered reliable, barring evidence to the contrary, or whether we need evidence that they are reliable. The latter position is the standard view of the majority of ḥadīth scholars.

This debate is often characterized in the field of ḥadīth studies as a question of whether we need some type of endorsement (*taʿdīl/tazkiya*) from a ḥadīth critic concerning a transmitter's reliability in order to consider them reliable. In fact, the debate is often more specifically characterized as whether one endorsement is enough or if we need more than one endorsement. The dominant position is that at least one endorsement is

[246] One might object claiming that these conditions refer not to internal reasons, but to the matter of fact. However, ḥadīth scholars were quite clear that they did not mean the matter of fact, rather they meant the reasons that the evaluator has. See, for example: al-Sakhāwī (2014b, 2:130) and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (2015, 13–14).

needed for any given transmitter in order for them to be considered reliable (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 138; Al-Ṣuyūṭī 2016a, 4:17, 48).

Notice how this *taʿdīl/tazkiya* requirement is reductionist in two ways. First, it indicates that the testimony of others is not de facto justifiable. In other words, there is no presumptive right to accept a ḥadīth simply because it was transmitted. Secondly, the endorsements serve as a type of reason that the evaluator has to believe the testimony in question. However, given that the endorsements are themselves usually testimonial, can this truly be said to be a form of reductionism?

This brings us to the third reductionist point of the traditional method of ḥadīh criticism. As was already discussed in Chapter 5, there are two ways to repel the criticism that transmitter criticism leads to a vicious circle. First, there are central authorities in transmitter criticism who are not accepted based upon individual endorsement, rather the community, as a whole, has accepted them (Al-Ṣuyūṭī 2016a, 4:17–29). The second is the peer review system, where the evaluator's reliance is on the immediate/proximate transmitter critic, who is then transmitting to us the authority and reliability of other critics. The reliability and authority of the immediate/proximate critic is grounded in a whole host of things, including sense perception and induction.[247] Finally, we can add a third point, that ḥadīth scholars require that, ultimately, someone will have had to have met or judged the transmitter in question. In other words, at the end of the testimonial chain of the endorsement is someone who evaluated the transmitter in question based on sense perception and induction.

All three of these aspects of the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars are intertwined. Each of these three aspects can be said to be a requirement for positive non-testimonial reasons for accepting a ḥadīth as attributable to the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ). Thus, they can be seen to cohere well with Lackey's *Positive Reasons Thesis*. Similarly, at least at face value, they also cohere well with the *Reduction Thesis* since their consequence is that justification for a ḥadīth's attribution reduces to non-testimonial sources.

[247] I benefitted this point from a similar discussion in Lackey (2008, 185–87).

A fourth aspect of traditional Islamic epistemology that can be characterized as reductionist has to do with the standard analysis of epistemic sources. As already mentioned in this chapter, Islamic scholars discussed what they sometimes referred to as the "pathways to certainty" (*madārik al-yaqīn*). These certain perceptions are said to be evident, and upon them, all inferential knowledge is built. At other times, they referred to them as necessary (*ḍarūrī*) knowledge. At times, they listed these types of sources out as described earlier. However, other times, they grouped them into two or three categories.

In some instances, Islamic theologians, philosophers, and jurists grouped these basic justified sources into three categories: external sense perceptions (*ḥissiyyāt*), internal sense perceptions (*wijdāniyyāt*), and first principles (*awwaliyyāt*), sometimes called self-evident principles (*badīhiyyāt*) (Al-Jurjānī 1998a, 1:98–102). Other times, they categorized them as being fundamentally grounded in either sense perception or reason (F. al-D. M. Al-Rāzī 1996c, 1:83–84).[248] They then go on to explain that these two or three categories can then be combined to produce other necessary (*ḍarūrī*) knowledge or pathways to certainty (*madārik al-yaqīn*).

In other words, the longer list of necessary knowledge reduces to this list of two or three fundamental sources. According to this reduction, one type of testimonial knowledge, *successive group testimony* (*mutawātirāt*), ends up reducing to reason and hearing (*samʿ*). This clearly coheres well with the *Reduction Thesis*.

A fifth and final aspect of traditional Islamic epistemology that can be characterized as reductionist is found in *kalām* texts when classifying evidence as either being rational (*ʿaqlī*), transmitted (*naqlī*), or a composite (*muarakkab*) of the two.[249] This investigation was already alluded to in Chapter 6 as it relates to the question of pure vs. hybrid forms of testimonial belief. However, at this juncture, a different part of this investigation is being stressed. When discussing these three categories, Sunnī theologians denied the possibility of purely transmitted (*naqlī*) evidence on the

[248] Al-Rāzī actually characterizes it as being either a sensory cause (*mūjib ḥissī*) or a rational cause (*mūjib ʿaqlī*). I've avoided the language of "cause" since it exhibits a level of externalism to the analysis.
[249] See, for example, Al-Rāzī (2012, 29); al-Khūnajī (2022, 151–53); al-Tilimsānī (2010, 91–93); and al-Taftāzānī (1998, 1:281–82). I am grateful to Shaykh Musa Furber for referring me to the relevant passage form al-Taftāzānī's *Sharḥ al-Maqāsid*.

grounds that knowing whether the speaker is truthful or whether the testimony is acceptable as a proof, must ultimately rely on reason. Otherwise, the evidence runs the risk of falling into an infinite regress of testimonial justification or a vicious circle.

The theologians were particularly interested in the case of the truthfulness and reliability of the Prophet (ṣ). According to this line of reasoning, evidence whose premises rely on Prophetic testimonies cannot be purely testimonial since the reliability of Prophets is ultimately known through inference. This inference, which is based on the breaking of nomological laws through miracles, signifies God's testifying to the truthfulness and reliability of the claimant of Prophecy. Therefore, while Prophetic testimonies are acceptable forms of evidence, their justification ultimately reduces to inference. This coheres well with the *Reduction Thesis*.

Therefore, through these five ways: the necessary conditions of authenticity (*shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa*), the requirement of endorsement (*taʿdīl/tazkiya*) for reliability, the requirement of non-testimonially-based transmitter criticism, the reduction of testimonial knowledge to other sources of knowledge, and through the reduction of transmitted evidence to inference, the traditional critical method of ḥadīth scholars specifically, and Sunnī epistemology more broadly, can be characterized as being reductionist when it comes to testimony. However, to claim, based on this reasoning alone, that the epistemology of ḥadīth scholars specifically, or Islamic scholars more broadly, is reductionist, is far too hasty. In fact, there are several compelling reasons to characterize their approach as nonreductionist as well.

7.3.7. Nonreductionism in Islamic Epistemology

Just as we investigated the central theses of reductionism, we must investigate the central theses of nonreductionism before we search for comparable views within the Islamic intellectual tradition. This is difficult since nonreductionism can be thought of in any number of ways. For example, at some level, nonreductionism can simply be thought of as a rejection of the sufficiency of reductionism's *Positive Reasons Thesis*. Alternatively, it can be thought of as a rejection of the *Reduction Thesis*. Or, more radically, it might be characterized as a rejection of any necessary condition of positive reasons.

For the purposes of this dissertation, nonreductionism will be taken to be made up of three core theses. The first is Gelfert's (2014, 101) *Presumptive Right Thesis*, which was mentioned above. This can be thought of as a rejection of the *Positive Reasons Thesis* since it confers the right of the hearer to believe testimony by the mere fact that it has been asserted. The second is the Reidan analogy between the basicness of perceptual knowledge and testimonial knowledge (Gelfert 2014, 61–64). The third is the requirement of any type of externalist condition.

Given our analysis of what a nonreductionist view entails, there are several aspects central to Islamic epistemology that are characteristic of a nonreductionist approach to testimony. In this section, four aspects will be covered, and a fifth will be independently investigated in the following section. The four aspects can be summarized as the possibility of testimonial knowledge, non-successive testimony (*āḥād*) yielding opinion (*ẓann*), the view that does not require an endorsement (*taʿdīl/tazkiya*) for transmitters, and finally, the lowering of the bar of justification for virtuous acts (*faḍāʾil al-aʿmāl*).

The first nonreductionist aspect of Islamic epistemology is the equating of *successive group testimony* (*tawātur*) and testimonies "surrounded by signs" (*muḥtaff biʾl qarāʾin*) with other basic forms of non-inferential knowledge, like sense perception and first principles (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 41–46, 52). As mentioned above, Islamic epistemology can be characterized as being foundationalist, and some of its immediately justified beliefs (justified basic beliefs, or non-inferentially justified beliefs, or necessary beliefs) are testimonial. In other words, similar to Reid's comparison between perception and testimony, Islamic epistemology draws a comparison between some types of testimony and sense perception and first principles (Al-Taftāzānī 2020, 112–29).

Earlier in the dissertation, an explication of various versions of testimonies "surrounded by signs" (*muḥtaff biʾl qarāʾin*) was provided. In order for such testimonies to be representative of nonreductionism, the *qarāʾin* would need to be of the type that is purely testimonial, as opposed to a hybrid.[250] Otherwise, we would be

[250] I drew this distinction in Chapter 6, relying on Ibn Ḥajar (2019, 52).

back to either a reductionist or hybrid account. As for *successive group testimony* (*tawātur*), it will receive its own analysis in Chapter 8. For now, it suffices to draw attention to the comparison. At the very least, through these cases, there is a live possibility of a nonreductionist reading of Islamic epistemology.

This leads us to an adjacent point that can be characterized as nonreductionist. On the standard Sunnī epistemological account, testimonies "surrounded by signs" and *successive group testimonies* yield nomic certainty (*wujūb ʿādī*). However, *non-successive testimonies*, called *āḥād* testimonies, are said to yield opinion (*ẓann*). The actual Arabic word, *āḥād*, translates as "singular." However, what is meant is any testimony that does not reach the level of *successive group testimony*. This *tawātur* vs. *āḥād* contrast, among other things, distinguishes between testimonies that yield nomic certainty and those that do not (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 50–51).

The traditional distinction posits that non-successive, *āḥād* testimonies, *ceteris paribus*, yield a credence of belief above .5, referred to as opinion (*ẓann*) (Al-Ghazālī 2016b, 219–20). Importantly, the standard view in ḥadīth studies, specifically, and Islamic epistemology more broadly, is that not only can *āḥād* testimonies yield justified belief, but even truly singular testimonies (*al-khabar al-wāḥid*) can yield justified belief. This is contrasted against some early objectors to the standard position, that held either that *āḥād* testimonies were always unjustified or that only corroborated testimonies were justified (Al-Juwaynī 2017a, 607–11).

This second nonreductionist aspect of Islamic epistemology, the view that *non-successive testimony* (*āḥād*) yields *ẓann*, is similar in ways to the *Presumptive Right Thesis*. It is as though, as a hearer, you are immediately allowed a credence of above .5 for any testimony you come into contact with.[251] Of course, as has already been

[251] This is one reading of this principle. An alternative reading is that ḥadīth scholars were saying that they know *āḥād* testimonies yield opinion through induction. On this alternative reading, the principle turns out to be reductionist since it is that previously held knowledge that confers justification. However, this second reading runs into exegetical and philosophical problems that deserve engagement but are beyond the scope of this thesis. For now, we can suffice with the following. Ḥadīth scholars are not going to require that a critic first come to know how and why *āḥād* testimonies yield opinion in order for their belief in the authenticity of a ḥādīth to be deemed justified. In other words, he could be oblivious to this principle, and yet the fact that it is, as a matter of fact, true, helps in the conferring of justification. Furthermore, the ḥadīth critic is held to a higher standard than the layman. This differentiation is analogous to contemporary philosophers differentiating between the theorist and the layman. If even the theorist doesn't need to have his own personal reasons, then the layman also surely

stated and will be further elaborated in Chapter 8, ḥadīth scholars and Islamic scholars more broadly also required a no-defeater condition.[252] However, having a no-defeater condition does not disqualify them from being nonreductionists. In fact, as we saw before, contemporary nonreductionists often require a no-defeater condition.

It is important to note here that the initial distinction is between the nomic necessity (*wujūb ʿādī*) of *successive group testimonies* and the credential probability of *non-successive* testimonies. This is largely because the debate occurred in light of the view that knowledge (*ʿilm*) is infallible and is synonymous with certainty (*yaqīn*). It is against this backdrop that a third type was articulated, *āḥād* testimonies "surrounded by signs" (*muḥtaff biʾl qarāʾin*), which were also said to yield nomic necessity. However, as will be argued in Chapter 8, there is room for another type of testimony that is neither certain nor probabilistic, which adds further nuance to this standard classification.

A third nonreductionist aspect of traditional Islamic epistemology is the view among some that an endorsement (*taʿdīl/tazkiya*) is not required for a transmitter to be considered reliable. Although this is not the standard position, those who espoused this view held that any transmitter that didn't have an impugnment (*jarḥ*) or impeachment (*ṭaʿn*) transmitted against them was de facto acceptable (Al-Sakhāwī 2014b, 2:169–75; Al-Ṣuyūṭī 2016a, 4:19–20). This also coheres well with the *Presumptive Right Thesis*.

Similarly, we can draw a connection between the above view and those that hold the view that transmission itself is a form of endorsement. This is a standard debate found in the ḥadīth studies literature. Al-Sakhāwī (2014b, 2:206) mentions that the view that no *taʿdīl/tazkiya* is required is entailed by those who hold that merely transmitting from an individual is an endorsement of them. If this is correct, then this would be another form of the *Presumptive Right Thesis*.

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does not. Finally, if one is unconvinced that the theorist doesn't need to know this beforehand, it is quite clear that ḥadīth scholars are not going to require that the average person need to know it and to have tested it. Therefore, I am ultimately unconvinced of this reductionist reading. I thank Dr. Hamzeh al-Bakri for bringing it to my attention.

[252] The necessary condition of being free of a hidden defect (*ʿilla*) can certainly be thought of as a no-defeater condition. In fact, it is more robust, as it includes norms of inquiry.

The fourth and final nonreductionist aspect of ḥadīth studies and Islamic epistemology relates to their adoption of *thresholds of acceptance*. As was discussed earlier and will be further explicated in Chapter 8, ḥadīth scholars employed a *threshold of acceptance* account of justification. Depending on the domain, context, stakes, and other factors, the level of credence required, as well as the stability and certainty required, would shift. Therefore, while it is true that the conditions of authenticity (*shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa*) mentioned above are clearly reductionist, these conditions are not always required.

For example, Islamic scholars are largely in agreement that such stringent conditions only apply to the legal domain (*aḥkām*), where the only evidence before one is the Prophetic testimony in question. It is standard to say that weak (*ḍaʿīf*) testimonies are acceptable when it comes to virtuous acts (*faḍāʾil al-aʿmāl*). Given that weakness can be a result of not knowing anything about a particular transmitter in the chain, it seems like, in such cases, one is justified in acting upon the testimony despite not knowing anything about them (M. ʿAwwāma 2017). This ties right back to the *Presumptive Right Thesis*.

One might object and say this rule is only tied to action, not belief and knowledge. While that might be true, action requires some type of belief about what is being transmitted. Furthermore, ḥadīth scholars and other Islamic scholars used weak ḥadīth in many non-action-oriented disciplines, like the Prophetic biography (*al-sīra*). Therefore, while there were higher reductionist-like standards in high-stakes cases, nonreductionism seems to be embraced in lower-stakes cases.

Finally, even in the case of virtuous acts, or in the domain of biographies, we are still dealing with a certain level of idealized epistemology. Meaning these are not mundane cases that have nothing to do with religion and the afterlife. If Muslim scholars are willing to accept this degree of justification in the religious domain, what does that mean for a mundane context like listening to someone's directions on how to get to the grocery store? It seems almost certain that their view would be at least partially nonreductionist under such conditions.

7.3.8. A Case for Dualism

As can be gleaned from the last two sections, Islamic epistemology broadly, and the traditional method of ḥadīth criticism specifically, can be described as reductionist from some vantage points and nonreductionist from others. In this section, I propose that the best way to understand the Sunnī tradition is by mapping out a hybrid theory of justification. Beyond attempting to show how the various aspects of the epistemic puzzle come together to make one coherent view, I will also build upon them to make an argument for hybridity as the correct position. In other words, this section is not merely exegetical or reconstructive; it is also philosophical and synthetic.

Before getting into the details of how the previous views can cohere with one another, it is useful to discuss a few overarching tensions that are guiding the conversation. First, there is the contrast between testimony as being analogous to perception and the insistence on its distinctness and difference. Secondly, there is the contrast between internalist notions of justification operating in the Islamic tradition, as well as externalist notions of reliability and entitlement. Thirdly, there is the contrast between the requirement for a highly reflective standard of reasons for certain cases of testimony and a much more basic default of acceptance for testimony in others. Bridging these three differences and reconciling these tensions will be key to making sense of and advocating for a hybrid view.

The first tension is between the view that testimony is analogous to perception and the insistence on its distinctness and difference. We can see the tension drawn out more clearly when we compare the view that testimonial knowledge is possible in the case of *successive group testimony* and *non-successive testimony* "surrounded by signs," with the distinctness of testimony as being the only source of knowledge that substantively relies on another epistemic agent.[253] The apparent contradiction is that testimony seems to be viewed as both similar to and different from other sources of knowledge. However, this apparent contradiction is reconcilable.

[253] Paul Faulkner (2000) also argues for the distinctness of testimony based upon similar grounds. Given that Faulkner also argues for a hybrid view, there is considerable overlap and opportunity for synthesis between the two views.

Notice that in our explication of *tawātur* vs. *āḥād* testimonies, the concern is primarily surrounding nomic necessity (*al-wujūb al-ʿādī*). Given the standard Islamic epistemic view that sense perception, if all conditions are met, yields nomically infallible knowledge, the philosophical question is whether testimony can reach that same standard. It is against the backdrop of this question that *tawātur* and *āḥād* testimonies which are "surrounded by signs," are analogized to sense perception.

However, the external nature of testimony as a source of knowledge renders it fundamentally different due to the involvement of another epistemic agent. The fact that there is another epistemic agent in cases of testimonial belief, whose reliability is fundamentally different from non-agential objects perceived by sense perception, renders it distinct from other sources of knowledge. More will be said about this in Chapter 8; however, for now, it suffices to draw attention to the possibility of deliberate and indeliberate falsehood on the part of the speaker. In fact, *tawātur* and *āḥād* testimonies "surrounded by signs" can be seen as unique testimonial cases whose conditions protect them against the possibility of deliberate and indeliberate falsehood.

Thus, in terms of this first reconciliation, Islamic epistemology can be said to be hybrid in that it views testimony as being like sense perception in its yielding knowledge that is nomically necessary in the case of *tawātur* and *āḥād* testimonies "surrounded by signs" and yet fundamentally different in that it recognizes the distinct testimonial possibility of deliberate and indeliberate falsehood outside of these two cases. The former can be glossed as a nonreductionist view, and the latter can be glossed as a reductionist view. It is precisely because of the distinctly testimonial possibility of deliberate and indeliberate falsehood that ḥadīth scholars introduced reductionist criteria for all cases of Prophetic testimonies outside of these two exceptions. Framing these two apparently contradictory views in this manner shows how the two can be reconciled.

The second tension that must be addressed is the contrast between internalist notions of justification operating in the Islamic tradition as well as externalist notions of reliability and entitlement. If we compare the *shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa*, the requirement of non-testimonially-based transmitter criticism, the requirement of *taʿdīl/tazkiya* for a transmitter to be considered acceptable, with the view that *āḥād* testimonies yield *ẓann*,

it seems that there is an apparent contradiction. However, these views are reconcilable if we view Sunnī epistemology through a hybrid lens.

Here, we can draw on the work of Paul Faulkner (2000), who has associated justification with internalist notions and entitlement with externalist notions. According to his view, warrant ends up being a combination of justification and entitlement. However, for our purposes, we need not rely on warrant or the particular language of justification and entitlement. We need only to draw a parallel between what is occurring in the Islamic tradition and what Faulkner has argued for.

On the traditional Sunnī account, the *shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa,* the requirement for transmitter criticism being at least partially grounded in non-testimonial reasons, and the requirement for *taʿdīl/tazkiya,* can be seen as internalist notions required for justification. In contrast, the view that *non-successive testimony* yields *ẓann* can be seen as a statement of fact about the reliability of testimony as a source of knowledge. The latter becomes even more apparent against the backdrop of the opponents to the standard view, who required corroboration for solitary reports (*al-khabar al-wāḥid*) to be considered acceptable.

Thus, the two views are reconcilable if we embrace a hybrid form of justification for testimonial belief and knowledge. The nonreductionist view that *āḥād* testimonies yields *ẓann* can be considered a baseline starting point, an entitlement that relates to the reliability of the very institution of testimonial communication. However, this brute fact does not alone yield justification if ḥadīth scholars require further internalist conditions. It is through the addition of these necessary conditions to the nonreductionist principle of entitlement that justification is conferred.

The third and final tension that must be addressed is the contrast between the requirement for a highly reflective standard of reasons for certain cases of testimony and a much more basic default of acceptance for testimony in others. How do we reconcile the incredibly high standards set by the critical method of ḥadīth scholars *vis-à-vis shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa* with the view that *āḥād* testimonies yield *ẓann* or the standard view that weak (*ḍaʿīf*) testimonies are acceptable when it comes to virtuous acts (*faḍāʾil al-aʿmāl*)? Similarly, how do we reconcile all of those standards with Sunnī

theologians denying the possibility of purely transmitted (*naqlī*) evidence on the grounds that knowing whether the speaker is truthful or whether the testimony is acceptable requires a certainty-yielding inference?

As already alluded to above, this is best understood through a model of justification that shifts the threshold according to the domain. In theological matters, the bar is highest. This is followed by legal matters, which standardly are said to require authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) or fair (*ḥasan*) testimonies. However, beyond that, when it comes to virtuous acts (*faḍāʾil al-aʿmāl*) or biographical accounts such as the Prophetic biography (*sīra*), weak (*ḍaʿīf*) testimonies are acceptable. All these cases are religious in nature, yet the threshold shifts with the domain, context, and risk involved.

These higher thresholds indicate that the principle that *āḥād* testimonies yield *ẓann* is not justificatorially sufficient in these contexts. This can be gleaned from the fact that lacking reasons for the reliability of a transmitter is seen as a cause for deeming a testimony *ḍaʿīf* and thus rejected (*mardūd*). Given the domain of legal rulings, a mere credence above .5 does not suffice. Instead, several necessary conditions are required, all of which operate as internalist conditions to raise the bar of acceptability.

In the case of Prophecy, certainty is required. Thus, neither *ẓann* nor the probability yielded by *shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa* suffices. Since certainty is required, only a demonstration (*burḥan*) can justify our belief and reliance on the claimant as being a Messenger of God. This is why Sunnī theologians mentioned that the reliability and truthfulness of the Prophet is known to us through the inference of the miracle and the breaking of nomic laws. Since we need to be certain in this theological context, it is through this clearly reductionist bar that we at least partially achieve that.[254]

Therefore, the tension between the two points is reconcilable. The apparent contradiction arises due to the changing domain, context, and risk. However, this can be explained and reconciled by pointing out that the conditions themselves shift with the shifting domain, context, and risk. This standard view in Islamic epistemology will receive further treatment in Chapter 8.

[254] The reason I'm qualifying it with "at least partially" is because certainty requires its own analysis and investigation in terms of the externalism and internalism debate.

In summary, all three dilemmas and points of tension found within the Islamic epistemological system are ultimately reconcilable. However, I propose that not only are they reconcilable, but they also provide an incredibly intuitive system that addresses an assortment of desiderata. The result is a hybrid system that accounts for both the concerns of reductionists and the concerns of nonreductionists.

Reductionists are concerned that the central theses of nonreductionism amount to naiveté and gullibility. They also point out that despite generally reliable conditions, without a positive reasons requirement, the epistemic subject will never know if this instance of testimony is itself reliable. In contrast, nonreductionists are concerned with the reductionist claim that positive reasons are sufficient. Positive internal reasons have no true connection to the external environment. Furthermore, reductionists seem to set too high of a bar. How do we make sense of the majority of what we believe based upon testimony, from mundane everyday beliefs to the beliefs we acquire as children?

The Islamic epistemic system broadly, and the critical method of ḥadīth scholars specifically, is well equipped to walk this fine line. It addresses the concerns of reductionists by requiring positive reasons, particularly in high-stakes cases. Furthermore, the critical method of ḥadīth scholars provides a realistic and applicable method of managing testimonies. Nonreductionism would have a difficult, if not impossible, time filtering out authentic from weak Prophetic testimonies since it places none of the justificatory burden on the hearer.

It also addresses the concerns of nonreductionists by relying on both the possibility of testimonial knowledge through *tawātur* and *āḥād* testimonies "surrounded by signs," as well as through the principle of *āḥād* testimonies yielding *ẓann*. Through these different positions, the Islamic epistemic system can make sense of many testimonies found in our day-to-day lives, as well as address the concern of nonreductionists that positive reasons are not sufficient. Therefore, the nonreductionist aspects of the Islamic system both lower the bar to make sense of the intuition of the prevalence of testimonial justification in our day-to-day lives, while also simultaneously tying justification to the external world.

The Islamic system also has another element going for it; it preserves the distinct nature of testimony while conceding operational reduction. The *Reductionist Thesis* is too strong. While it may be true that ultimately, our reason, sense perception, and memory are all working together in cases of testimonial belief, the idea that this means testimony is totally reducible is ignoring testimony as an epistemic category. In contrast, the nonreductionist thesis is too weak; by positing the similarity of testimony to sense perception, it ignores the distinct nature of testimony. The inclusion of another epistemic agent and the possibility of both deliberate and indeliberate falsehood is a reality that the hearer simply cannot ignore. Accounting for that superficially through a no-defeater condition ignores the real impact of that reality on how we deal with testimony as hearers in our day-to-day lives.

Before moving on to the final section of Chapter 7, it is important to stress that the context of Islamic epistemology is religious in nature. This religious (*sharʿī*) domain can be described as being formal and represents an idealized type of epistemology. What would Islamic scholars have to say about the mundane?

To answer this question would require a vast survey of Islamic sources, and that is far beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, given the theory of a threshold of acceptance, we can preliminarily say that the Islamic system would drop the high bar of positive reasons required in *shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa*. Whether or not positive reasons would drop completely is a difficult question to answer.

There are at least two possible answers to this question in the anglophone literature. One possible solution is to adopt Lackey's view and rely on something akin to her classes of inductively based positive reasons. On this view, positive reasons play a role even in mundane cases of testimony. Alternatively, one could argue that in the case of mundane testimony, the requirement for positive reasons drops, and the nonreductionist principles essentially kick in and take over.[255] Both paths would entail a hybrid view. However, the nature of that hybridity is different.

[255] See Elizabeth Fricker (1995) for a similar view.

If we advocate for a hard division between the domain of ḥadīth and religious epistemology on the one hand and mundane day-to-day testimonies on the other, we end up with a hybrid view for one domain of testimonies and nonreductionism for the other. If, however, we argue for one hybrid view for all domains, with a shifting threshold of reasons based on the domain, then the view is much closer to Lackey's dualism.[256]

I don't know of any evidence in Islamic epistemology favoring one way over the other. However, I am personally convinced by Lackey's view, given that it seems highly unlikely that we ever truly lack some form of positive reasons. If that is the case, there might be no use to the purely nonreductionist view.

In the fourth and final section of Chapter 7, we will move on to investigate another nonreductionist aspect of Islamic epistemology. This is a discussion that is rarely, if ever, discussed in the context of ḥadīth; however, it is essential to the greater Islamic epistemological system. In this final section of the chapter, we will be moving away from analyzing human testimony to discussing Divine testimony.

7.4. A Metaphysical Difference Between Divine Testimony and Human Testimony

7.4.1. A Brief Summary

According to the hybrid view defended above, hearers must necessarily have some type of positive reasons to justifiably believe or know through testimony. However, by embracing a few of Lackey's hybrid strategies, we have seen that the *Positive Reasons Thesis* need not be a high threshold. For one, the reasons are not doing all the justificatory work since these views also require certain externalist conditions. Secondly, if the reasons can be associated with classes of testimonies as explained above, but not necessarily associated with the hearer in question, the reasons become much more accessible. However, even with that diminished role, positive reasons are still required for justification.

[256] See Lackey (2008, 183–85, 208) for an extended engagement with Fricker's more bifurcated view.

This presents a problem in Islamic epistemology for Divine testimony. How will this hybrid view make sense of Divine testimony, whether it be direct to angels or Prophets, or indirect, like what the average person will receive through a testimonial chain? Given the view defended above, is it necessary to require some type of positive reasons that help confer justification in cases of Divine testimony? Is there not something inherently problematic with such a view? Intuitively, it seems incredibly problematic to require positive reasons to confer justification for what one hears directly or indirectly from God.[257]

In what follows, I will argue that Divine testimony is epistemically distinct from human testimony and, as such, does not require positive reasons. Therefore, one can hold a hybrid view on the question of reduction when it comes to human testimony and a purely nonreductionist view when it comes to Divine testimony. In fact, I will argue that this view is intuitive and further solidifies the nonreductionist aspects of Islamic epistemology.

Before moving on to make a case for this distinction, it is worthwhile to briefly connect some of what will be discussed to anglophone epistemology. There are two areas where similar investigations are discussed in the literature. The first area where this question comes up in the literature is the evil demon problem.[258] The second is the investigation into machine testimony.[259]

These two areas of anglophone philosophy are relevant to the topic at hand. However, they will not be relied upon for any type of synthesis or discussion. Nevertheless, reading material on these two questions is what initially turned my attention to the importance of this investigation and what ultimately led me to phrase the philosophical problem in this manner. There is, however, room for further investigation between the two traditions on this question.

[257] I don't mean requiring positive reasons for the transmitters who constitute the testimonial chain between the hearer and God, I mean requiring positive reasons for God, Himself, as a speaker.
[258] For an introduction, see: Newman (2019).
[259] See, for example: Goldberg (2021; 2017).

7.4.2. Divine Testimony in Islamic Theology

Similar to the evil demon problem, Muslim theologians and jurists investigated the possibility of what they called "deception" (*al-ighwāʾ*).[260] Often this topic is raised when discussing the possibility of Prophecy given the prominent Sunnī view of *Divine Command Morality* (*kawn al-khayr wa al-sharr sharʿiyyayn*) as opposed to the *Natural Morality* view (*kawn al-khayr wa al-sharr ʿaqliyyayn*). While the prevalent view among Sunnī theologians and jurists is that it is not rationally possible for God to deceive humans testimonially, they differ on how to make sense of that impossibility.

A prominent argument for this view rests on the doctrine of internal speech (*al-kalām al-nafsī*), ultimately relating to the knowledge of the speaker. Thus, in the case of a human, deception would entail that they first knew the truth and then brought to bear, *vis-à-vis* their internal speech, a meaning that contradicted that truth and then subsequently uttered that lie. A clear entailment of this analysis is the beginningness (*ḥudūth*) of the false speech.

Relying on this analysis, Islamic scholars then argue that such a case is impossible for God because He cannot be a locus of events (*maḥall lil-ḥawādith*), and He is not subject to change (Al-Jurjānī 1998c, 8:114–18). These two principles are standard views found in Islamic theology, and thus, anyone who holds them to be true must also hold that Divine deception is impossible. God's internal speech relates to His knowledge, which in turn relates to that which is rationally necessary, impossible, and possible. His speech *signifies* all three categories as they are. There cannot be a case of deception because it would require a new meaning to be signified, different from the eternally true meaning being signified. Given that God cannot change and cannot be a locus for events, this is impossible. Therefore, Divine deception is rationally impossible.[261]

[260] See, for example: al-Ghazālī (2016a, 257–58).

[261] There are several different arguments employed by Muslim scholars attempting to prove the impossibility of Divine deception or the impossibility of God speaking a falsehood. While all Muslim scholars want to argue that God does not speak falsehood, they differ greatly in how to make sense of that doctrine and how to argue for it. For examples of their arguments, see: al-Rāzī (2012, 123–24); al-Taftāzānī (2020, 292–93); and al-Jurjānī (1998c, 8:114–18).

7.4.3. A Case for a Clear Distinction

Given the hybrid view argued for earlier, Divine testimony seems to, at least at face value, present a problem. Although the argument presented above suffices in proving not only the reliability of Divine testimony, but the infallibility of it, it nevertheless seems to indicate that one would only be justified in accepting it if one knew the argument and understood it. This type of bar or threshold is simply too steep for the average person and would render most non-specialists and non-theorists unjustified in their beliefs based upon revelation.

It is here that I will make two interventions. The first is to say that the hybrid view presented above was not meant to apply to anything other than human testimony. While it is true that testimony is unique in its involvement of another epistemic agent, the nature of that agent is essential to its epistemic analysis. Recall that the ability to err and to deliberately deceive was key to our analysis, and thus, those possibilities impact our understanding of the reliability of human testimony. It is against the backdrop of these epistemic realities that the reductionist elements of the hybrid view kick in to filter out unreliable and deceptive testimonies. This analysis cannot be carried over to Divine testimony.

In the case of Divine testimony, the very nature of the Divine does not allow for deception since He cannot be a locus for events or change. Therefore, the very concept of the Divine prohibits the need for any reliability check. If a given testimony really is from the Divine, then there is no need for positive reasons to justify belief based upon that testimony. Divine testimony is, by its very nature, infallible.

The second intervention is to tie this investigation to the question of skepticism and the metajustificatory internalism vs. externalism debate. As mentioned above, Muslim scholars often presented arguments against skepticism while stating quite clearly that they did not think these arguments were needed to justify non-inferential beliefs. This case is no different; the possibility of a skeptical attack, like the evil demon problem, does not vitiate the justification afforded to the hearer in believing infallible Divine

testimony. Arguments can be presented by theorists to repel skeptical attacks, but they are not needed to justify the belief.[262]

Finally, when it comes to the case of an angel or Prophet who receives Divine testimony directly, there is another manner that renders it distinct from human testimony. In such cases, we can argue that the Divine testimony is communicated along with other supporting evidence that proves that it is, in fact, Divine and true.[263] In other words, the angel or Prophet as a hearer need not rely on positive reasons that precede the testimonial act; rather, the testimonial act is accompanied by what it needs to confer justification and infallibility.

[262] Some Islamic scholars discounted the skeptical attacks by differentiating between rational and nomic certainty, thus decreasing the blow of the skeptical argument. See, for example: Ramaḍān Efendī et al (2012, 546).
[263] Here I rely on al-Juwaynī's (1996a, 1:235) analysis of direct Divine testimony and build upon it.

CHAPTER VIII

AN EPISTEMIC ANALYSIS OF THE RULES AND AXIOMS OF ḤADĪTH CRITICISM

Having investigated several philosophically upstream debates in Chapters 6 and 7, we can return to one of the core theses of this dissertation. This core thesis argues that the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars includes an epistemic apparatus (*āla maʿrifiyya*) built upon firm rational and epistemic grounding. This argument will benefit greatly from all that has preceded this chapter, especially the chapter on testimonial justification. In fact, in many ways, the conclusions put forward in the reduction debate are essential to the forthcoming analysis.

