

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL IN ISLAMIC THEOLOGY :
A STUDY ON THE CONCEPT OF *AL-QABIĤ*
IN AL-QADI `ABD AL-JABBAR AL-HAMADHANT'S
THOUGHT

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis deals with the problem of evil in Islamic theology, and, in particular, tries to examine the concept of *al-qabīh* in al-Qāḍī `Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī's thought. This study is based on the fact that Islam, like other monotheist religions, considers the presence of evil in the world as a grave difficulty, a situation which has resulted in much dispute among the *mutakallimīn*. For `Abd al-Jabbār, the problem of evil is discussed in the framework of the concept of divine justice. According to this formulation, God does nothing except the good, as he must do the obligatory (*al-wājib*), will not devote himself to anything except for the sake of goodness, and never desires to do anything repulsive but only chooses wisdom and righteousness. Thus, `Abd al-Jabbār's discussion of the problem of evil is an effort aimed at defending God's justice and omnipotence in a world marred by the presence of evil. This is significant, since divine justice (*al-`adl*), together with divine unity (*al-tawhīd*), constitutes the most important characteristic of Mu`tazilism, a characteristic by virtue of which the Mu`tazilites claimed for themselves the title of *ahl al-`adl wa al-tawhīd*, the adherents of divine justice and unity.

RÉSUMÉ

- Auteur : Fauzan Saleh
- Titre : Le problème du mal au sein de la théologie islamique: une étude du concept d'*al-qabīh* dans la pensée d'al-Qāḍī `Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī.
- Departement : Institut des études islamiques, Université McGill.
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Cette thèse est centrée sur le problème du mal au sein de la théologie islamique, et en particulier elle essaie d'examiner le concept d'*al-qabīh* dans la pensée d'al-Qāḍī `Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī. Cette étude se base sur le fait que l'Islam, comme les autres religions monothéistes, considère la présence du mal dans le monde comme un sérieux problème - une situation qui a été à la source de bien des disputes parmi les *mutakallimīns*. Pour `Abd al-Jabbār, le problème du mal est abordé dans le cadre du concept de la justice divine. Selon cette formulation, Dieu ne fait que le bien; puisqu'il doit faire ce qui est obligatoire (*al-wājib*), il ne se dévoue qu'à ce qui est dans l'intérêt du bien; et, il ne désire jamais faire quelque chose de répugnant, mais choisit seulement la sagesse et la droiture. Donc, les propos de `Abd al-Jabbār au sujet du problème du mal représentent un effort qui est centré sur la défense de la justice et de l'omnipotence de Dieu dans un monde trouble par la présence du mal. Ceci est important, puisque la justice divine (*al-`adl*) constitue, avec l'unité divine (*al-tawhīd*), les caractéristiques les plus importantes du Mu`tazilisme, ce sont des caractéristiques qui leur ont valu de revendiquer le titre d'*ahl al-`adl wa al-tawhīd*, c'est-à-dire des partisans de la justice et de l'unité divine.

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F.S.

TRANSLITERATION

The Arabic-to-English transliteration system employed in this thesis follows that of the Institute of Islamic Studies, as shown in the scheme below. However, note should be taken that the *tā' marbūṭah* (ة) is normally transliterated with "h", unless it occurs within *idāfah* (genitive) or *naʿt* (attributive) construction, in which it will appear as "t". The *hamzah* (ء) occurring in the initial position is omitted, and simply appears in the forms of a, i, u, according to its vocalization.

ا = ā	ز = z	ق = q
ب = b	س = s	ك = k
ت = t	ش = sh	ل = l
ث = th	ص = ṣ	م = m
ج = j	ض = ḍ	ن = n
ح = ḥ	ط = ṭ	ه = h
خ = kh	ظ = ḏ	ة = h (t)
د = d	ع = ʿ	و = w (ū)
ذ = dh	غ = gh	ي = y (ī)
ر = r	ف = f	ء = ʾ

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INTRODUCTION

Almost every person believes that he has experienced the existence of evil. But not everyone of us is concerned with how this evil comes to be present in the world.¹ On the one hand this evil is felt to be a threat external to us, something of which we might become the victims. On the other hand, man himself can do evil, or indeed he might be the source of evil, such as by making someone else suffer.² Thus, evil is a problem that poses many questions, mainly for philosophers and theologians. The presence of evil in the world has aroused much speculative thinking on their part concerning the nature of God, for if, as is generally believed, God is perfectly good and ultimately powerful, then he must be able to abolish evil. But, since evil remains present in the world, the obvious conclusion would be that either God is not perfectly good or he is not ultimately powerful.³

Based on the above notion, in a monotheistic framework, the presence of evil is considered to be a grave difficulty, or even the greatest obstacle to belief. The presence of evil has puzzled monotheists because God is understood to be not only the source of goodness, but also the creator of all finite being, while being himself unlimited in power.⁴

¹ Paul Ricoeur, "Evil," *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987), Vol. 5, p. 200.

² *Ibid.*

³ John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (London: Macmillan, 1960), p. 5.

⁴ Geddes MacGregor, *Philosophical Issues in Religious Thought* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), p. 147.

Islam, as a monotheistic religion, also considers the problem of evil as an issue that needs to be resolved. Since the earliest stages in the development of Islamic theology, the problem of evil has been one of the issues most frequently discussed by almost every Muslim theologian. Indeed the problem of evil, more or less, was one of the major subjects of early Islamic theological debate, especially in so far as it concerned the problem of the "grave sin."⁵ This problem, according to tradition, gave rise to the development of the greatest school of rational theology in Islam. This was the *Mu'tazilah*, founded by two natives of Baṣra, Wāṣil b. `Atā' and `Amr b. `Ubaid, during the reign of the caliph Hishām and his Umayyad successors (105-131/723-748).⁶

Wāṣil b. `Atā' is believed to have been the first person to formulate the doctrine of *ʿitizāl*, which served as the starting point for the establishment of this school. Muslims agreed that a person committing grave sin deserved to be called *fāsiq* and *fājir*. But they differed in describing the nature of the person deserving these epithets.⁷ The Kharijīs said he was an infidel. The

⁵ "Grave sin" or *kabīrah* (pl.: *kabā'ir*), as reported by Zuhdī Hasan Jār Allāh, is of two kinds: the first is of idolatry (*kabīrat al-shirk*), the greatest sin of all, whose agent is unforgivable and will be eternally punished in hell-fire; and the second is lesser than that of idolatry but still a serious one. Based on a *hadīth* narrated by Imām Muslim, this grave sin consists of murder which is forbidden by God except for legal purpose, adultery, heaping abuse upon the parents (*uqūq al-wālidayn*), giving false testimony, witchcraft, encroaching upon the right of an orphan, taking usurious interest (*akl al-ribā*), desisting from soldierly march (*al-tawallī `an al-zahf*), and accusing unblemished women (*qadhif al-muhsanāt*). See, Zuhdī Hasan Jār Allāh, *Al-Mu'tazilah* (Cairo: Shirkat Mūsahamat al-Misrīyah, 1947), p. 15. The *hadīth* is quoted from *Sahīh Muslim*, vol. 1, pp. 63-64. The grave sin meant in this event usually refers to the murder of `Uthmān b. `Affān, the third rightly guided caliph.

⁶ H.S. Nyberg, "Al-Mu'tazilah," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, First Edition (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), Vol. 6, p. 788. An interesting and comprehensive discussion of the emergence of Mu'tazilism is also provided by Zuhdī Hasan Jār Allāh in his work mentioned above, (pp. 12-50).

Murji'is said he was a believer in spite of his *fisq* and his *fujūr*. Al-Hasan al-Baṣrī and his followers said that he was a hypocrite (*munāfiq*). Wāṣil b. `Aṭā' had another opinion. He said that the description of a believer and an infidel given in the Qur'an cannot be applied to such a person. He is, therefore, neither a believer nor an infidel. Nor did he agree with al-Hasan al-Baṣrī's description of that person as a hypocrite either. The only possibility left was to put him in a special category of those who are in an intermediate state, (*manzilah bayna al-manzilatayn*).⁸

Later, the doctrine of the *manzilah bayna al-manzilatayn* became one of the fundamental principles of the Mu'tazilite doctrines. This principle, together with four others (*al-tawhīd*, *al-`adl*, *al-wa'd wa al-wa'īd*, *al-amr bi al-mar'ūf wa al-nahy `an al-munkar*), became the characteristics which distinguished the Mu'tazilah from other schools of Islamic theology. Perhaps the most important of all these principles was *al-`adl* (divine justice) which reveals that God is just: all that he does is aimed at what is best for his creation. Some of the problems discussed in relationship to this principle are: Can God commit an injustice? Could he prevent evil? Is human power created? And are physical evils subject to human will or not?⁹

One of the greatest Mu'tazilite scholars was al-Qāḍī `Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025). He was the most remarkable of the Baṣran theologians of the period, and was considered by his successors as the head of the Mu'tazilite scholars in his generation.¹⁰ In 360 he migrated to Rayy, where he founded

⁷ H.S. Nyberg, *Ibid.*

⁸ Zuhdī Ḥasan Jār Allāh, *Al-Mu'tazilah*, pp. 16-17.

⁹ H.S. Nyberg, "Al-Mu'tazilah," p. 792.

¹⁰ George F. Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism: the Ethics of `Abd al-Jabbār* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 7.

an influential school. He is known as one of the greatest of the later Mu`tazilite theologians, especially because of his voluminous writings, one of which is his *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd wa al-`Adl*, his *magnum opus*.¹¹ The original edition was comprised of twenty parts (*ajzā'*), but an expedition to Yemen organized by Egyptian scholars in 1951 was able to find only twelve parts, i.e. parts 4 - 9, 11 - 14, 16 and 20. Later, two more parts were found, i.e. parts 15 and 17.¹² Although the general plan of the *Mughnī* cannot be determined (since the first three parts are still missing), it has been suggested that the work was not divided according to the five principles of the fundamental doctrines of the Mu`tazilah, but rather into its two major sections: *al-tawhīd* and *al-`adl*,¹³ (divine unity and justice).

Since the problem of evil is discussed within the overall context of divine justice, `Abd al-Jabbār's thought on the problem of evil is therefore most extensively elaborated in his *Kitāb al-Mughnī*. `Abd al-Jabbar examines this problem in many, albeit scattered parts of this book, but mainly in Part VI.1, *Kitāb al-Ta`dīl wa al-Tapwīr* (Book on (Determination of) Justice and Injustice, ed. A.F. el-Ahwany and I. Madkour). In this section we find `Abd al-Jabbār's definition of act and the qualifications given to an act to define it as either "good", "evil", "permitted", "obligatory", etc., which later on leads to his basic principle that God will not do something evil. Part VI.2, *al-Kalām*

11 H.S. Nyberg, "Al-Mu`tazilah," p. 791.

12 Judith Katz Hecker, "Reason and Responsibility: an Explanatory Translation of *Kitāb al-Tawlīd* from *Al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd wa al-`Adl* by al-Qādī `Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī, with Introduction and Notes." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California Berkeley, 1975. p. xxvi (Introduction).

13 *Ibid.* See also another remark on p. 7. `Abd al-Jabbār wrote a special book on which he elaborates his idea concerning those five fundamental principles of Mu`tazilite doctrines, i.e. in his *Sharh al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, edited by `Abd al-Karīm `Uthmān (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbāh, 1965).

fi al-irādah (The Discussion of the Will, ed. G. Anawati and I. Madkour), is devoted to demonstrating that God's will is really his act and that his act cannot be evil. Part VIII, *Kitāb al-Makhlūq* (Book on the Creature, ed. T. al-Tawīl and S. Zayd), deals with acts done by mankind which can be said to be evil, but whose evilness cannot be attributed to God. Part IX, *Kitāb al-Tawīd* (Book on Causation or Generation, ed. T. al-Tawīl and S. Zāyd), offers a rationalistic inquiry into the question of responsibility for human and divine actions. Part XI, *al-Taklīf* (Imposing of Obligation, ed. M.A. Najjār, and A.H. Najjār), deals with God's imposing duties on mankind which are good for them, since this imposition implies a reward. Part XIII, *al-Lutf* (Divine Grace, ed. I. Madkour and A.A. `Afīfī), is concerned with the divine assistance which makes the performance of the imposed duties possible. Finally Part XIV, *Kitāb al-Aṣlah, wa Istihqāq al-Dhamm wa al-Tawbah* (Book on the Optimum, Deserving Blame and Repentance, ed. M. al-Siqā and I. Madkour), deals with what is obligatory for God, and with the *taklīf `aqlī*, God's imposition of duties upon us and its consequences. A most important duty imposed by God upon us is the use of the human intellect to acquire true knowledge about God, neglecting of which would result in either deserving blame or repentance.¹⁴ The general goal of these parts of the *Mughnī* is to show that God only does what is good, that he does only what is obligatory, and that he only invites us to serve him in ways which are good.¹⁵

Consequently, `Abd al-Jabbār's *Al-Mughnī fi Abwāb al-Tawhīd wa al-`Adl*, together with his *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, represent important

¹⁴ J.R.T.M. Peters, *God's Created Speech: A Study in the Speculative Theology of the Mu'tazilī Qādī al-Qudāt Abū al-Hasan `Abd al-Jabbār b. Ahmad al-Hamadhānī* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), pp. 29-35.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31, citing from the *Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 3.

sources for our understanding of how the problem of evil was dealt with in Islamic theology. But since `Abd al-Jabbār usually discusses the same issue repeatedly either in different parts of the same or of other works, it is necessary to refer to some of his other writings, especially because of the need to achieve a more comprehensive clarification of `Abd al-Jabbār's concepts in the above two works. Among these is *Kitāb al-Majmū` fī al-Muḥīt bi al-Taklīf*, (Comprehensive Summary of Imposed Obligation) which deals with his concept of imposing obligation, which is aimed at formulating how man is to be judged responsible for his acts.¹⁶

The technical terms used by `Abd al-Jabbār which are equivalent to the English word "evil" are: "*al-qabīḥ*", "*al-sharr*", and "*al-fasād*". These words are synonymous.¹⁷ In this thesis I would like to use "*al-qabīḥ*" throughout. The standard definition of *al-qabīḥ* proposed by `Abd al-Jabbār is the one attributed to his teacher Abū Hāshim, and it is a simple one: "the evil is something that deserves blame when it is taken in isolation" (*inna al-qabīḥa mā yastahiqqu bihi al-dhamm idhā infarad*).¹⁸ The clause "when it is taken in isolation" is a significant part of this definition, as the act or event will deserve blame only when we consider it independently, regardless of its context.

This thesis will attempt to examine `Abd al-Jabbār's point of view on

¹⁶ There are two editions of this work: the first is by `Umar `Azmi, revised by Ahmad Fu'ād al-Ahwānī (Cairo, 1965), and another by J.J. Houben (Beirut, 1965). This work is less directly written by `Abd al-Jabbār, and was rather freely edited by his disciple, Abū Muhammad al-Hasan b. Mattawayh, as indicated in the front page of the the printed work. See also, Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 15 (note). The work cited in this thesis is that of the Beirut edition.

¹⁷ `Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd wa al-'Adl*, vol. XIV, pp. 41-42.; Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*. p. 49.

¹⁸ `Abd al-Jabbār, *Ibid.*, Vol. VI:1, p. 26.; Hourani, *Ibid.*

the problem of evil, and to show how he maintains the concept of divine justice, as a principal characteristic of Mu'tazilism, in the face of the problem of evil. And to deal with this issue, this thesis will be comprised of three chapters. The first chapter will deal with the biography and the works of 'Abd al-Jabbar. It will investigate how 'Abd al-Jabbār came to be the prominent Mu'tazilite figure of his age and how he made his contribution to the formulation of the fundamental teachings of this school, especially through his works *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd wa al-'Adl* and his *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, which are virtually devoted to restructuring the whole doctrinal system of Mu'tazilism. *Al-Mughnī*, a word whose verbal root means "that it procures all that is necessary and makes other things superfluous,"¹⁹ is a work undoubtedly designed to give comprehensive information about the subject concerned. The contents of this subject are explicitly made known by the title given to the work: *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd wa al-'Adl*, or *al-Mughnī in Monotheism and Equity*, as rendered in English on the back cover of some volumes of the printed work. Contrary to the *Sharḥ*, which is an elaboration of the five principles of Mu'tazilism, the *Mughnī*, though it consists of twenty volumes, only discusses "two basic principles which every adult believer has to know: *tawhīd* (God's unity) and *'adl* (God's justice)."²⁰

The second chapter will focus on the nature of evil in theoretical terms. In this chapter I try to elaborate how the problem of evil is discussed from the Christian theological perspective as well as from that of modern thought, dealing with the true nature of evil and evil as a problem, and particularly whether or not it is compatible with the existence of God. This

¹⁹ J.R.T.M. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, p. 27.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

is aimed at providing a general notion of how the problem of evil, as universally experienced by mankind, is formulated and resolved, but still remains an issue of acute debate. It is hoped that this exposition may provide the groundwork for examining `Abd al-Jabbār's thought in discussing his concept of *al-qabīh*.

The third chapter concentrates more fully on discussing the basic concept of evil in `Abd al-Jabbār's thought. By referring to both the *Mughnī* and the *Sharh* as the main sources, this discussion encompasses several issues, namely the true nature of *al-qabīh*, and deals with how `Abd al-Jabbar defines it and what his main concern with the issue is. Further, it also discusses what the basic criteria are for determining whether or not an act or a thing is considered as evil. In doing so, it is inevitable that I have also to deal with the problem of suffering from `Abd al-Jabbār's point of view, particularly how suffering can or cannot be evil, whether or not God really inflicts it, and further consequences which result from either one of these judgements. Accordingly, this discussion must also refer to another specific issue, i.e. God and the reality of evil. Here I will discuss the belief that God never does any evil, a principle firmly held by the Mu'tazilites in maintaining their concept of divine justice. Finally, as God is believed to be the most wise and just, and to be one who does no wrong and never fails to fulfill what is obligatory, as indicated by the meaning of justice, the last portion of this chapter is devoted to elaborating human responsibility and the reality of evil. In this section I will discuss the notion that all human actions, both good and evil, are only attributed to man himself, and that none of these is created by God on his part. This is to be the basis for God's either conferring his reward upon those who obey him or inflicting his punishment upon those who disobey him.

CHAPTER I :

AL-QADI `ABD AL-JABBAR, HIS LIFE AND WORKS

It is not easy to obtain reliable biographical data on this prominent figure. It is even difficult to reconstruct his complete name, since historians often differ in assigning him agnomens (*kunya*) and titles (*laqab*). Generally, his name is reconstructed as Abū al-Ḥasan `Abd al-Jabbār Aḥmad b. Khalīl b. `Abd Allāh al-Ḥamadhānī al-Asad Abadī.¹ But another account reveals that it is `Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad b. `Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad b. Khalīl b. `Abd Allāh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ḥamadhānī al-Asad Abadī, with the epithets *Imād al-Dīn* (the pillar of faith) and, the more frequently appearing, *Qādī al-Qudāt* (the chief judge).² He belonged to the eleventh generation of the Mu'tazilites,³ and was considered as a representative of the Baṣran school, under the influence of al-Jubbā'ī, as well as an adherent of Abū Ḥāshim's theological thought dealing with divine unity and justice (*al-tawḥīd*

¹ `Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, ed. `Abd al-Karīm `Uthmān (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1965), p. 13, (Introduction).