However, before we jump into the main arguments and theses of this chapter, it is important to preface with some brief comments about the terminology that will be used throughout. Thus, the first section will provide an explication of the terms: axioms, axiomatization, rules, rules of transformation, and apparatus. After a summary of how these terms will be used, we can return to the analysis of some of the core features of the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars.

8.1. Rules, Axioms, and Apparatuses

The terms rules, axioms, and apparatuses are all being used in a particular technical sense. While their usage is initially drawn from the Islamic tradition, it is also being synthesized with similar meanings found in the anglophone philosophical tradition. Finally, that synthesis is being taken and built upon to tie it to larger themes and theses in this dissertation, including the argument that the *manhaj al-naqd* began informal and applied and, over time, formalized and became more theoretical.

In Chapter 5, we mentioned that ḥadīth scholars of the classical era often define the study of ḥadīth criticism (*dirāya*) as a science concerning the rules through which one

comes to know the epistemic status of a ḥadīth.[264] The two terms most often used in Arabic for these "rules" are *qawāʿid* and *qānūn*. While the former might literally translate as "rules," the latter already has an equivalent in English, "canon." Irrespective of the Greek or Syriac origins of both the Arabic and English *qānūn/canon*, Islamic scholars viewed the two terms, *qawāʿid* and *qānūn*, as synonymous (Al-Fanārī 2023, 1:146).[265]

According to one definition, these *qawāʿid*/*qānūn* (rules/canon) are defined as universals that apply to all their particulars (Al-Jurjānī 1985, 177). However, alternatively, both terms, *qawāʿid*/*qānūn* are defined as universal propositions (*qaḍāya kulliyya*) from which particular rulings (*aḥkām*) are derived (Al-Fanārī 2023, 1:146). As mentioned briefly in Chapter 5, Ibn al-ʿAjamī (2016c, 2:26–27), in his gloss on al-Ṣuyūṭī's, *Tadrīb al-Rāwī,* and Munlā Ḥanafī (2021, 35–36) both critique the idea of these *qawāʿid* and whether they are indeed universal (*kullī*). Their critique seems to be based on the first definition.[266]

Therefore, my usage of *qawāʿid*/*qānūn* partially relies on these historical discussions and, in a sense, is my point of departure. The second definition, which states that these are universal propositions (*qaḍāya kulliyya*) from which particular rulings (*aḥkām*) are derived, is of particular relevance (Al-Fanārī 2023, 1:146). As we will see below, this coheres well with similar expositions in contemporary anglophone philosophy.

Another usage being drawn from is al-Ghazālī's (2016b, 8–9) discussion on the relationship between theology (*kalām*) and other Islamic sciences. He makes two

[264] For example, see: Ibn Ḥajar (1984, 2:225); Al-Sakhāwī (2014a, 1:14); and al-Munāwī (2020, 130). Also, see al-Bakrī (2022, 38–41) for a study of the historical development of these definitions.

[265] A possible objection to the assertion that they are synonomous is the fact that the former, *qawāʿid* is plural, whereas *qānūn*, is singular, and it is the plural *qawāʿid* that is used by hadīth scholars when defining the discipline. To respond to this objection, we can either just use the plural form, canons (*qawānīn*), or we can rely on the same response that Islamic scholars used when responding to the same objection in the field of Arabic logic. Al-Taftāzānī (2011, 109) responds to this objection of *qānūn* being singular, even though logic is an assortment of canons (*qawānīn*), by stating that the meaning intended in this context is the genus, as opposed to the actual axioms (particulars) themselves. It is standard to interpret the singular form as a genus. See, for example, al-Jāmī's (2015, 31–32) interpretation of the singular *kalima* as meaning the genus, not a particular. In other words, the science of logic belongs to the genus of canons as opposed to a singular canon.

[266] Their critique seems to be that these universal principles do not truly apply to all instances. But as we will explain more at the end of this chapter, the formulators of these rules didn't think that they applied to all cases, only to the cases in which they were intended to apply to.

relevant arguments. The first claim is that all sciences are built upon axioms. The term he uses for these axioms is *mabādiʾ*, literally, that which you start from.[267] The second point that he makes is that these axioms are taken on authority or imitation to be true. However, their proof is investigated elsewhere, in a science ordered "above," the science in question. Al-Ghazālī makes the further claim that the ultimate science is theology (*kalām*), in which all axioms (*mabādiʾ*) can, in theory, be investigated.

This type of theorizing about the relationship between any given science and its axioms is widely accepted in the classical and postclassical Islamic tradition. For example, we find the great Ḥanafī commentator on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1451), applying this analysis to ḥadīth studies at the end of his introduction.[268] "Know that every science has a subject matter (*mawḍūʿ*), principles (*mabādiʾ*), and questions (*masāʾil*)… The principles are that which a science is built upon, and they are either conceptions or propositions.[269] The conceptions are definitions of that which will be used in the science, while the propositions are premises from which the inferences of that science will be made up." (Al-ʿAynī 2001, 1:32–33)

These concepts and these usages can further be tied with the discussion of axioms and rules found in the anglophone philosophical tradition. Catarina Novaes (2007, 232) states that axioms have two distinctive qualities: they are propositions that are "more fundamental than others, on the basis of whose truth the truth of other propositions can be known," and secondly, they are propositions "whose truth is accepted without proof." As Novaes (2007, 232) goes on to explain, the first point can either be in reference to the structure of knowledge more broadly or to a given specific discipline, theory, or field.

[267] The technical term *mabādiʾ* is not unique to al-Ghazālī, rather, it is a standard term found in the books of Arabic logic. For example, see: al-Taftāzānī (2011, 383–84), also see al-Tahānawī's (1996, 1:12–14) treatment of the technical term. Other possible translations for *mabādiʾ* into English include principles or primitives. While I will be relying on the English, principles, quite readily in this chapter as a synonym for axioms, I've avoided the term primitives due to the confusion it might cause.

[268] I am grateful to Dr. Mustafa Macit Karagözoğlu for referring me to this relevant passage.

[269] If one were to be more faithful to the original Arabic, they would translate this as conceptions (*taṣawwurāt*) and assents (*taṣdīqāt*). However, the Arabic term *taṣdīqāt* can also be used to mean that which is assented to, in other words, propositions (*qaḍāya*). As mentioned earlier, this is a standard distinction found in postclassical Islamic epistemology, the distinction between conception and assent as well as conceptual and propositional knowledge.

Both points are found in the Islamic tradition. As for the first quality, that axioms are propositions that are more fundamental than others in the science, this is the same point that al-Ghazālī makes, which we referenced above. Other propositions and conclusions are derivative from these primary axioms (*mabādiʾ*). It is also important to note that this is characteristic of a foundationalist view of epistemology, which we've also already discussed.

As for the second quality of axioms, that they are accepted without proof, this too is alluded to by al-Ghazālī (2016b, 9–10). Novaes (2007, 233) states, "By hypothesis, axioms are the most primitive elements of a theory; there is nothing else on which their proof could be based. At face value, this contradicts al-Ghazālī's analysis, which instead argues that they can be proven in a science "above" the science for which they are axiomatic. Novaes (2007, 233), however, makes a similar point in the footnotes, where she argues that when a mathematical axiom, for example, is derived from logic, it is no longer mathematical; rather, it is logical. This, however, has the unhappy conclusion that Novaes is explicit about, that "the most primitive mathematical statements – its axioms – are not mathematical statements, but rather logical statements."

But this last point about axioms is unnecessary.[270] Al-Ghazālī's view is that every science is limited by certain boundaries of investigation. On his understanding of *kalām*, its boundaries are so vast that it can investigate all *mabādiʾ*. However, there is no reason to then conclude that those unexamined *mabādiʾ* in the derived science in question cease being part of that science.[271] Furthermore, as we have seen in our analysis of internalism and externalism and as we will return to shortly, justification of these *mabādiʾ* need not be overly reflective.[272]

Importantly, Novaes's (2007, 215–92) investigation of axioms is against the backdrop of her philosophical analysis of formalization. Although she gives several accounts of

[270] See al-Tahānawī's (1996, 1:12–14) treatment of *mabādiʾ*, where he mentions that *mabādiʾ* can be counted as being part of or external to a given science depending on various factors.
[271] Eventually, logicians in the Islamic tradition differentiated between different types of *mabādiʾ*. For example, Baḥr al-ʿUlūm (2012, 602–4) differentiates between *mabādiʾ* that are shared by all or most sciences, those that are found in one science but justified in another, found in one science, and justified in that science, and found in one science and not justified at all.
[272] To be fair, what they probably mean by justification is a reflective form of justification.

formalization, the one that concerns this dissertation is axiomatization and what she calls rules of transformation. Axiomatization here is being taken to mean the abstracting out or the stipulation of axioms, in Arabic, *taqʿīd*. Concerning the rules of transformation, she writes, "What is relevant here is that the axiomatization of a theory or field of knowledge involves not only the choice of suitable axioms, but also the choice of suitable primitive rules of inference." (Novaes 2007, 237)

Novaes (2007, 238) further summarizes, "Underlying any axiomatization project is the assumption that knowledge has an essentially deductive nature: it is by inferring new knowledge from previous known (and possibly more fundamental) truths that knowledge in general is expanded." This coheres well with the earlier definitions of *qawāʿid*/*qānūn* that we saw above, as well as al-Ghazālī's and al-ʿAynī's conception of the relationship between axioms of a science and its inferences.[273]

Finally, the term *apparatus* (*āla*) is being used to connote not only the combination of *qawāʿid* and *mabādiʾ* that scholars within that field are relying upon but also the methods of inference (*naẓar/istidlāl*) used, so that they arrive at correct conclusions.[274] Muslim theologians and logicians often define thought (*fikr*) as "the ordering of already known matters, in a specific manner, to come to know other things that were previously unknown." However, thought *fikr*, can err. Therefore, logic is often described by them as an apparatus (*āla*) that helps guide and protect *fikr* from error.[275]

[273] Novaes (2007, 239) here states that axiomatization assumes that knowledge is deductive. However, I'm not sure that argument follows. As she herself points out shortly thereafter, there are other views of the structure of knowledge that do not assume that all knowledge is inferential. This latter point is more indicative of the structure of knowledge that we've described in the Islamic epistemic system. Furthermore, it doesn't seem that axiomatization, even when it comes to inferential processes, must be limited to deduction. Why can't it be that these inferences and rules of transformation are inductive, analogical, or abductive? I'll be using axiomatization and rules of inference in a manner that allows for all of these variations.

[274] The term *āla* could also be translated as a "tool." Although, in theory, either English term could be used, I have chosen apparatus for a few different reasons. First, the word tool, in English, is widely used with physical objects like hammers, saws, wrenches and the like. The term *āla* can also be used in this way as well, however, that is not what is intended by those who use the term in this context or in the context of Arabic logic. The term apparatus doesn't present the same problem. Second, the English word apparatus, can be used to mean a collection of tools. This is preferable to the word tool, which generally refers to a singular device. It is preferable because the *criteria of authenticity* (*shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa*) and the *āla* of ḥadīth scholars is a collection of tools, not one.

[275] See al-Taftāzānī's (2011, 106, 108, 110) analysis of the terms *āla* and *fikr* and how they relate to one another in the context of Arabic logic. Although the relationship between thought and an apparatus that protects thought from error is easy to grasp, tying it to an already explicated theory and analysis in the context of Arabic logic is useful, since one desideratum of the dissertation is explicating how the critical method of ḥadīth scholars is rational and epistemic.

As we will see in the coming sections, ḥadīth scholars have core epistemic *qawāʿid* and *mabādiʾ* that make up the most fundamental part of their *āla maʿrifiyya*. They then use these *mabādiʾ* in various inferences to evaluate the authenticity and truthfulness of the attribution of Prophetic testimonies. In this way, the technical term *āla* is being used somewhat like how the word method (*manhaj*) is used in contemporary Arabic scholarship.[276]

One might then ask, "Why not just use the word *manhaj* since it is already in use in contemporary arabophone scholarship?" Although that is a fair question, my response is to first highlight that I am not suggesting that we substitute out the term *manhaj* for *āla*. Rather, I am introducing another term, *āla*, to be used in addition to *manhaj*.[277] According to my own analysis and conclusions, the *āla* used by ḥadīth scholars is one part of a broader *manhaj* that they rely on. As will become clearer at the end of this chapter, the *āla* they employ is best exemplified by their *shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥā*, in English, their *Criteria of Authenticity* (CA). This CA is used in tandem with other practices of critical testing and analysis that altogether make up the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars.[278]

Therefore, the term *āla* is being introduced for three main reasons. The first is because it accurately describes at least part of the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars. Secondly, it more precisely defines what ḥadīth scholars are doing when reasoning about the authenticity of ḥadīth, compared with alternatives used to characterize their method. Thirdly, this synthesis between axioms and rules of inference, which together constitute an *āla*, coheres well with one of my core theses in the dissertation: the formalization that the ḥadīthic method went through.

[276] See Eido (2018a, 1:91–100) for an analysis of the introduction, role, and centrality of the term *manhaj* in contemporary ḥadīth scholarship.

[277] As I've already noted, the term *āla* is already used in the Islamic sciences. In fact, it is sometimes informally used to describe the system employed by ḥadīth scholars. But my hope here is to formally introduce it and to make explicit how it can be used in relation to other formal terms already being used in ḥadīth studies.

[278] Consider the long list of practices alluded to in Chapter 5 that ḥadīth scholars engage in when transmitting and evaluating ḥadīth. All of these practices are part of the broad *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars, but not necessarily part of the *āla* of the CA that I am analyzing here. Perhaps other portions of that broad *manhaj al-naqd* can be also thought of as an *āla*, but that does not specifically concern my thesis or argument and is beyond the scope of this investigation.

Given that formalization itself can go through stages and become more refined, my usage of *āla* here is partially intended to indicate that the ḥadīthic system reached a refined level in the classical and postclassical periods (Novaes 2007, 219–34). In that same vein, the terms formal and *āla* are used to draw attention to the overlap between the *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid* being used in ḥadīth studies and Arabic formal logic (*al-manṭiq al-ṣūrī*). Arabic logicians used the phrase, *a canonical apparatus* (*āla qānūniyya*), or what we might call an apparatus of rules and axioms, to refer to the science of logic (Al-Taftāzānī 2011, 110). Given that it is a term already used elsewhere in the Islamic tradition, it is not foreign to it.

Before moving on to the various ḥadīth-related *qawāʿid* and *mabādiʾ* that will be investigated, it behooves us to respond to a looming objection. Al-Ghazālī's exposition seems to indicate that the analysis, investigation, and proof of these primitive *qawāʿid* and *mabādiʾ* cannot occur within the realm of the science to which they belong. If we follow this reasoning, our investigation in this dissertation is not ḥadīthic; rather, it is theological.

There is any number of ways we can respond to this charge. First, al-Ghazālī's point is disputed. Sirāj al-Dīn al-Urmawī (d. 682/1284) (2012) and others argued that there are other sciences that are more fundamental than *kalām*. Therefore, one could respond by ceding that our investigation is not technically ḥadīthic as much as it is epistemological.[279] This would parallel al-Urmawī's claim that metaphysics is more fundamental than *kalām*. Therefore, metaphysics and epistemology could be seen as the most fundamental of disciplines.

Alternatively, one could respond to the objection by not accepting that axioms in each science must *only* be investigated in a science "above" that discipline. The fact that these ḥadīthic *qawāʿid* and *mabādiʾ* can be investigated in epistemology does not necessitate that they cannot be investigated in ḥadīth studies proper. One might make a more descriptive statement here by pointing out that they have not traditionally been

[279] Although this historical dispute doesn't posit epistemology as being more fundamental, this could be due to the fact that epistemology did not exist as a field until the modern era. Nevertheless, one could argue that epistemology and metaphysics are the most fundamental of all disciplines.

investigated in ḥadīth studies texts. However, such a descriptive claim does not hold normative weight.

Regardless of how we respond to the objection, all will agree that investigating the *qawāʿid* and *mabādiʾ* in question is useful. Given that this dissertation is focused on the rational and epistemological foundations of the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars, such an investigation is of primary significance. Whether the investigation is better designated as an epistemological investigation vs. a ḥadīthic investigation is not as significant. Even if one were to agree that epistemology (as well as metaphysics) does have a more fundamental and prior position in relation to ḥadīth studies, there is nothing objectionable about investigating a set of epistemological questions in both fields.

8.2. A General Overview

Before we move on to unpacking the main principles of the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadith scholars, it is perhaps best to give a brief overview. The *manhaj al-naqd* is made up of many different elements. However, there are a few investigations that are essential to its functionality and coherency. They've been chosen because they are the most essential and foundational and, thus, the most important.

In Sections 8.3 and 8.4, we will focus on *qawāʿid* and *mabādiʾ* having to do with *successive group testimony* (*tawātur*), *non-successive* (*āḥād*) testimony, as well as the role of corroborative contextual signs (*qarāʾin*). We will analyze three principles related to these questions, as well as whether testimonial knowledge is possible. In Section 8.5, we will analyze the *qawāʿid* and *mabādiʾ* that underlie the most well-known feature of the *manhaj al-naqd*; the criteria of authenticity (*shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa*). First, we will focus on transmitter reliability, and second, we will focus on the role of inquiry. Finally, Section 8.6 will focus on the *qawāʿid* and *mabādiʾ* that underlie the norms of acceptance (*qābūl*) according to the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadith scholars.

After an analysis of all these *qawāʿid* and *mabādiʾ*, we will conclude with a section on how these principles are used in conjunction with one another to evaluate the ḥadīth corpus through the use of suitable rules of inference. Relying upon the combination of

these *qawāʿid* and *mabādiʾ* and the rules of transformation, ḥadīth scholars have historically been able to evaluate the ḥadith corpus and make justified judgments concerning the reliability of the testimonies under assessment.

8.3. The Principle of *Tawātur*[280]

The first two principles that we will investigate are two of the first points made in classical *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* texts, as well as some of the first points made in the *akhbār* sections in *uṣūl al-fiqh* texts (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 41–46; Al-Bayḍāwī 2008, 157–65).[281] In these sections, *akhbār* are categorized according to whether they yield knowledge (*ʿilm*) or whether they yield opinion (*ẓann*). The two principles most often invoked are that *tawātur* yields *ʿilm*, while *āḥād* testimonies yield *ẓann*. I will call the first the *Principle of Successive Testimonies* (alternatively the *Principle of Tawātur*) and the second the *Principle of Non-successive Testimonies* (alternatively, the *Principle of Āḥād*).

Before we move on to a more detailed epistemic investigation and analysis of these two principles, it is important to recall some adjacent points that provide epistemic context. First, as we mentioned in Chapter 7, knowledge (*ʿilm*) in this context is synonymous with certainty (*yaqīn*). Opinion (*ẓann*), on the other hand, is a credence above .5 but below full or firm belief (*iʿtiqād jāzim*). In addition, these two principles are intended to be categorizing statements and ḥadīth from one vantage point: the vantage point of the number of transmitters and testifiers (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 44, 51).

As a brief introduction to these two principles, Islamic epistemologists wanted to distinguish between statements about a given proposition that were so numerous that they yield in the hearer *yaqīn* vs. those that do not meet that threshold. There are many conditions for *tawātur* to obtain; however, for now, it suffices to say that they recognized that such a category exists and requires epistemic analysis. Furthermore,

[280] As stated earlier, I am using the English term principle as though it is synonymous with the term axiom. I am also treating the Arabic terms: *mabādiʾ*, *qawāʿid*, and *qānūn*, as being synonymous with the English terms: principles and axioms.
[281] This coheres well with al-Tahānawī's (1996, 1:12) point that the term *mabādiʾ* is sometimes used to connote the first matters one starts with in a science.

they recognized that this distinction is essential because the rest of the epistemology of testimony is impacted by it.

The historical development of these principles is beyond the scope of this dissertation; however, a few historical points are worth mentioning.[282] First, there is evidence of this distinction and its importance in some of the earliest sources of Islamic epistemology still extant. For example, al-Shāfiʿī mentions the concept of *tawātur*, as well as a parallel concept, *the statements of the public* (*khabar al-ʿāmma*), which is of an even higher epistemic status in his *al-Risāla* (2020, 86), as well as his treatise, *Jimāʿ al-ʿIlm* (1986, 16, 48, 76).[283]

Al-ʿAwnī (1996, 91–135) rejects the characterization of al-Shāfiʿī's classification as being an early precursor to the settled view on *tawātur*. He provides several arguments to substantiate his objection, arguing that *tawātur* is a foreign epistemic concept to ḥadīth studies, but his arguments are ultimately unconvincing.[284] As he himself admits, al-Shāfiʿī's *khabar al-ʿāmma* is a type of *tawātur*, perhaps the "highest type." (Al-ʿAwnī 1996, 104) The fact that al-Shāfiʿī criticizes his interlocutor's usage and definition of *tawātur* is not proof of his rejection of the concept itself. Rather, what one understands from the related passages is that al-Shāfiʿī rejects the sufficiency of the conditions the interlocutor has set as a threshold for what types of testimonies are acceptable and yield knowledge, as well as the conditions under which certainty obtains (Al-Shāfiʿī 1986, 76–83).

As will be further investigated below, al-Shāfiʿī's view of knowledge, as well as the view of preclassical ḥadīth scholars, is different than that of the standard view of theologians, jurists, and classical ḥadīth scholars.[285] According to al-Shāfiʿī, *ʿilm* is not synonymous with certainty. At various points in these debates, his interlocutors are

[282] For a more thorough investigation into the historical development of *tawātur*, see: Laher (2014).
[283] Eido (2022, 296–97 fn. 4) argues that this classification originates in the writings of Ibrāhīm al-Naẓẓām (d. 225/840).
[284] This argument is most vociferously found in al-ʿAwnī's earlier work, *al-Manhaj al-Muqtaraḥ* (1996). However, in two of his later works, *al-Yaqīnī wa al-Ẓannī* (2013) and *al-Usus al-ʿAqliyya* (2020), it seems that al-ʿAwnī walks back some of his forcefulness on the question, given how he approaches the topic in the two later works.
[285] A common objection to the reliance on al-Shāfiʿī in these discussions is whether he is squarely in the ḥadīthic camp or the juristic camp. As we discussed in Chapter 5, al-Shāfiʿī was seen by the most emnient of ḥadith scholars as their spokesman and defender. Furthermore, as al-ʿAwnī (2013, 86) notes, his views are in line with other major ḥadīthic figures.

trying to make a case for (a) the fact that only *mutawātir* testimonies with key conditions yield certain knowledge and (b) only they are acceptable. Al-Shāfiʿī rejects both claims. For one, he believes *āḥād* testimonies can yield knowledge that is not certain. Secondly, he believes non-certain knowledge through testimony is acceptable. Finally, he believes the conditions they mention for *tawātur* do not yield certainty in contrast to his category of *khabar al-ʿāmma*.

However, despite his rejection of their two claims, his view entails that he accepts the distinction between the two categories.[286] Using the technical terminology of logic, the relation (*nisba*) between the two phenomena: al-Shāfiʿī's *khabar al-ʿāmma* and the *tawātur* of his interlocutor, is one of strict inclusion. Al-Shāfiʿī's *khabar al-ʿāmma* are strictly included (*ʿumūm wa khuṣūṣ muṭlaq*) by the *tawātur* view of his interlocutor and the later settled view of *tawātur* accepted by all. Therefore, terminology aside, al-Shāfiʿī accepts the distinction but rejects the delineated threshold put forward by his opponent.

Al-Shāfiʿī's main objective in the related passages is to establish the authority and acceptability of Prophetic testimonies that are *āḥād*, what he calls, *the statements of specialists* (*khabar al-khāṣṣa*). Therefore, he rejects the view that a testimony must either be of the *khabar al-ʿāmma* or *tawātur* categories for it to be acceptable. His objection against his interlocutor's usage of *tawātur* is against this backdrop. It does not then follow that al-Shāfiʿī does not accept the *tawātur/ āḥād* distinction. In fact, he clearly does, except he uses the alternative language of *khabar al-ʿāmma* vs. *khabar al-khāṣṣa*. One could argue that al-Shāfiʿī rejects his interlocutor's view concerning the necessary and sufficient conditions of *tawātur*, or that he rejects the term itself, but it is far-fetched to say that he rejects the epistemic category entirely.[287]

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[286] Al-ʿAwnī (2013, 86–89) characterizes al-Shāfiʿī's view and the view of preclassical ḥadīth scholars as differentiating between certain and non-certain yielding testimonies, in contrast to the *tawātur* vs. *āḥād* distinction of the theologians and jurists. Characterizing the dispute in this way renders it verbal and not substantive. Although I agree that part of the dispute is verbal, especially the part having to do with whether the ḥadīthic preclassical camp accepts or rejects *tawātur*, there is still in my estimation a more nuanced disagreement concerning the difference between knowledge (*ʿilm*) and certainty (*yaqīn*), and the epistemic status of *āḥad* testimonies. More will be said about this later in the chapter.

[287] Elsewhere, Al-ʿAwnī (2013, 100–101) concedes this fact. However, he maintains that the position of preclassical ḥadith scholars is to accept *the statements of the public* (*khabar al-ʿāmma*), which are a type of *successive group testimony in meaning* (*tawātur maʿnawī*) and not *successive group testimony in word* (*tawātur lafẓī*). Although this distinction is uncontroversial, his usage of it here is strange, given that most authors of jurisprudential works, when dividing up testimonies into *successive* and *non-*

The conditions under which *tawātur* obtains are greatly debated throughout Islamic intellectual history and span across several different disciplines. However, there is ultimately a settling of the dispute, with some adjacent questions left unanswered.[288] That settled view will be taken as a starting point, then explicated and analyzed, and then tied to a few discussions in contemporary anglophone epistemology. Finally, the principles and settled view will be further built upon and developed by investigating the justification of these two principles as well as attempting to answer some of the remaining unanswered questions from the debate.

8.3.1. Successive Group Testimony's (*Tawātur*) Necessary Conditions

By as early as the period of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/936), segments of the Imām al-Shāfiʿī camp had all but embraced the language of the *tawātur/āḥād* distinction. It is important to note that al-Ashʿarī is characterized as having largely embraced al-Shāfiʿī's views in *uṣūl al-fiqh* (Ibn Fūrak 2022, 268). This is particularly important given the absence of extant commentaries on *al-Risāla* between al-Shāfiʿī and the next major figures with extant jurisprudential (*uṣūl*) works; Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370/981) and Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) (El Shamsy 2017).[289] Therefore, the direct line for the terminological acceptance of the *tawātur/āḥād* distinction goes back at least to al-Ashʿarī. Then, from towering figures such as al-Bāqillānī and Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027) to one of the first authors in the genre of *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), the passing of the baton is clearly documented through the likes of Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarī (d. 450/1058) (Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 2003a, 1:9). Al-Khaṭīb (2003a, 1:88) himself characterizes the classification as one between *tawātur* and *āḥād* testimonies.

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successive testimony, had *successive group testimony in meaning* (*tawātur maʿnawī*) in mind. This is evidenced by the types of examples they give for *successive group testimony* (*tawātur*). The existence or lack thereof of *successive group testimony in word* (*tawātur laf̣ẓī*) is a well-known dispute but is different and occurs later historically than the question at hand (Ibn al-Ḥanbalī 1987, 46). See Laher (2014, 121–32) for a discussion and analysis of this latter question.

[288] See Laher (2014, 77–120) for an analysis of the historical development and the eventual settling of the debate. It should also be noted that even contemporary critics such as Al-ʿAwnī do not reject the idea that there is a settled view.

[289] For his part, al-Jaṣṣāṣ is not working off of the al-Shāfiʿī intellectual line. Instead, al-Jaṣṣāṣ is working off a line going back at least as far back as ʿIsā b. Abān (d. 221/836). As Murteza Bedir (2002) has shown, al-Jaṣṣāṣ quotes ʿIsā b. Abān extensively on this topic and the distinction is firmly present.

As we have already seen, Imām al-Shāfiʿī himself accepted a similar distinction. He, however, used different language to characterize it and set a higher threshold for what would later be perceived as a type of *tawātur*. The type of epistemological category al-Shāfiʿī describes as *khabar al-ʿāmma* would later be called *that which is known to be a part of the religion by necessity* (*maʿlūm min al-dīn bi al-ḍarūra*) (Al-Maḥallī 2005a, 2:163). As already mentioned above, these two epistemic phenomena are not disjoint (*tabāyun*), rather the relationship between them is one of strict inclusion (*ʿumūm wa khuṣūṣ muṭlaq*). The *khabar al-ʿāmma* category is a higher epistemic form of *tawātur* and not what classical scholars had in mind when laying down the necessary and sufficient conditions of *tawātur*.[290]

In a standard exposition of the necessary conditions of *tawātur* in the classical era, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (2019, 43) lists them as four:

i. A large number [of transmitters] transmit the testimony such that it is nomically impossible that they could have colluded or coincidentally agreed upon falsehood.
ii. That large number of individuals transmitted from a similarly large number from the beginning to the end of the testimonial chain.
iii. That the testimony is ultimately grounded in the first testifier's sense perception.
iv. That knowledge obtains in the hearer.

A couple of points are in order about these conditions. First, the debate around how many transmitters meet the threshold is notorious in the Islamic tradition. Although several different theories were posited, ultimately, the settled view is that there isn't a specific number (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 44).[291]

This point only further solidifies the argument that the settled view and al-Shāfiʿī's view are not contradictory. Al-Shāfiʿī objected to his interlocutor's setting of the

[290] Defining the boundaries of a phenomenon is always a harder task. *Statements of the public* (*khabar al-ʿāmma*) are a clear example of certainty-yielding *tawātur*, but what if one is asked to delineate at what point *āḥād* testimonies become *statements of the public* (*khabar al-ʿāmma*)?
[291] See Laher (2014, 107–8) for an analysis of these different views.

threshold for *tawātur* to be certainty-yielding at such a low level. At the same time, he posited that a category that he called *khabar al-ʿāmma* existed, which entailed certainty. Al-Shāfiʿī never gives a number for how many people need to be involved in order for the *khabar al-ʿāmma* category to obtain. Thus, it seems that from one respect, while the actual term *tawātur* won the day, one of al-Shāfiʿī's main objections against it was also accepted into the settled view. In fact, some of al-Shāfiʿī's main examples of *khabar al-ʿāmma* end up becoming examples of *tawātur* in classical and postclassical texts.[292]

Secondly, Ibn Ḥajar (2019, 43) mentions, after enumerating the list of conditions, that the fourth condition is disputed. Some held that such a condition evokes circularity since knowledge ends up being conditioned on having knowledge. Others argue that it is necessary because, without it, the other three conditions are not sufficient for certain knowledge.

The discussion around this condition is as old as the term itself. As early as al-Ashʿarī, one of the ways of explicating the need for it was to root the question in nomic necessity. According to al-Ashʿarī, two of our sources of knowledge, sense perception and testimony, are ultimately nomically grounded (Ibn Fūrak 2022, 67–68). Therefore, if particular conditions obtain, knowledge obtains. Islamic scholars are quite clear that this isn't a rational necessity; rather, it is merely natural. Given the various contextual factors that could arise in cases in the epistemic vicinity of *tawātur*, as well as the skeptical objections against it, a condition of knowledge obtaining was added.

However, there is another plausible reason for adding the fourth condition that is directly related to a different lurking tension: the objective and subjective nature of conditions around knowledge. Like our earlier discussion around justification, warrant, and knowledge, it seems that the fourth condition is a subjective first-person condition that ties knowledge to the experience of the subject. Without such a condition, the analysis of *tawātur* ends up being purely external, a point that ultimately

[292] See, for example, both al-Shāfiʿī's (1986, 48) and al-Jurjānī's (1996, 33) usage of our being informed successively of the five prayers as an instance of *statements of the public* (*khabar al-ʿāmma*) as well as *tawātur*, respectively.

could not be accepted. Notice how conditions one through three are all external to the hearer.

We find this type of objection to the *tawātur* view from skeptics, who respond by saying that they find no such attitude of knowledge obtaining in the cases presented (F. al-D. M. Al-Rāzī 1996a, 4:260–68). How do we make sense of the absence of the attitude of knowledge in these cases? If we say the other three conditions are necessary and sufficient, we are faced with a problem. If we say that they are not sufficient, we are left asking what further conditions are needed for sufficiency. Islamic scholars thus answered the question by adding knowledge obtaining as a necessary condition.

Some scholars decided to avoid the inclusion of the fourth condition of knowledge actually obtaining by instead arguing that the three conditions are necessary and sufficient as long as there are no "preventative factors" (*mawāniʿ*). While this might answer the concern of some critics as to why the attitude of knowledge does not obtain for everyone under the three main conditions, it does not answer the internalist impulse for some type of connection between the subject and the matter of fact. On the view that relies on "preventative factors" (*mawāniʿ*), the subject need not have any connection to the matter of fact for knowledge and justification. Such a conclusion is undesirable for many of the reasons mentioned above in the discussion on internalism and externalism.

This analysis helps us make sense of another perennial problem with the concept of *tawātur*. One can divide instances of *tawātur* into direct and indirect *tawātur*. In cases of direct *tawātur,* the speakers are testifying to what they themselves witnessed with their own senses. However, in cases of indirect *tawātur,* there is a testimonial chain between the immediate speakers and those who actually witnessed the event being testified to. Without conditions one through three, it is unclear how we can delineate true *tawātur* in cases of indirect *tawātur* from some adjacent phenomenon, where there is initially only one witness and then subsequently the testimony "fans out."

One possible response is to require further internalist conditions, such as that the hearer has evidence that:

i. A large number [of transmitters] transmit the testimony such that it is nomically impossible that they could have colluded or coincidentally agreed upon falsehood.
ii. That large number of individuals transmitted from a similarly large number from the beginning to the end of the testimonial chain.
iii. That the testimony is ultimately grounded in the initial testifier's sense perception.

But requiring that the hearer have evidence or reason to believe is a much higher bar than what ḥadīth scholars specifically, and Islamic scholars more generally, are arguing for. This is clear in their designation of *tawātur* as non-inferential and of its obtaining even for children. Their arguing for *tawātur*, of both the direct and indirect variety, as being immediate and non-inferential (*ḍarūrī*), as opposed to mediate and inferential (*naẓarī*), leaves one without recourse to robust internalist conditions of evidence to address the epistemic gap.

Thus, to make sense of the combination of these views, it seems quite likely that Islamic scholars were trying to unite between two different desiderata: the internalist concern for justification through reasons via the first-person view of the hearer, as well as the externalist concern for tying the attitude of the hearer and their reasons to the actual matter of fact. The result is a hybrid tying of the external to the internal, of justification to warrant and knowledge. Before moving on to the *Principle of Non-successive Testimonies*, it behooves us to compare the *Principle of Successive Testimonies* in Islamic philosophy with analogous investigations in anglophone philosophy, as well as other philosophical traditions.

8.3.2. Successive Group Testimony (*Tawātur*) Outside of Islamic Philosophy

Contemporary anglophone scholarship on the epistemology of testimony has yet to identify or analyze the phenomenon and concept behind *successive group testimony* (*tawātur*).[293] Despite the emergence of literature around the epistemology of the

[293] I raised this question several times to professors Jennifer Lackey, Baron Reed, and Sanford Goldberg, all of whose areas of specialization include anglophone epistemology, and two of whom have published

testimony of groups, the questions analyzed therein are not directly related to the question of direct or indirect *successive group testimony*.[294] Nevertheless, there are three investigations found in the history of Western philosophy that are similar to *successive group testimony* and deserve mention.

The first is the existence of a similar argument in 19th-century English legal texts. Thomas Starkie (d. 1849), in his celebrated, *A Practical Treatise on the Law of Evidence* (1876, 819), states that the credit given to witnesses is given due to several factors, two of which are relevant to our investigation: their number and the consistency of the witnesses. It is useful to quote Starkie at length on the subject:

> But although the testimony of a single witness, whose credit is untainted, be sufficient to warrant a conviction, even in a criminal case, yet undoubtedly any additional and concurrent testimony adds greatly to the credibility of testimony, in all cases where it labors under doubt or suspicion; for then an opportunity is afforded of comparing the testimony of the witnesses on minute and collateral points, on which, if they were the witnesses of truth, their testimony would agree, but if they were false witnesses, would be likely to differ.
>
> Where direct testimony is opposed by conflicting evidence or by ordinary experience, or by the probabilities supplied by the circumstances of the case, the consideration of the number of witnesses becomes most material. It is more improbable that a number of witnesses should be mistaken, or that they should have conspired to commit a fraud by direct perjury than that one or a few should be mistaken, or willfully perjured. In the next place, not only must the difficulty of procuring a number of false witnesses be greatly increased in proportion to the number, but the danger and risk of detection must be increased in a far higher proportion; for the points on which their false statements may be compared with each other, and with ascertained facts, must necessarily be greatly multiplied.
>
> The consistency of testimony is also a strong and most important test for judging the credibility of witnesses. Where several witnesses bear testimony to the same transaction, and concur in their statement of a series of particular circumstances, and the order in which they occurred, such coincidences exclude all apprehension of mere chance and accident, and can be accounted for only by one or other of two suppositions; either the testimony is true, or the coincidences are the result of concert and conspiracy. If, therefore, the independency of the witnesses be proved, and the supposition of previous conspiracy be disproved, or rendered highly improbable, to the same extent will the truth of their testimony be established.
>
> So far does this principle extend, that in many cases, except for the purpose of repelling the suspicion of fraud and concert, the credit of the witnesses themselves for honesty and veracity may become wholly immaterial. Where it is once established that the witnesses to a transaction are not acting in concert then, although individually they should be unworthy of credit, yet if the coincidences in their testimony be too numerous to be attributed to mere accident, they cannot possibly be explained on any other supposition than that of the truth of their statement.
>
> The considerations which tend to negative any suspicion of concert and collusion between the witnesses, are either extrinsic of their testimony; such, for instance, as relate to their character, situation, their remoteness from each other, the absence of previous intercourse with each other

extensively on the epistemology of testimony. They are in agreement that it is not currently an area of investigation.

[294] See, for example: Lackey (2021b).

> or with the parties, and of all interest in the subject-matter of litigation; or they arise internally, from a minute and critical examination and comparison of the testimony itself. (Starkie 1876, 828–29)

In this passage, Starkie has brought up several factors often discussed in the Islamic literature on *tawātur*.[295] The most important similarity is the focus on the impossibility of "concert and collusion." The Islamic literature heavily emphasizes that what confers upon *tawātur* the status of knowledge and certainty is the *impossibility of colluding upon falsehood* (*istiḥālat al-ṭawāṭuʾ ʿalā al-kadhib*) (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 43). That collusion (*al-ṭawāṭuʾ*), in the Islamic epistemic context, has a broader meaning than intentional lying. Rather, they intend by it either deliberately or indeliberately agreeing upon falsehood (F. al-D. M. Al-Rāzī 1996a, 4:227–70).

A second phenomenon identified historically in the broader Western tradition that is like *successive group testimony* is Nicolas de Condorcet's (d. 1794) well-known jury theorem. Condorcet argues for the "wisdom of the crowds" in the sense that "the probability of a correct group decision (i) increases in group size and (ii) converges to one as group size approaches infinity." Although there would eventually be many different forms of jury theorems, Condorcet's is considered by many to be the first. Beyond the specifics of Condorcet's theorem, "Jury theorems are mathematical theorems about the ability of collectives to make correct decisions." (Dietrich and Spiekermann 2022)

Although there is a lot of shared philosophical space between the idea of the "wisdom of the crowds" or "jury theorems" and *tawātur*, they are fundamentally different. *Tawātur* is a phenomenon that is restricted to cases of testimony that are ultimately largely grounded in sense perception as opposed to those grounded in reason (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 43).[296] As per the terminological difference elucidated in the

[295] It is useful to note that Laher (2014, 2–3) cites a few other 18th and 19th-century thinkers who allude lightly to probabilities and certitude. Also, as will be mentioned in the next paragraph, Condorcet lived in the 18th century. It is important to note that Hacking (2006) famously argued that "newer" theories of probability emerged around the second half of the 17th century in Europe. It seems promising to research further into the philosophical discourse of that period around probability and certitude to see how those discussions overlapped with or are relevant to *successive group testimony*.

[296] According to the standard language in Islamic texts, *tawātur* is restricted to cases grounded in sense perception, full stop. In other words, the standard language doesn't include phrases like, "largely grounded in sense perception." I've done this to avoid the obvious objection that inference might still play a part, even if is minimal.

section on testimonial kinds, *tawātur*, according to the standard Islamic view, cannot be of the opinion (*raʾy*) type; it is restricted to testimony (*shahāda*) since the first is grounded in inference and the latter is grounded in sense perception. *Tawātur* also applies to certain types of *transmission* (*riwāya*) since, as mentioned earlier, *transmission* (*riwāya*) must ultimately itself be grounded in either sense perception or inference. Therefore, a *transmission* (*riwāya*) that is ultimately grounded in the sense perception of the original testifier would also qualify.[297]

Closer to Condorcet's view is the Islamic scholarly investigation into consensus (*ijmāʿ*).[298] Under the heading of *ijmāʿ*, Islamic scholars investigated whether a scholarly consensus of *opinion* (*raʾy*) constitutes certainty or is normatively binding. While the subjects of *ijmāʿ* and *tawātur* are closely related, they are also substantively different. Islamic scholars restricted *tawātur* to cases of sense perception because they tied the phenomenon to nomic necessity. On their view, the inference of even large numbers of testifiers might accidentally agree on falsehood.[299] Interestingly, the early debates around *tawātur* found in the writings of al-Shāfiʿī (1986) closely associate between the two phenomena, even if the distinction was made from the very beginning.

The third and final historical example of *successive group testimony* identified in the Western tradition goes as far back as Galen (d. 216 C.E.). In at least two different treatises, *On Medical Experience* (Galen 1985b), as well as *An Outline of Empiricism* (Galen 1985a), Galen identifies the concept behind *successive group testimony*. It is important to stress my usage of the phrase "identifies the concept behind *successive group testimony*." Asserting that Galen advocated for *successive group testimony*, or critiqued it, is too strong of a statement either way. Galen's own view on *successive group testimony* requires a much longer and more thorough study of his extant

[297] Prophetic testimonies also qualify, whether they are ultimately grounded in sense perception or reason. However, there are two parts to such a testimony. First, there is the *tawātur* of the statement being attributed to the Prophet (ṣ). This yields nomic certainty. Then there is the certainty we have in the truth of whatever the Prophet informs us of from God. This second certainty in the reliability of Prophets is justified through rational proofs.

[298] The epistemic analysis of concenssus (*ijmāʿ*) generally occurs in *uṣūl al-fiqh* texts. For an example of a standard exposition, see: al-Rāzī (F. al-D. M. Al-Rāzī 1996a, 4:17–212).

[299] This view is meant as a general rule and possibility. However, they simultaneously held that Islamic scholars cannot form a consensus upon (which they called *ijmāʿ*) falsehood. But this impossibility doesn't contradict the first view, because they held that the impossibility is grounded in God's having informed the community that they will not agree upon falsehood, not that it is impossible nomically.

writings. What we can be sure of is that he was aware of the view, given the allusion to it.

Galen (1985b, 83) writes, "Thus one who has not seen the city of Alexandria believes that there is in Egypt a town called Alexandria; he does not, however, believe this on hearing of it from one single person or from two people, but after he has heard of it from a larger number of people." In his *Outline on Empiricism*, Galen devotes a section to history. In his brief analysis, he discusses the conditions under which historical transmissions give us truth. Galen writes:

> Most useful and at the same time more truly a criterion of history is agreement. For it is possible that I have never used mace (this is a drug bought from Arabia, the bark of a tree). But all who write on materia medica say about it that it constipates. Shall we, then, believe or disbelieve them? I, for my part, say that one should believe those who are in such agreement. But I say this, since we talk about matters which can be perceived. For agreements concerning what is not manifest may be very widespread; yet they are not supported by everybody who writes on the subjects. And, even if one granted that it is not ruled out that such an agreement could ever occur, at least the empiricist will have no share in such an agreement. But, whatever agreements come about among all men concerning matters which can be perceived, such agreements can be trusted in practical life. For, though we ourselves never have sailed around Crete or Sicily or Sardinia, we have come to believe that they are islands, because those who have perceived the matter for themselves are all in agreement with each other on this. (Galen 1985a)

It is clear from these two passages that Galen is at least aware of the epistemic concept behind *successive group testimony*. Some have gone further and claimed that both the term and the concept were taken from Galen.[300] Their argument seems to be that we find in these passages evidence of Galen addressing the epistemic category, and we also have clear evidence that Galen's writings were translated into Arabic; therefore, the conclusion is that they must have taken the concept from him.

This argument fails for a whole host of reasons. Firstly, the extant writings we do have where *successive group testimony* is mentioned as a category predate the period historians believe that Galen's writings were translated into Arabic. The translation of Galen's corpus is most often associated with Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq (d. 260/874) and his "translation school." (Cooper 2019) But as we have already seen, al-Shāfiʿī (1986, 76),

[300] This is part of a larger popular sentiment that the "rationalist parts" of Islamic intellectual thought are largely taken from the Greeks. However, for specific reference to ḥadīth studies and *tawātur* being borrowed from the Greeks, see: Brown (2009); Laher (2014); and Al-ʿAwnī (1996). None of these studies provide evidence for their claim. The only actual evidence presented is by Van Den Bergh (2012) in his translation of *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut,* where he alludes to the two passages from Galen. Laher in turn cites Van Den Bergh.

who dies in 204 A.H., cites an opponent arguing for *successive group testimony* (*tawātur*) in *Jimāʿ al-ʿIlm*. Even if this text was written by al-Shāfiʿī in the last year of his life, as improbable as that is, Ḥunayn would have been 14 years old.

It is possible that parts of Galen's works were translated prior to Ḥunayn. However, to posit such a genealogy requires evidence, evidence that has yet to be found.[301] In fact, such guesswork is not only unhelpful, but it also shows a real ignorance of how perennial certain philosophical questions are. As we have already alluded to in the dissertation, there are other areas in Islamic philosophy, like dialectical theory, where it seems that native philosophical developments arose that paralleled previous philosophical traditions.[302]

If one foolishly follows this genealogical narrative to its extreme, it would mean that the many parallels we have found while doing research for this dissertation between ḥadīth scholarship and the epistemology of testimony must mean that anglophone philosophers took these ideas from the writings of ḥadith scholars that have been translated into English. If such a claim seems ludicrous without proper evidence to back it up, that is because it is. The philosophical significance of testimony and the epistemic problems that arise concerning it are not the property of any one philosophical tradition. Furthermore, any given philosophical question might only have a limited number of possible responses and views. Given these realities, it isn't shocking at all that multiple philosophical traditions would come up with similar views.

Furthermore, most of the early discussions around epistemology, broadly speaking, and skepticism concerning *tawātur* specifically, are often cited in conjunction with a taxonomy of views from Buddhist philosophy and other Eastern traditions, not with Greek or Roman philosophy (Al-Taftāzānī 2020, 120; F. al-D. M. Al-Rāzī 1996a,

[301] In fact, even that wouldn't be enough. The mere fact that a translation exists does not necessitate that the contents of that translation are responsible for the term or concept in the society that speaks that language. Ultimately, proving some type of direct genealogy is much harder than just pointing out that a similar concept exists in another philosophical tradition.

[302] See Young's (2017, 12–13, 42–43, 191–92) exceptionally through study of dialectical theory in Islamic philosophy. Young makes many of the same arguments I've made above concerning parallells not entailing evidence of influence as well as natural human processes of reasoning not being indebted to systematic theories.

4:228). Therefore, if *tawātur* is not native to Islamic thought, doesn't it seem much more likely that it was borrowed from those traditions and not Galen's works?[303]

Lastly, as we have already mentioned, *tawātur,* as a technical concept, was in circulation with other views that were conceptually similar to it in many ways. We specifically looked at al-Shāfiʿī's *khabar al-ʿāmma*, which is a type of *tawātur*. If, for argument's sake, we accepted that the concept of *tawātur* is borrowed from Galen's works, what are we to say about al-Shāfiʿī's *khabar al-ʿāmma*?[304]

It seems much more likely that Islamic scholars developed native epistemic concepts that they then eventually synthesized with views they learned about from other philosophical traditions. Or alternatively, there were already well-known views in the intellectual and philosophical milieu that Islamic scholars built upon. However, the claim that there was a direct borrowing of *tawātur* requires evidence that has not been provided.

Regardless of the existence of historical versions of *successive group testimony* in other philosophical traditions, one thing that is apparent is that *tawātur* as an independent epistemic category is almost non-existent outside of Islamic thought in contemporary philosophy.[305] What makes this even more surprising is the central status of *tawātur* in Islamic epistemology. Further historical research should be done to see just how much *successive group testimony* existed and continues to exist outside of Islamic philosophy.

[303] For new research highlighting the impact of Buddhist and Eastern philosophical thought on Islamic philosophy, see: Mihirig (2022) and Xiuyuan (2018).
[304] Something similar could be argued about reports arrtibuted to the founder of the Muʿtazilī theological school, Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (d. 131/749). Although we do not have any extant writings from him, based upon views attributed to him, it is clear that he was identifying and isolating out what later became known as *tawātur*. Given his death date and what we know about the translation movement, Wāṣil lived much too early to have borrowed the idea from Galen. I thank professor Issam Eido for this point. See, also: Eido (2022, 317).
[305] Beyond my conversations with anglophone philosophers focusing on contemporary testimony, I had similar conversations with professor Mathew Sibert, who focuses on medievel Christian theories of testimony, as well as professor Elisa Freschi, whose area of concentration is on Sanskrit and Indian philosophy and testimony. Both informed me that they are not aware of a concept similar to *successive group testimony* in either tradition.

8.4. The Principle of *Āḥād*

From one perspective, the view that *non-successive* (*āḥād*) testimonies yield opinion (a credence above .5) could be seen as a mere result of the view that *tawātur* yields certain knowledge. In other words, it could be that there is no *Principle of Non-successive Testimonies* (*Principle of Āḥād*) in the Islamic tradition, only a *Principle of Successive Testimonies* (*Principle of Tawātur*). However, this is incorrect, as will be shown below.

There is a lot of evidence for the existence of a *Principle of Non-successive Testimonies* in the Islamic tradition. The clearest of which is how rife the early texts are with debates between skeptics of *āḥād* testimonies and the standard settled view. In other words, skeptics of all stripes wanted to reject the reliance on *āḥād* testimonies in various legal and theological contexts as unacceptable and unjustified. In opposition to this skepticism, the settled view is to posit that such skepticism is misplaced and that *āḥād* testimonies, *ceteris paribus*, yield opinion (*ẓann*).[306]

Another argument can be made for the existence of an independent *Principle of Non-successive Testimonies* in how ḥadīth scholars and jurists alike refused to accept Prophetic testimonies without further evidence. As we have already noted regarding the criteria of authenticity (*shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa*), it is evident that the conditions serve as a type of reductionist check against gullibility and naiveté. It is as though ḥadīth scholars are saying, "Mere opinion (*ẓann*), a credence above .5, is not enough to justify reliance on a testimony in these contexts." Therefore, one needs extra evidence to better delineate just how likely it is that the testimony is properly attributable to the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ).

Both arguments converge in their signifying the existence of a clear *Principle of Non-successive Testimonies*. Al-Shāfiʿī (2020, 88), in his *Risāla*, explicitly mentions that

[306] See Eido (2022) for more background on this early tension. This line of argument is found in almost every *uṣūl al-fiqh* text. However, the debates, as mentioned earlier, go as far back as Imām al-Shāfiʿī (2020, 88) himself. Al-ʿAwnī (2013, 98) mentions that there were even independent treatises penned about this question during the third century, even if they are not still extant. He cites this as proof for the importance of the debate in the third century.

the reliance on *āḥād* testimonies is an axiom/principle (*aṣl*) in and of itself.[307] Therefore, we can confidently state that there are two initial axioms:

> *Principle of Successive Testimonies* (PST): *Successive group testimonies* yield nomically certain knowledge (*ʿilm*).
>
> *Principle of Non-successive Testimonies* (PNT): *Non-successive group testimonies* yield a credence above .5, known as opinion (*ẓann*).

8.4.1. Can Non-Successive (*Āḥād*) Testimonies Yield Knowledge?

We've already discussed some of the debates around the PST and have shown that the disagreement is largely verbal. However, the PNT is also not without its critics. In what follows, the central aspects of the disagreement will be articulated, and a novel solution to the controversy will be presented. It is important to stress at the outset that the disagreement does not threaten the legitimacy of the PNT within the Islamic intellectual tradition. As we will come to see, parts of the dispute are verbal, and the shared agreed-upon philosophical space is enough to legitimate the principle.[308]

There are several ways to approach the disagreement, but it might be useful to begin with a more big-picture approach. As al-Ghazālī (2016b, 65–67) explains, the technical terms certainty (*yaqīn*) and knowledge (*ʿilm*) are used by various groups to describe three different phenomena. Al-Ghazālī's intent is to clarify that only one of these phenomena is deserving of such a characterization.

Al-Ghazālī begins by describing certainty (*yaqīn*) as the assent of the subject to a given proposition as well as *sukūn*. It is tricky to try and pin down a good translation for the term *sukūn*, not because there aren't several possibilities in the English language, but because each possibility might fit with one of the three phenomena more than the

[307] Although it would be anachronistic to assume al-Shāfiʿī intended the word *aṣl* in the same technical sense as axioms/principles (*qawāʿid*/*mabādiʾ*), it is nevertheless interesting and useful to know that the word *aṣl* eventually grew to be synonmous with *mabādiʾ* in the classical and postclassical eras (M. ʿAlī Al-Tahānawī 1996, 1:13).
[308] In fact, it would be safe to say that all parties within Sunnī Islam accept that *āḥād* testimonies yield *at least* opinion (*ẓann*).

others. Nevertheless, *sukūn* in this context is used to characterize a level of tranquility, rest, calmness, or to feel assured. Therefore, each of these three cases includes assent and *sukūn*, but the nature of each phenomenon is different.

The first case is one where not only is the subject certain, but they are certain that they are certain.[309] The individual is sure that their certainty is infallible and cannot be otherwise. He goes on to say that they are so certain of these propositions that if they were to hear of a Prophet with miracles saying otherwise, they would either reject that such a person is a Prophet, or at the least reject that any true Prophet could have possibly said such a thing. Al-Ghazālī gives examples of this type of certainty, the certainty we have that three is less than six or that a person cannot be in two places at the same time.

As for the second case, he characterizes the subject as having firm belief (*iʿtiqād jāzim*) in the proposition. The subject does not believe the contrary is possible or at least does not entertain the possibility of the contrary at all. However, unlike the first case, al-Ghazālī characterizes the subject as being uncertain what to do if someone of great respect and authority were to affirm the contrary.

Al-Ghazālī argues that this is because some of what they believe about this proposition is based upon authority, imitation (*taqlīḍ*), or good opinion (*ḥusn al-ẓann*). He also states that this is the type of belief that most everyday believers are characterized by. In fact, he claims that most theologians are also in this category, since some of what they believe, given their broader web of beliefs, is taken on authority, *taqlīḍ*, and *ḥusn al-ẓann*.

As for the third case, al-Ghazālī says the subject has *sukūn* towards the truth of the proposition. The individual either does not consider the possibility of the contrary or, if he does, he sees no problem in still accepting the proposition as true. He says this third category is really just a form of *ẓann*. If, however, a second person, or a third, were to further confirm this point, or if various contextual signs (*qarāʾin*) were to support the truth of the testifiers or the proposition, it would eventually become *yaqīn*.

[309] This is similar to a "knowing that you know" condition (kk). A kk condition requires not just knowledge of the fact, but knowledge that you are in a state of knowledge of the fact.

Although we have already discussed contextual or circumstantial signs (*qarāʾin*) earlier in the dissertation, it is important here to highlight that according to the standard settled view, they can be said to represent a third initial principle alongside the PST and the PNT. Regardless of whether the contextual signs support the truth of the proposition directly or indirectly through the support of the reliability of the testifier, the idea is that *qarāʾin* can be added to *āḥād* testimonies to yield knowledge.

> *Principle of Contextual Signs* (alternatively, *Principle of Qarāʾin*): *Non-successive* (*āḥād*) testimonies can yield knowledge if accompanied by corroborative contextual signs (*qarāʾin*).

Returning to al-Ghazālī's categorization of various types of belief attitudes, he says that the only true case of knowledge and certainty is the first case, and only a select few have come to recognize this. He goes on to say that the majority refers to the second case as knowledge and certainty, even though it is not. Al-Ghazālī goes on to state that ḥadīth scholars held all three to be cases of knowledge and certainty, even though some of the cases are clearly fallible. It is this third opinion that al-Ghazālī attributes to ḥadīth scholars that needs further analysis and treatment.

A surface-level reading of the literature on testimony in the Islamic tradition will quickly reveal tension over what we have called the PNT. The standard settled view has often seen this disagreement as being mostly verbal, a disagreement over what to call these attitudes more than anything substantive. However, more recently, the debate has once again emerged, with various researchers rehashing the various epistemological positions.

For example, Hallaq (1999) asserts that Western academics have completely misunderstood the framework of Islamic scholars. Given that the majority of the ḥadīth corpus is *āḥād*, Islamic scholars viewed the corpus as broadly probabilistic (*ẓannī*). His point is to highlight the critical attitude ḥadīth scholars had toward the corpus, given accusations of gullibility or lack of rigor.

In response, Brown (2009) rejects Hallaq's characterization for several reasons. First, he claims that the view characterized by Hallaq is not the view of preclassical ḥadīth

scholars, rather it is the view of "rationalist scholars" who eventually influenced those working on ḥadīth.[310] He also attempts to show how the terminology used by the rationalists is foreign to ḥadīth scholarship and is rejected by them.

Al-ʿAwnī (1996, 133–58), in *Al-Manhaj al-Muqtaraḥ*, puts up a spirited defense of what he perceives to be the ḥadīth scholar view that *āḥād* testimonies can yield knowledge. Like Brown, he relies heavily on the thesis that these distinctions are alien to ḥadīth scholarship and only later creep in. He does, however, also argue for the fact that there is room for reconciliation between both views once we consider *qarāʾin*.

However, in his later works, *Al-Yaqīnī wa al-Ẓannī* (2013), as well as *Al-Usus al-Aqliyya* (2020), he walks back some of his language and presents the disagreement as purely verbal. The reader is left thinking that the jurists and theologians misunderstood what preclassical ḥadīth scholars actually meant when they said that *āḥād* testimonies could yield knowledge. While there is some truth to this analysis, there are other elements he seems to have overlooked.

Upon further epistemic analysis, it seems that the point of disagreement (*maḥall al-nizāʿ*) has not been properly identified. Although each of the contemporary views mentioned above has some merit to it, ultimately, they seem to have avoided the central epistemic tension in question. Before moving on to address the main tension and propose a possible solution, it is important to say a bit more about the threads of the critique presented above.

As already mentioned in Chapter 5, a popular trend among critics working on Islamic history, including many researchers working within the traditional Islamic studies paradigm, is to narrowly define what *true* ḥadīth scholarship is. Their views seem to entail that the only *true* representatives of ḥadīth scholarship are a few dozen well-known personalities that lived within a two-to-three-hundred-year period. If a researcher cites scholars working on ḥadīth before this period, they are rejected as not being truly representative of the Partisans of Ḥadīth (*Ahl al-Ḥadīth*). If a researcher refers to contemporaries of those famous figures, they are also discounted because they

[310] Although Brown himself does not use the language of preclassical and classical, I believe the classification is helpful and uncontroversial.

were also working in Islamic legal (*fiqh*) circles, even though they too worked on ḥadith. If a researcher refers to the main central authorities on hadīth in the classical era, like al-ʿIrāqī or Ibn Ḥajar, they are also discounted because they have been tainted with non-ḥadīthic ideas. The idea seems to be that *true* ḥadīth scholarship is essentially made up of a few specific views because, by definition, such critics only count those who hold such views as *true* ḥadīth scholars. This is a strange circular strategy that is clearly begging the question.

Many contemporary scholars in ḥadīth studies and many Western academics working on Islamic studies have fallen into the trap of essentializing ḥadīth scholarship in a way that is untenable. They limit what is truly ḥadīthic not only to a short list of famous figures but also to technical terms and investigations that are, according to them, original (*aṣīl*) to the preclassical era. Thus, they discard any extended (*mumtadd*) or borrowed (*dakhīl*) investigations and technical terms as alien and thus non-hadīthic. This is an unnatural and unjustified historical view to take of any discipline. Disciplines grow and develop, and our revisionist historical lenses cannot claim to be truer to preclassical ḥadīth scholars than those of the classical or postclassical eras. Furthermore, as we have already shown in Chapter 5, many of those supposedly foreign investigations were there from the very beginning.

Returning to the main dispute at hand, al-ʿAwnī is right that at one level, given the eventual acceptance of the PCT, the dispute does seem to be verbal to some extent.[311] Upon careful analysis, some of the criticisms are misplaced, given that the view under analysis is actually different than what the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* believe. It is not that preclassical ḥadīth scholars reject the PNT; rather, it's that they affirm the PCT.

Nevertheless, the PCT doesn't solve the dispute entirely. It helps resolve certain aspects of it, since the knowledge of *āḥād* testimonies referred to by ḥadīth scholars, is often about instances of testimonies "surrounded by signs" (*muḥtaff biʾl qarāʾin*). Given that the settled view of classical Islamic scholarship embraces the PCT, a part of the disagreement between the two sides ceases to be an issue.

[311] I'm tempering this statement with "eventual," because the PCT was not always widely accepted. See: Laher (2014, 113–17). Al-ʿAwnī (2013, 36–78) argues that it was much more widely accepted than is often thought.

Be that as it may, it would be inaccurate to say that the PCT completely resolves the dispute. The PCT refers to cases of *qarāʾin* that render it nomically impossible for the testimony to be false. However, many proponents of the preclassical ḥadīth scholar view maintain that they know a ḥadīth is true, while also accepting that their knowledge of the truth of the attribution is fallibilistic (Al-Shāfiʿī 2020, 114, 142).[312]

Any view that characterizes fallibilistic assent to the attribution of a testimony to the Prophet (ṣ) as a type of knowledge is *substantively* in disagreement with the settled Sunnī view that knowledge *is* certainty. Some Islamic scholars tried to argue that this, too, is ultimately a verbal dispute because both parties accept that such cases are not certain. Therefore, whether they call it knowledge or not, is a dispute over terminology, not a dispute over the actual view.

While this solution is partially correct, it still avoids the real place of disagreement. After further analysis, it seems that the preclassical ḥadīth scholar view held that one could have a firm judgment (*iʿtiqād jāzim*) about the truth of the attribution of a ḥadīth to the Prophet (ṣ), based upon evidence (*ʿan dalīl*), and yet that evidence itself is fallibilistic.[313] Unless classical scholars accept that this case is plausible and that it is justified, the dispute is substantive.

Epistemic analyses of the above-mentioned case are often left out of classical expositions of knowledge. As we have already seen in the definitions of knowledge by division, there is an assumption that the evidence that grounds the stability of the attitude, or causes the attitude, or that which the attitude is based on, yields infallible certain knowledge. Although there is no explicit explanation of why this should be the case, it seems that classical Islamic epistemology's view that testimonial knowledge is nomic served as proof that one cannot have a firm judgment (*iʿtiqād jāzim*) based upon evidence that is itself fallible.

[312] Al-Dārimī (2012, 244–45) goes as far as to say that ḥadīth scholars knew these judgments were not certain since they would never swear to the fact.
[313] I'm using *dalīl* here in the broadest sense. Islamic scholars sometimes conventionally came to refer to evidence that yields certainty as a *dalīl* and evidence that yields *ẓann* as an *amāra*. See: al-Tilimsānī (2010, 91–92).

But such an argument doesn't really exclude the case preclassical ḥadīth scholars had in mind. One could further build out an argument for them by emphasizing that the firmness (*jazm*), or lack thereof, of the judgment, is one matter, and the fallibility or infallibility of the judgment is another matter. As we will see below, the majority view already embraces such a distinction in the case of imitation (*taqlīḍ*). Therefore, if the two attitudes can come apart, then why can't some evidence nomically cause firm fallible belief and other types cause certain infallible knowledge?

Beginning with at least al-Shāfiʿī (2020, 114, 142), proponents of this view sought to differentiate between what they called outer knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ẓāhir*) and inner knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-bāṭin*).[314] *Al-ʿilm al-ẓāhir* seems to have been intended to characterize having full belief, a firm judgment, based upon strong but fallible evidence. This is juxtaposed against inner knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-bāṭin*), which refers to the case of certainty. The idea seems to have been that having *al-ʿilm al-ẓāhir* is having knowledge of how things seem based on evidence, while still accepting that the matter of fact might not match how things seem.[315]

In response, classical scholars argued that knowledge does not have an outer or inner component; either one has it or one doesn't. Given that, on their view, knowledge is certainty, these cases cannot be cases of knowledge (Al-Juwaynī 1996a, 1:326–30). But then, how does one make sense of the case in question?

According to one prevalent view, such cases are cases of *ẓann*. It is as though the response to the case is to reject the idea that the subject does actually have full firm belief (*iʿtiqād jāzim*), rather, to affirm they have a high credence, or a preponderance

[314] Al-Shāfiʿī (2020, 118) also describes knowledge as being from different perspectives. He calls one of those perspectives *ʿilm al-iḥāṭa*, which we can translate as encompassing knowledge. This concept of encompassment is used by him to describe a case where the subject encompasses both outer and inner knowledge.

[315] Al-ʿAwnī (2013, 88–89, 95–97) also mentions another important angle to the preclassical ḥadithic view; their usage of term: the truth (*al-ḥaqq*), to refer to *āḥād* testimonies. However, he ends up collaposing this onto either cases of PCT or a preponderance of opinion (*ghalabat al-ẓann*), which is consistent with his analysis. My view is different than Al-ʿAwnī's, since I am arguing that they at times intended cases that were beyond a preponderance of opinion (*ghalabat al-ẓann*), and below certainty (*yaqīn*). Thus, I am identifying a middle case that I believe to be truly representative of the Partisans of Ḥadīth (*Ahl al-Ḥadīth*) view. Of course, I am theorizing beyond their language, but I believe my analysis to be consistent with their language and concepts. The usage of terminology such as truth (*al-ḥaqq*), further supports my view.

of opinion (*ghalabat al-ẓann*) in the truth of the attribution (Al-Māzirī 2015, 445).[316] But this seems to be begging the question. Preclassical ḥadīth scholars argued that experience and introspection tell us we do experience cases where we have a full and firm belief that a ḥadīth is truthfully attributable to the Prophet (ṣ) based upon evidence and yet that evidence is itself fallibilistic.

It seems to me that the prevalent view is confusing the attitude of the subject with the signification of the probability of the evidence. Al-Rāzī (1996c, 1:85–86) explains that *ẓann* is said of cases where the subject's assent is itself credential and probabilistic above .5. However, *ẓann* is not said of evidence that signifies a probability above .5. To assume that just because a ḥadīth scholar's evidence is probabilistic, that the attitude of the subject is itself probabilistic, and thus a case of *ẓann,* is begging the question.

One can deny this 1:1 correspondence between the two domains. Doing so would allow for the possibility of the evidence being probabilistic while the subject's assent is firm. Even if one were to cede that the two are nomically related, there is no reason to assume that only certain infallible evidence yields firm judgments in the subject. It seems quite reasonable to hold that fallible evidence might, in certain cases, yield *ẓann,* while in other stronger cases, it might yield full belief or a firm judgment (*iʿtiqād jāzim*). However, despite having yielded firm belief, that does not necessitate that the evidence is of the quality and type that it is infallible.

Furthermore, just as we have problematized confusing the firmness of a judgment with the infallibility of knowledge, as well as problematized confusing the attitude of the subject with the signification of the probability of the evidence, we can also problematize confusing the lack of any preponderance in the evidence with certain

[316] A similar strategy is employed by some Islamic scholars when it comes to a different but related question: the faith of nonspecialists. Theologians hold that knowledge and faith in the core doctrines is obligatory. Given that knowledge requires evidence on their view, nonspecialists are required to have proofs for their beliefs. As we have already stated, nonspecialists are only required to have general proofs (*dalīl ijmālī*) for their beliefs, not the complicated syllogistic proofs (*dalīl tafṣīlī*) of the theologians. However, theologians want to maintain that knowledge is certainty. How can one unite between proofs that are based upon a simple inference with the stringent demands of certain knowledge? Therefore, some acquiesced, stating that in reality the faith of most nonspecialists was not based upon certain knowledge, rather it was a form of preponderance of opinion (*ghalabat al-ẓann*). Finally, the theologians stated that such an attitude was sufficient in the case of nonspecialists (Al-Jurjānī 1998a, 1:361).

evidence. The fact that the evidence indicates the truth of a proposition fully, does not necessarily mean that it indicates the truth of the proposition infallibly. Convoluting the firmness or lack thereof of the judgment, with the signification of the probability of the evidence, as well as the certainty and infallibility of the evidence, seems to be at the root of the dispute.[317]

In theory, classical scholars should be willing to accept the existence of this category given the standard discussions of knowledge we find in some of their jurisprudential texts. For example, we find in al-Subkī's, *Jamʿ al-Jawāmiʿ*, the division as follows: "The firm of it, which does not allow for change, is knowledge. If it does allow for change and it corresponds (to reality) then it is belief." (Al-Maḥallī 2005b, 1:123) Commenting on this section, al-Maḥallī gives the example of one taking a belief on authority and imitation (*taqlīd*). Al-Maḥallī's wording insinuates that the case of the imitator is just an example, meaning there is room for other scenarios.[318]

Although one is hard-pressed to find evidence conceding this point in the classical literature, there is at least one example. In his gloss on al-Ījī's commentary on Ibn al-Ḥājib's epistle, al-Taftāzānī (2004, 2:418–20) analyzes various views concerning whether an *āḥād* testimony, in conjunction with *qarāʾin*, can yield certain knowledge. After listing the views and various objections and rebuttals, al-Taftāzānī analyzes an objection to the central case for the PCT, which was itself introduced by Ibn al-Ḥājib. In the original case, a king testifies to the death of his son, in conjunction with several *qarāʾin* further supporting the truth of the proposition. The original case is supposed to serve as an example or thought experiment of the possibility of certain knowledge being yielded by an *āḥād* testimony when considered in conjunction with *qarāʾin*.