² `Abd al-Sattār al-Rāwī, *al-'Aql wa al-Hurrīyah* (Beirut: Al-Mu'assasat al-'Arabīyah lil-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1980), p. 36, citing from al-Ḥākim Abū Sa'īd al-Muḥassin al-Jushamī, *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-Masā'il*, in *Fādī al-Itizāl wa Tabaqāt al-Mu'tazilah*, ed. Fu'ād al-Sayyid (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisīyah lil-Nashr, 1974), p. 365.

³ For a complete account of the generations of the Mu'tazilites, see Ibn al-Murtada, *Kitāb al-Munyah wa al-Amal fī Sharḥ al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fīkr, 1979), pp. 122 - 200. `Abd al-Jabbār declared that the Mu'tazilite generations until his time were ten. But al-Ḥākim al-Jushamī, as reported by Ibn Murtadā, extended them to be twelve in which `Abd al-Jabbār was considered belonging to the eleventh. See *Ibid.*, p.194, and *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-Masā'il*, pp. 365-393.

wa al-`adl).⁴

There is not much information available for his early life as well. But as he was said to have attained a great age, exceeding ninety years, and as he died in 415/1025,⁵ it can be concluded that his birth was in about the year 325 A.H. at Asad Abad, in the region of Hamadhan, Iran. However, this conclusion seems to contradict the information recorded by `Abd al-Jabbār himself in his works that he began his education under Muḥammad Aḥmad b. `Umar al-Za'baqī al-Baṣrī, the traditionist, who died in 333 A.H. So it is inappropriate to assume that he was born in 325 A.H., when his first master died in 333 A.H. Accordingly, as `Abd al-Karīm `Uthmān suggests, his year of birth could fall anywhere between 320 to 325 A.H.⁶

He grew up in a poor family. His father was a craftsman working as a cotton ginner. Once, when he suffered from scabies, he bought grease to cure it. But when the night came, he debated whether he should use it to remedy his scabies or to use it to light his room so as not to miss a chance to read his books. Eventually he decided on the latter option.⁷

`Abd al-Jabbār spent his childhood in his birthplace, at Asad Abād, in which he began his early learning. No more details are available concerning this stage of his studies there, nor as well as concerning his studies at Qazwin under the two masters of that region, al-Zubayr b. `Abd al-Wāhid, the jurist, and Abū al-Ḥasan b. Salamah al-Qattān. In 340 A.H. he moved to

⁴ Al-Rāwī, *al-`Aql wa al-Hurrīyah*, p. 36, citing from al-Ḥakim al-Jushamī, *Sharḥ `Uyūn al-Masā'il*, p. 365.

⁵ al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanjī, 1931), vol. XI, p. 115. See also Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, 1966), vol. IX, p. 334.

⁶ *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, p. 13, (Introduction).

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15, (Introduction).

Hamadhan to learn *ḥadīth* from some reliable authorities of the time, such as Abu Muḥammad `Abd al-Rahmān al-Jallāb and Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyā.⁸

After he had mastered the science of *fiqh* and its principles he went to Iṣfahan at the end of 345 A.H., to learn more from Abū Muḥammad `Abd Allah b. Ja'far and Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm b. Yūsuf al-Famīmī. Then he moved to Baṣra, the capital of science and civilization, attending several instructional sessions given by contemporary scholars, in which he was greatly influenced by Ash'arite and Shafīite thought. Thus, he could adopt the doctrines of al-Ash'arī in theological matters, and of al-Shāfi'ī in jurisprudence. This period is considered an important phase in the development of his rational capacity and his inclination to intellectual exercises.⁹ `Abd al-Jabbār began his intellectual life as a jurist (*faqīh*), supporting the Shafīite school. Then he turned to theology after he realized that only a few scholars paid attention to this field, since it did not give them any significant material benefit as did *fiqh*.¹⁰

However, although `Abd al-Jabbār had learned a lot about both Ash'arite and Shafīite thought, he was also aware of the controversial discussions persisting among the Baṣran scholars who were mostly Mu'tazilites. He realized that it would be useful for him to communicate with them by attending their circles, so as he could learn something of their thought. Eventually he himself would frequently engage in serious discussion

⁸ `Abd al-Karīm al-Sam'ānī, *Al-Ansāb*, ed. `Abd al-Rahmān al-Ma'lamī (Deccan: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyah, 1962), vol. I, p. 211.

⁹ Al-Rāwī, *al-'Aql wa al-Hurrīyah*, p. 38.

¹⁰ *Sharh al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, p. 16; Ibn al-Murtadā, *Kitāb al-Munyah wa al-'Amal*, p. 195.

with them, until "he found the truth and followed it."¹¹

This was the turning point of his conversion to Mu'tazilism, learning under the guidance of Abū Ishāq b. `Ayyāsh, one of the tenth generation of the Mu'tazilite scholars. Then he moved to Baghdad, the centre of Mu'tazilism and the capital of the caliphate, in which he could further develop his intellectual capacity within the circle of al-Shaykh `Abd Allah al-Baṣrī (d. 367 A.H.).¹² He accompanied this master for quite a long time in order to examine his intellectual aptitude. After a long period of training, the teacher was convinced that `Abd al-Jabbār could be at the head of other students, as he surpassed all of them.¹³

`Abd al-Jabbār was not only superior in his achievement of religious knowledge, but also was successful in formulating his own system of thought. At the same time he began to write, and through his writings he decided to devote his knowledge to the cause of spreading the message of Islam beyond the Iraqi border, towards al-`Askar in the region of Khuzistan, preaching and inviting people to accept Islam and in particular the doctrines of Mu'tazilism. He continued his proselytizing activities as far as al-Rāmahurmuz, where he remained for a time, until he was invited by Ṣāhib b. `Abbad to come to Rayy in 360 A.H. Ṣāhib b. `Abbād offered him patronage and made him foremost among the outstanding scholars and jurists at his court.¹⁴ Then in 367 A.H.,

¹¹ Al-Rāwī, *al-`Aql wa al-Hurrīyah*, p. 39.

¹² His name is mentioned in the tenth generation of the Mu'tazilites as Abu `Abd Allāh al-Husayn al-Baṣrī, learnt Mu'tazilism from Abu `Ali b. Khalād and Abū Hāshim. He is well known as al-Shaykh al-Murshid. See, `Abd al-Jabbār, *Firaq wa Tabaqāt al-Mu'tazilah*, ed. Ali Sami al-Nashshār and `Isām al-Dīn Muhammad `Ali (Alexandria: Dar al-Matbū`āt al-Jāmi`īyah, 1972), p. 111.

¹³ Al-Rāwī, *al-`Aql wa al-Hurrīyah*, p. 39, citing from *Sharḥ Uyūn al-Masā'il*, p. 365.

¹⁴ Al-Rāwī, *Ibid.*, p. 40.

in the reign of Mu'ayyid al-Dawlah, he was appointed to be the chief judge for Rayy.¹⁵ His judicial authority was not limited only to the region of Rayy, but also extended into its dependent territories. Furthermore, he combined the judicial authority of Hamadhān and al-Jibāl under his control.¹⁶ By performing this religious office `Abd al-Jabbār was given the title of *qādī al-quḍāt*, the chief of judges, who had an authority to control other judges. `Abd al-Jabbār was the only Mu'tazilite scholar who earned that honorific title.¹⁷ He held this office for quite a long time, until the death of his patron, Ṣāhib b. `Abbād, in 385 A.H.

After the death of Ṣāhib b. `Abbād, `Abd al-Jabbār was dismissed from his position as *qādī al-quḍāt* by the ruling *amīr*, Fakhr al-Dawlah. Some accounts report that the reason for his dismissal was the *amīr's* displeasure over `Abd al-Jabbār's refusal to pray for Ṣāhib b. `Abbād at the time of the latter's death.¹⁸ In spite of Ṣāhib b. `Abbād's kindness to `Abd al-Jabbār during his life, and particularly his assigning him to the elevated position of *qādī al-quḍāt*, `Abd al-Jabbār condemned him at the close of his life for not repenting of the grave sins that he had committed. He said: "I do not ask God to have mercy upon him, because he did not show his repentance."¹⁹ Thus, `Abd al-Jabbār was himself blamed as unrespectful

¹⁵ `Abd al-Karīm b. Muhammad al-Rāfi'i, *Al-Tadwīn fī Akhbār Qazwīn*, edited by Al-Shaykh `Azīz Allāh al-Uṭaridī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, n.d.), vol. III, p. 119.

¹⁶ Yāqut al-Rūmī, *Kitāb Iṣhād al-Arīb ilā Ma'rifat al-Adīb* (Cairo: Maṭba'at Hindiyah, 1924), vol. II, p. 314.

¹⁷ Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyyat al-Kubrā*, (Cairo: Al-Maṭba'at al-Husayniyyat al-Miṣriyyah, 1906), vol. III, p. 219.

¹⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, vol. IX, p. 111.

¹⁹ *Ana lā atarahhamu `alayhi li-'annahu lam yuḥḥi tawbatahu*. Yāqūt al-Rūmī, *Kitāb Iṣhād al-Arīb*, vol. II, p. 335.

(*qalīl al-ri'āyah*) for that judgement, and was finally arrested by the *amīr* Fakhr al-Dawlah who then deposed him from his office, and appointed Abu al-Hasan `Alī b. `Abd al-`Azīz as a new chief *qādī*.²⁰

Exactly why `Abd al-Jabbār took this harsh decision is not clear. The incident might illustrate `Abd al-Jabbār's strong attachment to one of the Mu'tazilite principles which says that the grave sinner would remain eternally in hell, if he did not repent. However, it is very possible that none of the parties were sincere in their actions. On the death of Ṣāhib b. `Abbad, the *amīr* appointed new viziers, Abū al-`Abbās al-Ḍabī and Abu `Alī b. Ḥamūlah, to replace him and told them that the late Ṣāhib b. Abbad had wasted the wealth of the state and neglected the rights of the people, and thus it was compulsory to make up the loss by confiscating his wealth and property. And, accordingly it was also decided to confiscate much of the wealth and to invalidate all the appointments given by him to his companions and dependants. Eventually, the *amīr* decided to fine such people three million dirhams.²¹

It has been suggested that `Abd al-Jabbār, realizing the *amīr* Fakhr al-Dawlah's displeasure with Ṣāhib b. `Abbād, used the excuse of the latter's death-bed impenitence to distance himself from his patron, hoping thereby to win favour and to preserve his official position. In this way he could give the impression that he was indeed against the late Ṣāhib b. Abbad, and was in favour of the *amīr*, and thus escape from the latter's revenge.²² However,

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Zahīr al-Dīn al-Rudhrāwarī, *Dhayl Kitāb Tuḡrūb al-Umam*, ed. H.F. Amedroz (Baghdad: al-Muthannā, 1919), vol. III, p. 262.

²² Judith Katz Hecker, "Reason and Responsibility: An Explanatory Translation of *Kitāb al-Tawlīd* from *Al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd wa al-`Adl* by al-Qādī `Abd al-Jabbār al-Ḥamadani, with Introduction and Notes," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California Berkely, 1975, p.

Abd al-Jabbar was still officially condemned as ungrateful, and was irrevocably dismissed from his tenure.

But, on the other hand, Miskawayh, the historian contemporary to Abd al-Jabbar, also reported that the reason for the *amīr* to confiscate Ṣāhib b. `Abbad's wealth (and to abolish all the appointments made by him) after his death was actually in order to replenish the former's own bankrupt coffers. The *amīr* even went further and sold the vizierate tenure to both al-Dabī and Ibn Hamulah, who had been enemies to each other.²³

No more details are available on `Abd al-Jabbār's life after his dismissal from his position as *qādī al-quḍāt*, except, as Hecker reports further in her explanatory translation of *Kitāb al-Tawlīd* of the *Mughnī*, that he stayed on in Rayy until his death, in 415/1025.²⁴ Some reports indicate that he continued to teach and write during this period. This lack of information could be, as Hecker further suggests, attributable to attempts by the Mu'tazilite's opponents to withhold evidence about Mu'tazilite activities, or because of `Abd al-Jabbār's own choice to withdraw from public life and official attention. It might be true that he chose to do so because he had suffered at the hands of the rulers, as well as for the sake of his personal safety, or for his desire to be free of the government's influence so as to be able to pronounce his ideas without fear of repression. It cannot be ascertained either whether he reoccupied his office as the chief *qādī* or took any other official position after Fakhr al-Dawla's death in 387/997, although

xiv. (Introduction).

²³ Abū `Ali b. Muhammad Miskawayh, *The Eclipse of the Abbasid Caliphate: Original Chronicles of the Fourth Islamic Century*, translated by A.H. Amedroze and D.S. Margoliouth (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1921), vol. VI, pp. 279-280.

²⁴ Hecker, "Reason and Responsibility," p. xiv, (Introduction).

some writers continued to call him *qādī al-quḍāt*, even after he had been dismissed from that post.²⁵

In order to understand `Abd al-Jabbār's personality and his views more extensively, it is necessary to discuss the historical data dealing with religious and political circumstances in the Abbasid caliphate during the tenth century.

`Abd al-Jabbār's lifetime coincided with the time when the central and eastern parts of the Islamic world were ruled at least in theory, by the Abbasid caliphs. But by the first half of the tenth century, their sovereignty had been weakened to such an extent that there arose other regional powers. Several new dynasties were founded by the military commanders of Daylam, the mountainous hinterland on the south-western side of the Caspian sea, such as the Ziyarids and the Buyids. These new dynasties came to power and ruled central and southern Persia, as well as Mesopotamia.²⁶

The Buyids, who were in power during `Abd al-Jabbār's lifetime and with whom he often had direct relationship, were a Persian dynasty, founded by Abū Shujā` Buya (Buwayh). Its real founders, however, were his three sons, `Alī, Ḥasan, and Aḥmad. In the early stage of their careers they enlisted themselves in the service of Mardawij b. Ziyar, the founder of the Ziyarid dynasty. In about 320/932, when Mardawij was at the height of his power, `Alī, the eldest of these Buyid brothers, was appointed governor of al-Karj, south-east of Hamadhān.²⁷ The enthronement of `Alī as governor can be considered as marking the Buyids' real emergence into political

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xv.

²⁶ Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (London: Macmillan, 1964), pp. 468-473.

²⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārikh*, vol. VIII, p. 267; Miskawayh, *Tajārub al-Umam* (Baghdad: al-Muthannā, 1914), vol. I, p. 277.

power.

In the following years, the three brothers began their campaigns against the Ziyarid troops, and occupied some of their territories, such as al-Rajan, Nawbandajān, Kazarūn, Iṣṭahān, Fars, Shīrāz, etc. In 324/935, Ahmad, the youngest of them, conquered Kirmān and kept advancing gradually westwards, until eventually he was able to enter Baghdad in 334/945. Having no power to resist Ahmad, the caliph al-Mustakfī (944-946 C.E.) had to appoint him *amīr al-umarā'*, and even confer upon him the honorific *laqab*, *Mu'izz al-Dawlah*. At the same time, his brothers, 'Alī and Hasan, also received the *laqab* "*Imād al-Dawlah*" and "*Rukn al-Dawlah*," respectively.²⁸ This represents the beginning of the Buyids' interference with the Abbasid house and their seizure of Baghdad, which was the very center of the caliphate. By doing so, the Buyids placed the caliphate under the domination of the army chiefs.²⁹

Although the Buyids were professing Shī'is, they did not intend to suppress the caliphs by imposing their Shī'ite doctrines nor destroy the caliphate, but rather to let them maintain their Sunnite traditions. In addition, considering that the Shī'is were only the minority, they must have realized that it would be better for the Buyids to keep the caliphate under their thumb. Politically, they could benefit from this strategy, both to legitimize their authority over the Sunnites, and to strengthen their diplomatic relationship with the world outside. And, by deriving their official authority from the caliphate, the Buyids made it appear as though they honestly believed in the sovereignty of the Abbasid caliphate, even though the caliphs

²⁸ K.V. Zettersteen, "Buyids or Buwaihids," *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 1st. edition, vol. II, p. 807.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

were only the titular heads of state, or merely puppets in their hands.³⁰

ʿAbd al-Jabbār was born about the time when the Buyids began the expansion of their authority by conquering the Ziyarids and seizing their territories. Thus, his lifetime was also witness to the political cataclysm of the Abbasid caliphate, owing to the Buyids' interference, especially their enthroning and dethroning of caliphs at their will and by annexing the institution of the vizierate directly to the amirate, which had formerly belonged under the authority of the caliphate.³¹ During that time, one of the most outstanding Buyid viziers, Ṣāhib b. ʿAbbād (326-385 A.H.), was known as an influential Muʿtazilite scholar.³² But it was ʿAdud al-Dawlah, the greatest Buyid *amīr*, who was the closest of all to Muʿtazilism, and who was its most enthusiastic supporter. He provided all possible facilities for fortifying and disseminating its teachings throughout the caliphate. It was in such an atmosphere that Ṣāhib b. ʿAbbād could successfully achieve his prominent official status, and, moreover, promote other Muʿtazilite scholars to occupy important judicial and other official positions. As has been mentioned previously, it was the vizier Ṣāhib b. ʿAbbād who promoted ʿAbd al-Jabbār to a high judicial preferment as *qādī al-quḍāt* of Rayy in 367 A.H.

³⁰ Claude Cahen, "Buwayhids or Buyids," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. I, p. 1350; K.V. Zettersteen, "Buyids or Buwaihids," p.807.

³¹ Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, p. 471; Claude Cahen, "Buwayhids or Buyids," p. 1357.

³² Al-Rāwī, *al-ʿAql wa al-Hurriyah*, p. 32. In his bibliography (p. 495), al-Rāwī also mentions a treatise written by Ṣāhib b. ʿAbbād on Muʿtazilism which survives until recently: *al-Ibānah ʿan Madhhab Ahl al-ʿAdl: ʿUnwān al-Maʿārif wa Dhikr al-Khalāʿiq*, ed. al-Shaykh Muhammad Hasan Ali Yāsīn (Baghdad: Dār al-ʿAdāmūn, 1963). Together with two other viziers, Al-Muhallabī under Mūʿizz al-Dawlah and Ibn al-Amīd under Rukn al-Dawlah, Ṣāhib b. ʿAbbād was very cultured man and was at the same time a great administrator. His vizierate extended for twenty-eight years, during the reign of Fakhr al-Dawlah and Muʿayyid al-Dawlah. See Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (London & New York: Longman, 1986), p. 223.