According to the objection being considered by al-Taftāzānī (2004, 2:420), all the details are the same, except, as it turns out, the son has not died. The objection is supposed to serve as a counterexample, indicating that knowledge is not possible via

[317] Further analysis into the difference between these domains would be fruitful. See, for example, Reed (2021) on various types of certainty.

[318] It also seems that the word belief (*iʿtiqād*) here is being used to signify full-belief, not just the genus of belief. Recall the discussion concerning the various meanings of the word *iʿtiqād* and how at times it is used to mean a judgement (*ḥukm*). Given these two points, we can read the section as stating that there are two types of firm judgment (*ḥukm jāzim*). The first is certain knowledge, and the second is full belief. Only the latter is called belief (*iʿtiqād*), in the strict sense.

qarāʾin. Given that al-Taftāzānī agrees with the PCT and is advocating for the possibility of knowledge via *qarāʾin*, he needs to explain how we can make sense of this case.

Al-Taftāzānī concedes that it is possible for something resembling knowledge to obtain, which he calls belief (*iʿtiqād*).[319] Although al-Taftāzānī does not explicitly state that this is not a case of *ẓann*, given the context, and given his own usage of the term belief (*iʿtiqād*) to indicate firm belief (*al-iʿtiqād al-jāzim*) elsewhere, this interpretation seems likely. As previously mentioned in Chapter 7, the word *iʿtiqād* is a homonym. At the time, we were interested in highlighting that it can be used to signify a judgment (*ḥukm*) in the widest possible sense.[320] However, according to the more standard usage of the term, it is used to refer to judgments in a stricter sense, those that, while firm, are still fallible.[321]

A second possible response is to cede that the subject does have full and firm belief (*iʿtiqād jāzim*), but only because they haven't considered the contrary. Should they consider the contrary, the fullness or the firmness of their belief will collapse into *ẓann*. But this, too, seems problematic.

For one, on the classical view, Islamic scholars want to say that given natural laws (*aḥkām ʿādiyya*), one can have knowledge and certainty even if they know that such necessity is nomic and not logical. For example, we are certain that the earth is still rotating around the sun even though it is rationally possible that the natural laws have been broken. Therefore, even though the subject might consider the logical possibility of these natural laws breaking, that does not degrade his attitude from certain knowledge to *ẓann*.

But this view contradicts their response to full and firm belief (*iʿtiqād jāzim*) based upon fallible evidence. If classical scholars were to apply their view concerning full

[319] Al-Taftāzānī (2004, 2:420) writes*: Qad yaḥṣul al-iʿtiqād, wa huwa lā yūjib al-tanāquḍ li ʿadam istilzām al-thubūt fī al-wāqiʿ*.
[320] Including everything from certainty to credences.
[321] Al-Taftāzānī (2022b, 89) writes that according to the popular usage, the term *iʿtiqād* allows for doubt (*taskhīk*): *Wa al-iʿtiqād al-mashhūr: wa huwa ḥukm jāzim yaqbaluhu*. This means that the belief is fallibile.

and firm belief based upon fallible evidence to the question of nomic certainty, they would have to concede that they no longer have knowledge and certainty; rather, they have mere *ẓann*. Otherwise, how are they going to explain that considering the contrary in one case downgrades the subject's epistemic status and does not downgrade their epistemic status in the other case? Alternatively, they could maintain that such a consideration of nomic vs. logical possibility does not vitiate the subject's firm and full belief. However, if the latter is true, then why can't this also be true of the cases posed by preclassical ḥadīth scholars?

Al-Ghazālī's analysis of certainty can be used to propose a third type of argument for the settled classical view. Relying on al-Ghazālī's above distinction, one could accept that the subject does have a full and firm belief (*iʿtiqād jāzim*) in the truth of the proposition while still accepting its fallibility. However, one can still deny that this is a case of knowledge because the fullness and firmness of the belief is not entirely based on the evidence. One might argue that the evidence is 80% or 90% responsible for the belief, while good opinion, imitation, and authority are what fill in the rest. Therefore, this isn't a case of knowledge; this is a case of imitation (*taqlīd*).[322]

Although this third response strikes me as the strongest of the three, it does not disprove the case preclassical ḥadīth scholars have in mind. One could easily accept that, in some cases, the firmness and fullness of the belief is based upon good opinion, imitation, and authority, while maintaining that, in other cases, it is based upon evidence. It seems to me that unless classical scholars can prove that such a case is impossible, then they must, at the very least, accept that it is an identifiable category. Of course, this does not mean that such a category must be considered a type of knowledge; it could easily be called something else. However, one cannot deny the existence of the epistemic phenomenon just because it isn't an example of certainty. To do so is merely begging the question.

Finally, we can tie the existence of this fallible type of firm belief to the discussion around the PNT and the PCT. During our earlier analysis, we saw that both the jurists and ḥadith scholars accepted that although the PNT is correct, with the right type of

[322] On this view, imitation need not be pure.

contextual signs (*qarāʾin*), certainty can be achieved. This latter point is the main thrust of the PCT.

However, for *qarāʾin* to confer certain knowledge, those signs would need to indicate some type of nomic necessity. Recall how, in the case of the PST, *tawātur* confers certainty because of the nomic impossibility that a large group of individuals could collude or accidentally agree on a sensory matter. For the PCT to be correct, these cases must also present similar conditions.

While it is evident that *qarāʾin* might reach such an epistemic threshold in certain circumstances, it is also evident that they might fall short of nomic necessity. If they fall short of nomic necessity, the result might still be some form of PNT. However, it is not difficult to imagine a case of *qarāʾin* where the hearer has enough signs that they yield firm belief (*iʿtiqād jāzim*) in the relevant proposition, while those same *qarāʾin* have not reached the level of nomic necessity. This seems to me not only possible but exactly what ḥadīth scholars had in mind.[323]

Whether or not the analysis provided of the standard ḥadīth scholar view concerning the PNT is correct, ultimately, it does not harm the PNT. The standard view of ḥadīth scholars allows for the PNT, but it also offers a category between it and the PCT. This middle category is the case when a ḥadīth is *āḥād* and thus, by default, *ẓannī*, rises in epistemic status through features of the transmitters and the testimony in question, as well as through extrinsic *qarāʾin*, until it yields full and firm belief (*iʿtiqād jāzim*). And yet, despite that firmness, it has not reached the level of nomic or logical certainty. This is because that full and firm belief (*iʿtiqād jāzim*) is based on fallibilistic evidence.

In summary, the first three axioms that make up the rational and epistemological foundations of the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars are the *Principles of Successive and Non-successive Testimony*, as well as the *Principle of Contextual Signs*. The PST, PNT, and PCT are three of the primary principles (*mabādiʾ*) upon which the whole

[323] This is contrary to al-ʿAwnī (2013, 94–97), who argues that in cases where evidence falls short of the PCT, what ḥadīth scholars meant by knowledge is actually a preponderance of opinion (*ghalabat al-ẓann*).

system of ḥadīth scholars rests. These three initial principles guide how the rest of the traditional method is structured.

Given their primacy, their explication and justification are key. Although we have engaged in some epistemic analysis of the *mabādiʾ* in this section, we have yet to speak of the justification of the principles themselves. If we were to stop here, our work would be descriptive and exegetical and more in the spirit of the history of philosophy than in philosophical epistemology. Since we have set out to do the latter, we will need to make a case for how these principles can be justified. However, before discussing the justification of the principles themselves, it is useful to analyze a second group of principles having to do with speaker reliability, since their justification and the justification of the PST, PNT, and PCT are similar.

8.5. The Principles and Axioms of the Criteria of Authenticity (*Shurūṭ al-Ṣiḥḥa*)

8.5.1. An Overview of the Criteria of Authenticity

The previously mentioned *Criteria of Authenticity* (CA) (*shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa*) operate as conditions epistemically posterior to the initial designation of whether a given testimony is *mutawātir* or *āḥād*. Given the PST, *tawātur* need not be further investigated. If *tawātur* yields nomically certain knowledge, there is no need to further investigate the authenticity of such testimonies (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 45).

However, if the testimony under evaluation does not meet the necessary and sufficient conditions of *tawātur*, then it is *āḥād*. Given the PNT, as a default, these *āḥād* testimonies yield *ẓann*. As we have already mentioned and will be further discussed below, the default epistemic judgment of a credence above .5 is simply not enough for conferring justification given certain domains and contexts.

It is at this point in the process that the CA is used to further investigate the epistemic status of these *āḥād* testimonies. The criteria are a set of rules (*qawāʿid*) and conditions (*shurūṭ*) which help assess and evaluate the epistemic status of *āḥād* testimonies. They have been referred to here as *criteria* as opposed to the earlier usage of *necessary conditions* because the referent intended in this section is not strictly the necessary

conditions of authenticity (*ṣiḥḥa*) themselves. Rather, the intention here is to refer to the broad *standards of judgment and criticism* (*maʿāyīr*) through which a ḥadīth's authenticity can be evaluated as being authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*), fair (*ḥasan*), or weak (*ḍaʿīf*).[324]

The CA makes up the very backbone of the traditional method of ḥadīth criticism (*manhaj al-naqd*). Therefore, any analysis of the rational and epistemic foundations of ḥadīth criticism requires an analysis of the CA. However, the CA itself relies upon and assumes certain principles and axioms (*mabādiʾ*/*qawāʿid*) having to do with speaker reliability and inquiry, which we will need to investigate in order to give a thorough epistemic analysis of the *manhaj al-naqd*.

The CA is made up of five criteria, which will be analyzed below. As Eido has argued, the CA can be divided into two areas of investigation.[325] The first area of investigation is intrinsic to the testimony under evaluation (*bi-l-naẓar ilā dhātihi*), while the second area of investigation is extrinsic to the testimony under evaluation (*bi-l-naẓar ilā ghayrihi*). The first area is primarily focused on the reliability of the transmitters in the testimonial chain, while the second area is focused on comparing and contrasting the testimony under evaluation with other adjacent paths (*ṭuruq*) of the same testimony or other independent ḥadīth altogether.

On this division, the first three criteria of the CA relate to the reliability of the transmitters in the testimonial chain, while the last two criteria of the CA involve comparing the testimony under evaluation with other testimonies. This intrinsic vs. extrinsic distinction is intended to signify the difference between the evaluation of a particular testimony independent of any other testimonies vs. the evaluation of a particular testimony in light of other testimonies. For the rest of this section, we will analyze the five criteria of the CA in light of this division, focusing specifically on the *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid* upon which the criteria rest.

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[324] Ḥadīth scholars at times use this phrase, *shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa*, to connote the necessary conditions of authenticity (*ṣiḥḥa*), and at times use it to refer to something broader; the various variables that impact the authenticity or lackthereof of a Prophetic testimony. This is similar to Eido's (2018a, 1:191) usage of *miʿyār* (pl: *maʿāyīr*).

[325] See professor Eido's (2018a), *Manhaj Qabūl al-Akhbār*, where he divides the majority of his investigations along these lines. It is important to note that in Eido's work, the extrinsic investigations (*bi-l-naẓar ilā ghayrihi*) are of a much wider scope, as will be mentioned later in this chapter.

8.5.2. Intrinsic Criteria: Transmitter Reliability

8.5.2.1. An Overview

The CA enumerates three separate questions when it comes to transmitter reliability. The first question is the contiguity of the testimonial chain (*ittiṣal al-sanad*). The second question pertains to the uprightness or probity (*ʿadāla*) of the transmitters in the chain. The third question pertains to the precision (*ḍabṭ*) of the transmitters in the chain. These three questions make up the first three criteria of the CA.

As already mentioned in the dissertation, ḥadīth scholars are not focused on evaluating all human testimonies in an absolute sense; rather, they are primarily focused on evaluating Prophetic ḥadīth. Furthermore, while Prophetic ḥadīth are a type of statement (*khabar*) and thus a type of testimony in the anglophone sense, they nevertheless belong to a specific subset of *statements*. For ḥadīth critics, Prophetic ḥadīth are a type of *transmission* (*riwāya*), as opposed to being a type of *testimony* (*shahāda*) or *opinion* (*raʾy*). Thus, as mentioned in Chapter 6, the avenues for evaluating Prophetic ḥadīth must be *transmission* (*riwāya*) related, or else risk including superfluous conditions.

Take, for example, the standard ḥadīthic criterion of *ḍabṭ*. One aspect of this criterion is the assessment of the memory of the speaker. If one were to epistemically evaluate the reliability of a witness in a contemporary court case, the importance of the memory of the witness and thus their *ḍabṭ* would not necessarily play the same type of role as it would in a ḥadīthic context, where the speaker's preservation of the words of the ḥadīth (*matn*) is heavily impacted by his memory. That is not to say that memory plays no part in the assessment of witnesses in court testimony; rather, it is only to say that intuitively, the cases are substantively different.

Given that focus, ḥadith scholars sought to identify how to assess the reliability of ḥadīth *vis-à-vis* intrinsic and extrinsic criteria. Their solution involved a logical analysis of the possibility of testimonial unreliability. As for the intrinsic criteria, they identified the possibility of falsehood as being either due to deliberate or indeliberate means. The deliberate means are cases of lying in the strict sense (*al-kadhib bi al-*

maʿnā al-akhaṣṣ), while the indeliberate means are cases of error or mistakes which are included as a case of lying in the broader sense (*al-kadhib bi al-maʿnā al-aʿamm*).

From there, ḥadīth scholars associated each type of possible falsehood with a separate area of investigation. For cases of deliberately speaking falsehood, lying in the strict sense (*al-kadhib bi al-maʿnā al-akhaṣṣ*), ḥadīth scholars sought to investigate the *ʿadāla* of the transmitters in the chain. As for cases of indeliberately speaking falsehood, lying in the broader sense (*al-kadhib bi al-maʿnā al-aʿamm*), scholars sought to investigate the *ḍabṭ* of the transmitters in the chain.

The third and final intrinsic criterion, contiguity of the testimonial chain (*ittiṣāl al-sanad*), is a consequence of the other two criteria. In order to investigate the *ʿadāla* of the transmitters in the testimonial chain, as well as the *ḍabṭ* of the transmitters in the chain, one must know who is in the chain. Therefore, contiguity (*al-ittiṣāl*) is an investigation into whether we know the individuals that make up the testimonial chain. Any type of omission (*ṣaqṭ*) or break (*inqiṭāʿ*) in the testimonial chain means that we cannot assess the *ʿadāla* or the *ḍabṭ* of all the transmitters in the chain. Thus, we cannot evaluate the reliability of the ḥadīth itself.

8.5.2.2. Uprightness-Probity: *ʿAdāla*

The criterion of *ʿadāla* can be thought of in terms of concentric circles. At the center of these circles is honesty (*ṣidq*), which is what ḥadīth scholars are ultimately interested in when investigating the *ʿadāla* of a given transmitter. Their interest in the *ṣidq* of transmitters relates back to their initial division: deliberate vs. indeliberate cases of falsehood. *Ṣidq*, or the lack thereof, is associated with deliberate cases of lying in the strict sense (*al-kadhib bi al-maʿnā al-akhaṣṣ*). As we will investigate further below, there is an epistemic relationship between a transmitter being characterized by honesty, or their lack of being characterized by honesty, and the reliability of their testimony.

Beyond *ṣidq*, ḥadīth scholars, under the broad rubric of the *ʿadāla* of transmitters, investigated several other adjacent variables (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 58; Sirājuddīn 2020, 37). For example, transmitter critics focused on moral indiscretions,

sectarian leanings, bias, and even the violation of social conventions. However, these were outer circles to the core circle of the *ʿadāla* criterion, *ṣidq*. The thought was to investigate these other aspects of a transmitter's character and life in order to assess the likelihood of them engaging in lying in the strict sense (*al-kadhib bi al-maʿnā al-akhaṣṣ*).

From the criterion of *ʿadāla* we can deduce an *implicit* reliance upon a *Principle of Probity* (alternatively, a *Principle of ʿAdāla*). This principle operates in the epistemic background of their investigations into the *ʿadāla* of any given transmitter. They sought to assess the *ʿadāla* of transmitters because they already, *implicitly*, believed in this *Principle of Probity*.

> *Principle of Probity* (*Principle of ʿAdāla*): If a speaker is known to lie in the strict sense, then they are more likely to lie again. Similarly, if they are known to violate other moral boundaries, show undue bias, or regularly flaunt social conventions, then they are more likely to lie in the strict sense.

8.5.2.3. Precision: *Ḍabṭ*

The criterion of precision (*ḍabṭ*) is ultimately a criterion concerned with the proper reception of communication, its preservation, and the ability to recall it as needed in its preserved state. Ḥadīth scholars were thus interested in the memory of transmitters, as well as their ability to properly receive testimonies and convey them as they heard them. *Ḍabṭ* thus indicates the ability of the transmitter to properly receive information, preserve it, and then convey it as one once heard it (Sirājuddīn 2020, 39–40; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 58–59).

It is standard in *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* texts to distinguish between *ḍabṭ* of the heart and *ḍabṭ* of texts. The former alludes to the preservation of ḥadīth through memory, while the latter alludes to the preservation of ḥadīth through writing, notes, and formal compilations (Sirājuddīn 2020, 39–40; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 58–59). *Ḍabṭ*, or the lack thereof, relates to indeliberate cases of lying, otherwise known as lying in the broader sense (*al-kadhib bi al-maʿnā al-aʿamm*).

Depending on the transmitter, ḥadīth critics would investigate his *ḍabṭ* of heart or his *ḍabṭ* of texts, or both. As we have already mentioned in Chapter 5, ḥadīth criticism and transmitter criticism eventually developed into their own specialization among ḥadīth scholars. These individuals engaged in the evaluation of transmitters and their transmissions. At times, they would test the transmitters to try and catch them in a mistake or lie.[326] Similarly, they would investigate their written records, looking for the possibility of errors.

What can be deduced from our analysis of the ḥadīth scholar criterion of *ḍabṭ* is their reliance, *implicitly*, upon a *Principle of Precision* (alternatively, a *Principle of Ḍabṭ*). This principle also operates in the epistemic background of their investigations. They sought to assess the *ḍabṭ* of transmitters because they already believed, *implicitly*, in this *Principle of Precision*.[327]

> *Principle of Precision* (*Principle of Ḍabṭ*): If a speaker is known to make mistakes, or to be forgetful, or to generally be inattentive, then they are more likely to make mistakes in their conveying back what they had previously heard. Similarly, if they are inattentive and lack care with their notes, then there is a higher likelihood that their written material could have been tampered with.

8.5.2.4. Transmitter Reliability

With these two principles operating in the epistemic background, the *Principle of Probity* (*Principle of ʿAdāla*), PP for short, and the *Principle of Precision* (*Principle of Ḍabṭ*), PD for short, ḥadīth scholars investigated individuals involved in the transmission of the ḥadīth corpus. As already mentioned in Chapter 5, eventually, biographical dictionaries were compiled, where critics endorsed (*taʿdīl*) or impugned (*jarḥ*) transmitters based upon the variables described above.

This then led to a system of transmitter rankings. While the technical term "reliability" (*mawthūqiyya*) is not used in the Islamic texts the same way, or as often, as it is in the

[326] For an analysis of various means of assessing and evaluating precision (*ḍabṭ*), see Eido (2018a, 1:305–20).
[327] Alternatively, instead of saying that they investigate *ḍabṭ because* they believed in such a principle, one could assert that they investigate *ḍabṭ* given their implicit knowledge of this principle.

anglophone tradition, it nevertheless exists in spirit.[328] In the Islamic system, a transmitter's reliability is ultimately grounded in their *ʿadāla* and their *ḍabṭ*. Transmitter critics tested, investigated, and gathered information, and based on those findings, a transmitter would be given a reliability score.[329]

It is important to reemphasize that if there is any omission (*ṣaqṭ*) or break (*inqiṭāʿ*) in the testimonial chain, then the evaluators cannot assess the reliability score of the testimonial chain because one or more of the transmitters is missing. In this way, although the contiguity of the testimonial chain (*iṭṭiṣāl al-sanad*) is an independent criterion of authenticity, it ultimately relies upon the same two axioms: PP and PD.

8.5.2.5. The Problem of Induction

Before moving on to discuss how the PST, PNT, PCT, PP, and PD can be justified, there is a looming skeptical objection to the *Principles of Probity and Precision* that must be addressed. It seems that these two principles rely upon basic induction. When one witnesses someone else telling the truth or not telling the truth, at several intervals of time, they then judge that this person is going to tell the truth, or conversely, is going to lie, or is likely to tell the truth, or is likely to lie, based upon the previous witnessing of those instances. Similarly, if one witnesses that someone else regularly forgets, they then judge that this other person will make a mistake, or will likely make a mistake, or forget, based upon the previous witnessing of those instances. These cases seem like textbook cases of induction.

The looming skeptical objection is not specific to the PP or the PD*;* rather, it is the standard skeptical objection against induction writ large. The *problem of induction*, at its essence, argues that induction is faulty because it assumes the truth of the inductive principle itself. Given that there is no way to prove the inductive principle except by relying on it, induction itself is unjustified.[330]

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[328] See for example: Eido (2018a, 1:191–92). In some cases, the Arabic term *ṣiḥḥa* (authenticity) is used in the Islamic tradition the way reliability is used in the anglophone tradition. Similarly, ḥadīthic terms used to describe the reliability of actual transmitters, like *thiqa* and *thabt*, share a similar signification.
[329] This reliability applies to transmissions (*riwāya*) as opposed to other kinds of testimonies, which require their own analysis.
[330] See Feldman (2003, 132–34) for a summary of the *problem of induction*.

It will be useful to spend a bit more time unpacking this well-known objection. As Feldman points out, all induction relies upon what we can call a *Principle of Induction*.

> PI: The future will be like the past. (Or, somewhat more precisely, if X percent of the observed A's have been B's, then X percent of the unobserved A's are B's).[331]

The *problem of induction,* as pointed out by Hume and others, is that PI is itself unjustifiable except through reliance on induction itself. If that is true, the argument for induction is circular. If there is no other argument for induction other than this circular argument, then it seems that induction itself is unjustified.

If the above is true, PP and PD, two of the most important axioms upon which the CA rests, as well as the traditional method of ḥadīth criticism itself, are in trouble. What might seem to make matters worse is that the field of ḥadīth studies is often associated with *istiqrāʾ*, which is the technical word in Arabic for induction.[332] Furthermore, Islamic scholars themselves pointed out the less-than-optimal epistemic value of induction, particularly its inability to yield certitude. It is standard in Arabic logic texts to differentiate between complete induction (*istiqrāʾ tām*) and incomplete induction (*istiqrāʾ nāqiṣ*) (Al-Taftāzānī 2011, 364). While the former can yield certainty, the latter cannot. However, it is the latter that is more widespread.

Thankfully, things are not as troubling as they at first seem. Firstly, Islamic epistemology differentiates between two different epistemic phenomena that are often lumped together in the anglophone tradition. While *istiqrāʾ* is the noticing of similarity between several particulars and then judging that other instances will be the same, a somewhat adjacent concept, experience or empirical knowledge (*tajriba*), is substantively different.

According to Arabic logic texts, experience or empirical knowledge (*tajriba*) yields certainty, while induction (*istiqrāʾ*) does not. At first glance, given the apparent

[331] This is taken directly from Feldman (2003, 133), except his naming convention is different. I changed the naming convention to avoid confusion given the other acronyms I have employed in the chapter.
[332] See, for example: Eido (2018a, 1:120).

similarity between the two phenomena, this seems strange. A common example given for *tajriba* is the fact that fire burns. Their explanation is that we witness fire burning, and then we come to know that fire burns. This sounds almost identical to *istiqrāʾ*. One is left asking, what is the difference?

The difference is that in the case of *tajriba*, in addition to the witnessing of uniformity of the thing being judged, there is an implicit inference concerning the need for a cause for that uniformity (Al-Taftāzānī 2011, 365). Given that such uniformity cannot be by chance, there must be a cause. Uniformity by chance is not possible due to the principle of the rational impossibility of preponderance or determination between multiple possibilities without a cause or determiner (*istiḥālat al-rujḥān bi lā murajjiḥ*).[333]

Once one knows the above, then the subject is also justified in knowing, with nomic certainty, that any future event, if it includes that same cause and similar conditions, will yield the same effect. Notice that this explication does not rely on the PI for justification. Rather, it relies on demonstration, particularly on the law of causation; you cannot have an effect without a cause. Thus, circularity is avoided, and *tajriba*-yielding knowledge is justified.

As already discussed in Chapter 7 during our investigation of the internalism vs. externalism debate, Islamic epistemologists did not ultimately feel like they had to justify certain basic evident beliefs. *Tajriba* is often enumerated as one of these justified basic beliefs, and it, along with the rest of the list, is said to yield certainty. Be that as it may, Islamic scholars did end up responding to skeptical attacks and mustering up arguments for these basic beliefs for dialectical purposes. The above reply can thus be seen as part of that same tradition.

Turning back to the main topic at hand, it is *tajriba* that ḥadīth scholars rely on when investigating the criteria of *ʿadāla* and *ḍabṭ*. Although it is true that the characterization of ḥadīth scholarship as being inductive (*istiqrāʾī*) is relatively standard, it seems such descriptions must be understood in the broadest possible sense. It is quite normal in

[333] For reference to and further analysis of the principle of the rational impossibility of preponderance or determination between multiple possibilities without a cause or determiner (*istiḥālat al-rujḥān bi-lā murajjiḥ*), see: Ṣadr al-Sharīʿah (2020, 189).

the Islamic tradition to have technical terms be used with different meanings, depending upon the context. In these contexts, where ḥadīth scholarship is characterized as relying on *istiqrāʾ*, what is intended is that ḥadīth scholars rely on particulars to evaluate ḥadīth and transmitters. However, such a broad meaning applies to both induction (*istiqrāʾ*) in the strict sense, as well as experience or empirical knowledge (*tajriba*).[334]

Transmitter critics investigate particular instances of a given transmitter's life, as well as particular ḥadīth that they transmitted. The investigation and evaluation of these transmitters eventually produces for the critic an image of the uniformity of their behavior. That uniformity cannot be random; rather, it must rely on some cause. It is that cause that ḥadīth scholars called uprightness/probity (*ʿadāla*) and precision (*ḍabṭ*).

It is standard in *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* texts to define *ʿadāla*: as a firm disposition/ability (*malaka*) that carries a person to adhere to piety and social conventions. Similarly, it is standard to define *ḍabṭ* as a firm disposition/ability (*malaka*) that enables a transmitter to transmit a ḥadīth as they heard it (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 58 fn. 3).[335] Notice how the concept of cause and effect is operating in the background of their epistemic analysis. During the investigation undertaken by transmitter critics, they come to deduce that there is a uniformity in the transmitter's actions and thus further deduce that the transmitter is characterized by certain firm dispositions/abilities that caused that uniformity.

The above analysis is categorically different from the case of induction (*istiqrāʾ*) in the strict sense. In those cases, one witnesses uniformity without noticing any cause or effect. A common example mentioned in the books of logic is witnessing that animals with jaws always move their bottom jaw when chewing (Al-Laknawī 2018, 335; Q. al-D. Al-Rāzī 1975a, 2:447). Notice that there is no cause or effect being alluded to here. Rather, it is just the witnessing of a raw fact about particular animals. In such

[334] Thus we can distinguish between induction (*istiqrāʾ*) in the strict sense and induction (*istiqrāʾ*) in the broad sense. The latter includes *tajriba*, while the former does not.
[335] Although Ibn Ḥajar mentions the former, the latter is explicitly mentioned by the editor, Dr. Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr, in the footnotes.

cases, incomplete induction (*istiqrāʾ nāqiṣ*) will not yield nomic certainty because one has not witnessed all possible cases.[336]

8.5.2.6. Justifying the PST, PNT, PCT, PP, and PD

We have, up until this point, identified and made explicit five distinct *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid* that ḥadith scholars are relying upon implicitly in their epistemic system. The PST and PNT are logically prior to the rest and serve as a type of default belief or presumptive right.[337] The CA's criteria are then used to evaluate *āhād* testimonies and rely heavily on investigating the reliability of the transmitters in the testimonial chain. Given that transmitter criticism rests upon the axioms of the PP and PD, they serve as the backbone of the CA and confer justification on three out of the five *criteria of authenticity*.

As we have already seen with the case of the PP and PD, there is room for skeptical objections. Given that the entire edifice of the ḥadīthic system rests upon them, their validity and justification are paramount. We are then left asking, how do we respond to these skeptical attacks and justify these basic axioms?

As an initial response, we can begin by reiterating what we said above; one clear thread found in the Islamic epistemological system is the rejection of any epistemic need to justify such basic, necessary, non-inferential beliefs. We can then further build upon this default right by using a familiar argument within the Islamic system that these *mabādiʾ* are, as a matter of fact, nomically true, and the fact that they are nomically true itself confers justification. This line of externalist reasoning is standard in Islamic texts and serves as one part of a compound answer.

Beyond these externalist arguments, one can point out internalist themes, such as our experience as epistemic subjects, our tracking of reliability, arguments against skepticism, and proofs internal to us. For example, we, as epistemic subjects, come to know certain truths through *tawātur*. We also find within ourselves a credence-laden

[336] In contrast to complete induction (*istiqrāʾ tām*), where the subject has witnessed all particulars of the genus.
[337] The PCT functions in a similar manner except it is situated between the PNT and the CA.

attitude of possibility when considering *āḥād* testimony in a vacuum. That same credence-laden attitude of possibility, when considering *āḥād* testimony in a vacuum, easily turns to a firm judgment (*iʿtiqād jāzim*) when certain variables are posited further bolstering the testifier or the proposition being testified to. Finally, when theoretically considering an instance of *tawātur* or a testimony "surrounded by signs" (*muḥtaff biʾl qarāʾin*), the subject differentiates between cases where falsehood is nomically possible vs. nomically impossible. These are all internalist methods of giving a justificatory account of Islamic epistemology.

As for the PP and PD, we have already seen a theoretical deductive defense of the type of induction that they rely on. Beyond a theoretical defense, here, too, the epistemic subject finds themselves tracking these experiences and making nomic judgments based upon particular instances. Furthermore, on a purely pragmatic level, we as epistemic subjects require not only the PP and PD, but also the PI for the management of our epistemic lives. This reliability tracking and these experiences, arguments, and proofs are internal to us as epistemic subjects, and they represent the more internalist side of Islamic epistemology.

In summary, by combining both the externalist and internalist threads found above, we can weave a defense of the five *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid* that unites the external matter-of-fact reliability of these epistemic causes and theoretical and experiential internalist conditions, thus grounding and justifying our knowledge of the facts. This hybrid account lines up well with our earlier investigation into the internalism vs. externalism debate, as well as the question of testimonial reduction. However, these five *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid* are not the only principles key to the inferential edifice of the CA and the broad traditional critical approach of the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars. Therefore, next, we will investigate, analyze, and give a justificatory account of what remains.

8.5.3. Extrinsic Criteria: Inquiry

8.5.3.1. An Overview

The second half of the CA is focused on evaluating the epistemic status of a given ḥadīth in light of other paths (*ṭuruq*) of the same ḥadīth, or other independent ḥadīth

altogether. Eido's division of ḥadīth criticism into intrinsic vs. extrinsic criteria is both intuitive and useful. However, the extrinsic criteria he lists go far beyond the focus and scope of ḥadīth scholars, qua their strict role as ḥadīth scholars, to the focus and scope of other specialists, including the realm of Islamic legal scholars (*fuqahāʾ*) and theologians (*mutakallimūn*).[338]

As already mentioned in Chapter 5, the Islamic sciences, as they developed and settled, constituted a division of epistemic labor. At times, this meant they were studying and analyzing different phenomena altogether, while at other times, it meant they were investigating one phenomenon from different vantage points. Although this division of epistemic labor deserves its own extended study, for now, we must limit ourselves to emphasizing what is within the realm of ḥadīth scholarship proper and what is beyond its scope.

The extrinsic critical efforts of ḥadīth scholars are focused on gathering the various branches and offshoots of the primary ḥadīth under evaluation; in search of corroboration or contradiction in either the testimonial chain (*isnād*) or in the text (*matn*) of the ḥadīth. If we broaden the epistemic scope further, ḥadīth scholars also gathered independent ḥadīth altogether, in search of corroboration or contradiction in either the *isnād* or in the *matn* of the original ḥadīth under investigation. These two levels of extrinsic ḥadīth criticism are within the purview and scope of ḥadīth scholarship proper.

Although we have alluded to the *path* (*ṭarīq*) vs. independent ḥadīth distinction a few different times throughout this dissertation, it is useful to say a bit more about it to further clarify the distinction. Conventionally, within the field of ḥadīth scholarship, a Prophetic ḥadīth is qualified by the companion who transmitted it. Therefore, when they speak of *a ḥadīth*, it is the ḥadīth of so-and-so companion from the Prophet (ṣ).[339] If the *matn* of the hadīth is transmitted from a completely different companion, that is said to be another ḥadīth altogether.[340]

[338] See Eido's (2018b, 2:546–648) inclusion of the Qurʾān as well as legal maxims (*qawāʿid sharʿiyya*) as extrinsic criteria.
[339] For a hint of this distinction in a classical text, see Ibn Ḥajar (1984, 2:364), in his *Nukat*.
[340] This does not necessarily mean that the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) said the same statement more than once. It is quite possible that both companions heard it in the same instance. Establishing that there is

Having now clarified the above, we can move on to explicating what is meant by multiple paths (*ṭuruq*) of any given companion's Prophetic ḥadīth.[341] At any level of the testimonial chain (*ṭabaqa*), any number of transmitters might have taken from a given transmitter. This can increase or decrease at every generational level, and so you will often find testimonial chains flowering around certain figures and not others.[342] Each of these unique pathways leading back to the companion of that specific hadīth is conventionally called a path (*ṭarīq*).[343]

Therefore, the extrinsic investigations of ḥadīth scholars are primarily focused on these two areas: first and foremost, the various *ṭuruq* of the central ḥadīth under evaluation, and secondarily, other independent ḥadīth that pertain to the ḥadīth in question.[344] Both areas are extrinsic in that they require the critic to go beyond the primary *isnād* and *matn* under evaluation and compare and contrast it with other testimonial chains and texts. These two forms of extrinsic criticism will now allow us to make sense of the fourth and fifth criteria of the CA.

8.5.3.2. Hidden Defects and Anomalies

The two criteria that make up the extrinsic investigations of ḥadīth scholars are their being free of anomaly or defect (*al-salāma min al-shudhūdh wa al-ʿilla*) (ʿItr 1997, 213).[345] Writing about these two criteria, Ibn Ḥajar (2019, 59) states that a ḥadīth that

more than one instance of transmission (*taʿaddud al-ḥāditha*), requires more evidence. See Al-Bakri (2013) for an extensive study of the latter.