Hence, this period was also known as the new awakening of Mu`tazilism after its retrogression for about two hundred years.³³

The Buyids, along with the establishment of their suzerainty, recorded a brilliant achievement of scientific and cultural developments. Besides those viziers who were very cultured men, there were many Arabic poets and sages who were well-received at their court. They also bestowed honor upon scientists, especially those whose special knowledge could be put to practical use. Leaving aside the religious scholars, there were the historian Hilāl al-Ṣābi, the philosopher-historian Abū `Ali b. Muḥammad Miskawayh, the geographer Iṣṭakhri, the mathematician Abū al-Wafā' al-Buzjānī, and the astrologer al-Nasawī (for whom Sharaf al-Dawlah built an observatory in Baghdad), and physicians such as al-Majūsī for whom `Adud al-Dawlah founded a remarkable hospital in the ancient palace of Khuld at Baghdad and another at Shīrāz. Moreover, there were also great libraries established at Shiraz, Rayy, and Iṣfahān, which were organised successively by the Buyid *amīrs*. It was also during their reign that the *naskhī* calligraphy was invented by Ibn al-Bawwāb, who was himself one of the high Buyid dignitaries.³⁴ It was still in this period that a collection of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā's treatises, an encyclopedic work dealing with the doctrine of this society was composed. Likewise in 377/987-988 Ibn al-Nadīm composed his *al-Fihrist*, a catalogue of all knowledge available at that time.³⁵ Another significant figure worth mentioning was Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) who wrote his philosophical treatises

³³ Al-Rāwī, *al-`Aql wa al-Hurrīyah*, p. 32. For the complete account of the Mu`tazilite retrogression as well as its general periodical division, see *ibid.*, pp. 15 - 35.

³⁴ Claude Cahen, "Buwayhids or Buyids," p. 1354.

³⁵ See Johann Fück, "Al-Nadīm," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st. edition, vol. VI, pp. 808-809.

during this period. There were still many other scientists, philosophers, theologians, as well as poets or essayists who were contemporaries of `Abd al-Jabbār and lived under the Buyid reign. All these facts indicate that during the tenth-eleventh centuries, which corresponded with the span of `Abd al-Jabbār's life, there occurred a remarkable sequence of scientific and literary achievements.³⁶

Another important fact deserving of mention is that during this period there was a strong alliance between the Shi'ites and the Mu'tazilites, disregarding their differences in some doctrines. As has been pointed out before, the Buyids were Shi'ites of the moderate 'Twelvers or *Ithnā `Asharī* tendency who provided great support to the second Mu'tazilite awakening. And it was during their reign that `Abd al-Jabbār came to be known as the leader of the Mu'tazilites throughout the caliphate.³⁷ Actually, the relationship or alliance between the Shi'ites and Mu'tazilites can be traced back to the early emergence of Mu'tazilism. Disregarding the fact that formal Mu'tazilism was founded by Wāṣil b. `Aṭā' and `Amr b. `Ubayd during the reign of the Umayyad Caliph Hishām b. `Abd al-Malik (105-125/724-743), it was natural for `Abd al-Jabbār to include many early Muslim scholars, some of whom were the companions of the Prophet and some Shi'ite imams, into the first three levels of the Mu'tazilite generation.³⁸ `Abd al-Jabbār counted them among the original Mu'tazilite generations because they were the real links in the chain through which the principal

³⁶ For an extensive discussion dealing with the intellectual achievements during the Buyid age, see Joel Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: the Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), especially in the last two chapters.

³⁷ Hecker, "Reason and Responsibility," p. xxiii, (Introduction).

³⁸ See Ibn al-Murtadā, *Kitāb al-Munyah wa al-Amal*, p. 128; `Abd al-Jabbār, *Fadl al-Fitizāl wa Tabaqāt al-Mu'tazilah*, p. 214.

teachings of divine justice and the denial of predestination (*al-`adl wa inkār al-jabr*), the most characteristic principles of Mu`tazilism, came to the later generations. In the eyes of the Shī`ites, those doctrines were firmly held by `Alī, and were declared to be the Shī`ite creed as well.³⁹

The support given by the Buyids to the Mu`tazilites was undoubtedly an outgrowth of this alliance. Once Ṣāhib b. `Abbād was asked, "what would you prefer to be your faith so as to be able to gain your victory?" He confidently replied in a line of verse, "I am a Shī`i Mu`tazilite."⁴⁰ Al-Rāwī sees this attitude echoed in some of Ṣāhib b. `Abbād's Shī`ite contemporaries, such as Abū al-Qāsim al-Tanūkhī, al-Nawbakhtī, Abū `Abd Allāh, Yahyā b. Muḥammad al-`Alawī, al-Sharīf al-Murtadā, and others. Al-Rāwī further reports that this alliance was not limited to the Imami Shī`ites only, but was also prevalent among the Zaydites. The Zaydites were attracted to the Mu`tazilite methods in discussing the problem of divine unity and justice (*al-tawḥīd wa al-`adl*), taking these methods directly from `Abd al-Jabbār. Furthermore, they claimed that both Zaydites and Mu`tazilites were partisans of divine justice and unity, as this doctrine was held by some of their prominent figures, such as Abū al-Husayn al-Zaydī, al-Sayyid Abū Tālib, Abū al-Qāsim al-Bastī, and Aḥmad b. al-Mulāhimī. Yet, it was also admitted by `Abd al-Jabbār himself that the Zaydites were the closest among the Shī`ites to Mu`tazilite doctrines, especially in the realm of the imamate, in

³⁹ Ibn al-Murtadā, *Ibid.*, pp. 128-137. In his compilation of the genealogical order of the Mu`tazilite generation, `Abd al-Jabbār placed `Alī, the leading Shī`i Imam, at the first level together with the other three guided caliphs, *al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn*, Abū Bakr, `Umar, and `Uthmān. See also `Abd al-Rahmān Badawī, *Madhāhib al-Islāmīyīn* (Beirut: Dār al-`Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1971), vol. I, pp. 40-46.

⁴⁰ Ja'far b. Aḥmad al-Bahlūlī, *Sharḥ Qasīdat Ṣāhib b. `Abbād fī Usūl al-Dīn* (Baghdad: Maktabat Ahlīyah, 1965), p. 36. Al-Rāwī has an extensive elaboration dealing with the relationship of Shī`ism and Mu`tazilism in his *al-`Aql wa al-Hurriyah*, see Appendix IV, pp. 480-488.

which the Zaydite point of view agreed in many aspects with that of the Mu'tazilites, with the exception of the nature of the Imam.⁴¹ When the Zaydites eventually established their foothold in Ṣan'ā', Yemen, it was not by chance that it would be in that place that the most valuable Mu'tazilite treatises were securely preserved, and contribute finally to studies on Mu'tazilism by contemporary scholars.⁴²

From the previous discussion it can be said that the Mu'tazilites' alliance with the Shi'ites gave the two sides equal benefits. The Mu'tazilites, through the Buyids' support, could regain their power and intellectual vigour, which had lain dormant until then for two hundred years. On the other hand, their alliance was also beneficial for the Shi'ites as they could adopt the Mu'tazilites' great intellectual achievements, especially their theological system, since in reality the Shi'ites did not possess one of their own at that point. The first Shi'ite scholar to utilize the Mu'tazilite heritage for his system of thought was Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, the greatest Shi'ite scholar of the fourth century, who compiled his *al-Fīlāl*, a treatise on the *kalām*. So, in addition to the Zaydite adoption of 'Abd al-Jabbār's teachings, the transformation of principal Mu'tazilite doctrines by other Shi'ite groups are a clear indication that in general the Shi'ites inherited their theological doctrines from the Mu'tazilites.⁴³

⁴¹ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XX:1, pp. 28-29.

⁴² Al-Rāwī, *al-'Aql wa al-Hurrīyah*, p. 486 (Appendix). For the discovery of the Mu'tazilite treatises in Yemen, mainly that of 'Abd al-Jabbār, see Fu'ād al-Sayyid in his introduction to *Fadl al-Fīzāl wa Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazilah*, pp. 7-11.

⁴³ Zuhdī Hasan Jār Allah, *al-Mu'tazilah* (Cairo: Shirkat Musahamat al-Miṣrīyah, 1947), p. 205.

ʿABD AL-JABBĀR'S WORKS

As the leading Muʿtazilite figure of his age, ʿAbd al-Jabbār was known as a very prolific author. During his lengthy lifetime he never ceased writing and dictating, even when he was holding the office of *qādī al-quḍāt* or after his dismissal from that position. His works, amounting to no less than four hundred thousand pages, were reported as being available throughout the Islamic world, east and west.⁴⁴ Moreover, he was an authoritative proponent of Muʿtazilism, defending its principles against the attacks of external opponents and internal extremists, through his balanced interpretation of Muʿtazilite teachings, which were not too far from the Sunnite point of view. It may be supposed that this tendency resulted from his acquaintance with the Shāfiʿites principles of jurisprudence as well as his mastery of the *ḥadīth* literature and from the fact that ʿAbd al-Jabbār's scholarship covered many fields of Islamic learning of that time. Besides the areas of jurisprudence and *ḥadīth*, he was also known as an expert in Qurʾanic exegesis (*tafsīr*), and had a great interest in Greek philosophy, especially the logic of Aristotle. ʿAbd al-Jabbār's writings were remarkable contributions to the corpus of Muʿtazilite thought in its last period. Al-Rāwī considered ʿAbd al-Jabbār as having been, along with al-Jāḥiẓ, Bishr b. al-Muʿtamir, and al-Jubbāʿī, one of the four greatest Muʿtazilite scholars.⁴⁵ However, not all of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's works were written down by his own hand. Many of them were dictated by

⁴⁴ *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, p. 19 (Introduction), citing from Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalānī's *Lisān al-Mīzān*, vol. III, p. 387. ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUṯmān also mentions that al-Ḥākīm al-Jushamī reported in his *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-Masāʾil* (p. 367) that ʿAbd al-Jabbār's works amounted to one hundred thousand pages only.

⁴⁵ Al-Rāwī, *al-ʿAql wa al-Hurrīyah*, p. 42.

him to his disciples who then compiled them for him or put them under their own names.

Many studies have been made recently to explore his works. Although it is impossible to mention all of these works, because many of them have been missing or are as yet undiscovered, `Abd al-Karīm `Uthman has compiled a valuable list in his Introduction to his edition of `Abd al-Jabbār's *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, by referring to Ibn al-Murtada's *Kitāb al-Munyah wa al-Amal*. This list is comprised of 69 titles, and in it he gives a description of the subjects dealt with in each, the places where they may possibly be available now and the titles of the treatises of other scholars in which he found them cited.⁴⁶

Another compilation was made by `Abd al-Sattār al-Rawī in his *al-`Aql wa al-Hurrīyah*.⁴⁷ But, in contrast to `Abd al-Karīm `Uthmān's listing, al-Rāwī tries to classify `Abd al-Jabbār's works into nine subjects, i.e. Qur'anic science, principal doctrines, problems of schism, commentaries, disputations, refutations, inquiries and responses, Mu'tazilite history and generations, and jurisprudence. The following is a short elaboration of `Abd al-Jabbār's works in accordance with the classification made by al-Rāwī.

1. Qur'anic Sciences (*al-`Ulūm al-Qur'ānīyah*).

`Abd al-Jabbār devoted great attention to this field, not only because of the lofty position it deserves, but also because this science functioned as a means of spreading his teachings. The arguments that Abd al-Jabbar advanced were an endeavour to explain the objective conformity between the principles of Mu'tazilism and the evident assurance of the Qur'an, as was

⁴⁶ *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, (Introduction), pp. 20-23.

⁴⁷ Al-Rāwī, *al-`Aql wa al-Hurrīyah*, pp. 41-53.

clearly shown by his later works in which he tried to elucidate the obscure verses of the Qur'an. His *Bayān al-Mutashābih fī al-Qur'ān* and also *Tanzīh al-Qur'ān 'an al-Matū'in* are the two treatises in which he attempts to achieve that aim. And for the sake of explaining his principal teachings, he wrote his *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* or also known as *al-Muhīt fī al-Tafsīr*. Other works in this field are *al-Adillah*, *al-Tanzīh*, and *Shahādāt al-Qur'ān*. Al-Rāwī also mentions that the subject-matter of *Tathbīt Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah* belongs to the science of the Qur'ān, although he does not give any further explanation. But 'Abd al-Karīm 'Uthmān, the most recent editor of this text (Beirut: 1966), explains that this book deals with the miraculous aspects of the Qur'ān by which Muḥammad's prophecy was fortified.⁴⁸ This is probably the reason for al-Rāwī's decision to include this book in the category of Qur'ānic science. On the other hand, 'Abd al-Karīm 'Uthmān, in his Introduction to his edition of 'Abd al-Jabbār's *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, mentions that this book deals with the Prophet's biography and his miracles.⁴⁹

2. Works on the Principal Doctrines (*al-A'māl al-Uṣūliyah*)

'Abd al-Jabbār was inclined to imitate al-Jubbā'i's efforts at ridding Mu'tazilite doctrines of any accretions made by the extreme wing of the third century adherents, whose influence had produced a dreadful impression among the common people. 'Abd al-Jabbār was eager to nullify that impression by elaborating his teachings and restoring the most agreeable principles of Mu'tazilism. He began this task with his *Al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wa al-'Adl* in twenty parts, which took him twenty years to

⁴⁸ 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Tathbīt Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah* (Beirut: Dār al-'Arabīyah, 1966), p. v. (Introduction by 'Abd al-Karīm 'Uthmān).

⁴⁹ *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, p. 20, (Introduction).

complete. Although *al-Mughnī* was considered as an encyclopedic work on the Mu'tazilite doctrines embodied under the two main principles, divine unity and justice (*al-tawhīd wa al-'adl*), in reality those two principles also encompassed the other three. Moreover, *al-Mughnī* may be seen as the first Mu'tazilite work attempting to cover the entire body of Mu'tazilite doctrines from all angles. However, because it was not directly written by 'Abd al-Jabbār himself but rather at his dictation, *al-Mughnī* needed more thorough study as well as accurate editorial rearrangement before it could be published.

Disregarding any defects found in this treatise, it is still recognized as a reliable source of Mu'tazilite doctrine. However, 'Abd al-Jabbār was able to fill in any gaps in this book with his other brilliant and profound exploration entitled *al-Majmū' fī al-Muhīt bi al-Taklīf*. Also dealing with *al-tawhīd wa al-'adl*, this book is distinguished from *al-Mughnī* since it is more subtle and condensed. Other books written by 'Abd al-Jabbār dealing with the principal Mu'tazilite doctrines are *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*; *Uṣūl al-Dīn 'ala Madhhāb Ahl al-tawhīd wa al-'Adl*;⁵⁰ *Mukhtaṣar al-Husnā*; *Ziyādāt al-Uṣūl*; *Taqrīb al-Uṣūl*; *Takmilat Sharḥ al-Uṣūl*; and *al-Muqaddimāt*.

3. The Problems of Schism (*al-Qadāyā al-Madhhabīyah*)

'Abd al-Jabbār's works dealing with the problems of schism were derived from his conception of the Mu'tazilite's principal doctrines. His works in this field are *al-ʿItimād*, *al-Tajrīd*, *al-Jumal*, *al-Khātīr*, *al-Dawā'ī wa al-Ṣawārif*, and *al-Fīl wa al-Fā'il*.

4. Commentaries (*al-Shurūḥ*)

⁵⁰ Edited by Muhammad 'Ammārah, included into *Rasā'il al-ʿAdl wa al-Tawhīd*, with other treatises of al-Imām al-Ḥasan al-Basrī, al-Imam al-Qāsim al-Rasī, and al-Sharīf al-Murtadā (Beirut: Dār al-Shuruq, 1988).

The most apparent characteristic of fourth century theological writing is that it was dominated by various commentaries and explanatory works elaborating the reasons for schism and establishing firm foundations which would be proof against any criticism. `Abd al-Jabbār's efforts in this field were on behalf of his school, and formed a large portion of his early works, such as: *Sharḥ al-Muḥīt*, *Sharḥ Kashf al-A`rād `an al-A`rād*, *Tahdhīb al-Sharḥ*, *Takmilat al-Sharḥ*, *Sharḥ al-Jawāmi`*, *Sharḥ al-Maqālāt*, *Sharḥ al-Ārā'*, and *Tāliq Naqd al-Mārifah*.

5. Disputations (*al-Jadalīyāt*)

One of the intellectual traditions preserved by the Mu`tazilites was the art of disputation, not only in its formal but also in its analytical sense of maintaining an integrated argumentation. `Abd al-Jabbār's works in this field are *Adab al-Jadal*, supplemented with another work, *al-Umdah fī al-Jadal wa al-Munāẓarah*. He also wrote a third work, *al-Khilāf wa al-Wifāq*, which is a reflection on the Mu`tazilite disputational tradition, whose result was the cleavage of Mu`tazilism into the school of Baghdad and the school of Baṣra. This cleavage also motivated `Abd al-Jabbār to write his other treatise, *Mā Yajūzu fīhi al-Tazāyud wa Mā lā Yajūz*, in which he tried to establish the principal limitation of that disputational tradition and invited the people to aim at the greatest possible conformity with Mu`tazilite doctrines. This was more clearly demonstrated by `Abd al-Jabbār when he tried to systematize the problems disputed by Abū `Alī al-Jubbā'ī and his son, Abū Hāshim al-Jubba'ī, in his *al-Khilāf bayna al-Shaykhayn*.

6. Retutations (*al-Nuqūd*)

Al-Rawī states that along with his concern over the obligation to defend Mu`tazilism against the challenges of its opponents, `Abd al-Jabbār

realized that his criticism should be primarily directed to the Mu'tazilites, censuring in particular any ideas inconsistent with the principal doctrines of Mu'tazilism. Having said this, al-Rāwī fails to cite any work by `Abd al-Jabbār which represents an internal critique of Mu'tazilism. `Abd al-Jabbār, as al-Rāwī further explains, then directed his criticism towards the ideas of Mu'tazilites' opponents, mainly the Shī'ite conception of imamate and *al-ghaybah* (concealment) on which he wrote his *Naqḍ al-Imāmah* and *Naqḍ al-Luma`*. `Abd al-Jabbār criticized these Shī'ite concepts as subsidiary doctrines, having no origin in the religious principles. Other books in this field are *al-Badal*, *Sharḥ al-Ārā'*, and *al-Radd `Alā al-Nasārā*.

7. Inquiries and Responses (*al-Masā'il wa al-Jawābūt*)

Inquiries and responses were a method employed by Muslim scholars to discuss theological issues by stating the subject in the form of a question and trying to formulate its possible solution. It was first employed by Ja'far b. Harb, a Mu'tazilite scholar of the seventh generation in his *al-Masā'il fi al-Na'im* and *al-Masā'il al-Julilah*. `Abd al-Jabbār used this method at first to compile the questions posed to other Mu'tazilite scholars and their answers, recording them in his *al-Masā'il al-Wāridah `Alā Abī al-Husayn*, *al-Masā'il al-Wāridah `Alā al-Jubba'iyayn*, and *Masā'il Abī Rashīd*. Then, as he himself also received a lot of questions from some of his own disciples, he recorded their questions and his answers, in compilations which bear the names of the regions from which the issues originated, such as *Ajwibat al-Rūziyāt*, *al-Tarmiyāt*, *al-Qāshāniyāt*, *al-Kūfiyāt*, *al-Miṣriyāt*, *al-Nīsābūriyāt*, *al-Khawārazmiyāt*, *al-Askariyāt*, and *al-Makkīyāt*. Another book, *al-Muqaddimāt*, is also reported as belonging to this class, and is considered to be an introductory elaboration of material in his other treatises on the principal doctrines of Mu'tazilism.