[341] I am aware that this language is a bit counterintuitive. Usually, in ḥadīth studies, we distinguish between Prophetic testimonies (*al-marfūʿ*) and companion testimonies (*al-mawqūf*). Therefore, it seems a bit strange to say: "a companion's Prophetic ḥadīth." However, this is intentional, so as to avoid the reader assuming that I mean companion testimonies (*al-mawqūf*). In companion testimonies (*al-mawqūf*), the source of the statement is the companion himself or herself. Meaning, that the companion is not attributing the statement or action to the Prophet (ṣ). In contrast, what is intended here, is something that a specific companion attributes to the Prophet (ṣ).

[342] The transmitter from which the ḥadīth "flowers out" is referred to as the axis (*al-madār*) of the chain. See al-Khaṭīb (2003, 1:27–112) for a thorough study of this term and its usage among ḥadīth scholars.

[343] The plural of which is paths (*ṭuruq*).

[344] One could argue that the true role of ḥadīth scholars when it comes to extrinsic investigations, is to focus on the various *ṭuruq* of the central ḥadīth under evaluation and not other independent ḥadīth that pertain to the ḥadīth in question. While there is some truth to this assertion, in reality, ḥadīth scholars do investigate other independent ḥadīth that pertain to the ḥadīth in question. And they use their findings to corroborate and thus more positively assess the value of the ḥadīth under investigation, or to contradict and thus more negatively assess the value of the ḥadīth under investigation.

[345] Although the exact language of *being free of* (*al-salāma*) in this articulation of the criteria differs from author to author, conceptually, there is broad agreement upon the idea that these two criteria are intended to denote the absence of anomalies and defects (*al-shudhūdh wa al-ʿilla*) (Eido 2018b, 2:762–63).

is deemed to be defective (*muʿallal*), is a testimony that has a hidden defect (*ʿilla khafiyya*) that is piercing (*qādiḥa*). Concerning the anomalous testimony, Ibn Ḥajar explains, "It is when a transmitter contradicts the one who is more reliable (*arjaḥ*) than him."[346]

Notice how these criteria, unlike the first three, are constructed in the negative. The first three criteria concern (1) the contiguity of the testimonial chain (*ittiṣāl al-sanad*), (2) as well as the reliability of the transmitters that make up the testimonial chain from the vantage point of their *ʿadāla,* (3) as well as their *ḍabṭ*. Thus, all three intrinsic criteria are constructed in the affirmative, while the two extrinsic criteria are constructed in the negative: the ḥadīth *being free* of anomaly (*shudhūdh*) and defect (*ʿilla*). Two preliminary points about these extrinsic criteria are in order.

First, while it is true that the analysis of a given ḥadīth in light of other *ṭuruq* of the same ḥadīth, or other independent ḥadīth altogether, might uncover the existence of positive epistemic evidence *vis-à-vis* corroborations, within the strict confines of the CA's criteria, only the negative epistemic evidence *vis-à-vis* anomalies and defects is being accounted for. Corroborations continue to play a part in the overall evaluative system of the *manhaj al-naqd*, as will be discussed further in the next section; however, they are not explicitly mentioned in the CA.[347] Therefore, the extrinsic criteria of the CA are focused on evidence that would impact the ḥadīth under evaluation negatively.

Secondly, teasing out the difference between the criterion of being free of anomaly and the criterion of being free of defect can be tricky, given the apparent relationship between the two phenomena. Both are only apparent after the primary hadīth under evaluation is compared with other *ṭuruq* or independent ḥadīth.[348] Thus, both are "hidden" at first glance. It is true that the category of defects (*ʿilal*) can sometimes be

[346] The word *arjaḥ* here might be literally translated as "more preponderant." However, such terminology is awkward in English.

[347] Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (1984, 2:417) does refer to positive corroborations in his more robust account of authentic ḥadīth in the absolute sense (*al-ṣiḥḥa al-muṭlaqa*), as will be mentioned below.

[348] Building off of what was mentioned earlier, that the true role of ḥadīth scholars when it comes to extrinsic investigations, is to focus on the various *ṭuruq* of the central ḥadīth under evaluation and not other independent ḥadīth, one might object to including the comparison of the ḥadīth under evaluation with other independent ḥadīth as being a means of uncovering hidden defects (*ʿilal khafiyya*). On this view, any defects that would be uncovered during such a comparison would not be the type mentioned in the CA, but defects in a broader sense. While I do not find such a strict definition and delineation convincing, it does not impact the larger thrust of my arguments.

construed as being wider and more encompassing than the narrower category of anomalies (*shudhūdh*), but the relationship nevertheless constitutes a problem for the division. The problem persists because one would still need to work out how exactly the category of anomalous testimonies (*al-shādh*) is strictly included in the broader characterization of defects (*ʿilal*) and to explain why both criteria are mentioned in the CA if the broader set of *ʿilal* strictly includes the narrower category of *al-shādh*.

One common way to address this problem is to differentiate between the two criteria when they are juxtaposed against one another in a secondary manner.[349] According to this response, *ʿilal* are instances when the ḥadīth critic has evidence of what has gone wrong. In other words, it is not just that the primary ḥadīth under consideration has some epistemic issue with it, nor that it merely contradicts others, but that we have an idea of how that mistake came about, or what the defect is. In contrast, cases of *al-shādh* are, according to this explication, cases of contradiction where the evaluator judges the primary ḥadīth as being mistaken, given a more reliable transmitter in another path, or due to several equally reliable transmitters from other paths contradicting him, and yet the reasoning for how that mistake came about, or what that defect is, is unclear. Therefore, one way to think about the difference between the fourth and fifth criteria is whether the evaluator can uncover what the defect is, or whether they are not able to uncover it, but reject that version of the ḥadīth nevertheless due to its contradicting other reliable testimonies.[350]

Thus, it makes sense for classical scholars to have retained the existence of two separate criteria despite their similarities. It is as though they are saying, "Whether the critic knows what is defective about the ḥadīth in question, as is the case of the defective ḥadīth (*al-muʿallal*), or whether the critic doesn't know what is defective about the ḥadith in question, as is the case of the anomalous ḥadīth (*al-shādh*), either way, the ḥadīth is deemed unacceptable (*mardūd*)." This standard distinction between

[349] See Eido (2018b, 2:766–70) for an extended anaylysis of various ways to explicate the difference between the two categories.

[350] There are alternative readings of the distinction between the two criteria as mentioned in the footnote above. However, one particularly noteworthy alternative epistemic reading has the anomolous ḥadīth category (*al-shādh*) relate primarily to action and not knowledge. According to al-Sakhāwī (2014a, 1:28), Ibn Ḥajar viewed the distinction as one of action and not knowledge. Therefore, the anomolous ḥadīth (*al-shādh*), is a ḥadīth that would not be acted upon due to its contradicting other testimonies, even if it epistemically remains *ṣaḥīḥ*.

the two criteria will be relied upon throughout the rest of this dissertation. As such, both the fourth and fifth criteria will be characterized as being about defects (*ʿilal*) since, in both cases, there is believed to be something defective about the testimony under evaluation, whether or not it becomes clear what that defect is.

8.5.3.3. The Historical Development and Refinement of Terminology

8.5.3.3.1. Objections to New Stipulations and Qualifiers

Contemporary critics of the CA often object to new stipulations of preclassical terms, fearing that these changes will disconnect contemporary scholarship from the early pioneers of the field.[351] However, such objections overlook why classical ḥadīth scholars put forward these new stipulations while being fully aware of how these usages differed from their predecessors. A paradigmatic case of such a change is in their usage of the term *ʿilla* (Eido 2018b, 2:764–70).

Classical ḥadith scholars were fully aware of how their predecessors used the term since it was they who conveyed to us how earlier ḥadīth scholars were using it. At the same time, it was they who qualified the criteria of being free from a defect with the condition that the defect be "hidden" (*khafiyya*) and that it be piercing (*qādiḥa*). The question then is, why did they qualify the criterion in question with such conditions?

Two different types of answers to this question can be provided. The first relies on purely traditional designations as well as the division highlighted by Eido. The hope is to show that there is a clear consistency in the division, the stipulations, and the qualifications. In the next section, a deeper analysis of the same questions will be provided, synthesizing the work of classical and contemporary Islamic scholars with anglophone epistemology to uncover the deep epistemic structure of the CA. This will then leave us in a good position to move on to analyzing the *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid* upon which the latter two criteria rely.

[351] See al-ʿAwnī (1996); al-Malībārī (2001; 2003b; 2003a); al-Muḥammadī (2021); and Abū Samḥa (2012; n.d.) as broad examples of this type of criticism. See, specifically, Dr. Aḥmad Maʿbad and Dr. Muḥammad Naṣr's coauthored work, *ʿIlal al-Ḥadīth* (2015, 18–64), for an analysis and criticism of how the term *ʿilla* was defined and employed in the classical era. Also, see Eido (2016) and Al-Bakri (2022) for background and a more robust analysis of this tension.

8.5.3.3.2. A Preliminary Response

A preliminary response to this objection can be found in the intrinsic vs. extrinsic division between the first three criteria and the latter two. The first three criteria have to do with the epistemic analysis of the ḥadīth under investigation. When investigating a given ḥadīth's apparent contiguity (*al-ittiṣāl al-ẓāhir*), or the apparent uprightness/probity (*al-ʿadāla al-ẓāhira*) and the apparent precision (*al-ḍabṭ al-ẓāhir*) of its transmitters, one does not have to compare or contrast it to any other *ṭuruq* or other independent ḥadīth.[352]

In contrast, as we've already noted, the criteria of being free from anomaly and defect are essentially criteria that can only be gleaned after comparing the ḥadīth under investigation with other ḥadīth that share a similar chain or text. The epistemic logic of the latter two criteria of the CA is to move from an apparent (*ẓāhir*), surface-level analysis, to a deeper analysis that might uncover hidden defects. Therefore, in order to distinguish between defects that would be apparent at an initial stage of intrinsic analysis and hidden defects that would only become apparent after a more comparative deeper analysis, classical scholars qualified the criteria of being free of anomaly or defect with the qualifier that the *ʿilla* be hidden (*khafiyya*).

As for the qualifier that the *ʿilla* be piercing (*qādiḥa*), it is added to exclude cases of defects that do not render the ḥadīth unacceptable.[353] Given the fact that the technical term *ʿilla* is used by ḥadīth scholars and jurists alike, in different ways, classical scholars needed to clarify what types of defects would violate the CA. Thus, the qualifier is needed, or else the CA runs the risk of being ambiguous.

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[352] This has come to be described as analyzing the outer or apparent epistemic status of the ḥadīth's chain (*ẓāhir al-isnād*). See Snober (2020) for reference to this distinction. This is in contrast to what has come to be called the method of hidden defects (*ṭarīqat al-ʿilal*) or the method of contextual signs (*ṭarīqat al-qarāʾin*). Each of these contrasted methods maps onto Eido's intrinsic vs. extrinsic distinction, and furthermore, we can associate each with the subgenres of ḥadīth studies: *al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl* and *al-ʿilal*.

[353] See al-Sakhāwī's (2014a, 1:27; 2014b, 2:54–55) mentioning of the fact that some wrongly treat any defect as a cause to reject a ḥadīth, even if the defect is not piercing (*qādiḥa*). In the second citation, al-Sakhāwī gives examples of non-piercing defects. See, also, Shaykh Muḥammad Awwāma's (Al-Ṣuyūṭī 2016e, 5:139) notes on al-Ṣuyūṭī's *Tadrīb*.

8.5.3.4. A Deep Epistemic Analysis of the Question of Defects and Anomalies

8.5.3.4.1. Defects, Defeaters, and Inquiry

It is here that we can make an epistemological intervention to further clarify the nature of these two criteria and then finally address the *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid* upon which they rest. First, it is important to investigate the nature of these *ʿilal*, from the vantage point of their being piercing (*qādiḥa*). Second, it is important to investigate their nature from the vantage point of their being hidden (*khafiyya*).

A useful corollary found in the literature in contemporary anglophone epistemology is the concept of defeaters. Although defeaters themselves come in various forms, what unites them is that they render another belief unjustified. In this way, they defeat the belief the subject has of *p*.

One type of defeater is called a psychological defeater. Psychological defeaters are beliefs that are "had by S and that indicate that S's belief that *p* is either false or unreliably formed or sustained." These types of defeaters are themselves beliefs the subject has, which then render a different belief the subject has, on another matter, unjustified due to the indication that the second belief is false or unreliably formed. This latter distinction between psychological defeaters that indicate the falsehood of *p* vs. psychological defeaters that indicate that *p* was unreliably formed, is the cause of a further division of terms in the anglophone literature. Based upon this division, epistemologists draw a distinction between rebutting defeaters and undercutting defeaters, respectively (Lackey 2008, 44–45).

Ignoring for a moment the qualification that the *ʿilla* must be hidden (*khafiyya*), it seems quite evident that the *ʿilal* of the Islamic tradition are very similar to, if not the same as, the concept of defeaters in the anglophone tradition. Defects in the Islamic tradition are either conditions of the testimony under evaluation or beliefs the ḥadīth critic has about the testimony under evaluation that render the testimony unacceptable (*mardūd*).

Following these two possibilities, the qualification that the *ʿilla* be piercing (*qādiḥa*) could be a qualification that the *ʿilla*, as a condition of the testimony, indicates that the attribution of the ḥadīth is false, or that a transmitter is unreliable. Alternatively, the qualification that the *ʿilla* be piercing (*qādiḥa*) could be a qualification that the *ʿilla*, as a belief in the subject, indicates that the belief in the attribution of the ḥadīth is false, or that the transmitter is unreliable. In this way, the qualification that the *ʿilla* being piercing (*qādiḥa*) is important; otherwise, if the indication is not that the ḥadīth is falsely attributed, nor that a transmitter is unreliable, then the *ʿilla* should not render the ḥadīth unacceptable (*mardūd*).

Before moving on to discuss another type of defeater in the anglophone tradition, it is important that we further elaborate on the point that *ʿilal* in the Islamic tradition are either conditions in the testimony under evaluation or beliefs the ḥadīth critic has about the testimony under evaluation, that render the testimony unacceptable (*mardūd*). Although a *ʿilla* is in and of itself a condition of the testimony under evaluation, the epistemic system of ḥadīth scholars is largely interested in the beliefs and reasons the ḥadīth critic has about the testimony under evaluation and not the external matter of fact (Al-Sakhāwī 2014a, 1:30).

The claim that the hidden *ʿilal* mentioned in the CA refer to the actual *ʿilal* in a hypothetical testimony and not the belief of the critic about the hypothetical testimony, while rationally possible, runs into several problems. The first is the explicit statements to the contrary by ḥadīth scholars themselves, who are quite clear that judgments based upon the CA are not judgments about the matter of fact, rather they are judgments based upon evidence that indicates the matter of fact (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 2015, 13–14; Al-Sakhāwī 2014a, 1:30). Thus, they cautioned, the matter of fact might be different from the judgment of the critic.

The second reason that the criteria concerning *ʿilal* mentioned in the CA simply cannot be referring to actual *ʿilal* in a hypothetical ḥadīth is that this would entail that if a ḥadīth, as a matter of fact, was free of any *ʿilal*, as long as the other intrinsic conditions are fulfilled, the critic is justified in judging the ḥadīth to be authentic. But this runs contrary to the entire epistemic spirit of ḥadīth scholarship, which normatively requires

that ḥadīth critics gather the *ṭuruq* and adjacent independent ḥadīth in search of *ʿilal*.[354] This point will be further bolstered in our analysis of the qualification that the defect be hidden (*khafiyya*).

In addition to psychological defeaters, contemporary anglophone epistemologists have delineated a second type of defeater: normative defeaters. Normative defeaters, unlike their psychological counterparts, are not beliefs held by the subject; rather, they are beliefs the subject *ought* to have. "A normative defeater is a doubt or belief that S ought to have and that indicates that S's belief that *p* is either false or unreliably formed or sustained… Defeaters in this sense function by virtue of being doubts or beliefs that S should have given the presence of certain available evidence." (Lackey 2008, 45)

Imagine the following case: A detective is at the scene of a purported jewelry heist. Upon investigating the crime scene, he comes to realize that there are ten possible witnesses. The detective interviews the two closest witnesses to him, who each corroborate that the thief is no other than the brother of the store owner. The detective is satisfied with their account of the crime and decides to arrest the brother.

Intuitively, most readers would object to such a speedy conclusion if we found out that the thief was not, in fact, the brother. But notice that the inappropriately speedy conclusion is epistemically wrong irrespective of whether the brother is guilty. The fact that there are at the very least eight other witnesses that might corroborate or contradict the testimony of the first two is essential to our epistemic analysis of the case at hand.

Based upon the above distinction between psychological defeaters and normative defeaters, we can begin to better understand how *ʿilal* work in the ḥadīth tradition. The distinction between intrinsic vs. extrinsic criteria in the CA is partially a distinction between beliefs the ḥadīth critic has vs. beliefs the ḥadīth critic *ought* to have. What classical ḥadīth scholars envisioned is an initial intrinsic analysis of the testimony

[354] This is best exemplified by the now famous quote turned axiom of ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī (d. 234/849): "If the various paths of a *bāb* are not gathered, its error will not become clear." (Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1996, 2:316). For more on the spirit of searching for defects among ḥadīth scholars, see: Ibn Ḥajar (1984, 2:711); al-Sakhāwī (2014a, 1:27–28; 2014c, 3:249–50, 310–12; 2014b, 2:64); and finally, al-Khaṭīb (2003, 1:253–342) for a contemporary analysis of its centrality.

using the first three criteria of the CA, which presents him with an initial tentative conclusion. However, this tentative conclusion is not enough because there are looming normative defeaters if the ḥadīth critic were to just investigate a bit more.

Of course, ḥadīth scholars didn't use the language of normative defeat; rather, they used the language of a hidden defect (*ʿilla khafiyya*). The hiddenness of the defect is the fact that it isn't immediately available to the subject; rather, it is external to the primary *isnād* under analysis. Nevertheless, despite its being external to the primary *isnād* under analysis, he should believe it, and it will render his belief in the attribution of the ḥadīth unacceptable (*mardūd*), thus defeating his initial conclusion.

To further explain how ḥadīth scholars understood these external looming hidden defects, we must consider another consequence of the intrinsic vs. extrinsic criteria distinction. Not only is it a distinction about what is internal and present to the subject vs. what the subject should believe but is external to him, but it is also a normative judgment about inquiry.[355] In other words, what classical ḥadīth scholars had in mind is the distinction between making an epistemic judgment based on the apparent evidence at hand vs. making it after one has engaged in a certain amount of investigation and inquiry. By articulating the fourth and fifth criteria in the manner that they have, they've essentially set the bar for authenticity (*ṣiḥḥa*) higher. In doing so, they've required that a researcher have properly compared the ḥadīth in question with other *ṭuruq* of the same ḥadīth, as well as other related ḥadīth. It is only after such an epistemic search and inquiry has not turned up any hidden defects that they can judge the ḥadīth under analysis fairly (Al-Sakhāwī 2014a, 1:25). Without the aforementioned inquiry and comparison, any judgment would be both premature and epistemically blameworthy.[356]

It is not entirely accurate to say that the extrinsic criteria of the CA are inquiry-related criteria while the intrinsic criteria of the CA are not. Because according to the CA and

[355] Based on the analysis of this question, and the role of inquiry in theology (*kalām*), it seems likely that further study of inquiry and epistemology in the Islamic tradition would prove fruitful. The overlap between epistemology and norms of inquiry is a hotly debated topic in contemporary anglophone epistemology. See, for example: Kelp (2021); Friedman (2017; 2020; n.d.); Thorstad (2021; 2022); Carter (2013); and Carter and Sosa (2022).
[356] See Friedman (2017) on the importance of suspending judgement.

the traditional critical method of ḥadīth scholars, the evaluator must also inquire into the reliability of transmitters that make up the testimonial chain, as well as the more basic question concerning the possibility of them having transmitted from one another (Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 2003a, 1:141–48).[357] However, ḥadīth scholars viewed this step as an initial and easier step, in contrast to the more extensive step of gathering all the related *ṭuruq* and adjacent ḥadīth, as well as comparing them to one another in search of hidden defects. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that while both the intrinsic and extrinsic criteria require inquiry, the difference between the two is in the extent and difficulty of the inquiry required.

It is important to note that the initial judgment formed, which is based on the intrinsic criteria, is considered insufficient to act upon and insufficient to make a final conclusion based upon (Al-Sakhāwī 2014a, 1:27–28). If a ḥadīth scholar were to only complete the first half, the intrinsic half, he would be justified in making an initial judgment on the transmitters of the chain but would be required to suspend judgment on the ḥadīth as a whole and would be normatively prohibited from forming a more comprehensive conclusion. Hence, the discussion of ḥadīth scholars around the validity of asserting that *the chain* is authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ al-isnād*), in contrast to an absolute assertion that the ḥadīth is authentic (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 2015, 38).

Without the qualification that the *ʿilla* be "hidden" (*khafiyya*), this important and nuanced point concerning normative defeat and inquiry would not have become apparent. If it were left as an unqualified defect (*ʿilla muṭlaqa*), hidden or apparent (*ẓāhira aw khafiyya*), this would result in the extrinsic criteria of the CA not being able to do the epistemic work that we need it to do. If left unqualified, it would be quite natural to think that this type of zetetic work is unnecessary to form a justified belief about the ḥadīth under analysis. However, this is a conclusion that neither the defenders of the CA nor its opponents want.[358]

[357] Recall the discussion in Chapter 5 on transmitter critics, as well as the eventual writing of biographical dictionaries. If one were to consider what ḥadīth scholars do in the present day in order to fullfill the first three criteria, they search and inquire through various biographical disctionaries to form a judgement about the contiguity of the testimonial chain, as well as the reliability of its transmitters. If a contemporary ḥadīth scholar were *not* to inquire into their reliability, that would be unjustified and unacceptable.

[358] It would also entail a level of redundancy. An unqualified defect (*ʿilla muṭlaqa*) must, by definition, include problems with transmitter reliability or an omission or break in the chain. If that is true, then the first three criteria no longer need to be mentioned on their own as standalone criteria.

In conclusion, the qualifications and wording of the fourth and fifth criteria, which make up the extrinsic half of the CA, are intentional and needed. The qualifications help shore up the epistemic system of the CA. Both preclassical scholars and classical ḥadīth scholars were of the view that norms of inquiry play an essential role in the epistemic analysis of ḥadīth. The CA, as formulated by classical ḥadīth scholars, expresses this succinctly in the fourth and fifth criteria by stating that the ḥadīth should be free of anomaly or hidden defect (*al-salāma min al-shudhūdh wa al-ʿilal al-khafiyya*).

8.5.3.4.2. The CA as One Part of a Larger Apparatus

Before moving on to the *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid* upon which the extrinsic criteria of the CA rely, it is important to return to the external criteria that are not strictly part of a ḥadīth scholar's purview. Despite the initial lack of delineation and distinction between the various Islamic sciences, eventually, the various sciences and their respective scopes settled. The scope of ḥadīth scholars became an investigation into the reliability of ḥadīth from a particular vantage point, the intrinsic and extrinsic criteria of the CA.

Therefore, beyond the scope of ḥadīth scholarship, there are extrinsic criteria that could, in theory, impact the reliability of ḥadīth. There are also other extrinsic criteria that are so apparent and evident that they are considered by both ḥadīth scholars and non-ḥadīth scholars alike. Thus, we might classify the extrinsic criteria into three separate types.

The first type of extrinsic criteria is evident and does not require any type of prolonged study or investigation. This type of extrinsic criteria is considered by all. The second type of extrinsic criteria is what we analyzed above: a ḥadīth being free of anomaly or defect. This type of extrinsic criteria is the primary focus of ḥadīth scholars.[359] Finally, a third type of extrinsic criteria exists; these criteria are the purview of other disciplines, like Islamic law (*fiqh*) and theology (*kalām*).

[359] Their primary *extrinsic* focus, since the *intrinsic* criteria are also part of their purview.

It is useful to think of the epistemic analysis of any given ḥadīth as going through more than one stage of evaluation. As a first step, compilers of the ḥadīth corpus filtered out any supposed Prophetic statements that clearly contradicted necessary rational truths (*mūjibāt al-ʿuqūl*). We find evidence of such statements that contradict rational truths in later historical works, in a genre of works focused on fabrications.[360] These ḥadīth are not found in any of the early compilations; thus, while they might have been in circulation in the early period, they were filtered out of the standard compilations due to their clear falsehood (J. A. C. Brown 2012).[361]

Notice how the analysis of the reliability of a ḥadīth based upon whether it contradicts rational truths is a type of extrinsic criteria. This is an example of the first type of extrinsic criteria that all Islamic scholars engage in. Ḥadīth terminology works directly refer to the contradiction of rational truths as evidence of a ḥadīth being fabricated (Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 2003, 89).[362]

The actual number of ḥadith filtered out based upon the extrinsic criterion of rational possibility is, however, minimal.[363] Tens of thousands of ḥadīth remained. By having passed the first stage of evaluation, the remaining ḥadīth were shown to not be clearly false, but there were many other critical tools that remained. The usage of these other critical tools could help the ḥadīth scholar discount a ḥadīth that had passed the first stage of assessment, or it could help them positively attribute the statement to the Prophet (ṣ).

[360] See, for example: Ibn al-Jawzī (1966). Ibn al-Jawzī's evaluation of several ḥadīth as being fabricated is greatly contested. See al-Ṣuyūṭī's (2016d, 3:449–61) discussion on the contested ḥadīth in Ibn al-Jawzī's work.

[361] During our 2018 graduate course at Ibn Haldun University on textual criticism, Dr. Hamzeh al-Bakri would often phrase it in the following manner: Ḥadīth scholars only compiled and sought to evaluate ḥadith that had the slightest possibility of being truthfully attributable to the Prophet (ṣ). If a ḥadīth contradicted clear rational necessity (*mūjibāt al-ʿuqūl*) or that which is necessarily known to be a part of the religion (*al-maʿlum min al-dīn bi al-ḍarūra*), they neither included it in their compilations, nor even bothered with its epistemic analysis.

[362] This discussion also relates back to our explication of *epistemic source coherence*. Since truth cannot contradict truth, given the principle of non-contradiction, two certain sources of knowledge simply cannot contradict. Therefore, if a ḥadīth that is probabilistic in its attribution but unequivocal in its meaning and signification contradicts a necessary rational truth, the ḥadīth is rejected (*mardūd*).

[363] This is primarily why I have not centered this critical method in the present study. The brunt of their epistemic work is done through the critical apparatus of the CA. However, a more broad analysis of their work would need to include this feature of their methodology as well.

At this point, while there is still room for textual criticism that is focused on the proposition itself, the brunt of ḥadīth scholarship, as a discipline, focused on the reliability of ḥadīth from the vantage point of the intrinsic and extrinsic criteria of the CA. Although there are still other extrinsic factors to consider, the CA helped narrow down these results. Ḥadīth scholars thus assessed the reliability of ḥadīth from one vantage point, and jurists (*fuqahāʾ*) and theologians (*mutakallimūn*) were left to assess ḥadīth from other vantage points.[364]

Of course, this type of strict separation between the disciplines is somewhat figurative. There have always remained cases of polymathic figures that were experts in several different Islamic disciplines. In such cases, the individual, in their capacity as a ḥadīth scholar, might evaluate a ḥadīth from one vantage point, and in their capacity as a jurist, might evaluate a ḥadīth from another vantage point. The point is not to say that one person cannot unite between various specialties; rather, it is only to say that there are different specialties that constitute a division of epistemic labor.[365]

8.5.3.5. Axioms and Principles of the Extrinsic Criteria of the CA

There are two types of *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid* one can glean from the fourth and fifth criteria of the CA. They both stem from the idea that there are nearby defects/defeaters that must first be considered by ḥadīth scholars before one can justifiably make an epistemic judgment evaluating the authenticity of a ḥadīth. The logic of these axioms rests upon the idea that regardless of the evidence a critic might already have concerning the reliability of a given ḥadīth, the likelihood of looming defects/defeaters in the nearby epistemic vicinity of other *ṭuruq* and independent ḥadīth must be

[364] It is important at this juncture to draw attention to two technical terms used by ḥadīth scholars: contradicting ḥadīth (*mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*) and difficult ḥadīth (*mushkil al-ḥadīth*). According to one interpretation and usage, contradicting ḥadīth (*mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*), refers to a category where there are two or more ḥadīth that in theory contradict. On this interpretation, difficult ḥadīth (*mushkil al-ḥadīth*), refers to a category where a ḥadīth contradicts either another ḥadīth, or other sources of knowledge, like reason, or the Qur'an, etc. See Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAwwāma's (2016e, 5:114–15 fn. 2) notes on contradicting ḥadīth (*mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*) for this distinction. On this interpretation, the category of difficult ḥadīth (*mushkil al-ḥadīth*) strictly includes (*ʿumūm wa khuṣūṣ muṭlaq*) the category of contradicting ḥadīth (*mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*). Notice how the three types of extrinsic criteria that we mentioned earlier do not directly map onto this classification.

[365] There is a relationship between this question and another question we have addressed: Whether the axioms of a discipline can be analyzed and justified in the same discipline or whether they require a "higher order" discipline.

considered.[366] Therefore, the justifiability/acceptability of a judgment on any given ḥadīth is not only based upon the totality of the evidence that the subject has; it includes, to some extent, the defects/defeaters one *ought* to have.

A possible articulation of this axiom could be framed as such:

> *Principle of Defects & Defeaters*: The reliability of any given ḥadīth is impacted by defects/defeaters in the nearby epistemic vicinity of other paths (*ṭuruq*) and independent ḥadīth.

It would, however, be too strong of a statement to assert that the mere existence of a defect/defeater renders the belief of the subject in the attribution of a given ḥadīth unjustified. Recall how, in the example of the detective, what rendered his judgment unjustified was not the mere fact that there existed witnesses with a different account of events; rather, the lack of justification was tied to his lack of interviewing those other witnesses. Had the detective in our hypothetical scenario interviewed all the witnesses and then formed his judgment, he would be justified in believing that the brother is guilty, even if one of the witnesses had left out contradictory evidence.

Therefore, the following is proposed as a solution: In these cases, justified belief is tied to the norms of inquiry, while knowledge is tied to the actual existence or lack thereof of defects/defeaters. A ḥadīth critic is normatively required to inquire into the possible existence or lack thereof of defects/defeaters. After gathering the other paths and ḥadīth, the critic compares and contrasts the ḥadīth under evaluation with these other testimonies. If the critic finds evidence of the existence of a *ʿilla* in the initial ḥadīth, this defeats any belief in the truth of attribution. If the critic does not find evidence of a *ʿilla* in the initial ḥadīth, this suffices and renders his belief in the truth of the attribution justified.

[366] Depending on how we ground knowledge in Islamic epistemology, whether it be in stability, causation, or evidence, or some other means altogether, that will dictate how to make sense of these principles. Later in this section, we will make an argument for them based partially on the stability of belief.

Knowledge Principle of Defects & Defeaters (KDD): The reliability of any given ḥadīth is impacted by defects/defeaters in the nearby epistemic vicinity of other paths (*ṭuruq*) and independent ḥadīth.

JTB Principle of Defects & Defeaters (JDD): Given the truth of KDD, the justification of any belief in the attribution of a ḥadīth to the Prophet (ṣ) normatively requires inquiring into the existence of defects in the nearby epistemic vicinity of other paths (*ṭuruq*) and independent ḥadīth.

There are two important points to unpack here. The first is that the actual existence of a defect in the ḥadīth might vitiate the knowledge of the subject by either entailing the falsehood of the attribution or by disconnecting the subject's connection to the truth of the attribution. This could occur even if the subject took the proper steps of inquiring into the possible existence of defects/defeaters.

However, if the subject, based upon the JDD, engaged in proper inquiry, that suffices to grant him justification when it comes to the criteria of extrinsic defects/defeaters. The ḥadīth critic will usually only find *qarāʾin* indicating the possibility or likelihood of a *ʿilla* in the ḥadīth. But those *qarāʾin* suffice in defeating the justification of that belief.

Dividing up the extrinsic axioms in this way, between knowledge and justified belief, is important for clarifying the difference between the actual existence of defects/defeaters, as a matter of fact, and the normative requirement to inquire into the possibility of their existence. Furthermore, it is also important to stress that the CA is ultimately concerned with the internal reasons the critic has to believe or not believe in the attribution under consideration. Therefore, if a critic were to find *qarāʾin* indicating the falsehood of attribution and were to disbelieve in the attribution, even if there were actually no such *ʿilla*, he would be justified in doing so.[367]

[367] Al-Sakhāwī (2014a, 1:30) is very clear on this matter; the work of ḥadīth scholars is based upon the preponderance of opinion (*ghalabat al-ẓann*) and not the matter of fact.

8.5.3.5.1. Justifying the KDD and JDD

Unlike the earlier *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid* that were analyzed, the KDD and JDD are not the types of axioms that are so central to our existence as epistemic agents that a skeptical attack or objection can be rejected as being unnecessary to answer. In other words, criticism of these principles is more reasonable and more likely. In order to justify the standards set by ḥadith scholars, which themselves rely upon these *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid*, one must give a justificatory account of the axioms themselves. To take up this task, we will once again rely upon a hybrid response.

As for the KDD, a possible externalist response is to assert that this axiom is, as a matter of fact, nomically true, and the fact that it is true confers justification. In other words, it is as a matter of fact nomically true that "the reliability of any given ḥadīth is impacted by defects/defeaters in the nearby epistemic vicinity of other *ṭuruq* and independent ḥadīth." Since that fact is nomically true, that alone suffices in justifying it as an epistemic principle.

Furthermore, using a more internalist logic, we can argue that we, as epistemic agents, through experience and tracking, come to know that the reliability of testimonies is impacted by defects/defeaters in the nearby epistemic vicinity. The fact that we, over time, experience this reality confers upon us justification to believe it to be true. Thus, uniting between the externalist argument above and this internalist argument, we are justified in accepting the KDD as true.

For its part, the JDD rests upon the truth of the KDD. Having already presented an argument for the KDD, we can further make a case for the JDD. Here, we can also rely upon a hybrid response. First, we can make an externalist case for the matter of fact, and second, we can make an internalist argument for its justification.

As for an externalist argument, without such inquiry, testimonial belief becomes unstable. In other words, as a matter of fact, beliefs that originate in a testimonial source are not stable when inquiry into the nearby epistemic vicinity is not undertaken. Thus, the very fact that this is true justifies the JDD itself.

Relying upon a more internalist argument, we can rephrase the above as the experience we have as epistemic subjects. Given our belief and familiarity with the KDD, we do not find stability in our credence or confidence in any belief that originates in testimony unless we inquire into the nearby epistemic vicinity for defects/defeaters. Uniting between both the externalist and internalist arguments, we find that our reliance on the KDD and JDD is justified.

8.6. Degrees of Authenticity and Weakness ,and Thresholds of Acceptance

8.6.1. An Overview

Over the last few sections of Chapter 8, we have focused on epistemically analyzing the CA, as well as the *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid* upon which its criteria rely. However, beyond the criteria (*shurūṭ*) themselves, there is another essential aspect of the CA and how it is used that deserves further attention. This feature is related to the earlier discussion in Chapter 7 of *thresholds of acceptance*.[368] In that section, we briefly introduced the general feature of *thresholds of acceptance* found in Islamic epistemology and alluded to the fact that it is most apparent in its implementation in ḥadīth studies.