8. Treatise on Mu'tazilite history and its generations (*Tārīkh al-ʿItizāl wa Ṭabaqātuhu*).

Abd al-Jabbār has an important treatise dealing with the history of Mu'tazilism and its scholars. His book, *Fadl al-ʿItizāl wa Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazilah*, was the only treatise of its kind saved from destruction by `Abd al-Jabbār's opponents, and was preserved in the libraries of certain Yemeni mosques. Although it was not originally compiled from his own research but was rather an extension of other compilations made by previous Mu'tazilite scholars (Ibn Yazdādh al-Isbahānī, Ibn ʿArzawayh, Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī, and others),⁵¹ this treatise is nevertheless very significant in that it preserves the genealogical order of the Mu'tazilite generations, as well as the gradual development of their beliefs. As reported by Ibn al-Murtadā, there had been ten generations of Mu'tazilite scholars beginning with the Prophet's companions and extending until `Abd al-Jabbār's age, each of which included famous figures among the Mu'tazilite scholars.⁵² An important aspect which preserved this treatise from disappearance was that its contents had been almost completely quoted by al-Ḥākim al-Jushamī (d. 494 A.H.) in his *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-Masāʾil*, in which he extended the number of the Mu'tazilite generations to twelve. And then, about four hundred years later, Ibn al-Murtadā (d. 840 A.H.) combined the treatises of both `Abd al-Jabbār and al-Jushamī in his *Kitāb al-Munyah wa al-Amal*, with a small simplification and abridgement.⁵³

51 `Abd al-Jabbār, *Fadl al-ʿItizāl wa Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazilah*, pp. 36-38, (Introduction).

52 Ibn al-Murtadā, *Kitāb al-Munyah wa al-Amal*, p. 127.

53 `Abd al-Jabbār, *Fadl al-ʿItizāl wa Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'tazilah*, p. 35, (Introduction).

9. Treatises on Jurisprudence (*al-ʿAṣmūl al-Fiqhīyah*).

As a *qāḍī*, ʿAbd al-Jabbār was very learned in Islamic jurisprudence, and accordingly wrote many treatises on it. His *Kitāb al-ʿAmd*, together with Imām al-Ḥaramayn's *al-Burhān*, al-Ghazalī's *al-Mustaṣfā*, and Abu al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's *Sharḥ al-ʿAmd* are regarded as the four best treatises on Islamic jurisprudence written by Muslim theologians. In addition, these four treatises have been described as the foundations as well as the pillars of this branch of learning.⁵⁴ However ʿAbd al-Jabbār's *Kitāb al-ʿAmd* is still considered as superior to all other works on Islamic Law, and basing themselves on the thesis conveyed in this book, other scholars after him compiled their own treatises, such as Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Baṣrī in his *al-Muṭamad fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, and al-Mulāḥimī in his *al-Muṭamad fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*.⁵⁵

Besides *Kitāb al-ʿAmd* and its commentary, his other works on this field are *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* and *Naṣīḥat al-Mutafaqqih*,⁵⁶ both dealing with the principles of jurisprudence, and *Majmūʿ al-ʿAhd*, *al-Nihāyah*, *al-Ḥudūd*, *al-Uqūd*, *Sharḥ al-Uqūd*, and *al-Mabsūt*, in which he set forth his teachings dealing with both general and particular issues of Islamic jurisprudence.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār made a great contribution to the development of Shafīʿite jurisprudence through his profound learning. In his *al-Ikhtiyārāt* he

⁵⁴ Al-Rāwī, *al-ʿAql wa al-Hurrīyah*, p. 142, quoted from Ibn Khaldun, *al-Muqaddimah*, (Cairo: Dār al-Shaʿb, 1379 A.H.), p. 1031.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁵⁶ Since the book remains undiscovered, it cannot be ascertained whether or not this book really deals with Islamic jurisprudence. Even al-Rawī's reference to ʿAbd al-Jabbār's *Faḍl al-Itizāl* (p. 183) is also confusing, as the passage mentioning the title of this book deals with the problem of "*kalām*." Accordingly, ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān's consideration to put this book under the subject of *ilm al-kalām* may be more appropriate. See his Introduction to *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, p. 23. On the other hand, Ibn al-Murtadā considers this book as dealing with religious exhortation. See his *Kitāb al-Munyah wa al-Amal*, p. 195.

examined all the juristical issues based on the principles of this school with great scrutiny. But, on the other hand, as `Abd al-Jabbār was in every other respect a Mu`tazilite scholar, it was inevitable that he should have an interest in making his juristical teachings accord with Mu`tazilite thought, mainly in the doctrine of *al-wa`d wa al-wa`id*, the promise and threat. This is confirmed when one consults part seventeen of his *al-Mughnī*, which deals with Islamic Law (*al-Shar`iyyāt*). Fu`ād al-Sayyid, in his introduction to this book, reported that through this book `Abd al-Jabbār intended to establish the foundations of belief (*uṣūl al-`aqīdah*) and the foundations of practical life (*uṣūl al-`amal*) for the Muslim people.⁵⁷

Out of those numerous works, however, there are only nine of them mentioned by Brockelmann in his *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, namely : *Tanzīh al-Qur`ān `an al-Maṭā`in*, *Tathbīt Dalā`il al-Nubuwwah*, *Kitāb al-Majmū` fī al-Muḥīt bi al-Taklīf*, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mu`tazilah*, *Risālah fī `Ilm al-Kīmiyā'*, *al-Amālī (Niṣām al-Qawā`id wa Taqrīb al-Marād (?) lil-Rā'id)*, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, *Mas'alah fī al-Ghaybah*, and *al-Khilāf bayna al-Shaykhayn*.⁵⁸ In addition to these nine works, Fuat Sezgin mentions *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wa al-`Adl*, *Mutashābih al-Qur`ān*, *al-Mu`tamad fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*, *Kitāb al-Dars*, and *Kitāb al-Nihāyah*. The last two are reported as fragments from al-Baṣrī's *al-Mu`tamad*.⁵⁹

At the moment, as indicated by J.R.T.M. Peters in his *God's Created Speech*,⁶⁰ only thirteen out of those treatises are known to exist in

⁵⁷ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XVII, p. 5. (Introduction by Amīn al-Khūlī).

⁵⁸ Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1937), vol. I, pp. 343-344.

⁵⁹ Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schriftums* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), vol. I, pp. 625-626.

⁶⁰ J.R.T.M. Peters, *God's Created Speech: A Study in the Speculative*

manuscript, completely or partly; and only seven of them have been published already:

1. *Bayān al-Mutashābih fī al-Qurʾān*, edited by ʿAdnān Muḥammad Zarzūr, published by Dār al-Turāth (Cairo: 1969), in two volumes.

2. *Tanzīh al-Qurʾān ʿan al-Matāʾin*, printed by al-Matbaʿat al-Jamāliyah (Cairo: 1329), and reprinted in Beirut (n.d.)

3. *Tathbīt Dalāʾil al-Nubuwwah*, edited by ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān, published by Dār al-ʿArabīyah (Beirut: 1966).

4. *Fadl al-ʿItizāl*, published together with the other treatise "*Ṭabaqāt al-Muʿtazilah*," edited by Fuʿād al-Sayid, printed in Tunis (1974).

5. *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, edited by ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān and printed in Cairo (1965).

6. *Kitāb al-Majmūʿ fī al-Muḥīt bi al-Taklīf*, in two editions, the first is by ʿUmar al-Sayyid ʿAzmī (Cairo, 1965), and another by J.J. Houben (Beirut, 1965).

7. *Al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wa al-ʿAdl*, his elaborate *summa theologica*. Originally consisted of twenty parts, but only fourteen of them have been discovered and published in Cairo by the Egyptian Ministry for Culture and National Guidance (*Wazārat al-Thaqāfah wa al-Irshād al-Qawmī*) under the editorial works of various scholars, from 1960 to 1969, when the sixteenth and the last volume was completed.⁶¹

Theology of the Muʿtazili Qādī al-Qudāt Abū al-Hasan ʿAbd al-Jabbār b. Ahmad al-Hamadhānī (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), pp. 11-14.

⁶¹ See *Ibid.*, p. 27.

CHAPTER II :

THE NATURE OF EVIL IN THEORETICAL TERMS

The problem of evil has attracted the attention of many philosophers and theologians, whose responses to it have been quite varied. The presence of evil in the world has aroused much speculative thinking on the subject of the nature of God: whether or not he is really omnipotent, or, even more extreme, whether or not he exists. The discussion of this issue is still an acute one, even today, although the problem itself was originally formulated by Epicurus (341-270 B.C.). His formulation is quoted by Lactantius (c. A.D. 210-340):

God either wishes to take away evils, and is unable; or He is able, and is unwilling; or He is neither willing nor able, or He is both willing and able. If He is willing and is unable, He is feeble, which is not in accordance with the character of God; if He is able and unwilling, He is envious, which is equally at variance with God; if He is neither willing nor able, He is both envious and feeble, and therefore not God; if He is both willing and able, which alone is suitable to God, from what source then are evils? or why does He not remove them?¹

According to this point of view, it might be assumed that if God is perfectly good and unlimitedly powerful, he must be able to abolish all evils. But evils are still present in the world: hence it can be further concluded: either God is not perfectly good or he is not unlimitedly powerful.² Or, in a

¹ M.B. Ahern, *The Problem of Evil* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 2.

² John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (London: Macmillan, 1966), p. 5.

simpler expression: "God cannot be both all-powerful and perfectly good if evil is real."³ Almost the same expression is commonly attributed to St. Augustine, the greatest theodocist of all, who says: "Either God cannot abolish evil or he will not: if he cannot then he is not all-powerful; if he will not then he is not all-good."⁴ Another perspective is given by St. Thomas Aquinas who apparently subsumed God's omnipotence under the notion of his infinite goodness, as quoted by M.B. Ahern:

If one of two contraries is infinite, the other is excluded absolutely. But the idea of God is that of an infinite good. Therefore if God should exist, there could be no evil. But evil exists. Consequently God does not.⁵

While the problem of evil received much attention from classical thinkers and mediaeval theologians, the subject is still of interest to scholars of recent times who see the problem of evil as a continuing puzzle.

According to J.L. Mackie, writing in *Mind* (1955), the problem of evil is a problem only for someone who believes that there is a God who is both omnipotent and wholly good. Therefore, it is not a scientific nor a practical problem, but rather a logical one, demanding that one clarify and reconcile a number of beliefs. The problem can be stated in its simple form as: God is omnipotent; God is wholly good; and yet evil exists. Moreover, he rejects the stance of those theologians who ignore the problem by saying: "Evil is something to be faced and overcome, not to be merely discussed."⁶

³ H.J. McCloskey, "God and Evil," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 39 (1960), p. 97.

⁴ John W. Steen, "The Problem of Evil: Ethical Consideration," *Canadian Journal of Theology*, vol. 11, no. 4 (1965), p. 255, citing from Augustine's *Confession*, Book 7, Ch. 5.

⁵ M.B. Ahern, *The Problem of Evil*, p. 3, citing from St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae*, vol. I, Question 2, Article 3.

⁶ J.L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind*, vol. 64, no. 254 (1955), p. 200.

Another writer, H.J. McCloskey, in the beginning of his article "The Problem of Evil" writes:

The problem of evil is a very simple problem to state. There is evil in the world; yet the world is said to be the creation of a good, omnipotent God. How is this possible? Surely a good, omnipotent being would have made a world that is free of evil of any kind.⁷

However, although it is "a very simple problem" to state, it remains very crucial. Supposing it to be true that a good omnipotent God should have made a world which is free of evil of any kind, the existence of evil is then considered as entailing one of the following possibilities: either there is no God; or he is not all-powerful; or he is not good; or there are two or more powers, of which at least one is evil and neither or none is omnipotent,⁸ all of which implies that the reality of evil is incompatible with the existence of God. Indeed, in its most popular significance, the problem of evil is :

the problem of reconciling the hypothesis of a good and beneficent deity with existence of an apparently evil and imperfect world. Or, since omnipotence is commonly regarded as a necessary attribute of divinity, it asks how God can be at once omnipotent and entirely good.⁹

Having established what is meant by the "problem" of evil, we must ask ourselves what its "nature" is as well. There are many different arguments regarding the nature of evil and solutions proposed to the problem, some of them involving major intellectual issues, both philosophical and religious.

John Hick, in his examination of the nature of evil, first tries to approach the term etymologically by considering how the word is used in the

⁷ H.J. McCloskey, "The Problem of Evil," *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, vol. 30, no. 3 (1962), p. 187.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ B.A.G. Fuller, *The Problem of Evil in Plotinus* (Cambridge: University Press, 1912), p. 18 (Introduction).

English, German, and French languages. In English, he explains, the word "evil" is frequently used in a comprehensive sense, and thus there can be distinguished under it the moral evil of wickedness as well as such non-moral evils as disease and natural disasters. In German, the word "evil" can be translated as either *Übel* or *Böse*, although they have different senses. The word *Übel* is a general term, covering the meaning of both moral and non-moral evils, even though it can be used in a particular sense for the latter, whilst the word *Böse* is definitely used for moral evil. The French word for evil is *le mal*, which refers to all types of evil.¹⁰

Therefore, the term evil can be generally differentiated into two types, moral and non-moral. Moral evil can be defined as immorality, or whatever evil human beings originate, such as selfishness, envy, greed, deceit, cruelty, callousness or cowardice, and on a larger scale, war. Non-moral evil, on the other hand, which can be referred to as physical evil or natural evil, is the evil that originates independently of human actions, or, as Fairbairn designates, physical evil means :

all the sufferings he may have to endure, whether bodily or mental, nervous or sympathetic, alike as a distinct individual and a social unit, alike as a natural being, fleshly and mortal, and as a human being, sharing in the special history of a people and in the collective fortunes and immortality of the race.¹¹

Besides these moral and non-moral evils, John Hick mentions another type of evil, i.e. metaphysical evil, which was first proposed by Leibniz. This type of evil refers to the basic fact of finitude and limitation within the created universe, and is supposed to be the ultimate cause of other types of evil; i.e., the unavoidable imperfection of created things is to be regarded as evil.¹²

¹⁰ John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, p. 18.

¹¹ A.M. Fairbairn, *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion* (New York & London: Macmillan, 1902), p. 134.

In the exposition which follows, I intend to rely heavily on the elaboration made by H.J. McCloskey in his article "The Problem of Evil,"¹³ dealing with the nature of evil, in which he discusses the problem in the following order: Evil as Unreal, Evil as Privation, Evil as Real but Justified, and Moral Evil.

A. EVIL AS UNREAL.

The idea that evil is unreal can be traced back to Plotinus (c. 205-270 A.D.), who sees evil as simply the absence of reality. He establishes his idea on the fact that evil is the degree in which a given entity is still subject to matter, or as a necessary stage of development in the history of the visible universe. This is because he considers that every entity is good to certain extent and evil to a converse extent.¹⁴ Furthermore, as also reported by B.A.G. Fuller in his work *The Problem of Evil in Plotinus*, evil "has no real existence *qua* evil. It is but an appearance, a partial aspect, an erroneous opinion, a finite point of view."¹⁵ Thus, evil is illusory. Its existence can be deduced from reality as a misunderstood fragment, to be considered as either as a means towards perfection justified and transfigured by the end, or as an integral and contributive factor in perfection itself.¹⁶

¹² John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, p. 19. See also, W.D. Niven, "Good and Evil," *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), vol. VI, pp. 324-325.

¹³ H.J. McCloskey, "The Problem of Evil," pp. 187-197.

¹⁴ Philippus V. Pistorius, *Plotinus and Neoplatonism: an Introductory Study* (Cambridge: Bowes & Bowes, 1952), p. 122.

¹⁵ Fuller, *The Problem of Evil in Plotinus*, p. 21.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

In accordance with the above idea, Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the Christian Science in 1866, writing in her book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, declares that evil is nothing and has no reality. "Evil is neither person, place, nor thing, but simply a belief, an illusion of material sense."¹⁷ She goes on to explain that evil is merely illusion and error, having no real basis. Even in more concrete form, like sickness and death, evil may be regarded as illusion and nothingness, which would virtually vanish. "If sin, sickness, and death were understood as nothingness, they would disappear."¹⁸

If the idea of evil as unreal is applied to physical evil it may be said that pain or suffering is not really evil, and that neither is natural disorder. Such things must be understood as logically occurring because of certain causes, or because of a necessary natural law that we do not yet understand. A person may think that pain, suffering, natural disorder, or even disaster are evils, possibly because he does not see them in their whole context. Sufferings of this present time could be reckoned as not worthy to be compared with the glory that would be revealed to mankind, or may be regarded as something for which the totality of experience is absolutely the richer and better. B.A.G. Fuller writes :

Evil exists that God may triumph over and transcend it in an act of victory in which his perfection consists; the opposition of good and evil, that God may have the supreme happiness of identifying them in a higher unity.¹⁹

It is very commonly believed that there is no pleasure if there is no pain, or at least that many pains are virtual conditions for gaining pleasure.

¹⁷ Mary Baker G. Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston: W.G. Nixon, 1891), p. 237.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 464.

¹⁹ Fuller, *The Problem of Evil in Plotinus*, p. 21.

Thus, evil can be regarded as a temptation for man in order to obtain higher achievement. Moreover, evil can be justified as functioning as a means of warning us against worse possible evils. It is true that hunger, which itself causes discomfort or even pain, can function as a warning that our body needs some supply of energy in order to avoid a greater evil. If our body were not sensitive towards coldness or heat, we might not be aware of being burnt or frostbitten, thus endangering our life. If wounds did not cause pain, their presence might be just ignored and would lead to more dangerous damage, and so on. Thus, pain can be considered as a warning system which have been given to us in "the form of traffic lights to increase safety on the roads," although they are in some measure parasitic.²⁰

This idea seems to be supported by M.B. Ahern as he suggests that pain can and even really does serve a good purpose. Pain, in some form or other, has led people to seek medical aid in almost all cases. Thus, pain is not an evil to be evaded, since it can function as a pointer to something beyond itself, some physical ill that may need treatment.²¹

Like M.B. Ahern, J.L. Mackie also suggests that the appearance of evil can be understood in connection with the concept of progress:

that the best possible organisation of the universe will not be static, but progressive, that the gradual overcoming of evil by good is really a finer thing than would be the eternal unchallenged supremacy of good.

That is, "the universe is better with some evils in it than it could be if there were no evil."²²

However, McCloskey does not agree that there is such a thing as an

²⁰ H.J. McCloskey, *God and Evil* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), p. 87.

²¹ M.B. Ahern, "The Nature of Evil," *Sophia*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1966), p. 38.

²² J.L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," p. 206.

unreal evil. He argues that it is impossible to conceive that a thoroughly bad man is only an illusion. "The thoroughly bad man is not simply an illusion of a bad man; he *is* a bad man."²³ Considering that evil is unreal or only a valuable part which heightens the beauty of the whole might happen if one had "a God's eye view." Even from the moral point of view, however, it is unreasonable to assert that the suffering of others is a contribution to the divine melody.²⁴ This allegation is in particular based on the idea that "evil is like a discordant or ugly element in a symphony or painting but one which in fact adds beauty to the whole work,"²⁵ which is also rejected by McCloskey. He argues that it is incompatible to make an analogy between the existence of evil and works of art. In contrast to the aesthetic model, in which the parts have meaning in the context of the whole, human actions are considered good or bad only by virtue of their intrinsic nature or their consequences. Should the suffering be explained by reference to its context, we have only to refer to our moral judgement, which suggests that evil may be justified as a means to good, but not as a part of a whole.²⁶ And as this explanation of suffering is based on a false analogy between aesthetic standards and moral judgement, inasmuch as a pain and suffering in the world are very different from ugly or discordant elements in a painting or a symphony, it is invalid to claim that evil is unreal.