We further discussed how justification, as a term, is not used in the Islamic epistemic system and that, instead, the term *acceptance* (*qabūl*) is widely employed. We then saw how what is deemed acceptable (*maqbūl*) shifts based on the context or domain being analyzed. While in some cases certainty (*yaqīn*) is required, and that alone confers justification, in others, *thresholds of acceptance* below *yaqīn* are set for what constitutes justified belief.

In this section, we will explore two core features of the CA. The first feature is the reliance of ḥadīth scholars on *degrees of authenticity and weakness* (*darajāt al-ṣiḥḥa*

[368] This phrase, *thresholds of acceptance*, is a term I am stipulating to characterize an epistemological feature of ḥadīth scholarship. Although there is a similar term already in use in the books of *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*, *degrees of acceptance* (*darajāt al-qabūl*), it refers to something slightly different (Al-Sakhāwī 2014a, 1:30). *Degrees of acceptance* (*darajāt al-qabūl*) refers to the very fact that there are various degrees that are acceptable, while *thresholds of acceptance*, refers to the various *boundaries set* for acceptability. The latter entails the former, while the opposite is not necessarily true. I do not have a strong suggestion for which Arabic term should be designated for this slightly different meaning. However, a possible phrase suggested to me by Dr. Issam Eido is, *ḥadd al-qabūl*.

wa al-daʿf) when speaking about *thubūt* and how these degrees of probability relate to the CA.[369] We will then integrate that discussion with the second core feature of the CA that deserves our attention, the employment of *thresholds of acceptance* to characterize justified belief and action. Finally, we will synthesize these discussions with discussions in anglophone epistemology on contextualism and stable invariantism.

8.6.2. The Historical Development of Degrees of Authenticity and Weakness

Ḥadīth scholarship in the preclassical era formally relied upon a two-tiered, authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) vs. weak (*ḍaʿīf*) classification of ḥadīth (Eido 2016, 275–76). This two-tiered classification served two different purposes. One purpose was to express the degree of *thubūt*. The *ṣaḥīḥ* category applied to ḥadīth whose attribution to the Prophet is a credence above .5, while the *ḍaʿīf* category applied to ḥadīth whose attribution to the Prophet is a credence below .5. It is important to stress that even in these early stages, there was an understanding that these broad categories of authenticity (*ṣīḥḥa*) and weakness (*ḍaʿf*) were umbrella terms, which included various *degrees of authenticity and weakness*. Nevertheless, formally, and explicitly, there were only two categories.

[369] What I am stipulating here as a technical term, *degrees of authenticity and weakness*, is referred to in Arabic by a few different phrases, but the most common three are: *marātib al-ṣaḥīḥ*, *marātib al-ḥasan*, and *marātib al-daʿīf*, each used independently of the other (Al-Sakhāwī 2014a, 1:30, 123; ʿItr 1997, 233). However, contrary to what I have in mind, each of these phrases is generally used in a stricter sense; for the various degrees of ḥadīth that are judged to be *ṣaḥīḥ* in the first, for the various degrees of ḥadīth that are judged to be *ḥasan* in the second, and for the various degrees of ḥadīth that are judged to be *daʿīf* in the third. According to this standard usage, the degrees in question refer to higher and lower judgements of authenticity, fairness, and weakness, meaning that even the lowest level of *marātib al-ṣaḥīḥ* is still considered *ṣaḥīḥ* and even the highest level of *marātib al-daʿīf* is still considered *ḍaʿīf*. As for the *ḥasan* category, any degree between its lower and higher limits is considered *ḥasan*. I intend to use these phrases and concepts in a more general sense. In that more general sense, they refer not only to that which is judged to be *ṣaḥīḥ* in the first, *ḥasan* in the second, and *ḍaʿīf* in the third, rather, they refer to the very spectrum on which belief about the probability of attribution is increasing or decreasing. In Arabic, I refer to this as *darajāt al-ṣiḥḥa wa al-daʿf*, in contrast to *marātib al-ṣaḥīḥ*, *marātib al-ḥasan*, and *marātib al-daʿīf*, in order to differentiate between the different referents. This is despite the fact that in English, I would translate the two latter phrases as: *degrees of authenticity* and *degrees of weakness*, respectively. I am essentially combining these three concepts and terms and using them more broadly. While I have not found clear textual evidence of the usage of the term *darajāt al-ṣiḥḥa wa al-daʿf* as I am using it, stipulating terms to mean slightly different referents is in line with the field of ḥadīth studies and is not foreign to it. In fact, al-Ṣuyūṭī (2016d, 3:22–23) highlights such differences in usage during his exposition of the term *ḥasan*, its relation to the category of *ṣaḥīḥ*, as well as the various degrees of authenticity (*marātib al-ṣaḥīḥ*) and acceptability.

This initial classification served another purpose as well. The *ṣaḥīḥ* vs. *ḍaʿīf* classification seems to have paralleled the acceptable (*maqbūl*) vs. rejected (*mardūd*) classification that would eventually become dominant. In other words, initially, the terminology of *ṣaḥīḥ* vs. *ḍaʿīf* served two different epistemic purposes; to delineate the probability of attribution, as well as to delineate if the ḥadīth was acceptable.

Although we will return to the *maqbūl* vs. *mardūd* distinction shortly, it is important to comment upon its signification. While the exact origins of the distinction require further historical assessment, the terminology is present in *fiqh*, ḥadīth, and logic texts, in some of the earliest available extant writings.[370] In the case of ḥadīth studies, this technical terminology is closely associated with two related discussions around the acceptability of transmitters and their respective testimonies.

The first place where this technical terminology can be found is in al-Shāfiʿī's analysis of proof (*al-ḥujja*).[371] In fact, al-Shāfiʿī's now famous passage in *al-Risāla*, where he delineates the earliest expression of the CA, is expressed as an outline of what constitutes a *ḥujja*. The second area where it is used in ḥadīth texts, by both al-Shāfiʿī and later al-Khaṭīb, is with regard to transmitters who are considered acceptable to rely upon.[372] While this requires more explanation, for now, it suffices to say that the *maqbūl* vs. *mardūd* categorization was intended to indicate that which met some standard and sufficed and that which didn't. Given the two contexts within which the terminology was most often used, the terminology was closely associated with Islamic legal arguments.

In the next iteration of the *degrees of authenticity and weakness*, a third category, fair (*ḥasan*), was introduced between the *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḍaʿīf* categories (Eido 2016, 277–79). The CA was then used to designate whether a given ḥadīth is authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*), fair (*ḥasan*), or weak (*ḍaʿīf*). Each of these categories represents a probability of *thubūt*, even if each category is also said to include a spectrum of probabilities and allow for a spectrum of credences.

[370] We've already referred to and cited its existence in Arabic logic texts, whereas here, we hope to cite its usage in ḥadīth texts.
[371] Al-Shāfiʿī uses this term regularly in *al-Risāla*, but the section that is of prime importance for my argument is the section on *al-khabar al-wāḥid* (Al-Shāfiʿī 2020, 88).
[372] See, for example, al-Shāfiʿī (2020, 89) and al-Khaṭīb (2003a, 1:193).

In this three-tiered categorization, *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan* ḥadīth were deemed *maqbūl*, while *ḍaʿīf* ḥadīth were deemed *mardūd*. In expanding from a two-tiered to a three-tiered classification, it became clearer that the categories of authenticity (*ṣiḥḥa*) and weakness (*ḍaʿf*) come apart from the classification of acceptance (*qabūl*) and rejection (*radd*). This is not to say that on the two-tiered classification, the authenticity (*ṣiḥḥa*) and weakness (*ḍaʿf*) classification and the acceptance (*qabūl*) and rejection (*radd*) classification never came apart; it is only to say that the expansion to the three-tiered classification necessitated that they come apart.[373]

It thus becomes clear that categories like authenticity (*ṣiḥḥa*), fairness (*ḥusn*), and weakness (*ḍaʿf*) refer to one thing, and acceptance (*qabūl*) and rejection (*radd*) refer to something else. In what follows, I will argue that the former classification refers to the degrees of probability of *thubūt*, while the latter signifies which degrees of truthfulness are acceptable and justified to *use*.[374]

The category of authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) ḥadīth represents the highest of the three epistemic classes of *degrees of authenticity and weakness* and is associated with five necessary conditions:

i. That the testimonial chain be contiguous (without omissions or breaks).
ii. That all the transmitters in the testimonial chain be upright (*ʿudūl*).
iii. That all the transmitters in the testimonial chain be precise (*ḍābiṭūn*).
iv. That the ḥadīth be free of anomaly (*shudhūdh*).
v. That the ḥadīth be free of defect (*ʿilla*).

[373] For examples of their coming apart even in the preclassical era, see Abū Yaʿlā's (d. 458/1066) (1993, 3:938–41) transmissions from Imām Ahmad, where he says, "We only [judge] its testimonial chain to be *ḍaʿīf*, but it is acted upon…" and "It is not *ṣaḥīḥ*, and it is acted upon." These distinctions eventually get standardized and are demarcated as the difference between the truthfulness of the attribution of a ḥadīth to the Prophet (ṣ) (*thubūt*) and acting on a ḥadīth (*ʿamal*). We will return to these distinctions shortly.

[374] Explaining what I mean by *use* is difficult to do without trying to summarize what much of this chapter will go on to explain. Nevertheless, for now, what I can say is that I am using the English word *use* as a stand in for the Arabic phrases: *ḥujja* and *maʿmul bihi*,

These necessary conditions should be familiar since they mimic the five criteria of the CA. However, their particular wording is important since each of the three epistemic categories will have slightly different wording.[375]

As for fair (*ḥasan*) ḥadīth, the same necessary conditions apply. However, the only difference between the necessary conditions for *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan* ḥadīth is the level of *ḍabṭ* required of the transmitters. A *ḥasan* ḥadīth includes one or more transmitters whose *ḍabṭ* is of a slightly lower degree than the transmitters of a ḥadīth that would be considered *ṣaḥīḥ* (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 65).

As for weak (*ḍaʿīf*) ḥadīth, they are often defined as any ḥadīth that violates the necessary conditions of *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan* ḥadīth (Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ 2015, 41). However, in reality, any violation of the necessary conditions of *ḥasan* ḥadīth would be sufficient in defining the *ḍaʿīf* category since *ḥasan* ḥadīth are of a lesser epistemic status than *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth, and so, if a ḥadīth violates the conditions of the lesser category, it by necessity violates the conditions of the higher category. *Ḍaʿīf* ḥadīth, like their *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan* counterparts, were still said to each include a spectrum of degrees of probability of authenticity or weakness and allow for a spectrum of credences of belief.

Eventually, two more categories were formally introduced and designated.[376] These new categories were introduced to account for the positive epistemic support afforded to ḥadīth through corroborations. Ḥadīth scholars wanted to account for the fact that a *ḍaʿīf* ḥadīth, through the epistemic support of corroborations, could reach the epistemic degree of *ḥasan* ḥadīth, and a *ḥasan* ḥadīth, through the epistemic support of corroborations, could reach the epistemic degree of a *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth.

However, ḥadīth scholars also wanted to distinguish between ḥadīth that were deemed *ṣaḥīḥ* before corroborations were considered and those that were deemed *ṣaḥīḥ* after corroborations were considered. They also wanted to distinguish between ḥadīth that

[375] This is the standard explication of the five conditions of authenticity that can be found in Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's *Muqaddima* (2015, 11–12).
[376] Although elements of these additions occurred during the preclassical era, it was during the classical era that they were formalized. See, as an example, al-Sakhāwī (2008, 80–83) and Ibn al-Ḥanbalī (d. 971) (1987, 49–50) from the classical and postclassical era and al-Tahānawī (2018, 33–37) and ʿItr (1997, 233–37) from the contemporary era, for a summary of these additions and their epistemic rulings.

were deemed *ḥasan* before corroborations were considered and those that were deemed *ḥasan* after corroborations were considered. Therefore, in addition to introducing two new categories, they also qualified the names of two of the existing categories:

i. Intrinsically authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ li-dhātihi*)
ii. Extrinsically authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrihi*)
iii. Intrinsically fair (*ḥasan li-dhātihi*)
iv. Extrinsically fair (*ḥasan li-ghayrihi*)
v. Weak (*ḍaʿīf*)

According to this new five-tiered classification, intrinsically authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ li-dhātihi*) and intrinsically fair (*ḥasan li-dhātihi*) ḥadīth were Prophetic testimonies that were deemed *ṣaḥīḥ* or *ḥasan*, respectively, without recourse to corroborations. While extrinsically authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrihi*) and extrinsically fair (*ḥasan li-ghayrihi*) ḥadīth were deemed *ṣaḥīḥ* or *ḥasan*, respectively, due to corroborative evidence. Furthermore, all categories other than *ḍaʿīf* ḥadīth were deemed *maqbūl*, while *ḍaʿīf* ḥadīth were deemed *mardūd*.

It is important to stress that classical ḥadīth scholars, through this development, were able to account for the positive epistemic evidence found through the extrinsic criteria of the CA. Earlier, we had mentioned that the extrinsic criteria of the CA, as delineated by the criteria themselves, focused solely on negative epistemic evidence through the criteria of being free from anomalies and defects. However, inquiry into other paths and independent ḥadīth can also yield positive epistemic evidence in the form of corroborations. Thus, with the introduction of this five-tiered delineation of *degrees of authenticity and weakness*, ḥadīth scholars were able to formally account for the positive aspects of their extrinsic criteria.

This five-tiered classification of *degrees of authenticity and weakness* is divided along the *maqbūl* vs. *mardūd* classification as such:

I. Acceptable (*al-maqbūl*)

i. Intrinsically Authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ li-dhātihi*)
ii. Extrinsically Authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrihi*)
iii. Intrinsically Fair (*ḥasan li-dhātihi*)
iv. Extrinsically Fair (*ḥasan li-ghayrihi*)

II. Rejected (*al-mardūd*)

i. Weak (*ḍaʿīf*)

8.6.3. Acceptability Revisited

Although the context and usage of terms like *maqbūl*, *mardūd*, and proof (*al-ḥujja*), started out very much integrally associated with questions of Islamic law, the terminology should not be limited to, nor entirely equated with the question of action (*ʿamal*) in the strictest sense of the term.[377] In fact, even in its earliest usages, there is a clear distinction between a ḥadīth being *maqbūl* and its being acted upon (*maʿmūl bihi*). The first is an epistemic delineation, and the second is a delineation related to action and law (Eido 2018a, 1:110–20).

The preclassical era of ḥaḍīth studies did not stress the designation between these two domains. In fact, as we've already mentioned, ḥadīth studies very much developed in the context of legal and practical action-oriented questions. However, without a doubt, as ḥadīth studies came into its own as a field in the classical era, and as it is expressed in the contemporary age, there is a clear demarcation between the epistemic questions ḥadīth scholars are primarily interested in and the action-oriented investigations Islamic legal scholars are interested in (Eido 2018a, 1:114–19). This is often characterized as the difference between the authenticity or truthfulness of the attribution of a ḥadīth to the Prophet (ṣ) (*thubūt*) and acting on a ḥadīth (*ʿamal*). This

[377] To better flesh this out: By action (*ʿamal*) here, what is meant is applying what the ḥadīth is indicating. For example, if a ḥadīth says to fast a certain day of the year, the ḥadīth is acted upon (*maʿmūl bihi*) by having it "apply" in this context, in that it is permitted to fast that day. Call this, acting upon a ḥadīth in actuality (*bi-l-fiʿil*). This is a much stricter sense of action (*ʿamal*) than what the phrase "the ḥadīth is acted upon" (*maʿmūl bihi*), allows for, as will be explained below.

designation follows the knowledge vs. action distinction found in the anglophone tradition.

However, this *thubūt* vs. *ʿamal* distinction should not be overstated and can, at times, be more complicated than might at first seem. For one, while there is clearly a conceptual separation between the two domains, *ʿamal* still relies upon *thubūt* for justification. Islamic legal scholars are ultimately relying upon ḥadīth they believe are attributable back to the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ). It would be strange to think that they act upon ḥadīth irrespective of the truth of the attribution of that testimony.

Furthermore, *ʿamal*'s signification (*dalāla*) is broader than action in the strictest sense of the term. While it is true that the term *ʿamal* is used to mean action in the strict sense, as in one's performance of a supererogatory act of worship, it is also used to mean: the usage of a specific type of testimony in a particular domain, taking a specific type of testimony into consideration, or including it in the critical and inferential process one uses when forming a judgment on a matter. The *dalāla* of the term *ʿamal* in this context is not the same as the *dalāla* of *ʿamal* when used to mean acting upon a teaching found in the ḥadīth corpus. Therefore, there is a broader sense of *ʿamal* that includes both referents. For the sake of ease, let *ʿamal* in the strict sense, refer only to cases of acting upon a teaching found in the ḥadīth corpus and *ʿamal* in the broad sense, refer not only to such cases, but also let it refer to the use of testimony in a particular domain, taking it into consideration, or including it in the critical and inferential process one uses when forming a judgment on a matter.

Case in point, when introducing the technical terminology of *maqbūl* and *mardūd*, Ibn Ḥajar (2019, 51) writes, "The acceptable (*maqbūl*), is that which, according to the majority, must be acted upon…the unacceptable/rejected (*mardūd*) is that which the truthfulness of the transmitter does not preponderate."[378] Later, in the same text, Ibn Ḥajar (2019, 76) writes, "And the acceptable (*maqbūl*) is further divided into that which is acted upon (*maʿmūl bihi*) and that which is not acted upon (*ghayr maʿmūl*

[378] As was mentioned by many of the commentors, this is not actually a definition of the category of acceptable (*maqbūl*) ḥadīth. However, both Ibn Ḥajar's definition and their alternatives are not ultimately definitions of acceptance/rejection (*qabūl*/*radd*) in the absolute sense. Rather, they are definitions that are contextually contingent. We will return to Ibn Ḥajar's definition and their alternative definitions shortly.

bihi).” If the technical term *ʿamal* refers to only one phenomenon, then Ibn Ḥajar’s comments contradict one another. How can he first characterize the *maqbūl* as that which must be acted upon, and then a few sections later, state that the *maqbūl* is further divided into that which is acted upon (*maʿmūl bihi*) and that which is not acted upon (*ghayr maʿmūl bihi*)?

The answer to this apparent contradiction is that the technical phrases “that which is acted upon (*maʿmūl bihi*)” and “that which is not acted upon (*ghayr maʿmūl bihi*)” can be used to mean different things. In the first usage, Ibn Ḥajar intends *ʿamal* in the broadest sense. In the sense that these testimonies, in theory, can be acted upon. Call this broadest sense of the term action, potentiality (*bi-l-quwwa*). In the second usage, Ibn Ḥajar intends *ʿamal* in a stricter sense, in the sense that these are the types of testimonies that have passed a critical juristic examination and have been shown to be actionable. Call this stricter sense of the term action, actuality (*bi-l-fiʿil*).[379] Therefore, there is no contradiction.

This interpretation of Ibn Ḥajar’s words coheres well with some of the commentators on his text who took the first usage to be connected to the much longer debate around the acceptance of solitary testimonies (*al-khabar al-wāḥid*) specifically, and *āḥād* testimonies more broadly.[380] The skeptical view against *al-khabar al-wāḥid* argued against the validity of “acting upon” such reports. The *ʿamal* being argued against by skeptics is, in the broader sense, that they cannot, even in theory, be acted upon. Hence, al-Shāfiʿī responded to this view by defending these categories as valid forms of proof (*ḥujja*) that can be *used* in a particular context, taken into consideration, or included in the critical and inferential process one uses when forming a judgment on a matter.

A consequence of this line of reasoning is the fact that the term *ʿamal*, when used in this broader sense, ends up being synonymous with the term acceptance (*qabūl*). This

[379] According to the action in potentiality (*bi-l-quwwa*) vs. action in actuality (*bi-l-fiʿil*) distinction we’ve proposed, the broadest and strictest usages of “that which is acted upon (*maʿmūl bihi*)” and “that which is not acted upon (*ghayr maʿmūl bihi*)” are covered. However, in reality, there are usages that fall between these two. As we have already mentioned, “that which is acted upon (*maʿmūl bihi*),” could be used to mean the usage of a specific type of testimony in a particular context, taking a specific type of testimony into consideration, or including it in the critical and inferential process one uses when forming a judgement on a matter. These other usages fall somewhere between these two distinctions.
[380] See: Al-Qārī (1995, 210–15) and Al-Munāwī (2020, 169–75).

is both important and useful to note since it also coheres well with other adjacent conversations in ḥadīth studies, including the well-known topic of "acting upon weak ḥadīth" (*al-ʿamal bi-l ḥadīth al-ḍaʿīf*) in the domain of virtuous acts (*faḍāʾil al-aʿmāl*). Given the context of this dispute, it is quite clear that what is meant by "acting upon weak ḥadīth" is not *ʿamal* in the strictest sense. How else are we to make sense of their including historical or exegetical cases as examples of when "acting upon weak ḥadīth" is considered valid?[381]

Rather, what is meant by *al-ʿamal bi-l ḥadīth al-ḍaʿīf*, is something broader that includes physical action, as well as what we might call "the usage of weak ḥadīth in reasoning." If we were to substitute the term *qabūl* for *ʿamal*, it would better characterize the question being investigated: "the acceptance of weak ḥadīth" (*qabūl al-ḥadīth al-ḍaʿīf*). We also have further support for this reading in testimonies from preclassical and classical scholars speaking of "the acceptance of weak ḥadīth" in certain contexts (Al-Bayhaqī 2003, 3:428).

In all the classifications delineated in the previous section, *daʿīf* ḥadīth are always classified as being *mardūd*. However, as we have just shown above, *daʿīf* ḥadīth are in certain contexts used (*maʿmūl bihi*) and thus *maqbūl*. Therefore, it is important to highlight that the standard designation of which degrees of *thubūt* are *maqbūl* vs. *mardūd* is based upon the legal domain.

This becomes crystal clear when we shift contexts to topics such as virtues (*manāqib*), historical accounts of the Prophetic biography (*sīra*), and exegetical literature (*tafsīr*). In these domains and others, what is deemed *maqbūl* vs. *mardūd* shifts accordingly. No longer will ḥadīth scholars say that *ḍaʿīf* ḥadīth are unacceptable in the absolute sense. In fact, as we've already mentioned above, an agreed-upon principle among ḥadīth scholars is the fact that *ḍaʿīf* ḥadīth are acceptable in the domain of virtuous acts (*faḍāʾil al-aʿmāl*).[382]

[381] For a thorough analysis of the question of "acting upon weak ḥadīth" (*al-ʿamal bi-l ḥadīth al-ḍaʿīf*), see Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAwwāmah's (2017) comprehensive treatise on the subject.
[382] Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAwwāma (2017) argues that there is consensus on this matter.

Thus, according to the classical system of ḥadīth scholars, there are an assortment of degrees of probability as expressed *vis-à-vis* the *degrees of authenticity and weakness*. These levels of authenticity and weakness directly relate back to the CA, and given the context of ḥadīth studies, indicate the probability of the attribution of the hadīth to the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) (*thubūt*). However, the *thresholds of acceptance*, best represented by the *maqbūl* vs. *mardūd* distinction, shift from one level/degree of authenticity/weakness to another, based upon the context or domain in which the ḥadīth will be *used*. If the domain is one of law (*aḥkām*), the bar is set higher than if the domain is one of virtuous acts (*faḍāʾil al-aʿmāl*), virtues (*manāqib*), historical accounts of the Prophetic biography (*sīra*), and exegetical literature (*tafsīr*). According to the standard view of ḥadīth scholars, one is justified in using *ḍaʿīf* ḥadīth in these contexts, but one is not justified in using weak ḥadīth in the domain of law (*aḥkām*).[383]

8.6.4. Contextualism and Stable Invariantism

The view we've detailed above, explicating the relationship between the *degrees of authenticity and weakness* and the *thresholds of acceptance*, overlaps with the contemporary debate around contextualism. Contextualism is the view that argues that the attribution of knowledge is at least partially context-dependent (Rysiew 2021; DeRose 1992). A somewhat adjacent view, known as pragmatic encroachment, argues that practical concerns play a part in epistemic justification and knowledge attribution (B. Kim and McCgrath 2019).

According to these views, when the stakes are high, or when the risks are great, knowledge is no longer attributable. Skeptical cases like the evil demon problem are often used as examples of the usefulness of these views. It is important to stress that according to these views, two different subjects, with the same exact evidence, could be described as having knowledge or not having knowledge based on their different contexts. Proponents of this view often rely on the multi-faceted usage of the word knowledge in society to further support their claim. On their view, knowledge isn't one thing; knowledge changes based on context.

[383] Whether or not *ḍaʿīf* ḥadīth can actually be used in matters of law is a complex question that is beyond the scope of this dissertation. See Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAwwāma's (1997) book on the role of ḥadīth in Islamic law for an introduction to the topic.

However, in response to these views, Baron Reed (2010; 2013) has argued that this goes too far. Knowledge is not some amorphous concept that differs based on practical concerns or contexts. Rather, different contexts require different types of epistemic evidence and attitudes from us as agents. Therefore, knowledge remains stable, but the threshold of what we are required to have in any given scenario might be different. He calls this stable invariantism.

Notice how Reed's view seems to mimic the relationship between the *degrees of authenticity and weakness* and the *thresholds of acceptance* laid out above. The *degrees of authenticity and weakness* directly relate back to the criteria of the CA and, more importantly, signify some probability of attributability. However, the *threshold of acceptance* shifts along that spectrum of probability with the shifting of context or domain. The changing of the domain from Islamic law (*fiqh*) to the domain of the Prophetic biography (*sīra*) does not lead to a change in the *degrees of authenticity and weakness*; rather, it leads to a change in what constitutes an acceptable threshold.

Thus, according to the CA, the *degrees of authenticity and weakness* are stable, while the *threshold of acceptance* shifts. There is further evidence for this found in the discussion around the conditions required for acting upon weak ḥadīth in the domain of virtuous acts (*faḍāʾil al-aʿmāl*) (Al-Ṣuyūṭī 2016d, 3:522–32). In these discussions, various conditions are said to be required for someone to *use daʿīf* ḥadīth in this domain. One of the conditions mentioned is that the subject does not believe that the hadīth is attributable to the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) more than its epistemic status allows for. In other words, acting upon the hadīth and using it is justified, but the degree of probability associated with it based upon the CA does not change. The fact that these two things come apart in the traditional system anticipates Reed's stable invariantism.

8.6.5. Expanding the Degrees of Authenticity and Weakness

Before we move on to discuss how we can justify these two core features of the CA, it is useful to suggest an expansion of the standard exposition of the *degrees of authenticity and weakness*. Although the five-tiered *degrees of authenticity and weakness* are standard among classical, postclassical, and contemporary scholars, their

view entails that they are expanded to seven tiers. While the additional formal *degrees of authenticity and weakness* being suggested are sometimes understood implicitly from the writings of ḥadīth scholars, other times, they are explicitly identified. Nevertheless, the standard expositions of the *degrees of authenticity and weakness* do not include these extra two tiers in the literature.

The first category that should be added to the formal *degrees of authenticity and weakness* is the degree of certainty (*yaqīn*). This degree represents certainty-yielding ḥadīth, which we have already enumerated *vis-à-vis* the PST and the PCT. *Successive group testimonies* and *non-successive testimonies* "surrounded by signs" each yield certainty.[384] Although it is standard to collapse these categories into the category of *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth, it is more precise to separate them out.[385] The highest forms of ḥadīth found in the *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth category should still rationally and nomically allow for the contrary to be true (*iḥtimāl al-naqīḍ*). However, the PST and PCT are examples of ḥadīth that are certain, and thus their contrary is nomically impossible (*mustaḥil ʿādatan*).

A second category that I suggest being added to the *degrees of authenticity and weakness* is forgeries (*al-mawḍūʿāt*). These are testimonies attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) that are thought to be not only false but to have been deliberately falsely attributed to him. Even though *al-mawḍūʿāt*, traditionally, were subsumed under the heading of *ḍaʿīf* ḥadīth, many scholars pointed out that this is incorrect. Forgeries are testimonies where the critic has evidence that the statement was forged, while *ḍaʿīf* ḥadīth are free of such evidence (Al-Sakhāwī 2014b, 2:98–132). The conclusion seems to be that forgeries are not ḥadīth at all and, therefore, cannot be subsumed under the category of *ḍaʿīf* ḥadīth. While this point seems valid, it does not

[384] It is standard for ḥadīth scholars to state that *successive group testimonies* are all *maqbūl*, while non-successive (*āḥād*) testimonies are divided between some that are *maqbūl* and some that are *mardūd* (Al-Qārī 1995, 210). Thus, certainty-yielding *successive group testimonies* are a type of *maqbūl* report.

[385] A possible objection to this classification is that ḥadīth scholars themselves noted that the investigation into *tawātur* is not a ḥadīth studies investigation (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 45). Rather, it is a borrowed investigation from *uṣūl al-fiqh*. As I've already noted, there are a number of solutions to this objection. For example, ḥadīth scholars have been discussing these topics from as far back as the preclassical era. Therefore, one possible response is to say this investigation is originally a ḥadīth studies investigation and thus, those who include it, are simply reintroducing it into ḥadīth studies. A second possible answer is to accept that it is a borrowed investigation; however, to point out that any type of holistic study of the epistemology of ḥadīth will require that we bring in conversations from other disciplines.

impact the suggestion that we expand the *degrees of authenticity and weakness* to include the category of forgeries. Notice that the *degrees of authenticity and weakness* are not restricted to the domain of ḥadīth.

Thus, we can rearticulate the five-tiered *degrees of authenticity and weakness* as seven tiers:

III. Acceptable (*maqbūl*)

i. Certain Testimonies (*al-akhbār al-yaqīniyya*)
ii. Intrinsically Authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ li-dhātihi*)
iii. Extrinsically Authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrihi*)
iv. Intrinsically Fair (*ḥasan li-dhātihi*)
v. Extrinsically Fair (*ḥasan li-ghayrihi*)

IV. Rejected (*mardūd*)

1. Weak (*ḍaʿīf*)

i. Forgery (*mawḍūʿ*)

8.6.6. Justifying the Degrees of Authenticity and Weakness and the Thresholds of Acceptance

Our investigation into the two features of the CA, which we have called the *degrees of authenticity and weakness* and the *thresholds of acceptance*, can each be formulated as principles in the following manner:

> *Principle of Degrees of Authenticity and Weakness* (PDA): Based upon the variables of successiveness or lack thereof, the intrinsic and extrinsic criteria of the CA, as well as other contextual signs, the authenticity of a testimony's attribution to its source (*thubūt*) is considered by the subject to be certainly true, certainly false, or some probability between the two. The *degrees of certainty and weakness* are placeholders for these various degrees of probability.

Principle of Thresholds of Acceptance (PTA): Based upon the domain, context, risks, and consequences of a given situation, the *degree of authenticity and weakness* required for the *usage* of a testimony will shift. The context or domain will determine what the threshold of acceptance vs. rejection will be for any given class of testimonies.

The PDA refers to both the belief that is internal to the subject and to the external matter of fact. Justifying the latter is relatively straightforward. The matter-of-fact probabilities ranging from certainly true to certainly false, to everything between, simply collapse into any rational (*ʿaqlī*) and nomic (*ʿādī*) assessment of necessity, impossibility, and possibility. The names given to the various degrees associated with necessity or possibility are merely conventional (*waḍʿī*) and do not require justification.

Although the PDA relies on this matter-of-fact assessment of *ʿaqlī* and *ʿādī* necessity, impossibility, and possibility, it relates more to the attitudes the subject has toward the world than the world itself. The justification of the attitudes one has concerning the world is a bit more complicated.

An initial step would be to tie the PDA to the previous axioms we've seen: the PST, PNT, PCT, PP, PD, KDD, and JDD. This is important because any justification of an attitude the subject has towards these testimonies is going to rely upon the criteria themselves. The second step is to assert that the attitude of the subject is only justified as long as it is in line with the above-mentioned criteria. This is not to say that it must exactly parallel the external matter-of-fact reality. As we have seen, there is a difference between reality as a matter-of-fact, the internal attitude of the subject, and the evidence a subject might have that indicates the external matter-of-fact. However, there needs to be some reasonable relationship between the evidence based on the criteria of the CA and the matter-of-fact epistemic status of the testimony under evaluation. This second step is the normative epistemic claim that the subject must follow the evidence. The third step would be to say that the names given to the various degrees mentioned above are purely conventional (*waḍʿī*) and should not be a place of dispute.

As for the PTA, there are two different types of arguments that can be made for it: rational and scriptural. Although scriptural arguments are made in other areas of the CA, we have, for the most part, avoided them in order to highlight the rational and epistemic foundations of the traditional critical method of ḥadīth scholars.[386] However, there are epistemic norms associated with the PTA that have decisive scriptural arguments that are useful in the face of certain forms of skepticism.

As for the rational arguments, ḥadīth scholars have historically relied upon a two-tiered response: One side of their argument focuses on relying on the very concept of *ʿaqlī* and *ʿādī* necessity, impossibility, and possibility. This is particularly true when it comes to the argument for why hadīth that are at least *ḥasan* should be *maqbūl*. If the lowest degree of *ḥasan* ḥadīth is some credence above .5, that is due to the preponderance of the truthfulness of the transmitter, and therefore by definition, his truthfulness is more likely than his falsehood and thus should be accepted (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 51).[387] What else does the fact that the credence for a ḥadīth is above .5 mean, other than the fact that it is *maqbūl*?

Conversely, *ḍaʿīf* ḥadīth parallel any credence below .5 due to the preponderance of falsehood attributed to the transmitter, and therefore by definition, his falsehood is more likely than his truthfulness and should be rejected. In the case of an exactly .5 probability, it is associated with the *mardūd* category due to the absence of any internal or external evidence that leads to the truth preponderating over falsehood (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2019, 51). This first tier of the rational argument is particularly useful when it comes to the threshold of acceptance associated with legislative (*aḥkām*) ḥadīth because the threshold of acceptance when it comes to the Islamic legal domain, and thus legislative (*aḥkām*) ḥadīth, pivots on a preponderance of truth vs. a preponderance of falsehood.

[386] It is quite standard to see an appeal to scriptural evidence when discussing the traditional method of ḥadīth criticism. However, one should not confuse this with a rejection of rational arguments, nor with the idea that the given question does not have any rational proofs. As Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAwwāma regularly mentions in his weekly class on al-Ṣuyūṭī's (2016b) *Tadrīb al-Rāwī*, which is attended by scholars, professors, researchers, and students alike, ḥadīth scholars often sought to ground their system in scripture even when the initial designation might have been rational or conventional.

[387] Ibn Ḥajar's student, Ibn Quṭlūbughā (2017, 94) argues that Ibn Ḥajar didn't intend this section as an argument for the obligation to act upon "acceptable" (*maqbūl*) ḥadīth, rather, he offerred it as an argument for classifying *āḥād* ḥadīth into the *maqbūl* and *mardūd* categories. Al-Kurānī (2017, 94) rejects this explanation, and argues that he could have intended both.

Before moving on to the second tier of the rational argument, it is important to stress that Ibn Ḥajar's characterization of acceptance/rejection (*qabūl*/*radd*) is domain-contingent and not a characterization of the categories of *qabūl*/*radd* in their absolute sense. Notice how both his characterization above and the earlier definition of *mardūd* ḥadīth as "that which the truthfulness of the transmitter does not preponderate" do not apply to other domains, such as that of virtuous acts (*faḍāʾil al-aʿmāl*), or other contexts that allow for the usage of *ḍaʿīf* ḥadīth. Commentators on Ibn Ḥajar's (2019) *Nuzha*, as well as those familiar with his work, followed suit.[388] Their only correction was to define *maqbūl* ḥadīth as "that which the truthfulness of the transmitter preponderates." But again, this is domain-contingent.

These definitions are better fit for the qualified category of *acceptability in the domain of Islamic legal rulings (aḥkam)* and *unacceptability in the domain of Islamic legal rulings (aḥkām)*. Our earlier analysis of *qabūl*/*radd* is meant to avoid domain-contingent delineations and to instead focus on *qabūl*/*radd* in its absolute sense. Given that *qabūl*/*radd* shifts on a spectrum according to contextual factors, it should be defined in such terms.

The second tier of the rational argument applies not only to the domain of legal (*aḥkām*) ḥadīth but extends to all thresholds used by ḥadīth scholars. This side of the argument is rooted in the idea of risk (Al-Munāwī and Al-Munāwī 2020, 170–71; Al-Ghazālī 2016b, 220–22). According to this line of reasoning, the risks associated with accepting vs. rejecting a ḥadīth, given a hypothetical threshold, have real-world ramifications. For example, rejecting any ḥadīth that does not meet the threshold of certainty means rejecting the overwhelming majority of the ḥadith corpus. Rejecting the overwhelming majority of the ḥadith corpus means that we would know very little about how to practice Islam. The risk involved here is great.

Similarly, using *ḍaʿīf* ḥadīth in the legal domain (*aḥkām*) runs the risk of harming others without sufficient cause. Islamic legal rulings (*aḥkām*), which are often grounded in legislative ḥadīth, can result in real-world consequences; the breaking up of families or punishing possible criminals, they can also be the basis of what

[388] See: Ibn al-Ḥanbalī (1987, 48); Ibn Quṭlūbughā (2017, 93–94); Ibn Abī al-Sharīf (2017, 93–94); al-Munāwī (2020, 169–70); and Al-Kurānī (2017, 93–94); for examples of this analysis.

constitutes a legal means of income and thus get in the way of people's livelihood. To take ḥadīth, whose probability is below .5, and ground such serious rulings in them is a risk Islamic scholars were largely unwilling to take.

This argument from inductive risk mimics some of the contemporary literature found in anglophone epistemology and the philosophy of science.[389] The inductive risk argument is stronger than the first argument because the first argument assumes that the preponderance of probability and the question of acceptability are inseparable. However, as we have seen, the two come apart. Therefore, without the second half of the rational argument, one is still left wondering why a mere preponderance is sufficient or why a mere preponderance is even needed.

Finally, as for scriptural arguments, this is found in the context of discussions pertaining to the acceptance of solitary testimonies (*qabūl al-khabar al-wāḥid*) and *āḥād* testimonies more broadly. One of the arguments employed by the majority is the fact that the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) commanded his companions using *al-khabar al-wāḥid* and *āḥād* testimonies and treated them as sufficient. In fact, if one were to gather all the ḥadīth that indicate and entail the Prophet Muhammad's viewing of these testimonies as sufficient, the number surpasses the threshold of *tawātur*. Thus, we are certain that the Prophet (ṣ) viewed *al-khabar al-wāḥid* and *āḥād* testimonies more broadly as normatively binding (Al-Ghazālī 2016b, 222–28).

8.7. Rules of Transformation and Inference

We began this chapter with an analysis of the technical epistemic terms: axioms, rules, and apparatuses. At the time, we stated that we were using the terms *qawāʿid* and *qānūn* to mean universal propositions (*qaḍāya kulliyya*) from which particular rulings (*aḥkām*) are derived (Al-Fanārī 2023, 1:146). We then further drew on the assertion made by al-Ghazālī (2016b, 8–9) and others that the foundation of any science is built upon axioms/principles, in Arabic, *mabādiʾ*, literally, that which you start from. We

[389] See, for example, Steel (2010b) on inductive risk. It should be noted that there is also a clear conceptual overlap between the inductive risk literature in the philosopy of science and the epistemic literature on contextualism, pragmatic encroachment, and stable invariantism. For my own work, I am drawing mostly on the latter given the overlap between stable invariantism and the *thresholds of acceptance* in the ḥadīthic system.

then tied these meanings to Novaes's (2007, 232) explication of axioms being propositions that are "more fundamental than others, on the basis of whose truth the truth of other propositions can be known."

Since that initial section, we've spent the subsequent sections investigating the various axioms/principles and rules (*mabādiʾ/qawāʿid/qānūn*) upon which the traditional critical method (*manhaj al-naqd*) of ḥadīth scholars relies. We analyzed these core principles epistemically and sought to provide an account of their justification. While this is the most important part of epistemically analyzing the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars, it does not give a complete account.

Recall that ḥadīth scholars of the classical era often define the study of ḥadīth criticism (*dirāya*) as a science concerning the rules *through which one comes to know* the status of a ḥadīth.[390] Their definition of *qawāʿid*, which parallels al-Ghazālī's usage of *mabādiʾ* and Novaes's usage of axioms, includes something beyond the principles themselves, given that these axioms are supposed to be used to come to know the epistemic status of any given ḥadīth under investigation. *Mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid*, after all, do not, on their own, produce new knowledge. In order for them to produce new knowledge, they require some type of inferential process. This is explicitly mentioned by the great ḥadīth scholar al-ʿAynī when he described these *mabādiʾ* as "… premises from which the inferences of that science will be made up." (Al-ʿAynī 2001, 1:32–33) This point coheres well with Novaes's (2007, 238) statement, "Underlying any axiomatization project is the assumption that knowledge has an essentially deductive nature: it is by inferring new knowledge from previous known (and possibly more fundamental) truths that knowledge in general is expanded."

This point is the central impetus behind my characterization of the CA, which includes the *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid* it relies upon, as well as the methods that ḥadīth scholars employed, as an epistemic apparatus (*āla maʿrifiyya*). Anyone investigating the authenticity of ḥadīth will ultimately be engaging in some type of critical thought or reasoning (*fikr*). *Fikr*, as we've already stated, is defined as "the ordering of already known matters, in a specific manner, to come to know other things that were previously

[390] As mentioned earlier, see: Ibn Ḥajar (1984, 2:225); Al-Sakhāwī (2014a, 1:14); and al-Munāwī (2020, 130). Also, see al-Bakrī (2022, 38–41) for a study of the historical development of these definitions.

unknown."[391] However, not everyone who engages in *fikr* reaches the same conclusion. In fact, some who engage in *fikr*, err. Therefore, part of what developed into the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars is the combination of suitable justified *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid*, alongside suitable valid rules of inference (*naẓar*/*istidlāl*), to produce justified conclusions regarding the epistemic status of any given ḥadīth under investigation.[392] This *āla maʿrifiyya*, which is made up of this assortment of suitable justified *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid*, alongside these suitable valid rules of *naẓar/istidlāl*, protects those engaged in the critical evaluation of ḥadīth from making errors in epistemic judgment. Therefore, the CA that we find explicated in *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* texts is the pedagogical equivalent of teaching students how to reason properly about the authenticity and truthfulness of the attribution of ḥadīth to the Prophet (ṣ), otherwise known as the investigation into a ḥadīth's *thubūt*.

To further express this point, it is useful to reconstruct a possible inference that might be used in conjunction with these *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid*:[393]

1st Syllogism:

(1) Zayd stated that he heard *p* from A.
(2) If Zayd states that he heard *p* from A, then it is likely true that Zayd heard *p* from A.
(3) Therefore, it is likely true that Zayd heard *p* from A.

[391] See: al-Taftāzānī (2011, 106). Interestingly, Eido (2018a, 1:93) cites a definition for the technical term *manhaj* that conceptually overlaps with *fikr*, *qawāʿid*, and *āla*. However, distinguishing between each is important when using all of the terms together. A *manhaj* can be made up of *qawāʿid*, as well as being made up of one or more *āla*. All of these things, working together, help guide and protect one's *fikr*.

[392] The rules of inference (*naẓar/istidlāl*) differ based upon the type of inference being used. Typically, three types of inference and their respective rules are mentioned in the Islamic sciences: deduction (*qiyās*), induction (*istiqrāʾ*), and analogical reasoning (*tamthīl*) (Al-Yazdī 2018, 334). One could expand the list to include other forms of inference, for example, combinations between the three, like in the case of experience or empirical knowledge (*tajriba*). As mentioned at the outset of the chapter, I am using inference in a broader sense than mere deduction.

[393] It is important to emphasize that these reconstructions are not meant to be solely representative of the implict reasoning taking place in traditional ḥadīth scholarship. I've chosen to rely on hypothetical/conditional inferences (*al-qiyās al-istithnāʾī*) and modus ponens out of ease. A more rigorous study of the various possibilities is needed. Furthermore, I've limited this reconstruction to the intrinsic criteria of *manhaj al-naqd*. A more robust reconstruction of the entire method is needed.

The belief in premise (2) needs further expansion; it can be rationalized as follows:

2nd Syllogism:

(1) Zayd is a reliable transmitter.
(2) If Zayd is a reliable transmitter, then Zayd's statements concerning what he has heard from others are likely true.
(3) Therefore, Zayd's statements concerning what he has heard from others are likely true.

Notice that premise (2) of the 1st Syllogism is one instance of the conclusion of the 2nd Syllogism. In other words, it is a proper subset of the extension of the 2nd Syllogism's conclusion. Therefore, if Zayd's statements concerning what he has heard from others are likely true, then Zayd's statement of having heard *p* from A is strictly included in that fact and is thus likely true.

However, premises (1) and (2) of the 2nd Syllogism require further expansion. As for premise (1):

3rd Syllogism:

(1) Zayd is upright (*ʿadl*) and precise (*ḍābiṭ*).
(2) If Zayd is upright (*ʿadl*) and precise (*ḍābiṭ*), then Zayd is a reliable transmitter.
(3) Therefore, Zayd is a reliable transmitter.

Notice how the second premise in the third syllogism is grounded in the rational division of what the logical possibilities are for how a person can err when engaging in *transmission* (*riwāya*). As for the first premise, it is grounded in the experience or empirical knowledge (*tajriba*) of the evaluator with Zayd in the technical sense we used above. In other words, the evaluator witnesses a uniformity in the actions of Zayd, which gives way to an implicit inference concerning the need for a cause of that uniformity. Given that such uniformity cannot be by chance, there must be a cause. Uniformity by chance is not possible due to the principle of the rational impossibility of preponderance or determination between multiple possibilities without a cause or

determiner (*istiḥālat al-rujḥān bi lā murajjiḥ*).[394] Therefore, that uniformity is caused by firm dispositions/abilities in Zayd, which is the meaning of him being upright (*ʿadl*) and precise (*ḍābiṭ*). These two dispositions are what justify the critic's belief in his reliability when it comes to *transmission* (*riwāya*).

The above rationalization can also be used for the second premise of the second syllogism:

(2) If Zayd is a reliable transmitter, then Zayd's statements concerning what he has heard from others are likely true.

Depending upon how one understands this premise, it too relies on the technical concept of experience or empirical knowledge (*tajriba*). This is true when what is meant by the premise is that "If Zayd is a reliable transmitter [in past transmissions], then Zayd's statements concerning what he has heard from others [in the future] are likely true." However, there are other readings of the premise that would make it necessarily true. Notice how if we interpret it to not be differentiating between past and future instances, the premise just ends up giving us a meaning of what reliability is. If all the premise is doing is telling us what reliability is, we no longer need experience or empirical knowledge (*tajriba*) to justify it. Nevertheless, the safer path is to choose the first interpretation, which requires our reliance on experience or empirical knowledge (*tajriba*), which, as we've mentioned previously, is a source of nomic certainty and thus included among the foundational principles known as "the pathways to certainty" (*madārik al-yaqīn*).

It is important to stress that I do not mean that ḥadīth critics sat down and formally wrote out these syllogisms, nor do I mean that they thought about these questions in this specific step-by-step process. Rather, what I am positing is that their critical method is made up of *implicit* arguments like these. At times, they were explicit about some of their principle-based reasoning, while at other times, their principle-based reasoning was done implicitly and informally.[395]

[394] See: Ṣadr al-Sharīʿah (2020, 189).
[395] It is perhaps more precise to say that their *āla* was not further formalized, because, as we've already noted, various degrees of formalization were taking place from era to era and period to period.

The fact that many of the *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid* of ḥadīth scholars, and virtually all their inferences, occurred implicitly, is neither a problem for formalization nor for this research project. One of the central aims of the dissertation is to take their implicit reasoning, which is itself based upon various principles, and to reconstruct it explicitly and formally. While identifying, analyzing, and giving a justificatory account of the *mabādiʾ* and *qawāʿid* of the *manhaj al-naqd* is key to fulfilling this goal, it is also essential to clarify how these principles can come together to justify evaluative judgments being made by ḥadīth scholars. This is because, ultimately, the *manhaj al-naqd* is an inferential process.

If we take reasoning and inference to be *naẓar/istidlāl*, and as such, it includes deduction (*qiyās*), induction (*istiqrāʾ*), analogical reasoning (*tamthīl*), and even empiricals/experiences (*al-tajrībiyyāt*), then the claim that the *manhaj al-naqd* is inferential should be uncontroversial. As previously noted in the dissertation, the *manhaj al-naqd* is often characterized by contemporary ḥadīth scholars as being inductive. Perhaps the only place of dispute will be over whether the traditional critical method is also deductive.[396] However, this likely stems from a verbal dispute over what deduction is.

As Novaes (2021, 4–9) has shown in her work on deduction, the core features of deductive reasoning are three: necessary truth-preservation, stepwise structure (perspicuity), and belief bracketing. If we take deduction to be a truth-preserving stepwise structure where the beliefs of the premises are bracketed, then it is clearly true that ḥadīth scholars are engaging in deductive reasoning *implicitly and mentally* when evaluating ḥadīth.[397] This is not to say that the *manhaj al-naqd* is not also inductive, since it also relies on induction in the broader sense of the term. In other words, the two types of reasoning, induction and deduction, need not be mutually exclusive as part of the larger epistemic structure of the *manhaj al-naqd*. Therefore, my claim is not that the *manhaj al-naqd* is purely deductive; rather, it is that hadīth scholars used several suitable methods of inference, relying on a number of core

[396] See, for example: Karagözoğlu (2017a).
[397] I am emphasizing that this occurs implicitly and mentally to avoid the objection that hadīth scholars did not explicitly and publicly engage in deductive reasoning when evaluating ḥadīth. Even though this objection might not stand up to proper scrutiny, the much weaker claim that they were engaging in deductive reasoning implicitly and mentally, should be uncontroversial.

axioms and principles, to yield for them justified epistemic conclusions when evaluating ḥadīth.

It seems that many who categorically deny that the *manhaj al-naqd* is deductive, do so on the presumption that deductive inferences must be made up of purely rational (*ʿaqlī*) premises.[398] But deductive inferences need not be made up of solely *ʿaqlī* premises. Some forms of deduction use sense perception in the formation of their premises, while others rely on induction or introspection. Even deductive inferences that rely on *ʿaqlī* premises often do so in combination with premises yielded from other sources of knowledge, such that they become a composite (*murakkab*) deduction.[399] Finally, there is also a difference between saying that a deductive inference is made up of purely (*ʿaqlī*) premises and that it proceeds *a priori*. The latter is a much stronger claim that goes beyond the proximate premises to their very origins.

Therefore, part of the argument of this section is that the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars can be explicitly reconstructed in this fashion.[400] In addition to describing *how* their reasoning can be reconstructed, I am striving to emphasize the *value* and justification of their semi-formalized, principle-based evaluations. This is further highlighted through the comparison with anglophone epistemology, which showcased just how advanced and multifaceted the traditional method is, as well as how high of a hybrid bar it has set. It has also shown how the anglophone tradition can benefit from *manhaj al-naqd*, as well as how *manhaj al-naqd* can benefit from some of the

[398] Alternatively, a verbal dispute might arise due to one side taking deduction to mean demonstration (*burhān*). However, deduction need not be demonstrative; it only needs to be logically sound (*ṣaḥīḥ fī al-mādda wa al-ṣūra*). Finally, it is possible that a verbal dispute might arise due to one side taking deduction to mean explicit deduction. However, as we have noted several times, deduction need not be explicit.

[399] This was already introduced in Chapter 6 when discussing what Islamic scholars called composite evidence; evidence which is made up of inferential and transmitted premises.

[400] An area that requires further research and clarification is the relation (*nisba*) between three different distinctions being used throughout this section: explicit vs. implicit inferences, public vs. mental inferences, and finally, formal vs. informal inferences. Such an investigation is beyond the scope of this dissertation, however, it is important to provide an initial demarcation between terms. As for the explicit vs. implicit distinction: I am using it to track the difference between inferences where the subject is cognizant of all of the premises and the ordering of principles, and follows a more methododical structured step-by-step approach, in contrast to cases where the subject is only cognizant of some premises and steps and not others and is "skipping steps" in his reasoning. As for the mental vs. public distinction: This distinction is tracking whether the inference is happanning in the subject's own mind or if it is being shared publicly, either through speech or writing. Given that formalization was already addressed at the beginning of Chapter 5, I will suffice myslef with summarizing what was written there: the concept of formalization I am relying on in this dissertation, is one that ties formalization to axiomatization and to the rules of inference.

investigations found in the anglophone literature. Thus, I am not only emphasizing the *value* of the formalizations of the classical and postclassical eras, but I am also advocating for further formalization and synthesis.

As we've already noted, formalization can be thought of on a spectrum. Further formalization is needed to be more explicit about the rational and epistemic foundations of the traditional method of ḥadīth criticism. The *āla maʿrifiyya* of ḥadīth scholars specifically, as well as their *manhaj al-naqḍ* more broadly, requires further analysis, reconstruction, and explication. While this dissertation is only meant as an initial step in beginning this process, for now, it will have to do. However, before concluding the dissertation, there is one last set of objections that must be addressed.

8.8. Qualified Reliability and Knowledge How

8.8.1. An Overview

The CA, in its classical form, as a set of *qawāʿid*, has in recent years come under severe scrutiny by contemporary ḥadīth scholarship. While a more robust historical analysis is still needed to make sense of this intellectual upheaval, for the time being, it will suffice to attribute this to a perceived weakness in the criteria themselves.[401] According to the line of reasoning attributable to these critics, the CA does not help us accurately assess which testimonies are *ṣahīḥ* and which are not, nor does it help us manage ḥadīth; such that we can practically and accurately choose the correct wording of one Prophetic statement over another. If this is true, this is deeply threatening to the CA as an *āla maʿrifiyya*, which ultimately purports to guide those who wish to engage in the critical evaluation of ḥadīth in how to reason properly and to protect them from making errors in epistemic judgment.

The proposed solution, according to one group of critics, is to leave the axiomatization (*taqʿīd*) and stipulations of the classical period and instead focus on how the early community of ḥadīth scholars conceived of their *qawāʿid*. This argument rests upon the idea that classical ḥadīth scholars failed at axiomatizing and formalizing what early

[401] Professor Hamzeh al-Bakri's (2022) work, *Māhiyyat ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*, does partially address this historical question.

ḥadīth scholars had done in their analysis of the ḥadīth corpus. While this argument is multi-faceted, it ultimately rejects the CA not because it is an axiomatized list of *qawāʿid*; rather, it rejects it because it claims that the CA doesn't match the complex informal epistemic work performed by the early generations. Given that there is a weaker version of this line of criticism, we can call this the stronger view.

According to the weaker version, critics hold that classical ḥadīth scholars failed at axiomatizing *certain elements* of the preclassical method, but still largely accept the other parts of the CA. Both the stronger and weaker view share in their criticism of the classical formulation of *qawāʿid* of ḥadīth scholars. However, the stronger view is absolute in its rejection of their *taqʿīd*, whereas the weaker view limits its criticisms to particular *qawāʿid*.

A second line of reasoning rejects theorizing (*al-tanẓīr*) and the goal of *taqʿīd* altogether and instead encourages the applied work (*al-taṭbīq*) of analyzing Prophetic statements.[402] Although objections of this sort might agree with the first line of reasoning mentioned above, they seem to take it a step further. To them, any type of *taqʿīd* will ultimately fail since managing and analyzing testimonies is not the type of work that can be axiomatized.[403] They prefer instead to keep the epistemological work informal and skill-oriented.

Before moving on, it is important to stress a cautionary note. While the critical views mentioned above are present in some sense in contemporary ḥadīth scholarship, it is much too strong of a claim to think of them as clearly defined views. The debate around the *qawāʿid* of classical ḥadīth scholarship is still imprecise and has yet to settle. In fact, the hope is that this dissertation broadly, and this section specifically, can help further isolate the exact dispute (*taḥrīr maḥall al-nizāʿ*).

[402] Application (*taṭbīq*) is often contrasted with theorization (*tanẓīr*) in these debates. See, for example, al-Malībārī's (2001, 29–68) emphasis on these two distinct areas. Although this requires more research and analysis, it seems that these terms are similar in scope to our earlier usage of applied vs. theoretical, as in applied epistemology vs. epistemology proper. There also seems to be at least a partial overlap between this and the more ancient Aristotelian distinction between practical and theoretical philosophy (Allen 2015). More will be said about these distinctions below.

[403] At times, they might even boldly claim that it can't be rationalized. But I've decided in this section to avoid that stronger claim and focus on the lesser claim that it can't be axiomatized.

In this section, I will defend the CA against these objections by suggesting that it can be further developed and formalized to address the concerns of these critics. I will first motivate these objections to the CA. I will then propose an expanded understanding of reliability to address the first objection. As for the second objection, I will argue that the relationship between propositional knowledge and knowledge-how helps rebut or at least weakens their criticisms.

8.8.2. Motivating the Objections

When a contemporary ḥadīth scholar analyzes a particular ḥadīth, one of the first steps they must take is to look up the entries of each transmitter in various biographical dictionaries. Every transmitter in the testimonial chain will be looked up in these resources in search of information regarding their *ʿadāla*, and *ḍabṭ*, and other personal biographical information. The contemporary ḥadīth scholar then forms an opinion about where this transmitter falls on the "rubric of endorsement and impugnment."[404] If the chain seems to be contiguous and all its transmitters have met the *ʿadāla* and *ḍabṭ* threshold of acceptance, then the ḥadīth has met the first intrinsic stage of criticism and can move on to the extrinsic stage.

It is at this stage that the first objection emerges. According to opponents of the CA, the criterion of *ḍabṭ* is itself imprecise. Given how the CA is articulated by classical ḥadīth scholars, a *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth can only be authentic if the transmitters that make up its chain are of the highest order and are characterized as having "complete precision" (*ḍabṭ tām*). Such a conclusion can't be right given that some of the most important works of ḥadīth criticism and some of the most authentic compilations of the early generation do not abide by such a criterion. A couple of examples are instructive.

The Sunnī community has for nearly a millennium held that the most reliable compilation of ḥadīth is that of Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870). Al-Bukhārī's work, often referred to as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, contains around 7,400 ḥadīth if the repetitions are taken into account, and around 2,600 ḥadīth if the repetitions are not

[404] What I mean by the *rubric of endorsement and impugnment* is the formal system developed by ḥadīth scholars to characterize the degree of reliability conferred on any given transmitter (*marātib al-jarḥ wa al-taʿdīl*) by transmitter critics. We alluded to this development in ḥadīth studies in Chapter 5. See Ibn Ḥajar (1991, 74–75) for a standard example.

taken into account.[405] Opponents of the CA take it as a given that proponents of the CA will agree with them that al-Bukhārī's work is the most reliable and rigorous collection of Prophetic testimonies. But this creates a problem for classical ḥadīth scholars and proponents of the CA because al-Bukhārī's work includes several transmitters that, according to this formalized system, do not meet the necessary standards of *ḍabṭ*.

A case in point is the example of ʿAbdullah b. al-Muthannā, who al-Bukhāri indirectly transmits from in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, despite his contentious biography.[406] Opponents of the CA will often point out that when al-Bukhārī transmits from ʿAbdullah, he often transmits from him alone, without any corroboration.[407] Furthermore, they point out that when al-Bukhārī transmits from ʿAbdullah, ʿAbdullah himself often is directly transmitting from his uncle, Thumāma. The famous commentator on the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (2013a, 1:396–97), points out this familial connection and concludes that al-Bukhārī found that ʿAbdullah's ḥadīth, when directly transmitted from his uncle Thumāma, were acceptable, due to that familial familiarity. If this is correct, then the CA, as it stands, cannot be right since it excludes such nuanced judgments.

Another example from the *Ṣaḥīḥ* is the inclusion of the transmitter, Ismāʿīl b. Abī Uways.[408] Similar to the case of ʿAbdullah b. al-Muthannā, his biography is contentious.[409] Yet unlike the case of ʿAbdullah, al-Bukhārī transmits directly from Ismāʿīl. In other words, al-Bukhārī actually met with Ismāʿīl as opposed to ʿAbdullah, who al-Bukhārī transmits from through other people. The same classical commentator, Ibn Ḥajar (2013b, 2:357), transmits an authentic report of how al-Bukhārī came to transmit these ḥadīth from Ismāʿīl. In it, we learn that al-Bukhārī asked Ismāʿīl for his notebook of collected ḥadīth; he then took it home with him and studied it. After

[405] See: Eido and Safi (2020) as well as Brown (2007b) for more information on al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*.
[406] For an example of a ḥadīth transmitted through him in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, see: *Bāb man Aʿād al-Ḥadīth li-Yufhama ʿAnh, Kitāb al-ʿIlm*. As for an example of his contentious biography, see, for example: Ibn Ḥajar (1991, 320).
[407] This is important because otherwise an easy response to the criticism would be that the ḥadīth has corroborations and is thus extrinsically authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrihi*). Given that this testimony is not bolstered by any corroborations, it is harder to explain why it is included given the problem in the testimonial chain.
[408] See, for example: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: *Bāb Mata Yaṣiḥḥu Samāʿ Al-Ṣaghīr, Kitāb al-ʿIlm*.
[409] See, for example: Ibn Ḥajar (1991, 108).

having emerged from that analysis, he chose a few ḥadīth and left the rest. Ḥadīth scholars call this process "selection" or "hand-picking" out (*intiqāʿ*) the reliable reports from the unreliable ones. Opponents of the CA highlight that the *taqʿīd* of classical scholars, as exemplified by the CA, would have us reject these ḥadīth since it can't account for this type of epistemic work. And yet the most influential ḥadīth scholar to have ever lived, the one who literally wrote the book, included them. Therefore, reliability can't be as simple as it is being characterized in the CA.

The second objection to the formalization of the CA stems from the ineffectiveness of teaching ḥadīth theoretically. This line of criticism objects to the very idea of trying to make sense of the work of ḥadīth scholars through any theoretical criteria whatsoever. Early ḥadīth scholars had the right idea in mind when they simply engaged in ḥadīth criticism informally, in an applied fashion, without trying to pin down any theoretical or formal system. It was a mistake for classical scholars to try and make sense of that vast library through the expression of the CA.

Opponents of the CA find support for this type of argument in the works of ḥadīth scholars themselves. A common analogy used by ḥadīth scholars is to liken their work to that of a goldsmith.[410] The idea is that a goldsmith will be able to tell apart true gold from fool's gold, *intuitively*. He will not be able to explain to you the details of how he came to know; he just does. It took years of training and working with gold to gain that ability. Some opponents of the CA view their work as being like the work of a goldsmith, and so formalization and the theoretical study of ḥaḍith criticism for them is a misinformed and ultimately incorrect method.[411]

They find anecdotal support for this thesis in the inability of famous early ḥadīth scholars to sometimes put into words why they rejected certain ḥadīth and not others. When criticized for their rejection without some clear, explicit form of reasoning, they would tell their critics to ask other famous ḥadīth scholars. Surprisingly, their

[410] See Ibn Ḥajar (2019, 92) for this exact quote.
[411] Although I ultimately disagree with this thesis, it is not as far-fetched as it might seem. Consider someone telling you that in order for you to learn to ride a bike that you should sit and study the rules of riding a bike. Intuitively and experientially, most of us would find this silly and instead recommend that you just get on the bike and learn through practice. I will return to this example at the end of the section.

judgments would all match (Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī 2003, 360–61). All of this served to cloak ḥadīth scholarship in a shroud of mystery and mystique. These opponents of the CA do not think that ḥadīth scholarship can or should be axiomatized. According to them, it should be informally applied, practiced, and lived, and in that way, it will be passed on from generation to generation.

Therefore, in summary, there are three types of views. The first two views do not object to the very idea of axiomatization or formalization; rather, they merely object to the axiomatization and formalization of the classical and postclassical eras. According to the stronger version of this view, the axiomatizations and formalizations of the classical and postclassical eras were entirely inaccurate, whereas on the weaker version of the view, they got some things right and others wrong. Finally, on the third and final view, the very idea of axiomatization is a mistake.

Most contemporary critics of the CA fall somewhere in the middle. While contemporary critics of the CA sometimes seem to indicate a total rejection of the *tanẓīr* and *taqʿīd* of the classical era, at other times, they temper their assertions to a more limited scope. Similarly, while some of what they say concerning the possibility of *tanẓīr* and *taqʿīd* indicates a more extreme view, rejecting it outright, at other times, their view is tempered with assertions that the *tanẓīr* and *taqʿīd* of the classical era is useful as an introduction to the field.[412]

[412] Al-ʿAwnī (1996, 171–281), al-Muḥammadī (2021, 1–2), al-Saʿd (2018), Abū Samḥa (2012, 19–25) and al-Malībārī (2003b, 11–20) are all critics of the CA. Each of their approaches is different. Many of them seem to accept *taqʿīd* in theory, even if they object to certain expressions of it by classical scholars. This would render their work more akin to the first line of reasoning. However, despite this, the second line of reasoning, which rejects *taqʿīd* altogether, is still present in their writing to various degrees. I surmise that this is because popular views on this topic have yet to settle, and therefore clear distinctions have not yet formed. Clarifying that ambiguity is one of the objectives of this section, to further demarcate the exact dispute (*taḥrīr maḥall al-nizāʿ*). In my estimation, serious scholars of ḥadīth, like the ones mentioned above, cannot embrace this second line of reasoning, due to all the negative consequences that it entails. If we can all agree on that, then the area of disagreement shrinks to which *qawāʿid* are acceptable and which aren't. That would render the dispute much more manageable.

8.8.3. Responding to the Objections

8.8.3.1. Qualified Reliability

In this section, I will be responding to the objections raised above. The intention is not to defend the CA as is; rather, it is to show that the CA is a functional set of criteria that can be further developed to answer these objections. Therefore, my defense of the CA is more a defense of the process of classical and postclassical ḥadīth scholars than it is of the finished product. Another way to put it is that my defense is a defense of the *tanẓīr* and *taqʿīd* of the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars, as well as an argument for further development and growth.

I will, at the outset, concede that the types of cases highlighted by the opponents of the CA in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* are, in fact, cases that any true systematic formalization must address. Secondly, I will, at the outset, concede that the CA, as so formulated, does not *explicitly* seem to be able to make sense of these cases.[413] However, where I think opponents of the CA are mistaken is in their wholesale rejection of the CA as opposed to just recognizing its current limitations. I will, in the coming paragraphs, highlight where their analysis is mistaken, and then I will suggest some developments to the CA that might address its shortcomings.

The first step in responding to these objections is to isolate the exact area of disagreement (*taḥrīr maḥall al-nizāʿ*). The first objection does not entail rejecting the CA as a list of *criteria* (*maʿāyīr*), in the sense of broad standards of judgment and criticism through which a ḥadith's authenticity can be evaluated as being *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan*, or *ḍaʿīf*. Rather, the objection is more finely focused on the *shurūṭ al-ṣiḥḥa* as *conditions*. Opponents of the CA seem to think that classical scholars held these

[413] I stress that the CA cannot *explicitly* make sense of them because there are interpretations of the CA that can make sense of them, but it requires reading into the CA certain *implicit* assumptions. I thank Dr. Hamzeh al-Bakri for pointing out to me a way of responding to some of these concerns by expanding our interpretation of extrinsic positive epistemic support to include not just corroborations, but other features that would apply to the case of qualified reliability. I am ultimately unconvinced that this is what was intended, and more importantly, even if it was or even if we see no problem in interpreting it this way, I believe highlighting and identifying a clear and explicit solution is important. Therefore, my solution follows a different path.

conditions to be necessary and jointly sufficient for authenticity (*ṣiḥḥa*).[414] Although opponents of the CA are not using this exact language, their criticism necessitates such an interpretation. In fact, their entire argument rests upon this assumption. According to them, if a transmitter is part of a given testimonial chain and does not meet the highest degree of reliability (*al-ḍabṭ al-tām*), then according to the CA, *ipso facto,* said ḥadīth cannot be *ṣaḥīḥ*. More precisely, under such conditions, the ḥadīth cannot be intrinsically authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ li-dhātihi*).[415]

However, classical scholars and contemporary proponents of the CA have never claimed that the CA's conditions are necessary and jointly sufficient.[416] In fact, there is clear evidence that classical scholars never viewed the CA's conditions as being necessary conditions for authenticity. Clear evidence for this can be found in their expanding the *degrees of authenticity and weakness* from three to five. The impetus behind the intrinsically authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ li-dhātihi*) vs. extrinsically authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrihi*) distinction is to allow for ḥadīth that would have otherwise been deemed at a lower epistemic status, when further supported by corroborative evidence in the form of other testimonies, to also be deemed *ṣahīḥ*. This is clear evidence that the category of authenticity (*ṣiḥḥa*), according to the CA, is not solely reserved for ḥadīth that meet the five conditions of intrinsically authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ li-dhātihi*) ḥadīth. In such cases, classical ḥadīth scholars had no problem judging these ḥadīth as *ṣahīḥ* if they found corroborative evidence.[417]

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[414] For an introduction to the usage of necessary and sufficient conditions in definition theory, see: Brennan (2022).

[415] This is an important clarification because according to the standard exposition of the CA and its related *degrees of authenticity and weakness*, the conditions for a ḥadīth being deemed intrinsically authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ li-dhātihi*) are not the same as the conditions for a ḥadith being deemed extrinsically authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ li-ghayrihi*). The latter relies on corroborations, while the former does not. However, in this case, there are no corroborations. Therefore, in theory, the ḥadīth does not fit in either category.

[416] Necessary conditions, as critical tools, are found in Islamic philosophy. The technical term most closely associated with this concept is *al-sharṭ,* which translates into English as condition. A common definition in Islamic philosophy of *al-sharṭ* is "that which's nonexistence necessitates the nonexistence of that which it is a condition for, while its existence does not necessitate the existence or nonexistence of that which it is a condition for." See al-Jurjānī (1985, 131) for a brief entry on the concept of *al-sharṭ* in Islamic thought and see Eido and Safi (2020) for an expanded treatment of *al-sharṭ* in ḥadīth studies. As for the existence of the idea of jointly sufficient conditions, that also exists in the Islamic tradition since it is inherently part of their understanding of *al-sharṭ*. However, I have not been able to find any theoretical concept or technical term to parrallel the idea of suficient conditions. Therefore, what I am arguing for here is not that they had a formal idea of sufficient conditions, but that some of their conditions for the category of *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth in the absolute sense, were sufficient and not necessary.