B. EVIL AS PRIVATION

²³ H.J. McCloskey, "The Problem of Evil," p. 188.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ H.J. McCloskey, *God and Evil*, (1974), p. 41.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

Evil as privation is generally discussed with reference to Augustine's most frequent phrase *privatio boni*, which means "privation of good."²⁷ The idea that evil is a privation of proper good, or of right order, is proffered as an intermediate course between defining evil as merely an illusion (evil as unreal) and defining it as fully real. Thereby, it can serve to evade the difficulty of attributing to God the responsibility for creating evil in its positive form.²⁸ Evil, as St. Augustine explains, has no nature but loss of good.²⁹

But the idea of privation is not meant to be a simple lack of goodness, such as a tree lacking the spiritual quality of an angel. Moreover, it is not an instance of evil to have been created a member of a lower hierarchy of creatures, since to have been created as a worm is not worse than to have been created a lion. Accordingly, the immoral man is one whose acts spring from lack of right order, just as physical evil is said to result from the absence of proper good.³⁰ In general, evil is negative, a lack, a loss, and privation. One passage from the *Enchiridion* of St. Augustine reads:

that which has the name of evil is nothing else than privation of good. For as, in the bodies of animate beings, to be affected by diseases and wounds is the same thing as to be deprived of health (for the purpose of healing, when it is applied, is not that those evils which were in the bodies, namely diseases and wounds, should come out from them and go elsewhere, but that they should utterly cease to exist: for wound or disease is not a substance in itself, but a defect of fleshly substance)³¹

²⁷ John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, p. 53.

²⁸ H.J. McCloskey, "The Problem of Evil," p. 189.

²⁹ St. Augustine, *The City of God* (London: J.M. Dent & Son, 1947), p. 320.

³⁰ H.J. McCloskey, "The Problem of Evil," p. 189.

³¹ St. Augustine, *Enchiridion or Manual to Laurentius Concerning Faith, Hope, and Charity*, trans. by Ernest Evan (London: S.P.C.K., 1953), pp. 8-9.

It may be said that St. Augustine's point of view, i.e. that evil is privation of good, is optimistic, in that it seems to be a reflection of his optimistic way of thinking about the world. He sees evil as part of a total metaphysical picture of the universe, basically resulting from the whole Christian interpretation of life, in which his conception of *privatio boni* receives its meaning and justification. Since the universe has been created by an omnipotent and all-good God, evil cannot be anything substantial or a positive constituent of the universe, but only a loss of natural "measure, form and order", or a malfunctioning of something that is in itself good.³²

Besides St. Augustine, we can find further elaboration of the theory that evil is privation in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. In his *Summa Theologicae* I, Question 48, Article 3, we can read:

Evil imports the absence of good. But not every absence of good is evil. For absence of good can be taken in a privative and in a negative sense. Absence of good, taken negatively is not evil; otherwise, it would follow that what does not exist is evil, and also that everything would be evil, through not having the good belonging to something else; for instance, a man would be evil who had not the swiftness of the roe, or the strength of lion. But the absence of good, taken in a privative sense, is an evil; as, for instance, the privation of sight is called blindness.³³

From this passage, it is clear that St. Thomas regards evil, in its basic sense, as the absence of good, although not every absence of good is evil. As there are privative and negative absences of good, it may be understood that not existing or not having the good proper to one's nature would be evil. For instance, it is not evil at all for man not to have wings, as wings are not proper to his nature. What would truly be evil would be his not having hands, because it is the nature of his human body to have them. In a

³² John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, p. 60.

³³ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae*, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1974), vol. 1, p. 250.

commentary on Aquinas's theory, Etienne Gilson explains:

What is called an *evil* in the substance of a thing is only a lack of some quality which ought naturally to be there. For a man to have no wings is not evil, because it is not the nature of the human body to possess wings. Similarly there is no evil in not having fair hair. The possession of fair hair is compatible with human nature but is not necessary to it. On the other hand, it is an evil for a man to have no hands, while it is not so for a bird. Now the term *privation*, considered strictly and in its proper sense, designates the absence or want of what a being ought naturally to possess. It is to privation of this kind that evil is limited. Evil is pure negation within a substance. It is not an essence, not a reality.³⁴

In contrast, McCloskey does not accept that evil can be regarded as only a privation of proper good or right order. It is still right to say that the immoral man is the one whose acts originate from lack of right order or of the direction of God; and that physical evil lies in the absence of proper good. But, as he further argues, if it deals with the blind man it would be really a paradigm. "Blindness is not an evil in living things which do not by nature enjoy sight, but it is an evil in man because sight is a good appropriate to man."³⁵

In addition, he also repudiates the view that privative theory could be applied to the problem of pain. Pain is neither illusion nor simply absence of good. Pain has a real and positive nature, and its evilness issues from that nature alone, not from its being the absence of something else. McCloskey explains:

It is pointless to tell the child whose body is bruised and broken by the landslide, and who is wracked by pain, that he is experiencing simply a privation of the proper good of the body. His suffering may be associated with a privation of the proper good of the body, but it is much more and other than this.³⁶

³⁴ Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Random House, 1956), p. 156.

³⁵ H.J. McCloskey, "The Problem of Evil," p. 189.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Supposing that evil were simply a privation of good, both the case of a blind man and that of a child being bruised by the landslide would remain great problems. Would, as McCloskey afterwards enquires, a benevolent, all-powerful being so arbitrarily and capriciously deprive individuals of their appropriate human attributes and cause them suffering in doing so? Consequently he comes to the conclusion that evil is real and has a real nature of its own, as it cannot be regarded as merely privation of being or of right order.³⁷

C. EVIL AS REAL BUT JUSTIFIED

The idea that evil can be justified refers to the general notion of the problem of evil, by asking whether any evil could be morally justified if an omnipotent, wholly good God exists. If evil could be justified, accordingly, good seems to be the only criterion appropriate for justifying it. This is to say that the occurrence of evil should produce good proportionate to that evil, and that the good cannot be achieved without inflicting that evil. These are the conditions by which, according to M.B. Ahern, evil can be justified. For example, Ahern goes on, it is morally justifiable for a motorist to injure one person slightly in order to avoid injuring another person seriously, although he must realize that the first person would never agree with him. However, it does not mean that when such an evil is justified, the agent is blameless in causing it. His intention to cause an evil is, in some respect, itself evil. Pain which naturally accompanies surgery should not be intended, if the agent is to be morally blameless.³⁸

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

³⁸ M.B. Ahern, *The Problem of Evil*, p. 23

The idea that non-moral evil or physical evil is real but justified, is generally based on the belief that evil serves as either God's warning to men in order to acknowledge his power, or is deserved as his punishment for sin. Physical evil as God's warning of his power can be explained by the argument that certain natural calamities may be intended by God as a reminder to mankind of his power over the universe. That is to say, God manifests his power in causing the natural calamities in the hope that men will respond through fear, then subjugate themselves to the power of God by worshipping him or obeying his commands, and eventually become morally better individuals by behaving respectfully towards God. Generally such a belief is associated with the religious tradition of the reality of atonement and of personal immortality.³⁹

However, it is still a matter of dispute whether natural calamities can serve the moral purpose of evoking respectful behavior towards God. On the contrary, such calamities may result in skepticism or even disbelief in God's goodness. If God's intention in causing those calamities was in order to achieve such a purpose, then it is hard to believe that God is both omnipotent and omniscient. The question can also be posed: why should God use such physical evils to achieve this object instead of choosing the less evil methods available to him as a benevolent God?⁴⁰ After all, the pains inflicted outweighs the good achieved. Furthermore, much pain even results in moral evils such as a sense of defeat, self pity, selfishness, cringing, cowardice, terror, etc. Or, as F.R. Tennant suggests more precisely :

it is not necessary to suppose that every specific form of suffering that man undergoes - e.g. the agony of tetanus or of cancer - is antecedently willed by God as a means to some particular end. It

³⁹ H.J. McCloskey, *God and Evil*, (1974), p. 90.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

can be admitted that excruciating pains are more severe than they need be for evoking virtues such as patience and fortitude, and that to assign them to God's antecedent will would be to attribute devilishness to the Deity. Moreover, the fact that some human beings are born as abortions, as imbecile or insane, seems to be inexplicable on the view that every form of suffering is a particular providence, or an antecedently willed dispensation for educating and spiritually perfecting the person on whom the affliction falls; while to suppose that suffering is inflicted on one person for the spiritual edification of another is again to conceive of God as immoral.⁴¹

The argument that physical evil is considered as God's punishment for sin often makes reference to natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions, and so on. The outstanding example generally referred to in the past by theologians is the great earthquake that happened in Lisbon in the eighteenth century, in which 40,000 people were killed. However, it is still debatable, since there was no a single proof indicating that all victims of this incident were the sinful citizens of Portugal who deserved that painful punishment. At the time Voltaire asked: "Did God in this earthquake select 40,000 least virtuous of the Portuguese citizens?"⁴² Indeed it is impossible to assume that only the sinners were killed, because the victims included children who were by nature innocent, and even animals. As a result, that disastrous earthquake, were we to look upon it as God's punishment, was not proportionately distributed in accordance with the offence of the sufferers.

On the other hand, many physical evils have been inflicted on children from the moment of their birth, such as mental defects, blindness, deformities, etc. It is impossible to consider that such evils constitute punishment, and it is even injustice to inflict on those innocent children such retribution.⁴³

⁴¹ F.R. Tennant, *Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge: University Press, 1968), Vol. II, p. 203.

⁴² H.J. McCloskey, "God and Evil," p. 102.

Another explanation concerning justifiable evil deals with the idea that physical evils are unavoidable but compensated for in after-life. C.A. Campbell, in his exposition of suffering,⁴⁴ indicates that some sufferings are unavoidable, and even God himself could not avoid them, since they result from the operation of natural law, which ultimately has a good effect. Although such evils are unavoidable, God will make up for them by granting joy in the after-life. Thus, evil is justified, and one should not complain about it in this life.

As this explanation involves the possibility of compensation in the after-life, it implies that the problem of suffering requires the notion of immortality in order to be solved. However, not all people are sure that there is such an after-life in reality. But, as C.A. Campbell further suggests, those people who accept the possibility of an after-life will hold certain values not available in those who deny it. In reality, the principle of joy compensating sorrow in our ordinary life is familiar and readily accepted. A man who has experienced much suffering in his life does not always complain that life has been "unfair" to him, so long as he can hope that more happiness and joy will counter-balance and cancel out the sorrows. This simple principle of compensation, according to C.A. Campbell, is capable of balancing the sufferings occurring in the earthly life with the joys in the after-life.⁴⁵

Against all those explanations, H.J. McCloskey argues that although undeserved and unavoidable evil is compensated for by some joys in after-

43 *Ibid.*

44 C.A. Campbell, *On Selfhood and Godhood* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1957), pp. 301 f.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 302.

life, it is, however, still evil. McCloskey agrees that men do not always complain about such evil. It is because men are accustomed to injustices in their life that they can bear the occurrence of evil. They have grown to be insensitive and have virtually learnt how to withhold their complaints in many circumstances where they would be entitled to complain. McCloskey has described this type of reaction:

We are used both to the injustices and to trying to right them in terms of compensations. Nevertheless, it remains true that even if he were finally to receive the most lavish of compensations, a man unjustly but unavoidably imprisoned for twenty years would be right in complaining that an evil had been done to him and that it would have been a better world if he had not had to suffer undeservedly in this way. So, too, if God strikes down and kills an only child, it is no adequate compensation if he subsequently blesses the parents with several other children.⁴⁶

The basic difference between both McCloskey and Campbell lies in how to explain the "alleged unavoidability of evil." According to Campbell, the world with the natural laws it has is a good world, and it is better for the world to have them than if it did not; the laws belonging to the world now are superior to any others we can imagine. The last statement is principally to assert that evil, however undeserved it is, is unavoidable and even the omnipotent God himself would not be able to remove it. So, a good world is the world in which there is evil as a result of the operation of the natural laws.⁴⁷ For example, it is evident that because of the functioning of the law of gravity certain calamities such as landslides and earthquakes happen, whose occurrence is absolutely unavoidable.

But, against Campbell's point of view, McCloskey suggests that the laws of nature are not the laws of correlation indicating uniformities. The laws of nature are held to govern natural phenomena. Accordingly, it would

⁴⁶ H.J. McCloskey, "The Problem of Evil," pp. 190-191.

⁴⁷ C.A. Campbell, *On Selfhood and Godhood*, p. 299.

be possible to hope that there could be a better world with fewer evils, in which we might be able to enjoy more pleasure and intellectual satisfaction, in spite of the fact that it is impossible to give a detailed description of such a world. On the other hand, it is also possible to hope that God could intervene by way of miracles to reduce and even to eliminate suffering, instead of permitting calamities to endanger the uniformity of nature, which is by nature good.⁴⁸

D. MORAL EVIL

Moral evil is not merely moral fault. More than moral fault, it entails an estrangement of God's laws and a rejection of the reality of God's existence. Nevertheless, it is believed that God, in creating mankind had the intrinsic foreknowledge that they would engage in moral evil by committing actions such as lying or cheating, by being unkind to others, by being callous, cruel, violent, jealous, ruthlessly ambitious, or by manifesting other unpleasant traits.⁴⁹ It is very common to find these evils in the daily actions of individuals and it is not at all unusual to blame those who commit them as sinners. Most theists think that all men, with rare exception, are sinners, and it is well known that there are always extraordinarily evil men such as professional killers or robbers, transgressors, oppressors, and the like. All of these phenomena indicate that there is an immense amount of evil which has to be explained or justified.⁵⁰

John Hick alleges that all these evils originate from sin, which he

⁴⁸ H.J. McCloskey, "The Problem of Evil," p. 191.

⁴⁹ H.J. McCloskey, *God and Evil*, (1974), p. 113.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

precisely defines as "a disorientation at the very centre of man's being where he stands in relationship with the Source and Lord of his life and the Determiner of his destiny."⁵¹ The reality of sin, as Hick goes on, affects all men's horizontal relationships within the created realm, by which their sinfulness expresses itself in various kinds of broken and destructive relationships with human society and nature. Thus, sinfulness has been regarded as constituting the kernel of the problem of evil. If it is plausible that sinfulness is the source of evils, so it is legitimate to question: "why has an omnipotent, omniscient, and infinitely good God permitted sin to happen?"⁵²

The basic attempt to figure out this problem refers to the traditional elaboration of free will. J.L. Mackie, in his article "Evil and Omnipotence,"⁵³ reveals that evil is not to be ascribed to God, but rather to the independent actions of human beings, since God has endowed them with freedom of the will. The solution proposed by J.L. Mackie is very original. In his solution of this problem he first tries to differentiate between certain sorts of evil, such as pain, misery, anguish, and the like on the one hand, and cruelty, brutality, savagery, and the like on the other, on the basis of their degree of seriousness. Pain is called a first order evil, while cruelty is of the second order. First order evils are apparently those which naturally occur in human life and cause suffering. Second order evils are those which result from certain actions conducted by an agent which cause other's suffering. Accordingly, it is only first order evil that can be justified, since it may be a logically necessary component of good events, such as sympathy,

⁵¹ John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, p. 300.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ J.L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," p. 208.

kindness, heroism, and the gradual successful struggle to eliminate evils. On the contrary, second order evil cannot be justified, and is ascribed only to human beings and not to God who holds no responsibility for them.⁵⁴

Similarly, McCloskey suggests that since moral evil results from man's exercise of free will, and free will itself is held to be of highest value, it is claimed that free will must outweigh not only the existence of moral evil and the vast amount of physical evil, but also the eternal suffering of the damned. So, it is because of free will alone that man always chooses evil and, as a result, the greatest sufferings endured by men are due to the free acts of others.⁵⁵

But, again, why did a wholly good God give men free will knowing that it would lead them to commit evils? This is the most crucial question to be dealt with in discussing the problem of moral evil, and is one that has caused much dispute among theists. Moreover, not all of them agree with the reality of man's free will. Some hold that it is almost unbelievable that man is completely free. What man can exercise is only limited free will. It is frequently realized that man chooses what he does not really wish to. Several hindrances restrain him from achieving his choice, either because of miscalculation, lack of knowledge, inability to discover facts, etc.⁵⁶ This is a position as largely held by the adherents of predeterminism.

Disregarding this pessimistic point of view, J.L. Mackie suggests that men should act freely, since God has given them free will, although it might lead them to commit some evils. It is still better for them to act freely, even if sometimes they err in the extent of their freedom, than to be "innocent

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ H.J. McCloskey, "The Problem of Evil," p.193.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

automata, acting rightly in a wholly determined way."⁵⁷ McCloskey, citing G.H. Joyce, affirms that man should have the power to choose the wrong in accordance with God's giving him great privilege in the form of his final blessedness. This blessedness represents the fruit of his exertion and is a reward for his hard-won victory which is a considerably higher achievement than it would have been had he received it without any effort on his part. Man may not deserve the reward due to victory without being exposed to the possibility of defeat.⁵⁸

Free will, therefore, has been vindicated as justifying God's allowing moral evil to happen. And moral evil is, then, only a consequence of the possibility of defeat, without which man might not gain victory. Moral evil exists only by virtue of the hypothesis that there is a free agent who has the power to sin or morally to err. God has created man as a very subtle and clever being, who is by nature conscious of what he is doing. Unlike a lion, for instance, which can tear its prey to pieces and let it die in agony, man, through his conscience, commonly suffers guilt at causing another's misery. And the lion, which has been preordained to act in this way, has no other choice in treating its prey.⁵⁹

Finally, it must be acknowledged that there is no final consensus amongst all theists and scholars in discussing the problem of evil. Everyone holds his own view and has come to a conclusion different from others, so long as they establish their argumentation on the basis of intellectual inference. "We have seen," writes W.D. Niven at the end of his exposition of good and evil,

⁵⁷ J.L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," p. 208.

⁵⁸ H.J. McCloskey, *God and Evil*, (1974), p. 114.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

that every proposed solution either leaves the old question unanswered or raises new ones. The problem is for human mind insoluble. However for we may get with an answer, ultimately
 "There is a veil past which we cannot see'
 and the final and the complete answer to 'Si Deus bonus, unde malum?' lies within.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, the previous exposition should provide a general notion of the problem of evil, and it is hoped that it may provide the groundwork for examining al-Qaḍī `Abd al-Jabbār's thought in discussing his concept of *al-qabīḥ*.

In general, it can be said that there are two different points of view concerning the reality of evil. On the one hand there are some scholars who say that evil is real and unavoidable, and that thus it is incompatible with the idea that there is a God who can be believed to be wholly good and omnipotent. On the other hand, there are some theists who hold that evil is merely an illusion and unreal, or that it is real but its reality is justified as a means of greater good, or that it is unavoidable in accordance with the idea that evil results from the operation of the natural laws, and will be compensated for in after-life.

In spite of the fact that, as J.L. Mackie suggests, none of the proposed solutions of the problem of evil can stand up to criticism,⁶¹ it must be realized, following A. Lecerf's consideration as restated by McCloskey, that it is presumptuous and arrogant for man to judge God on the basis of his limited human reason. How can man, with his limited power, be so confident of his reasoning as to claim that God is either imperfect or does not exist?⁶²

⁶⁰ W.D. Niven, "Good and Evil," p. 324.

⁶¹ J.L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," p. 212.

⁶² H.J. McCloskey, "The Problem of Evil," p. 194.

CHAPTER III :
THE BASIC CONCEPT OF EVIL IN `ABD AL-JABBĀR'S THOUGHT

A. THE TRUE NATURE OF *AL-QABĪH*

`Abd al-Jabbār has discussed the problem of evil extensively in several sections of his *al-Mughnī*, mainly in Volume six, Part one, as well as in some sections of his *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*. In both works, he discusses the problem of evil in its relation with the general Mu'tazilite concept of divine justice, which itself is the central theme of this volume of the *Mughnī*.

In Arabic, to the extent that `Abd al-Jabbār himself has explored, the word *qabīh* primarily indicates the aesthetic sense, and means "ugly" or "repulsive," referring to a physical quality. Based on this idea, the word is transferred to indicate an ethical quality, such as disgraceful, shameless, and so, evil and bad. `Abd al-Jabbār recognizes this difference and concludes that the true nature of *al-qabīh* lies in its ethical sense, whilst its aesthetic sense should be considered as metaphorical (*majāz*).¹ This implies that `Abd al-Jabbār's discussion of the problem of evil concentrates more on moral evil, although to some extent he also discusses physical evils, such as suffering, pain, misery and the like.²

¹ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 25; George F. Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism: The Ethics of `Abd al-Jabbār* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), p. 49. Hourani's work will be cited frequently in this chapter, and will be referred to as *Islamic Rationalism*.

Prior to `Abd al-Jabbār, the chief representative of the ninth Mu`tazilite generation, Abū Hāshim, had defined *al-qabīh* as "(the act) for which, taken in isolation, one deserves blame."³ This simple definition also reinforces its sense of moral evil, since to be or not to be blamed is only concerning a certain act.

The reason for restricting this definition with the phrase "taken in isolation" is in order to exclude "peccadilloes and white lies by a person who is on the whole of good character and performance."⁴ Thus, it is to be understood that we should blame the man only for the act itself, such as injustice or lying, disregarding its context with his general record.⁵ The same definition is also mentioned in his *Sharḥ*, except that he uses the phrase "*alā ba`d al-wujūh*," in some aspects, instead of "*idhā infarad*," but still for the same purpose, that is to exclude those peccadilloes, which, in spite of their evilness, are not in every respect blameworthy. In this case, `Abd al-Jabbār seems to be leaning more towards the Islamic concept of judgement of human actions, where such actions are either deserving of reward or punishment in accordance with divine sanction. Therefore, since one who commits peccadilloes is neither blameworthy nor deserving of any reward, he is granted pardon for it. Moreover, the definition also serves to exclude the evils done by small children or insane people and animals whose evilness is not to be blamed, except in some respects, such as when it occurs in those

² *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIII, p. 229.

³ *Inna al-qabīh mā yastahiqqu bihi al-dhamm idhā infarad*, translated as quoted above from *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 49. In spite of the fact that this definition is ascribed to Abū Hāshim, the criterion "deserving blame" is always used by `Abd al-Jabbār in discussing the problem of evil.

⁴ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, pp. 19, 26.; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 49.

⁵ *Al-Mughnī*, *Ibid.*; *Islamic Rationalism*, *Ibid.*

who realize what they are doing.⁶

In addition to the definitions cited above, `Abd al-Jabbār himself defines *al-qabīh* as "an act for which, if it occurs in any way on the part of one who knows it will occur from him in that way, and who lets it happen, he deserves blame, unless there is a restricting reason."⁷ This definition, not far apart from the previous ones, emphasizes that the basic idea of evil is something that deserves blame. But it is not clear how one should decide that an action is blameworthy. Based on the latter definition, `Abd al-Jabbār indicates that an action is blameworthy when its evilness occurs due to the action of an individual who knows it will occur, but then does not refrain from that action. In other words, it can be understood that to be blameworthy the evilness of the action should be based on the real knowledge or the consciousness of the doer. Thus, the knowledge or consciousness of the agent is to be considered as the basic condition of an act being blameworthy. However, there is another restriction for the latter definition: for an act to be blameworthy, it must be an avoidable one, for the agent cannot be blamed when it is impossible for him to avoid it, as can be understood from *idhā lam yamna` minhu mānī*, or "unless there is a restricting reason."

⁶ *Sharh al-Usūl al-Khamsah*, p. 41. There seems to be an obscurity in the last sentence, as it is evident that children and insane people would not realize whether or not their actions are evil, and thus they cannot be fully demanded for their responsibility.

⁷ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 26; Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 50.

B. SOME ASPECTS UNDER WHICH AN ACT MAY BE CALLED EVIL.

In my further discussion of `Abd al-Jabbār's concept of evil, I will often refer to Hourani's *Islamic Rationalism*, the most recent study of `Abd al-Jabbār's ethical thought, which provides a pattern for exploring `Abd al-Jabbār's *al-Mughnī* and his discussion of the problem of evil. According to Hourani, `Abd al-Jabbār's main concern in discussing the concept of *al-qabīh* is to maintain the objectivity of value, and in doing so to counteract the views of the subjectivists, his main opponents, who held that the values of actions are determined exclusively by the will of God.⁸ `Abd al-Jabbār, in supporting his call for an objective approach to the subject, states: "the blameworthiness of a particular act is a fact that cannot be alterable by the wishes, utterances, thoughts, or feelings of any spectator or judge, even if he be God Himself."⁹ As a Mu`tazilite, `Abd al-Jabbār supported the general concept of this school, that natural reason can serve as a sufficient source of ethical knowledge. This means that man has the capability to know the right and the good by his own unaided intellect, and even to define them, independently of the divine will.¹⁰ Thus, as the human intellect is inherently capable of recognizing the right and the good independently of the divine will, good and evil are objective. Man can grasp the good or evil of actions as he grasps "directly perceived phenomena" (*al-mudrakāt*). "We know at once that injustice, lying and ingratitude are evil, just as we know straight away that justice, truthfulness, and gratitude are good."¹¹

⁸ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

However, in the chapter "The explanation of how an act becomes evil or good or obligatory,"¹² `Abd al-Jabbār mentions that an evil can be either "rational" (*al-qabā`ih al-`aqliyah*) or "juridical" (*al-qabā`ih al-shar`īyah*).¹³ Rational evil defines an act that becomes evil because of its own peculiar characteristics, not because of its relationship with other factors. This type of evil is like wrongdoing or injustice (*ẓulm*),¹⁴ lying (*kidhb*), willing evil (*irādat al-qabīh*), commanding evil (*amr al-qabīh*), ignorance (*al-jahl*), and imposing unperformable obligation (*taklīf mā lā yutāq*). Each one of these acts is evil, such as in the case of injustice, for instance, because of its being injustice alone, not because it is committed by a certain agent, or, as said previously, because of its relationship with other things.

Furthermore, there must be something peculiar to each one of these "rational evils" which makes it different from the other evils. For instance, there must be particular things that make injustice what it is, rather than make it lying or pointless, etc. Furthermore, "it must differ from good by a

11 Eric L. Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought: The Dispute over al-Ghazālī's "Best of All Possible Worlds"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 233, citing from *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, pp. 58, 61.

12 *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, pp. 57-60.

13 Hourani does not make any clarification of this *al-qabā`ih al-shar`īyah*, except that he mentions as "the evil of Law." (*Islamic Rationalism*, p. 70). As he refers to the same passage of the *Mughnī*, it can be assumed that what he means with "the evil of Law" is that *al-qabā`ih al-shar`īyah*. But with regard to a few examples given in both the *Mughnī* and the *Muḥīt*, we may conjecture it as "an evil resulting from disobeying or transgressing the religious law (*sharī`ah*)," "juridical evil" or "evil in the legal sense." This agrees with an allusion made by Hourani "the evil of the Laws (e.g. neglect of prayers)."

14 Eric L. Ormsby, while discussing the Problem of the Optimum, indicates that *ẓulm*, according to Mu'tazilites, means "injustice" as the opposite of *al-`adl*. Of course, as he further explains in his note, *ẓulm* may denote wrongdoing in general, but it is used particularly of tyrannous wrong. This is in contrast with Hourani who maintains the use of "wrongdoing" for *ẓulm* throughout his book. See, Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, p. 227.

reality (*ḥaqīqah*) by which it is separated from it."¹⁵

On the contrary, the "juridical evil" (*al-qabīḥ al-shar'īyah*) are acts that become evil because of their relationship with other things. For example, as `Abd al-Jabbār says in the *Muḥīt*, it describes an act that incites (someone) to commit rational evil or to renounce some obligations. Unfortunately, `Abd al-Jabbār gives no further explanation of this "juridical evil," except by restating the same idea in the *Muḥīt* with a suggestion that the "juridical evil" should be understood in its general outlook. For example, if God forbids us from doing a certain act, or ordains the Prophet to forbid us from it, we should understand that if the act were not corrupt there would not be such a prohibition. However, as we have only to adopt the general knowledge of it, ignorance of such a detailed account of that "juridical evil" is not considered as a defect on our part.¹⁶

In any case, `Abd al-Jabbār's main concern in dealing with evil is to prove that it is objective. More than conforming to the defining formula "deserving or not deserving blame," an evil act must have distinguishing attributes beyond that bare defining character which determines it as evil rather than good.¹⁷ Accordingly, there are several grounds upon which we can base our knowledge of what makes evil things evil, and what makes their agent deserving or undeserving of blame. Restating what `Abd al-Jabbār writes in the *Mughnī*, Hourani explains: "If 'rational evil' such as wrongdoing and lying is distinguished by some property peculiar to it, there must be something that makes it like that, evil rather than good, and makes it

¹⁵ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 56; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 63.

¹⁶ *Kitāb al-Majmū` fī al-Muḥīt bi al-Taklīf*, ed. by J.J. Houben (Beirut: Maṭba'at al-Kāthūlikīyah, 1965), vol. I, p. 235.

¹⁷ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 62.

rather than another thing evil."¹⁸

But before we proceed to discuss these grounds, it is useful to note that some grounds which make evil things evil are elaborated in the negative mode. This is what we find in `Abd al-Jabbār's discussion of this issue in the *Mughnī*, where he repudiates his opponents' points of view, before he explains his own. On the whole, there are four aspects which should be rejected as grounds of evil, i.e., (1) An evil thing is evil not because of its genus (*jins*),¹⁹ existence or generation; (2) It is not because of the existence of a determining cause (*ma'nā*) or the cessation of a cause; (3) It is not because of certain states (*ahwāl*) of its agent, such as being generated, subjected, obliged (*mukallaf*), dominated, or subdued by God; (4) It is not because of being prohibited or forbidden. The details of these four aspects will be dealt with in what follows, by referring to the *Mughnī* as well as Hourani's work.²⁰

1. In stating that an evil thing is evil not because of its genus (*jins*), existence, or generation, `Abd al-Jabbār explains that there are no genus of acts which may not be good if they occur with a certain aspect (*alā wajh*) and evil if they occur with other than that aspect; so that we cannot judge any genus of act in abstraction (*bi-mujarradih*) as evil or good. For example,

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Hourani might have been mistaken in translating the word *jins* with "species." According to Edward W. Lane, *jins* means "genus, kind or general class, comprising under it several species or sorts." See, Edward W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London & Edinburgh: Williams Norgate, 1974), Book I, p. 470. Here I will use "genus" for the meaning of *jins*.

²⁰ *Islamic Rationalism*, pp. 64-69. `Abd al-Jabbār's elaboration of this issue is dispersed in several chapters (*al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, pp. 77-114) which are not specifically devoted to examining these aspects. It is Hourani who has systematized them in such an orderly exposition.

Abd al-Jabbar considers that pain and injury are not evil in every instance of their genus that occurs, because they can be just, and therefore not evil, when they are accompanied by benefits or are deserved. Furthermore, in another passage in the *Mughnī*, he also states that injustice is not evil by virtue of its genus. At first glance, this seems to contradict the idea that injustice is evil simply because of its very nature, as has been previously indicated to maintain its objectivity. This appears to show inconsistency on `Abd al-Jabbār's part. But it is not true if we try to understand `Abd al-Jabbār's idea more carefully. As Hourani further explains, injustice as a genus is "a large class which is not referred to as a species in itself; the species are the kinds of pain, injury, etc., which have a common character that can be described in natural, non-value term."²¹ Thus, injustice is not evil because of the genus of act of which it is composed, like inflicting pain, speaking in anger, etc., but, as has been stated before, simply because of its being injustice. In the *Mughnī* `Abd al-Jabbār writes: "Know that if wrongdoing is evil because of its species, every injury and pain is evil. And as to our knowledge that there is something good in it, it is evident that such an idea is incorrect."²²

In the previous discussion, Hourani uses the word "species" for the meaning of *jms*. However, in addition to this term, `Abd al-Jabbār also uses the words *`ayn*, or *li-`aynihi* for the same purpose. Hourani further examines the word *`avn* by referring to A.M. Goichon's *Lexique de la langue philosophique d'Ibn Sinā* (Paris, 1938), in which it is said :

... It is true that the word *`ayn* does not itself mean "species"; but in the expression *li-`aynihi* meaning "because of its essence" we have to ask, "the essence of what?", and the context here gives

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

²² *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 77.

"the essence of the species."²³

Actually, it is not `Abd al-Jabbār himself who uses the words *`ayn*, or *li-`aynihi* for the meaning of genus, but rather he quotes it from his master, Abū `Alī al-Jubbā`ī, who holds that "not to know God (*al-jahl bi-Allāh*) is evil because of its genus (*li-`aynihi*)." This expression was then used by `Abd al-Jabbār's opponents to argue against the former's point of view dealing with the objectivity of injustice. "If not to know God (*al-jahl bi-Allāh*) is evil because of its genus (*li-`aynihi*), it must be possible to say that injustice is evil because of its genus."²⁴

`Abd al-Jabbār also states that no evil thing is evil because of its existence. There is a simple reason for this, i.e. it would lead us to say that every existent being is evil, which is obviously false. There is no further explanation given by `Abd al-Jabbār dealing with the significance of the last argument. In the same passage, `Abd al-Jabbār further explains that an evil thing is not evil because of its lack of existence or because of its being non-existent, because its evilness is only peculiar to its state of being existent.²⁵ In dealing with this point of view, Hourani suggests that there is a slight, perhaps indirect influence from Neo-platonic thought through the books of al-Fārābī and the treatises of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafa', as well as other writings circulating in Iraq and Iran during his age, although it might be supposed that `Abd al-Jabbār did not fully realize this.²⁶

Another aspect which is rejected by `Abd al-Jabbar as a ground for defining an act as evil is that an evil thing cannot be evil because of its being

²³ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 64.

²⁴ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 78.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

²⁶ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 65.

generated (*muḥdath*). The reason is that it would imply that everything generated is evil, and this too is surely false. `Abd al-Jabbār further explains that if evil were to be dependent on generation, it would only happen in the temporal sphere; but injustice, for instance, even though it does not happen in the eternal sphere, is believed to exist in it. Thus, there is no essential correlation between evil and generation.²⁷

2. An evil thing is not evil because of a determining cause (*ma`nā*) or the cessation of a cause. `Abd al-Jabbār asserts that certain evils, such as injustice and lying are not evil because of the *ma`nā* or the determining cause, but rather because of their own being. An extensive study concerning the meaning of *ma`nā* as a technical term in Mu`tazilite theology, has been made by Richard M. Frank. In it he suggests its meaning as "an immediate, intrinsic causal determinant,"²⁸ or, as Hourani tries to simplify, "an internal determining cause or a ground."²⁹ In short, injustice or lying is evil because of its own being, independent of other conditions. "If lying needed a *ma`nā* to make it evil, the *ma`nā* might conceivably occur with truthfulness and make it evil; or conversely lying might occur without the *ma`nā*, and then it would be good."³⁰

It seems difficult to understand what is meant by *ma`nā* in this context, without considering the examples which `Abd al-Jabbār provides to illustrate it. As a determining cause, the *ma`nā* is exemplified by "will" and

²⁷ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, pp. 68-69; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 65.

²⁸ Richard M. Frank, "al-Ma`nā: Some Reflections on the Technical Meanings of the Term in the Kalām and its use in the Physics of Mu`ammar," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 87, (1967), p. 253.

²⁹ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 66.

³⁰ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, pp. 67-68; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 66.

"aversion" (*al-irādah wa al-karūhah*). In a chapter entitled "The evil thing is not evil because of the will or aversion" `Abd al-Jabbār explains that in accordance with his principal axiom, injustice is evil only when it is known to be harmful, to have no benefit, to not repel injury or to be undeserved. Therefore, if an act were evil because of one's will, its evilness could not be known without knowing whether or not it is willed. Furthermore, if evil acts were evil because of the will, then acts could be good when they occurred involuntarily, or without anybody's will.³¹

Besides the will, `Abd al-Jabbār also mentions knowledge (*al-ilm*) as another example of a determining cause which makes an act evil. But, as it is more than only a *ma'nā*, knowledge is admissibly regarded as a condition (*shart*) by which an agent deserves blame, because it is possible for man to use it to avoid evil. And it is not admissible for man to be blamed when it is impossible for him to prevent himself from doing evil, because it is as though he were to do something under constraint, or as a result of pressure.³²

Another word used by `Abd al-Jabbār to demonstrate the meaning of *ma'nā* is the word *`illah*. In Volume XIII of the *Mughnī* it is said that injustice is not evil because of its *`illah*, because if that were so, it would cease to be evil when the *`illah* is absent.³³ Indeed `Abd al-Jabbār wants to assert that if the ground for evil (injustice, lying) were dependent on another ground, it would not be the ground at all, which is not the case, because the character of injustice and lying is itself sufficient grounds for the evilness of an act. In addition, there is another objection for suggesting the second

³¹ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 81.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 82.

³³ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIII, pp. 288-289.

ground, that it would lead us to an infinite series of simultaneous *ma`ānī*.³⁴

An evil act is not evil because of the cessation of a cause or because of its lack of existence, because its evilness is peculiar to the state of its existence. In addition, `Abd al-Jabbār suggests that it is incorrect to define an act as evil because of its lack of another *ma`nā*, because every conceivable *ma`nā* is already conveyed in it, and thus, acts such as injustice or lying cannot be deprived of their evil character.³⁵

3. Another argument rejected by `Abd al-Jabbār is that an act is not evil because of certain states (*aḥwāl*) present in the agent, such as being generated, owned, subjected, obliged, dominated, or subdued by God. The *aḥwāl*, as indicated by the examples above, refer to permanent states of the agent in relation to another being. `Abd al-Jabbār's objection to such an idea may be due to the belief held by the Ash`arites that man's subjection to God makes it possible for him to be evil, because he is capable of disobeying a good master to whom he owes obedience.³⁶

In his refutation, `Abd al-Jabbār suggests that an attempt to connect evil with the states (*aḥwāl*) is of the usual character: that if it were so, all human acts alike would be evil, because they proceed from beings in the same relation of subjection to God.³⁷ In addition, the agent's status of being generated or subjected is irrelevant to the value of the acts, like his being a body, tall, a substance, etc.³⁸

³⁴ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 66.

³⁵ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 80.

³⁶ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 67.