[417] The same can be said about the intrinsically fair (*ḥasan li-dhātihi*) and extrinsically fair (*ḥasan li-ghayrihi*) distinction.

This response repels half of the force of their objection. The next step is to try and make sense of what classical scholars were trying to capture in their criteria. If the condition of complete precision (*ḍabṭ tām*) is not a necessary condition for *ṣiḥḥa*, then what is it? And how do we make sense of the aforementioned cases from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukharī*? How can his compilation be unanimously considered *ṣahīḥ* but include transmitters with poor or at least contested *ḍabṭ*?

To answer these questions, it is useful to take a step back and build out a more robust understanding of reliability. First, it is important to reconsider the PNT:

> *Principle of Non-successive Testimonies* (PNT): *Non-successive group testimonies* yield a credence above .5, known as opinion (*ẓann*).

Although ḥadīth scholars did not use the term *reliable* to characterize this point in particular, it is clear that the *opinion* that one is entitled to, is a type of reliability. We can refer to this as the Reliability of the Institution of Testimony (RIT).

Next, if we recall the PTA:

> *Principle of Thresholds of Acceptance* (PTA): Based upon the domain, context, risks, and consequences of a given situation, the *degree of authenticity and weakness* required for the *usage* of a testimony will shift. The context or domain will determine what the threshold of acceptance vs. rejection will be for any given class of testimonies.

Given the high stakes, domain, and context of the ḥadīth corpus, ḥadīth scholars demanded higher forms of reliability beyond the reliability of the RIT. The epistemic force of the RIT was simply not enough to justify their acceptance of ḥadīth, given its lack of precision. In other words, the reliability being affirmed did not do much to assure the truth of attribution. Ḥadīth scholars decided instead to highlight another type of reliability through the criteria of *ʿadāla* and *ḍabṭ*. We can refer to this as Transmitter Reliability (TR). TR carried with it much more force in predicting the likelihood of the truth of their attributions.

Beyond the RIT and TR, early ḥadīth scholars were able to identify other forms of reliability, such as the reliability one might have when transmitting from a family member or from one particular class of people.[418] Classical ḥadīth scholars were aware of this form of reliability since it was they who pointed out these phenomena. In fact, the classical commentator mentioned above, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, is really seen as the arch-representative of the CA, and it was he who pointed out how and why al-Bukhārī included such transmitters. However, classical ḥadīth scholars did not provide the theoretical language to include such cases in the formalized CA. In contrast to their development of language around intrinsic and extrinsic authenticity to account for corroborations, we do not find any robust theory to account for this type of limited reliability. However, their not accounting for it in the CA does not mean that they did not understand it. Given the clear evidence of their being aware of it, one must try to make sense of their holding on to the CA in a manner that takes this into account.

The answer seems to lie in the fact that the condition of *complete precision* (*ḍabṭ tām*) was meant to be a sufficient but not necessary condition for authenticity in the absolute unrestricted sense (*al-ṣiḥḥa al-muṭlaqa*), while simultaneously serving as a necessary condition for intrinsic authenticity (*al-ṣiḥḥa al-dhātiyya*).[419] The relation between authenticity in the absolute unrestricted sense and authenticity in the intrinsically authentic sense is one of strict inclusion (*ʿumūm wa khuṣūṣ muṭlaq*). Meaning, all ḥadīth that are *ṣaḥīḥ li-dhātihi*, are also subsumed within the category of *al-ṣiḥḥa al-muṭlaqa*, but not vice versa. Thus, when listing the conditions of *al-ṣiḥḥa al-muṭlaqa*, both complete precision (*al-ḍabṭ al-tām*), as well as corroborative evidence were mentioned as conditions. This is because the conditions listed there were sufficient conditions and not necessary ones. Otherwise, the explication of the conditions of *al-ṣiḥḥa al-muṭlaqa* would be overdetermined; it would entail requiring *both* that all the

[418] Another type of reliability that traditional ḥadīth scholars were clearly aware of is the reliability of the primary ḥadīth under evaluation. One could read their criteria of a ḥadīth being free of any anomaly or defect (*al-salāma min al-shudhūdh wa al-ʿilla*) as a type of reliability beyond both the RIT and the TR. On this reading, neither the presumptive right to *ẓann* of *āḥād* ḥadīth in the theoretical sense, nor the extra epistemic weight conferred by the criteria of *ʿadāla* and *ḍabṭ* being fulfilled, was enough for ḥadīth scholars. They required a third type of reliability that was only conferred after inquiry, a reliability of this particular ḥadīth that has been transmitted. I thank Dr. Hamzeh al-Bakri for this insight into the distinction between what I've called the TR and the criteria of a ḥadīth being free of anomaly or defect.

[419] This is clear when one compares Ibn Ḥajar's definition of intrinsically authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ li-dhātihi*) ḥadīth in the *Nuzha* (2019, 58) with his definition of authenticity in the absolute unrestricted sense (*al-ṣiḥḥa al-muṭlaqa*) in his *Nukat* (1984, 2:417).

transmitters were characterized with complete precision (*al-ḍabṭ al-tām*) *and* that they be corroborated. This is clearly not what was intended.

Finally, I would like to propose a way of expanding the CA to account for these cases. It is instructive here to recall a development in the history of ḥadīth studies that we first mentioned in Chapter 5. Snober (2022, 333–41) argues that during the era of Ibn Maʿīn, ḥadīth scholars formally identified that the reliability of a transmitter might shift according to several variables and thus took note of these variables when making evaluations. Ibn Maʿīn monitored the reliability of transmitters according to the time of their transmission, the place, who they were transmitting from, and the content of their transmission.

In doing so, Ibn Maʿīn specifically, and ḥadīth scholars more broadly, anticipated Lackey's (2008, 181–83) three classes of inductively based positive reasons for distinguishing between reliable and unreliable testimony. Two of the classes she mentions, contexts and reports, are not far off from trends that ḥadīth scholars had identified, although they had not built them into the formalized CA.

What all these cases have in common is a type of *qualified reliability*.

> QR: A form of reliability that is more limited than general transmitter reliability (TR), which, when added to the other four criteria, is jointly sufficient for unrestricted authenticity or soundness.

Thus, I propose that the QR is added to the list of possible jointly sufficient conditions of *al-ṣiḥḥa al-muṭlaqa*, alongside complete precision (*al-ḍabṭ al-tām*), as well as corroborative evidence. With the introduction of the QR, the newly modified CA can alleviate the substantive concern of its opponents while maintaining its core structure.

8.8.3.2. Knowledge-That, Knowledge-How, Skills, and Abilities

In this final section of Chapter 8, I will be responding to the view that any *taqʿīd* of the *manhaj al-naqd* is a mistake. This view, which we can characterize as *anti-intellectualist*, in the stronger sense, likens the work of preclassical ḥadīth scholars to

the work of goldsmiths.[420] According to this view, the *taqʿīd* and formalization of the classical and postclassical eras is seen as an abomination, a misunderstanding of what true ḥadīth scholarship is, and is ultimately unable to help those studying the ḥadīth sciences to become full-fledged ḥadīth scholars.[421]

This strong form of *anti-intellectualism* goes far beyond the first objection. The first objection, in both its stronger and weaker form, asserts that the standard *taqʿīḍ* of the classical era is not fully representative of the traditional critical method of ḥadīth scholars of the preclassical era and, as such, is insufficient. In contrast, this strong form of *anti-intellectualism* asserts that *qawāʿid* qua *qawāʿid* cannot capture the epistemic work of ḥadīth scholars of the preclassical era.

This dissertation has not only defended the *taqʿīḍ* and formalization of the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars, but it has also identified what we have called the epistemic apparatus (*āla maʿrifiyya*) of the CA and further developed it. In general, one of the aims of the dissertation has been to further encourage formalization and theorization. Therefore, this objection, if true, greatly threatens the conclusions of this research project. What could be more threatening to the conclusions of this dissertation than the idea that the *āla maʿrifiyya* of ḥadīth scholars does not ultimately work and is unable to help those evaluating ḥadīth to reason properly about the reliability of Prophetic ḥadīth?

Before responding, it behooves us to unpack their claim that the correct way to teach the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars is through application and practice (*al-ʿamal wa al-taṭbīq*) without recourse to any theoretical or formally axiomatized system (*al-tanẓīr wa al-taqʿīd*). This claim can be read in one of two ways. The first is to say that *taqʿīḍ* is a mistake in that it isn't pedagogically sufficient or perhaps that it is not even pedagogically useful. Alternatively, the argument can be read as a rejection of the idea

[420] *Anti-intellectualism* in the context of the knowledge-that vs. knowledge-how debate can be characterized as the view "that knowledge-how is irreducible to knowledge-that." (Brownstein and Michaelson 2016) In less technical terms, "skills do not ultimately reduce to theoretical knowledge."

[421] As I've already noted above, whether or not actual individuals would characterize their view in this strong sense is not my point. Given the fluid nature of these debates, this philosophical analysis isn't focused on categorizing people and groups, as much as it is in engaging with ideas. Having said that, this type of objection exists among the authors we've already cited, regardless of whether anyone might take it to its logical conclusions.

that the skills/abilities (*malakāt*) of ḥadīth scholars of the preclassical era can be entirely reduced to *qawāʿid*.[422]

In response, I will begin by stating that regardless of which reading is intended, this line of criticism against the CA is misguided. All that needs to be proven in order to defend the formal framework of the CA and thus repel the force of the objection is that there is *some truthful relationship* between the *qawāʿid* of the CA and the informal and applied work of preclassical ḥadīth scholars. Whether or not the formalization of the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars and the *taqʿīd* of its rules is pedagogically sufficient, and whether or not the *malakāt* of ḥadīth scholars of the preclassical era can be wholly reduced to *qawāʿid,* are both questions that do not need to be answered in order to defend the CA.

I do not mean that these stronger theses and questions are superfluous or unimportant; far from it. In fact, I find these questions incredibly worthwhile and important. These questions deserve attention and further research. The difference between axioms, rules, inference, criteria, knowledge-that, knowledge-how, dispositions, habits, skills, and abilities are topics of great concern in the contemporary philosophical literature.[423]

However, the bar that needs to be met to repel the objection does not require answering these big questions because no one is claiming that the *qawāʿid* of the CA are pedagogically sufficient, nor is anyone claiming that the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars is *entirely* reducible to the *qawāʿid* of the CA. There seems to be an assumption by critics that proponents of the classical CA think that the *malakāt* associated with the *manhaj al-naqd* completely reduce to these *qawāʿid*. But that is much too strong of a claim, and I doubt any proponent of the CA holds such a view.[424] Rather, the claim is that these *qawāʿid* represent *part* of the broader *manhaj al-naqd*

[422] There is also another element to this criticism: These critics seem to find the reliance on reason, logic, and foreign disciplines objectionable. This is similar to our discussion in Chapter 5 concerning the objection to formalization being a result of the influence of philosophical jurisprudence, logic, and scholastic theology on ḥadīth studies. Given that we have already addressed this objection, I have left it out of this analysis.

[423] See, for example, as an introduction to contemporary work on the knowledge-how vs. knowledge-that distinction, skills, abilities: Ryle (2009, 14–48); Roland (1958); Maier (2022); and Pavese (2022).

[424] Notice how framing the debate in this manner shows the similarity between it and the *intellectualism* vs. *anti-intellectualism* debate mentioned earlier. On at least one exposition of the debate, *anti-intellectualism* denies that knowledge-how, skill, etc, ultimately reduce to knowledge-that.

of ḥadīth scholars and are a work in progress. Thus, there is *some truthful relationship* between the *qawāʿid* of the CA and the target under analysis. This much weaker claim should be uncontroversial.

Given the existence of some metaphilosophical engagement with this question in the Islamic tradition, it is instructive to consider what Islamic theologians, jurists, and logicians have said about the relationship between theoretical knowledge and applied knowledge. They often characterize the word knowledge (*ʿilm*) as being one of three things: a cognition, a science, or a skill/ability (*malaka*) (Al-Siyalkūtī 1911, 1:104; Al-Kafawī 1998, 615–16; M. ʿAlī Al-Tahānawī 1996, 1:3–5). We've already spent a considerable amount of space discussing their conception of knowledge as cognition.

As for their conception of *ʿilm* as a science, we have lightly alluded to this when discussing how any given science is made up of *mabādiʾ* and suitable inferences. They often go into detail explicating the categories of subject matter (*mawḍūʿ*), fruit (*thamara*), and questions (*masāʾil*) of any given science and how these various elements relate to one another.[425] However, such investigations are beyond the scope of our study. We will, however, return to their classification of sciences shortly.

Finally, they characterized the third type of *ʿilm*, a *malaka*, as being gained through the knowledge of particulars or through repetition. This idea of knowledge of particulars yielding a *malaka*, or repetition yielding a *malaka*, directly relates to the question at hand. We can begin our analysis of their distinction by stating that their exposition does not necessitate some stronger form of *intellectualism*, where knowledge as a *malaka* totally reduces to some formalized set of *qawāʿid*. Nor does their exposition necessitate any strong form of *anti-intellectualism*, where knowledge as a *malaka* does not reduce to a formalized set of *qawāʿid* at all. Thus, their very conception of what a *malaka* is, is evidence of a much more balanced position.

Furthermore, classical and postclassical scholars also had their own means of distinguishing between the theoretical (*al-tanẓīr*) and applied (*al-taṭbīq*) aspects of a science. However, they used slightly different language, generally characterizing it as

[425] For examples of these discussions, see: al-Taftāzānī, (2011, 379–88); al-Yazdī (2018, 358–89); and al-Tahānawī (1996, 1:7–17).

a difference between theoretical sciences (*ʿulūm naẓariyya*) and applied sciences (*ʿulūm ʿamaliyya*). While explicating the difference between the two, Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Tahānawī (d. 1158/1745) (1996, 1:5) mentions that the theoretical vs. applied classification can be used to delineate sciences in more than one way.

It is instructive for us to consider the delineations most closely related to our question. Among the usages mentioned is the stipulation that *ʿulūm ʿamaliyya* are ones that cannot be learned except through repetitive action.[426] If that is what is meant by applied, then that excludes sciences like logic, Islamic law (*fiqh*), and ḥadīth studies. Alternatively, according to another usage, *ʿulūm ʿamaliyya* are sciences that are related to some manner of *ʿamal* (action/application), *ʿulūm naẓariyya* are ones that do not relate to any manner of *ʿamal*. On this classification, sciences like logic, Islamic law (*fiqh*), and ḥadīth studies count as *ʿulūm ʿamaliyya*. Because, according to al-Tahānawī (1996, 1:5), sciences like logic and Islamic law (*fiqh*) relate to some manner of *ʿamal*, even if that manner of *ʿamal* is mental as opposed to extramental.

Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 766/1365) (1975b, 1:27) and Al-Tahānawī (1996, 1:6) mention another classification that is useful for our analysis. They mention that sciences can also be categorized according to whether they are sciences that are apparatuses (*āliyya*) or sciences that are not apparatuses. After explicating the meaning of *āla* in this context, Al-Tahānawī states that this distinction between sciences that are *āliyya* and those that are not, ends up collapsing onto the applied vs. theoretical classification mentioned above. If an *āla* is used for achieving something else, then it must, by its very nature, relate to the manner in which that other goal is achieved. Therefore, by definition, sciences that are *āliyya* relate to some manner of *ʿamal*. This leads us to conclude that sciences that are *āliyya* are also *ʿulūm ʿamaliyya*.

Following this line of reasoning and this conclusion, the *qawāʿid* of classical ḥadīth scholars, best exemplified by the CA, when used in tandem with suitable rules of inference (*naẓar/istidlāl*), are ultimately a type of *āla maʿrifiyya*. That *āla* guides the ḥadīth scholar in reasoning critically about the authenticity and truthfulness of the

[426] The word "science" here is being used loosely. In fact, al-Laknawī mentions that the meaning of science (*ʿilm*) here overlaps with the arts (*al-ṣināʿāt*). This becomes clear when according to this usage of applied, they end up including things like sewing and blood letting (*ḥijāma*).

attribution of ḥadīth to the Prophet (ṣ) and protects him from incorrect epistemic judgments. If this conclusion is correct, then it turns out that the formalization of the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadith scholars and its *taqʿīd* into rules is evidence of an applied system that is meant to help the practitioner reason properly, as opposed to a theoretical one. This is, of course, the exact opposite conclusion to what critics of the CA would like us to believe.

Therefore, the CA, as a set of *qawāʿid*, is meant to be implemented and acted upon to help foster in the practitioner the *malakāt* associated with being a ḥadīth scholar. This *āla maʿrifiyya* is a tool that is supposed to help the critic in reasoning properly and help him avoid errors in epistemic judgment. Tools are part of the epistemic process, not the entirety of it.

This brief foray into what Islamic theologians, jurists, and logicians have said about the relationship between theoretical knowledge, applied knowledge, knowledge-that, knowledge-how, skills, and abilities gives us a better picture of how we can respond to these criticisms. Notice that if we relied on their view to make sense of ḥadīth scholarship, at most, their view necessitates that there is *some truthful relationship* between the formalized *manhaj al-naqd*, its *qawāʿid*, and its *āla*, and the work of preclassical scholars. It does not necessitate the stronger *intellectualist* view that the *manhaj al-naqd* of preclassical scholars reduces entirely to the *qawāʿid* found in their formalized system. It also helps us distinguish between various types of applied vs. theoretical classifications. While ḥadīth studies is an applied science, it is not an applied science in the same way that sewing or riding a bike is an applied science. The latter two are learned by practice, not by theoretical study. Whereas the former can be learned theoretically and in an applied fashion.

One last point can be made concerning this dispute. Critics of the CA should concede that there is *some truthful relationship* between the formalization and axiomatization of classical ḥadith scholarship and their preclassical counterparts because otherwise, they run the risk of accepting that the very development of criteria is impossible. If a critic were to reject the very notion of criteria being delineated, they would have to accept that the epistemic work of critiquing ḥadīth has no means of being judged as

being proper or improper. In other words, such an objection collapses into a type of epistemic relativism.

I doubt the opponent would accept such an unhappy conclusion. Therefore, the only choice before them is to concur that there is *some truthful relationship* between the formalized *manhaj al-naqd* of classical ḥadīth scholars, its *qawāʿid*, and its *āla*, and the work of preclassical scholars, even if they themselves do not find direct benefit in it. Given this concession, their view ends up being one of taste as opposed to one of epistemic evaluation.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The conclusions reached in Chapter 8 have brought us full circle. We ended the chapter having rationally reconstructed the CA of *manhaj al-naqd*. This included working back to and identifying the core principles and axioms (*qawāʿid/mabādiʾ*) upon which the traditional method relies. It also included reconstructing the ways its axioms might be used through inference (*naẓar/istidlāl*) to evaluate ḥadīth.

We then moved past analysis to synthesis when we argued for various ways its core principles and axioms might be justified. Given that the CA's evaluative inferences ultimately rely upon core *qawāʿid* and *mabādiʾ*, providing an account of their justification is key. Chapter 8 laid out a hybrid justificatory account of these principles, drawing upon the reduction debate from Chapter 7. Through these various steps, we can conclude that the CA specifically, and *manhaj al-naqd* more broadly, is rationally justified.

Finally, we rounded out Chapter 8 by further developing the CA in response to various criticisms. Key to that response is explaining how the CA functions as a critical epistemic apparatus (*āla maʿrifiyya*) and the relationship between axiomatization (*taqʿīd*) and applied evaluation (*al-naqd al-ʿamalī*). The conclusions reached in that final portion of Chapter 8 can now help us return to where we began in historically analyzing the development and formalization of *manhaj al-naqd*.

The main thesis of Chapter 5 was that the traditional method of ḥadīth criticism began as an informal and applied system and gradually developed into a formal and theoretical apparatus. Part of that formalization included the identification and development of rules and axioms. However, drawing upon the conclusions from Chapter 8, it now becomes clear that the epistemic apparatus of the CA is not meant to substitute theory for application. Rather, the theoretical formalizations and

axiomatizations of *manhaj al-naqd*, which ultimately produced the critical apparatus of the CA, are tools that aid the student in fostering and developing the requisite skills (*malakāt*) needed to engage in ḥadīth studies as an applied science.

Thus, the *āla maʿrifiyya* of the traditional method is a comprehensive and robust epistemic system, which is not only philosophically justified and grounded but also functional and applied. This conclusion coheres well with the arguments and conclusions of Chapter 4, where we argued that the existence of a robust epistemology of testimony in the Islamic tradition is a result of the existence of the ḥadīth corpus. This large body of testimonial material and the practical need to evaluate the authenticity of its attribution epistemically, served as a motivating factor for the development of the traditional critical method. Therefore, this philosophically justified, grounded, functional, and applied *āla maʿrifiyya* is owed to the very existence of the ḥadīth corpus, whose epistemic nature served as an impetus for these investigations. Due to several other considerations, including social and philosophical dilemmas, the field grew and developed, giving way to this refined apparatus.

The absence of a similar body of testimonial material in the Western tradition explains the absence of a historically robust engagement with the epistemology of testimony. The emergence of the epistemology of testimony in the West is a result of the change in concentration on the part of anglophone philosophers, away from ideal cases of certainty to the much more prevalent mundane cases of everyday knowledge and belief. This change in concentration resulted in a change in the object of epistemic analysis. The result of shifting the focus away from the domain of the ideal to the domain of the mundane led to the introduction of a large body of testimonial material. This influx of testimonial material in need of analysis and justification resulted in the emergence and development of a robust epistemology of testimony.

These conclusions were reached through broad philosophical analysis and synthesis. Therefore, it is important to note that the entire enterprise of philosophically analyzing the traditional system, comparing, contrasting, and synthesizing it with the epistemology of testimony literature, is useful for ḥadīth studies in both the theoretical and applied sense. This should encourage other researchers to engage with the Islamic sciences philosophically.

Throughout this dissertation, I have pointed to several areas that need further consideration and investigation. It is useful to end on that note, summarizing some of the key areas that require further research. Of the several areas already highlighted throughout the dissertation, three deserve emphasis. The first is a proper epistemic analysis of the various juristic methods (*manāhij al-uṣūliyyīn*) of ḥadīth criticism and how to make sense of them in light of the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars. The second area that requires further research is ḥadīth skepticism in its various iterations. A deep epistemic analysis of the arguments for and against ḥadīth skepticism, as well as an analysis and evaluation of the proposed alternatives to *manhaj al-naqd*, is needed.

Both of these areas of inquiry share a common theme. There are classical and contemporary alternatives to the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars. These alternatives come in the form of *manāhij al-uṣūliyyīn*, the Muʿtazilī or Shiʿī approaches to ḥadīth criticism, or the various tools employed in textual criticism *vis-à-vis* the historical-critical method. In each of these methods, the practitioners rely on various epistemic axioms and critical tools in their evaluation of the ḥadīth corpus. Thus, there is a need to epistemically evaluate these other methods as well as a need to compare and contrast them with each other and the *manhaj al-naqd* of ḥadīth scholars.

Finally, the third area of research relates to expertise and authority in the Islamic intellectual tradition. One of the core areas of research in contemporary anglophone epistemology is the role of epistemic authority in justifying testimony. This question investigates the difference between testimonial beliefs acquired from laypeople vs. testimonial beliefs acquired from epistemic authorities. Should there be a difference? If so, how do we make epistemic sense of that difference?

This investigation is extremely pertinent to Islamic theology, law, and ḥadīth studies. As we've already noted, the role of epistemic authority is investigated in theology when it comes to the conditions for faith (*īmān*), as well as the relationship between non-specialists, Islamic legal schools (*madhāhib*), and the *mujtahid*. Similarly, we've pointed out the importance of epistemic authority in ḥadīth studies when it comes to peer review between critics. These questions and several others require epistemic

analysis, as well as engagement with the contemporary epistemology of testimony literature.

There are several other areas of research that require investigation. However, the three mentioned above would build upon and complement this study. The hope is that this research project and those that build upon it mark an *epistemological turn* in research having to do with ḥadīth studies specifically and the Islamic intellectual tradition more broadly.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
GLOSSARY

Abstraction: *tajrīd*

Acceptance: *qabūl*

Analysis: *taḥlīl*

Anomolous: *shādh*

Apparatus: *āla*

Assent: *taṣdīq*

Attribution: *nisba/iḍāfa*

Axiom: *mabdaʾ/qāʿida*

Axis: *madār*

Basic beliefs: *badīhiyyāt/ḍarūriyyāt*

Belief: *iʿtiqād*

Classical era: *ʿaṣr al-mutaʾakhkhirīn*

Coherence: *insijām/muṭābaqa/munāsaba*

Conception: *taṣawwur*

Condition: *sharṭ*

Convention: *waḍʿ*

Credulity: *sadhāja*

Critcism: *naqd*

Criterion/criteria: *miʿyār/maʿāyīr*

Deduction: *qiyās*

Defect: *ʿilla*

Degree: *daraja*

Demonstration: *burhān*

Dialectic: *jadal*

Dilemma: *muʿḍila/mushkila*

Division: *taqsīm*

Endorsement: *taʿdīl/tazkiya*

Epistemic: *maʿrifī*

Epistemology: *naẓariyyat al-maʿrifa*

Externalism: *al-khārijiyya*

Evidence: *dalīl*

Form: *ṣūra*

Full belief: *iʿtiqād jāzim*

Homonym: *al-lafẓ al-mushtarak*

Hybrid: *hajīn/murakkab*

Imitation: *taqlīd*

Impugnment: *al-jarḥ*

Independent reasoning: *ijtihād*

Induction: *istiqrāʾ*

Inference: *istidlāl/naẓar*

Internalism: *al-dākhiliyya*

Intrinsic: *dhātī*

Journeying: *al-riḥla*

Judgement: *ḥukm*

Justification: *al-tabrīr/al-taswīgh*

Matter: *al-mādda*

Method: *manhaj*

Nomic or nomilogical: *ʿādī/al-ʿāda*

Non-inferrential: *ḍarūrī*

Nonreductionism: *al-lā ikhtizāliyya*

Non-successive testimony: *āḥād*

Obfuscation: *tadlīs*

Opinion: *ẓann/raʾy*

Particular: *juzʾī*

Perception: *idrāk*

Performative utterances: *inshāʾāt*

Precision: *ḍabṭ*

Preclassical era: *ʿaṣr al-mutaqaddimīn*

Premise: *muqaddima*

Preponderance: *al-rujḥān*

Principle: *mabdaʾ/qāʿida*

Probablistic: *ẓannī*

Prompting: *talqīn*

Proof: *hujja/dalīl*

Proposition: *qaḍiyya*

Reduction: *ikhtizāl/irjāʿ*

Reductionism: *al-ikhtizāliyya*

Relation: *nisba*

Reliability: *al-mawthūqiyya*

Sign: *qarīna*

Signification: *dalāla*

Source: *maṣdar*

Statement: *khabar*

Strictly include: *ʿumūm wa khuṣūṣ muṭlaq*

Strictly overlap: *ʿumūm wa khuṣūṣ min wajh*

Successive group testimony: *tawātur*

Syllogism: *qiyās*

Synthesis: *tarkīb*

Testimony: *shahāda/khabar*

Transmission: *riwāya*

Universal: *kullī*

APPENDIX B

FORMALIZATION DIAGRAMS

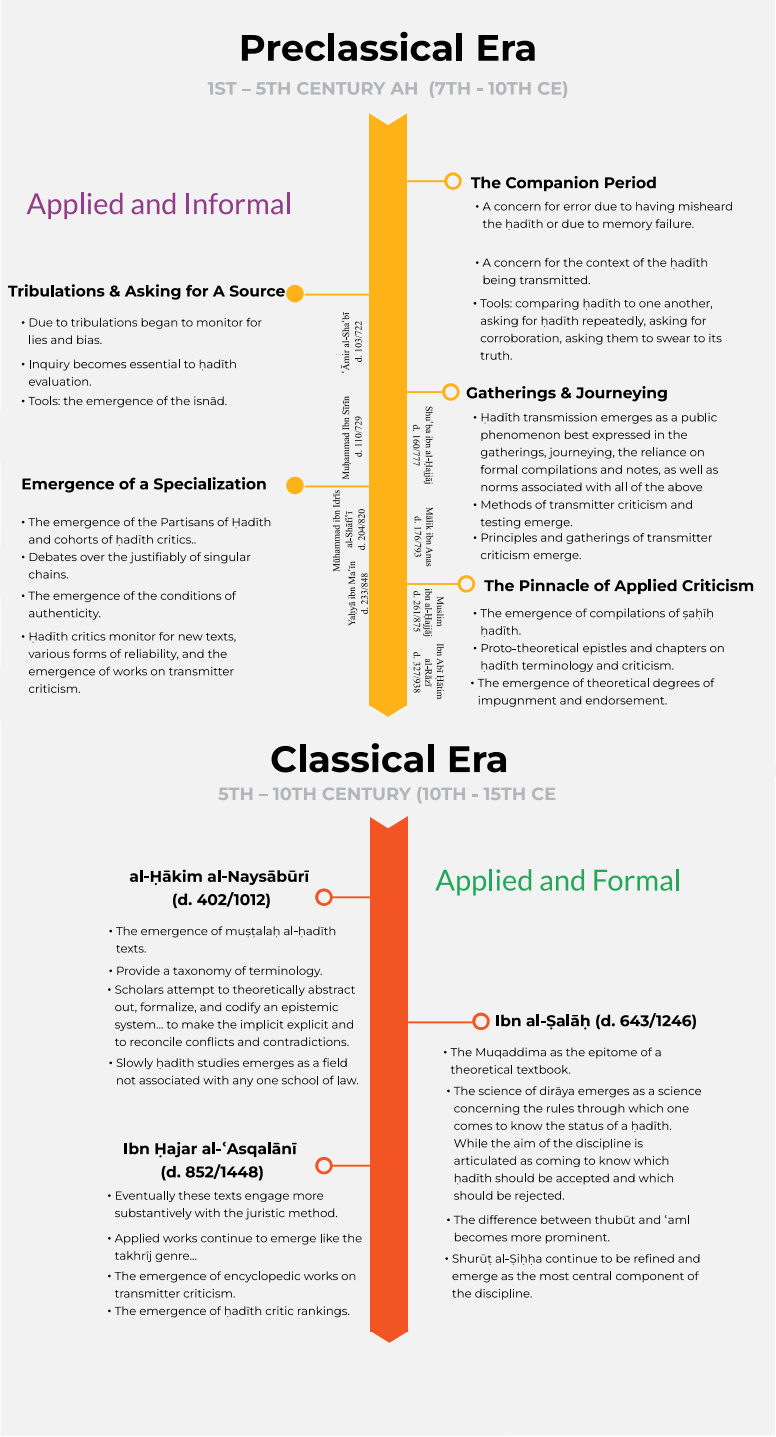

Figure B.1. Preclassical and Classical Formalization

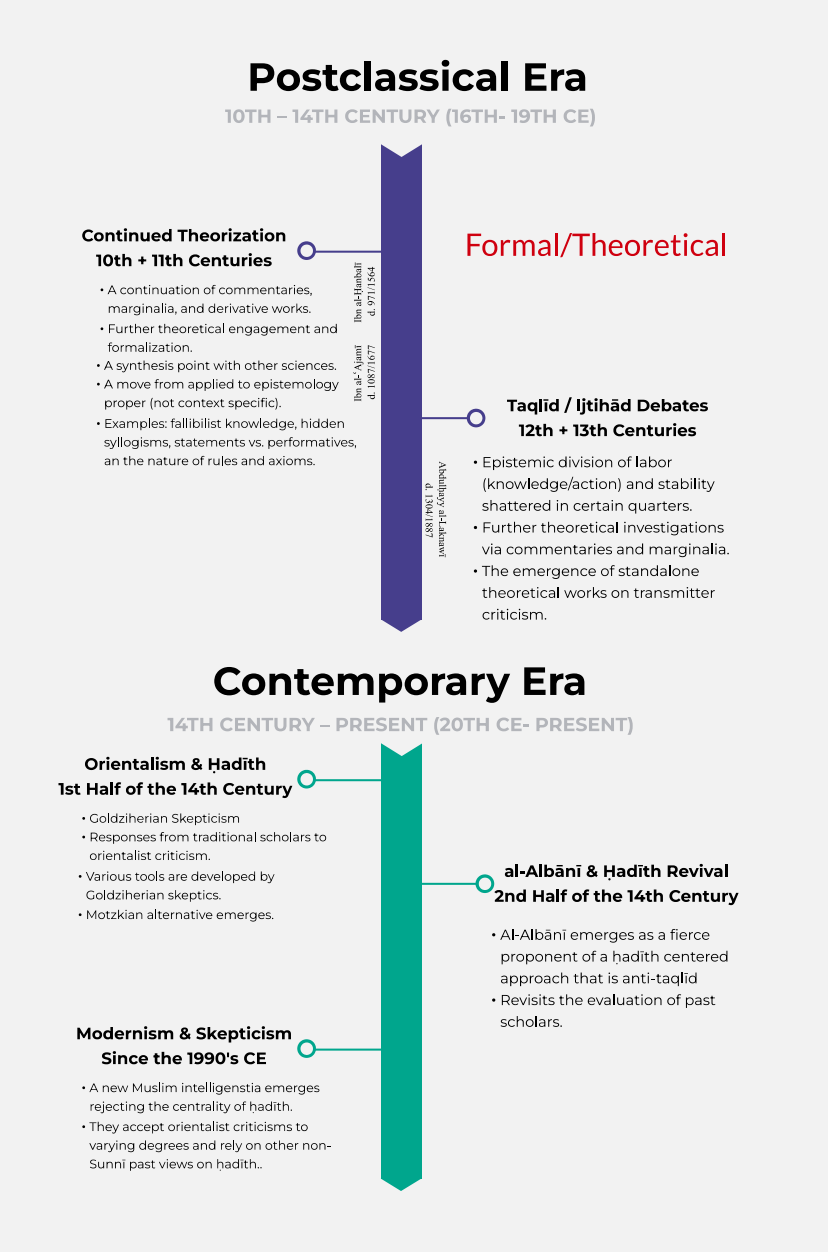

Figure B.2. Postclassical and Contemporary Formalization

CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Information:

Name – Surname: Mohammed Tayssir Safi

Contact Information:

Education:

2002-2006 BA in Middle Eastern and North African Studies & Political Science, University of Michigan, USA

2011-2016 MA in Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language, University of Michigan, USA

2018-2023 Ph.D. in Islamic Studies, Ibn Haldun University, Turkey

Publications:

Eido, M. Issam, and Mohammed Tayssir Safi. 2020. "Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī's Criteria: An Epistemological Perspective." In *Sahihi Buhari Geleneksel ve Çağdaş Yaklaşımlar*, edited by Serdar Demirel, Hamzeh Al-Bakri, and Ahmad Snober, 93–142. Istanbul: Ibn Haldun University Press.

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