³⁷ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 87.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

By making such a statement `Abd al-Jabbār wants to emphasize that if the status of the agent resulted in a difference in the ethical value of an act, it would be admissible to say that injustice done by the prophets or angels or even God was not evil.³⁹ But `Abd al-Jabbār also acknowledges that it is possible for God to inflict pain on innocent children, and that this should not be considered as evil because there is always a difference of circumstances, such as that God will grant compensation in the next life.⁴⁰

Closely associated with all the above explanations concerning the status of the agent is the condition of being under prohibition which will be dealt with in the following section. In a similar way, `Abd al-Jabbār also proves that God's acts are not good or obligatory (*wājib*) because of his status as Lord and commander. He suggests that the goodness of God be judged by the same standard as that of men, which should not be different because of the status and power of the agent.⁴¹ This is the principal doctrine held by the Mu'tazilites against their theological adversaries, the Ash'arites. The Ash'arites maintain that human acts are made good only by being commanded by God, which, in fact, would lead them to a difficulty with

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁴⁰ This idea seems to be very significant in `Abd al-Jabbār's thought as an attempt to "justify" the reality of suffering undeservedly inflicted upon mankind, as will be discussed later. However, although this was not disputed by any of his contemporaries, this explanation would not be accepted easily today. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, we must ask ourselves: couldn't God, the most wise and most powerful being, choose an easier way other than inflicting pain on the innocent children in order to give them reward? In modern times it is hard to believe that such an act of inflicting pain is due to God's interest in granting reward. A hedonist, for instance, would reject such an idea, since they hold that a life without pain is more desirable than a life with it. See Anthony O'Hear, *Experience, Explanation and Faith: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 202.

⁴¹ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, pp. 59-60; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 109.

regard to their understanding of the goodness of God's acts. If God's acts are said to be good in the same sense as that of human acts, it will imply that they are good for the obedience of a certain command. But if they are said to be good for a reason other than a command,

they must allow in the same way that His act may be evil for a reason other than a prohibition, and their doctrine that our evil acts are evil because of prohibition would not stand in the way of the acts of the Exalted being evil.⁴²

Thus, `Abd al-Jabbār presumes that there is no proof that God's status as Lord and Master of the universe in itself makes his acts good. If his status of being Lord and Master were the criteria of his goodness, there would be no guarantee that he has not punished the Prophets and rewarded the Pharaohs, told lies, punished the obedient, and commanded the pointless acts, since all of them could be performed through God's exercise of his mastery and power.⁴³ Based on this idea, `Abd al-Jabbār has emphasized that things do not differ in their essential natures in this world and beyond, a good act is good regardless of agent, and an evil act is evil regardless of agent.⁴⁴ Or, as also indicated somewhere else:

We shall demonstrate that this matter (ethical value) does not differ according to agents, and that the judgement in this sphere on the acts of the Eternal Exalted One is the same as the judgement on our acts.⁴⁵

4. An act is not evil because of its being prohibited or forbidden. According to `Abd al-Jabbār, evil is not evil simply because it is forbidden (*manhīy*, *mahẓūr*). Otherwise it would result in the incorrect consequence, that if evil

⁴² *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 107; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 109.

⁴³ *Islamic Rationalism*, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, p. 236, citing from the *Mughnī*, vol. XIV, p. 13.

⁴⁵ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, pp. 59-60; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 69.

means forbidden, any forbidding will make an act evil, regardless of who forbids it, either man or God. Furthermore, it would be also possible for an act to be at one and the same time ordered by God but forbidden by man, which implies that it would be obligatory and evil at the same time, two incompatible possibilities.⁴⁶

But his opponents claim that "evil means forbidden" is not a complete definition of evil, because it must be ascribed as "forbidden by God." And because of God's status as divine Lord and Master, his prohibition must be different from that of man, and thus God's prohibition is authoritative, causing the act thus prohibited to be evil. Against this objection, `Abd al-Jabbār says that if God were to forbid us from being grateful or acting justly, or even to forbid us from knowing and believing in him, all these acts would be evil according to that definition, which is absolutely unreasonable.⁴⁷ In another passage we can find another equivalent answer: "if God were to do wrong, that would (really) be evil of Him, yet we do not say in His case that He is forbidden to do it."⁴⁸ This is another assertion made by `Abd al-Jabbar i.e. that evil is something objectively knowable, and not merely because determined by any prohibition. The principle held by `Abd al-Jabbar is that there are ethical qualities inherent in acts, over and above being commanded or forbidden.⁴⁹ Thus, if God commands some act to be done, it is because the act is itself good; and conversely, if God forbids something, it is because it is wrong or evil. Here is, then, the real point of difference between `Abd al-Jabbār and his opponents, who hold that good or evil is definitely

⁴⁶ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 102.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 27.

⁴⁹ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 56.

determined by God's command or prohibition.

For further clarification, it is worthwhile noting `Abd al-Jabbār's examination of the meaning of command as the opposite of prohibition. Command, according to him, does not necessarily indicate that an act commanded is obligatory (*wājib*), but rather represents information that someone wants something done by another person. Although it can still be argued that command may specify what is to be done in as much detail as required, yet it does not mean to specify it in the way of obligation. "The character of an act of being obligatory is different from being commanded."⁵⁰ What makes an act obligatory is not its being commanded but rather its own attribute. The same thing can be said for prohibition. Accordingly, `Abd al-Jabbār suggests that God's command indicates that the commanded thing is advantageous (*ṣalāh*) while God's prohibition indicates that the prohibited thing is detrimental (*fasād*). Both are indications of the real characters of the two acts, but do not necessitate the goodness of the one and the evilness of the other.⁵¹

There is still another suggestion given by `Abd al-Jabbār, to the effect that if evil means forbidden by God, one cannot know it as evil without knowing that it is prohibited.⁵² The real fact is, as Hourani tries to restate `Abd al-Jabbār's explanation :

anyone can understand an ethical truth e.g. the evilness of lying without necessarily knowing the source of that truth - that evilness comes from being forbidden - just as we can know the existence of a thing without any knowledge of its creator.⁵³

⁵⁰ George F. Hourani, "Divine Justice and Human Reason in Mu'tazilite Ethical Theology" in *Ethics in Islam*, ed. by Richard G. Hovannisian (Malibu, California: Undena Publications, 1983), p. 78.

⁵¹ *Al-Mughni*, vol. VI:1, p. 103.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 110.

Corresponding to the definition "evil means forbidden" is "good means commanded." So that, if the opponents insist that God's acts cannot be evil because there was no Lord above him to forbid them, this doctrine in reality raises difficulties about the meaning of the goodness of God's acts. However, it is evident that God is not subject to any command, and that nothing can be commanded of him. And if it is said that God's acts are good for a reason other than a command, they must allow in the same way that his acts can be evil for a reason other than a prohibition.⁵⁴

The last explanation is also used by `Abd al-Jabbār to repudiate his opponents' argument that some evils forbidden and obligations prescribed in God's revelation are not recognizable by reason, which implies that evil or obligation is solely made by God's prohibition and command.⁵⁵ On the contrary, `Abd al-Jabbār suggests that there is always an intelligible reason for the thing prohibited and commanded in revelation, accessible in principle to our intelligence. This is in accordance with the idea conveyed in one of the Qur'anic verses: "Verily God has enjoined justice, the doing of good, and the giving of gifts to your relatives; and forbidden indecency, impropriety and oppression. He warns you so that you may remember." (Q.S. 16:90).⁵⁶ Thus, God refers to these things as real virtues and vices, with their own characters, prior to being commanded or prohibited.⁵⁷

⁵³ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 60.

⁵⁴ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 107; *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, pp. 311-312; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 61.

⁵⁵ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 57.

⁵⁶ The translation of this verse is referred to Ahmed Ali, *Al-Qur'ān: A Contemporary Translation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). I will use this translation throughout in citing the Qur'anic verses.

⁵⁷ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 113; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 57.

Having discussed the negative grounds of evils, in which we can see `Abd al-Jabbār's refutation of his opponents' idea, we can proceed now to discuss the positive grounds of evil as seen by our author. The word "ground," which is variously expressed by the terms *ma`nā*, *wajh*, or *`illah*, in its strict sense means:

the total character of an act which renders it evil, its internal *ma`nā* or *`illah* as contrasted on one side with the defined meaning of "evil" and on the other side with the *prima facie* aspects which in some cases go to make up the ground.⁵⁸

`Abd al-Jabbār's exposition of these grounds can be found particularly under the chapter "A Detailed account of the grounds on which evil things are evil,"⁵⁹ in which he mentions the major grounds of evil, although he does not claim to be providing a complete list of them. These grounds, which he calls here *wujūh*, are injustice (*ẓulm*), gratuitousness (*`abath*), lying (*kidhb*), ingratitude for a favour (*kufr al-ni`mah*), ignorance (*jahl*), willing evil (*irādat al-qabīh*), commanding evil (*amr al-qabīh*), and imposing unattainable obligation (*taklīf mā lā yutāq*).

With less elaborate exposition, `Abd al-Jabbār cites some examples in order to make clear how these grounds act as the internal *ma`nā* (plural : *ma`ānī*) for evil. `Abd al-Jabbār draws examples of some neutral acts and explains how they become evil in accordance with one or more of these grounds. Speech, for instance, as a neutral act can be evil because it is pointless, or is a command of evil, or because it is lying. Here, `Abd al-Jabbār posits pointlessness, commanding evil, and lying altogether as the grounds of the evilness of speech. The will, in the same way, can be evil because it is pointless, a will for evil, a will to fulfill an unattainable

⁵⁸ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 69.

⁵⁹ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, pp. 61-69.

obligation, or will for deceiving or cheating. Belief can also be evil when it is based on ignorance or on supposition without any evidence. Thus, ignorance is the real ground for the evilness of belief. One more example deserving of mention is that pain is not itself evil, except that it be the result of an act which is pointless or an act of injustice. On this last point `Abd al-Jabbar elaborates somewhat further, as will be discussed below.

However, `Abd al-Jabbār unfortunately does not attempt a detailed explanation of each of these grounds in the above mentioned chapter. Thus just as Hourani tries to do, we have to refer to some other parts of the *Mughnī* as well as the *Sharḥ* and the *Muḥīt* in order to reconstruct `Abd al-Jabbār's theories. But as these grounds are discussed in vast and scattered passages of `Abd al-Jabbār's works, it would be sufficient to circumscribe this account to injustice, pointlessness, lying, and the will for evil. These four grounds are the most frequently referred to by `Abd al-Jabbar in his exposition of the problem of evil.

1. Injustice

Injustice (*ẓulm*) is the most prominent ground of evil. `Abd al-Jabbar defines it as "evil injuries done to another person."⁶⁰ In contrast to the reference in the Qur'ān which indicates that it is possible for people to do wrong to themselves,⁶¹ this definition stresses its social character, because it excludes acts done to oneself.⁶²

There is another definition of injustice, taken from `Abd al-Jabbar's

⁶⁰ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 50.

⁶¹ For instance by the Qur'anic expression "they wrong themselves" in several verses, like 2:57; 3:117; 4:97; 16:28, etc.

⁶² *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 70.

discussion of the essential nature of wrong, where he writes : "The essential nature of wrong is any injury without benefit exceeding it or repulsion of harm greater than it, which is not deserved and not thought to have any of these (good-making) aspects."⁶³ To clarify this statement, `Abd al-Jabbār elsewhere gives an example of one who injures another person, personified by Zayd and `Amr. If, in the case of Zayd's inflicting injury on `Amr the latter does not deserve it, or the former has no right to punish him, or it is not for the purpose of self defense or even for `Amr's benefit, this injury is evidently wrong.⁶⁴ From this example, we know that injury or harm is not a *prima facie* evil. What makes it evil is because it is inflicted wrongly, and not for a beneficial purpose or undeservedly. Moreover, there is an intelligible component of this injustice, that is, injury (*ḍarar*) or harm (*maḍarrah*), two synonymous words which are defined as "any pain or sorrow, or thing productive of them, when they do not bring about benefit outweighing it."⁶⁵ But, more than only inflicting pain, the injurious act can include disobedience to God, because it leads to punishment, as well as feeding someone with delicious but poisoned food, because it results in death.⁶⁶

However, it must be realized that injustice and injury are not on the same level in terms of evil. That is because injury is not only a component of injustice, but also a component of other grounds of evil, such as pointlessness.⁶⁷ On the other hand, injury is only a *prima facie* evil

⁶³ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIII, p. 298.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

⁶⁵ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIV, p. 41; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 71.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIII, p. 298.

component of evil acts, because it can be neutralized by other factors.⁶⁸ In the case of pain (*al-alam*) and its relation to injury, it can be understood that pain is a species of injury. Thus, injury has a broader sense than pain, because pain is an intrinsic state of feeling. But Hourani shows that both injury and pain are independent but overlapping species of *prima facie* evil, which can also become the components of injustice and pointlessness. Yet, it is still conceivable that pain, like injury, can be evil only through not being a cause of benefit, repulsion of greater injury, or deserved punishment.⁶⁹ In short, pain is evil when it is wrong or pointless.⁷⁰

ʿAbd al-Jabbār's conception that inflicting pain is evil only as a component of injustice or pointlessness is in fact not his own, but rather was adopted from his masters. But his assertion in the *Mughnī* that the pain of hard study is good, even if it does not result in the real success of obtaining knowledge,⁷¹ shows that actually he did not maintain the consistency of his argument, since such pain is pointless, and therefore must be evil. This is in accordance with ʿAbd al-Jabbār's principle that pain, like injury, is evil only when it does not bring about benefit or does not function as repulsion of greater injury or as a deserved punishment.

Another discussion in the realm of injustice as a ground of evil deals with the fact that some acts may lead to benefit as well as to injury. Abd al-Jabbār, in this case, suggests that the problem can be solved by comparing both the benefit and injury, to see which one is greater than the other. If the injury is greater, it is as if the act does not lead to benefit. On the contrary,

⁶⁸ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 72.

⁶⁹ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIII, pp. 228, 297.

⁷⁰ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 63; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 72.

⁷¹ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIII, p. 293.

if the benefit is greater, it is as if the injury does not happen. Another possibility is if the proportion between them is not ascertainable, it can be decided by employing our personal judgement and estimation, by considering how much suffering the act may risk, as well as how much injury will be for its consequence. And if the benefit is estimated to be greater than both together, the act will not be judged as evil.⁷²

2. Gratuitousness or pointlessness (*al-'abath*).

Less extensive than his discussion of injustice, `Abd al-Jabbār's elaboration of gratuitousness as a ground of evil states that a thing can be evil because it is pointless, independently of any injustice, as has been alluded in the previous part of this section. His discussion of this issue is scattered throughout several chapters, and even overlapping with other subjects, mainly with injustice (*ẓulm*). Thus we do not find a special chapter devoted to discussing the nature of gratuitousness as a ground of evil. The most significant exposition of it is in a chapter entitled "Injury may be evil because it is gratuitous, even though it is not wrong,"⁷³ which is in fact not meant to serve as a complete discussion of gratuitousness alone. In the beginning of this discussion `Abd al-Jabbār gives an example of gratuitousness by stating:

A man allows another person to beat him, on condition that the beater compensates him with something more advantageous to him than not being beaten. The agreed acts are carried out, no wrong has been done, yet the beating is evil ... because it is useless (pointless); no other reason possible.⁷⁴

There are two other examples, but all suggest the same notion, and seem to be trivial or strange, as they never happen in our every day life. But

⁷² *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIV, pp. 26-27.

⁷³ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIII, pp. 312-315.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 312; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 75.

the idea is to clarify how the act of beating, which is not evil because it is compensated, is pointless. Based on this idea, `Abd al-Jabbar makes an analogy describing how if God were to inflict pain upon someone without any consideration (*itibār*),⁷⁵ it would be evil, not because it is wrong (*ẓulm*) as God will compensate him with a certain reward, but because it is pointless.⁷⁶ As God, the most wise, is believed never to do anything pointless, his inflicting pain upon men must have an intelligible purpose, either that God will compensate him with a greater joy or a reward, or that pain is deserved as a punishment.

But, is it true that God may inflict pain upon men? `Abd al-Jabbar admits that this is so. In a chapter entitled "It is right for God to inflict pain,"⁷⁷ `Abd al-Jabbār explains that as inflicting pain is one of the species of acts that is possible for us to do, inflicting pain is also permissible (*yajūz*) for God, because God is able to do every species of act he is permitted to. In the following chapter entitled "In the affirmation that God inflicts pain" `Abd al-Jabbār explains further how such pain is inflicted by God. `Abd al-Jabbar establishes his argument by drawing an analogy with God's power over natural phenomena such as color and his ability to set distant things in motion. According to his point of view, man cannot do anything with these phenomena. And when these two things happen, neither of which can be done by man, it must be God who causes them to happen.⁷⁸ But the main

⁷⁵ A note made by `Abd al-Karīm `Uthmān, the editor of *Sharh al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, shows us that according to `Abd al-Jabbār God's inflicting pain must produce some *itibār*, which prompts men to perform their obligations and persuades them to abandon the evils. See *Sharh al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, p.493.

⁷⁶ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIII, pp. 312, 229.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 366.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 367. For further discussion dealing with those natural

concern of `Abd al-Jabbār seems to be his assertion that although it is admitted that God can inflict pain upon man, such an act cannot be considered as evil, because it is neither wrong nor pointless. This, as `Abd al-Jabbār suggests, reinforces his rejection of the idea of the predestinarians that something is evil because it is forbidden, or because of the status of the agent.⁷⁹ This means that God's inflicting pain is not evil, not because it is done by God above whom there is no Lord to forbid him, but because of an objective reason, that is, because it is not wrong or pointless.

In addition, to hold that God never does something pointlessly also means to maintain his justice. In his interpretation of the Qur'anic verse "Do you think We created you for nothing, and that you will not return to Us?" (Q.S. 23:115),⁸⁰ `Abd al-Jabbār asserts that this verse must be brought to indicate God's justice. It means that as pointlessness is contrary to the meaning of divine justice, God will never act or create something "for nothing." However, there is no further explanation how divine justice is fulfilled by eliminating gratuitousness. But in general, as to maintain that God is just means to affirm that all his acts are good and that he does no wrong at all (as will be discussed later), it can be understood that since pointlessness is evil, there is none of his acts which is pointless.⁸¹

phenomena which come into being only because of God, see, among the others, *al-Mughnī*, vol. IX, pp. 87-93; Judith K. Hecker, "Reason and Responsibility" pp. 246-263.

⁷⁹ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIII, p. 368.

⁸⁰ *A-ja-hasibtum annamā khalaqnākum `abathan wa-ilaynā turja`ūn*. Here the word "*abathan*" is translated as "for nothing," or "for nought." See, Ahmed Ali, *Al-Qur'ān: A Contemporary Translation*, p. 297; M. Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (New York: New American Library, n.d.), p. 252.

⁸¹ `Abd al-Jabbār, *Mutashūbih al-Qur'ān*, ed. `Adnān Muḥammad Zarzūr (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1969), vol. II, p. 520.

3. Lying (*kidhb*)

In the previous discussion, it has been shown that together with injustice, lying is one of the grounds of evil, which, unlike injury, can be directly regarded as evil. In one passage of the *Mughnī*, `Abd al-Jabbar explains that lying is considered as evil merely because it is lying, as the rational judgement can decide. It is different from injury, which the rational argumentation does not necessarily recognize as evil simply because it is injury, except when it is wrong or pointless.⁸²

In his attempt to prove his argument that lying is always evil, `Abd al-Jabbār makes a comparison with the case of painting. In the case of painting, people may differ in their perception of the same subject. One person may say that a painting is beautiful, but another person will say the opposite. Alternatively, the same person may change his mind, and say something differently from his previous point of view. This is not the case with injustice or lying, where people will not differ in considering them as evil; or that the doer of them will deserve blame. `Abd al-Jabbār then draws an analogy with the Kharijites who considered that killing people having different beliefs from theirs is lawful, because, being their enemies, such people deserved that punishment. Thus, if they knew that it was wrong (*ẓulm*), certainly they would have to consider it as evil.⁸³

This is in accordance with another explanation given by `Abd al-Jabbar in another part of the *Mughnī*, in which it is stated that lying is known to be evil in itself and unconditionally, for the reason that lying is on the same level as injustice as the grounds of evil. The passage from the *Mughnī* reads:

⁸² *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIII, p. 351.

⁸³ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 20.

We know that wrongdoing when it is known as wrongdoing is known as evil, while if it (the act's effect) is known as being deserved or leading to benefit or repulsion of injury, or believed to be such, its evil condition is not known. So it is necessary that what necessitates its evilness is its being wrongdoing. Therefore, the knowledge that it is evil springs from the perfection of the intellect. If it were evil on any other ground, that would not be necessary. And our thesis about the other kinds of evils mentioned is the same - such as being imposition of what is beyond someone's capacity, ingratitude to the benefactor, ignorance and lying.⁸⁴

But, to some extent, lying cannot be exactly similar to injustice, because of their different natures. The previous quotation shows that injustice is evil when it is known to be injustice. But if it is deserved or leads to benefit or repulsion of injury, it is not seen as evil anymore. Based on this fact, a question can be raised: can lying be deserved or lead to benefit, or can it function as repulsion of another evil!? This issue seems to remain obscure in `Abd al-Jabbār's discussion, and even invites more confusion. However, `Abd al-Jabbār seems to assert that it is possible for lying to have such qualities as does injustice, i.e. having a beneficial effect or repelling injury, as shown by the following quotation:

It is known immediately that a lie which has no benefit or repulsion of injury is evil for the reasons we have mentioned. (But) if it were evil through its being exempt from them (benefit and repulsion of injury), it would be like truthfulness. For truthfulness too when it is lacking in them is evil, while when it contains benefit it is good.⁸⁵

Based on this idea, we can assume that lying, having the same qualities as injustice, cannot be evil when it leads to benefit or repulses other injury. But it does not seem to be true, and here is the beginning of the real confusion in `Abd al-Jabbār's point of view. In contrast to the idea conveyed in the previous quotation `Abd al-Jabbār goes on to state in the following lines that if an equal benefit occurred in lying as in truth-telling, it would be

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 77.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

permissible for man to prefer lying to truth-telling. This conclusion, as `Abd al-Jabbār suggests, is absolutely false, and is itself a proof that lying is evil because it is lying alone. With greater emphasis `Abd al-Jabbār writes:

... if it were possible for lying to be good because of benefit or repulsion of injury, we should not be sure that it would not be good from the Exalted, and that would necessitate doubt about His messages and those of His prophets, and would result in our knowing nothing about these things.⁸⁶

Dealing with this confusion, Hourani suggests that in fact `Abd al-Jabbār wants to provide "a test case" of the unconditional evilness of lying with a conclusion that even though lying can bring about benefit, it is still evil.⁸⁷ This statement is more clearly expressed by providing an example of someone seeking to murder a believer. In such a critical case, lying is still evil, although it is intended to save the life of that believer. Accordingly, `Abd al-Jabbār proposes "speaking obliquely" (*ta'rīd*) instead of lying in order to save his life. An objection is then put forward by his opponents, to the effect that if someone does not know how to insinuate, a lie on his part must be accepted as good, as well as on the part of those who are under compulsion or overcome with fear. In answering this objection, `Abd al-Jabbār insists that every sane person knows how to insinuate just as he knows how to give information. Thus, in any case, `Abd al-Jabbār maintains his assertion that lying is still evil, even though it might bring about benefit or repulse another injury.⁸⁸

The last notion seems to agree with an idea held by the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant maintains that human action should be based upon a rational principle and not on empirical one; and

⁸⁶ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 67; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 77.

⁸⁷ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 78.

⁸⁸ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:2, p. 342.

suggests that this rational principle should extol the universal maxim, without primary consideration of consequences. Citing from Kant's essay *On a Supposed Right to Tell Lies from Benevolent Motives*, Brenden E.A. Liddell reports:

A friend, pursued by a murderer, runs to my house and I hide him. The murderer arrives and asks if my friend is hiding inside. May I lie to save my friend? Kant's answer is that I may not, since it is always wrong to lie. He argues that we do not find in *anticipated* results the *absolute* moral criterion we need. Suppose we universalize the maxim: whenever I hide a friend from a murderer, I will lie to protect him. Surely, it would seem, we could willingly allow anyone to lie in such a situation. Isn't it better to save a life than to tell the truth here? Generally speaking, yes, but in such a case we cannot be sure that our purpose in lying will actually result; moral decisions require some absolute criterion, not one offering merely high probability. Even if I do lie, I cannot be certain that I will be believed; and if I am believed, I cannot be certain that my lie will ultimately prevent the murderer from carrying out his plot. Suppose, for instance, that my friend, hearing me stall the murderer at the door, escapes through a rear window. The murderer believes me, searches elsewhere, find my friend outside, and kills him. By my lie, I helped cause the very result I had intended to prevent. The *anticipated* consequences upon which I based my decision to lie *did not occur*.⁸⁹

In any case, based on `Abd al-Jabbār's assertion that certain acts are obligatory not because of a benefit obtainable for the obligatee,⁹⁰ it can be assumed that, agreeing with Kant's point of view, lying is evil, disregarding any benefit that might be pursued from it.

4. Willing evil (*irādat al-qabīh*)

Willing evil is mentioned as one of the grounds of evil in `Abd al-Jabbār's discussion containing a detailed account of the aspects by which an

⁸⁹ Brenden E.A. Liddell, *Kant on the Foundation of Morality: A Modern Version of the Grundlegung* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1970), pp. 73-74.

⁹⁰ Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, p. 233, citing from *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIV, p. 28.

evil thing should be judged as evil.⁹¹ A different explanation is also available in another volume of the *Mughnī*, where it is mentioned that the will for evil is necessarily evil, because whoever knows its being as such must know its evilness, and that therefore the doer must deserve blame. Likewise the one who knows injustice to be wrong will know its evilness.⁹²

In order to understand `Abd al-Jabbār's concept in wider perspective, it is important that we see what the relationship is between will and purpose in evil. There are certain causal relations between each of them and the act. Accordingly `Abd al-Jabbār uses several terms to describe these relations, dealing with mental processes and their results. In discussing this issue, Hourani tries to clarify some technical terms used by `Abd al-Jabbār, such as *shahwah* (desire), *dā'i* (motive), *irādah* (will), and *qaṣd* (purpose).⁹³

Dealing with *shahwah*, Hourani explains that it is a natural state of passion, the state of being attracted by what is perceived. The *shahwah* comes before the motives and provides raw material for it. But it is still different from the will which is more rational and far-sighted.

The motive (*dā'i*) is entirely an intellectual state, such as a knowledge possessed by the able agent concerning the character of the act, or his estimate or belief that something has benefit or that it is good. It is possible that several motives emerge for the same purpose of act. But the one which is really meant by `Abd al-Jabbār is the most prominent of them which leads toward an act. Thus, the motive must precede man's act or his refraining from it, as it is evident that if someone performs an act he must know what

⁹¹ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 62.

⁹² *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:2, p. 101.

⁹³ *Islamic Rationalism*, pp. 82-89.

he is doing.⁹⁴

However, motive is neither a will nor another name for it, because a person who has a motive (having knowledge that something is beneficial or good for him) may remain knowing it as such, but not willing it. So, motive is a determining cause of the will. The will or *irādah* is then the necessitating factor which leads toward action. It occupies an intermediate position between motive and action. The existence of will is something which everyone can observe immediately in his own experience, just as he observes himself believing, desiring, etc., the existence of which needs no proof.⁹⁵

Any intelligent person does not deny the fact of his aiming at (*kawnuhu qāsīdan li al-fīl*) and willing it (*murīdan lahu*) and choosing (*mukhtāran*). He distinguishes between this state of his and his rejecting (*kawnuhu kārihan*), and he distinguishes between what he wills from himself and what he wills from another.⁹⁶

This quotation gives us an impression that aiming at (purpose), will, and choice are synonyms. Thus it seems that `Abd al-Jabbār does not differentiate between will and choice, no more than he does between will and purpose. But, as Hourani then suggests, both will and purpose are used in different contexts: *irādah* is used to indicate an activity of the mind without attention to its end, while *qasḍ* is used to indicate the activity with attention to its end.⁹⁷ Therefore, as Hourani goes on, *irādah* can signify "want," based on `Abd al-Jabbār's explanation "God wills all the acts of worship that He commands and seeks, and He does not will any evil but rejects it."⁹⁸

Bearing in mind those technical terms used by `Abd al-Jabbār in his

⁹⁴ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:2, p. 194.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 88; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 85.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:2, p. 218; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 87.

discussion of the will for evil, we can now discuss the relationship of the mental state to the value of evil. Based on our discussion that a motive is an intellectual state of the agent able to carry out an act, it can be defined in terms of those acts which are done with knowledge (motivated) and others which are done without it (unmotivated). Hourani, in his attempt to clarify this classification, makes further distinctions for each one of these classes. Motivated acts can either have value independent of a particular purpose, or have value dependent on a particular purpose. For example, motivated acts with value independent of a particular purpose include acts like injustice, ignorance, will for evil, etc.⁹⁹ The value judgement assigned for these acts is evil, and the agent deserves blame, except if he is in the state of constraint (*mulja'*). An example of a motivated act with value dependent on a particular purpose is that of lying, which is evil. Here too the agent deserves blame.

But this "particular purpose" is not an easy term to understand. It is taken from the phrase "*wajhan makhsūsan*" which frequently appears in `Abd al-Jabbār's discussion of this issue. Hourani suggests that it does not mean simply the purpose to do evil, but more precisely, the purpose to inflict injury, take revenge, or commit robbery.¹⁰⁰ In other words, it is aimed at inflicting a certain form of harm.

Unmotivated acts or acts without knowledge can be subdivided into ordinary acts which cause damage resulting from unconscious actions, and other acts whose value is dependent on a particular purpose. Acts which cause damage and which are performed by an unconscious agent are certainly evil. But the agent, not being conscious of his actions or having no full

⁹⁹ *Al-Mughni*, vol. VI:1, p. 83.

¹⁰⁰ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 92.

awareness of them, is not to be blamed. This is in accordance with the criterion given by `Abd al-Jabbār that knowledge of injustice is not a condition for an act to be evil. Injustice is evil, regardless of whether or not the agent knows it, because knowledge is only a condition for the agent's deserving blame.¹⁰¹ Unmotivated acts, whose value is dependent on a particular purpose, is exemplified by the talking in one's sleep. Basically, such an act is neither good nor evil, since it is not right to consider this talking as giving information or a command, nor can the act be regarded as an acquisition either for the sake of gaining a benefit or repulsing any harm.¹⁰²

In contrast with `Abd al-Jabbār's assertion that knowledge is a criterion of the value judgement on the agent, will is not a relevant criterion for deciding our judgement on the agent. Thus, will is not a condition for blaming the wrongdoer, because will is not always a determining factor for the agent to decide his acts, such as in the case of constraint, where the agent is unable to will to avoid an act. In addition, knowledge is merely one of the conditions for our ability to will to perform an act.¹⁰³

Accordingly, the will for evil is not blameworthy. This is what can be clearly understood from `Abd al-Jabbār's explanation, as follows:

Further, this assertion (that *irādah* is a condition of deserving blame) implies that none of us deserves blame for evil wills, for they are not willed; and if that assertion were admissible in this case it would be admissible for all other evils.¹⁰⁴

But as is clear from the beginning of our discussion that the will for

¹⁰¹ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 82.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁰³ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 91.

¹⁰⁴ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 82; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 92.

evil is necessarily evil and its agent deserves blame, the last statement is then in apparent contradiction with it. However, Hourani, in his attempt to reconcile this contradiction, considers that the will for evil, like injustice and ignorance, is an evil act disregarding its particular purpose, such as to injure someone or to take revenge. And based on this argument, Hourani suggests that a will for any evil object is evil, and its being evil is not dependent on particular directions of purpose.¹⁰⁵

C. THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

Besides his extensive discussion of *al-qabīḥ* dealing with its nature and the aspects by which a thing becomes evil, `Abd al-Jabbār also discusses *al-ālam* (sufferings, pains)¹⁰⁶ as another type of evil.

`Abd al-Jabbār's discussion of this issue can be found, for the most part, in volume XIII of the *Mughnī*. In this volume `Abd al-Jabbār discusses the problem of suffering after explaining his concept of divine grace (*lutf*), which occupies the first half of the book. *Lutf*, as a central theme of this volume, is meant as something which summons men to perform their obligations whether voluntarily or involuntarily. In the case of the occurrence of suffering, *lutf* plays a role similar to that played by a father who has to be gracious toward his children by encouraging them to learn and to pursue a

¹⁰⁵ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 92.

¹⁰⁶ The word *alam* (plural: *ālām*) in the Dictionary means pain, ache, suffering, or agony. (Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, (1976), p. 24. J.R.T.M. Peters prefers to use the word "pain" for it, while Judith K. Hecker prefers "suffering." See J.R.T.M. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, pp. 134-135; Judith K. Hecker, "Reason and Responsibility," p. 135, ff. Here I will use both "pain" and "suffering" interchangeably.

good education.¹⁰⁷ Thus, the problem of suffering in the realm of divine grace is justified by the explanation that if men had bestowed on them perpetual delight and felicity, they would be oppressive and haughty, based on the scriptural allusion cited by `Abd al-Jabbar: "If God were to give in abundance to His creatures they would fill the earth with oppression. So He gives according to measure as He will. He knows (what is good for) His creatures." (Q.S. 42:27).¹⁰⁸ This discussion occupies more than the second half of the volume. Although there are some repetitions of his discussion of the same issue from volume nine of the *Mughnī* (especially concerning the belief that pain is something generated from "cleavage" (*taḥnūqah*) or "infirmity" (*wahā*) of the body),¹⁰⁹ `Abd al-Jabbār's discussion of suffering in volume XIII is more complete and covers many aspects related to it, particularly concerning how suffering can or cannot be evil, whether or not God really inflicts it, and further consequences of the issue.

But the problem of suffering has also appeared in earlier volumes of the *Mughnī*, mainly in volume seven, where there is a discussion of it with respect to its nature as an "accident" (*arad*) which occupies a certain space of a living body, an idea held by Abū `Alī al-Jubba'ī; and that the pain is called pain only when it is perceptible together with a natural aversion (to it) (*li-anna kawnuhu alaman yarjū ilā kawnihi mudrakan ma a nufūr al-tab'i*).¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIII, p. 9.

¹⁰⁸ Further explanation for this verse is given by the author by stating that God distributes sustenance among his creatures in a definite way so as to enable them to avoid avarice and so as to bring about their well-being, as can be understood from "He knows (what is good for) His creatures." See, *Ibid.*, p. 193.

¹⁰⁹ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIII, p. 272; vol. IX, p. 52.

¹¹⁰ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VII, p. 37; J.R.T.M. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, p.

Another discussion relating to the issue is also available in volume one of his *al-Muḥīt bi al-Taklīf*, in which `Abd al-Jabbār discusses suffering as a genus - equivalent to the voice and composition (*ṣawt wa-talīf*) of human acts - which will not happen except when there is a cause.¹¹¹

As an accident (*arad*) compatible with composition (*talīf*), pain is a form of separation or cleavage which occurs in a composite substance. In its turn, this composite substance is the substrate (*maḥall*) in which the existence of pain inheres and on which it depends. Accordingly, such an accident can also exist in a non-living body, although then it is no longer called pain. In another passage of the *Muḥīt*, `Abd al-Jabbār explains further that pain as a genus is like pleasure (*ladhdhah*), which only differs from pain in the name given to each of them. The name is given according to the connection of special *ma`ānī* appropriate to it.¹¹²

As has been mentioned above, pain is called pain only when it is perceptible. And an agent is said to have pain when he can perceive it with his natural aversion. This is said to be the reason why Abū `Alī al-Jubbā`ī holds that pain needs a living body to exist.¹¹³

Pain cannot happen by itself. It can only happen by means of a cause which generates (*wallada*) it. The cause is called *wahā*, infirmity or weakness¹¹⁴ which generates the pain without delay:

135.

¹¹¹ *al-Muḥīt bi al-Taklīf*, vol. I, p. 411.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 366; J.R.T.M. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, p. 134.

¹¹³ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VII, p. 37.

¹¹⁴ Hecker in her translation of the text uses "infirmity" instead of "weakness." The latter, however, appears in a glossary supplemented to the end of this dissertation (p. 563), in which she writes *wahā* means "weakness (the case which generates suffering)." J.R.T.M. Peters translates *wahā* with "cleavage," although there is no such notion found

It has been established that infirmity generates suffering, because the latter inevitably comes about upon the occurrence of the former, and because suffering is produced in conformity to infirmity. If infirmity did not generate suffering, this would not be the case.¹¹⁵

As a generated effect of the infirmity, suffering is said to be produced in proportion to a directive cause (*ʿitmād*).¹¹⁶ In order to clarify this idea, ʿAbd al-Jabbār gives as an example by making a comparison between beating a tough part of the body and a tender one, in which the directive cause would be the same, but the extent of suffering would be different:

Suffering is produced in proportion to the extent of infirmity and not in proportion to a directive cause. For if a person received a blow where his body is tough, the directive cause would be the same (for both blows), but the (extent of) suffering would be different, since the (extent of) infirmity (of each place which was hit) was different.¹¹⁷

This is the way by which ʿAbd al-Jabbār demonstrates that suffering is an effect generated by infirmity. But what is meant by infirmity? Abd al-Jabbār explains in the following lines of his discussion that infirmity means "a dismemberment (*iftirāq*) upon the occurrence of which the health which life needs disappears."¹¹⁸

in the dictionaries. It seems to be based on his understanding of its terminological meaning given by ʿAbd al-Jabbār himself: *al-wahū innamā yurīdu bihi al-iftirāq alladhī tantafī ʿindahū al-sihhah*, that *al-wahū* is the cleavage which causes the absence of health. (*Al-Mughni*, vol. IX, p. 52; J.R.T.M. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, p. 134). I prefer to use "infirmity" or "weakness" for its translation, rather than "cleavage."

115 *Al-Mughni*, vol. IX, p. 52; Hecker, "Reason and Responsibility," p. 135.

116 *ʿitmād*, according to Hecker means "a directive cause which generates movements in various directions." But according to Peters, it means "pressure" as one of the five acts of the limbs (*afʿāl al-jawāriḥ*). The other four acts are modes of being (*akwān*), compositions (*taʿlīfāt*), sounds, and pains. See Hecker, "Reason and Responsibility," p. 556; J.R.T.M. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, p. 127.

117 Judith K. Hecker, "Reason and Responsibility," p. 135.

Concerning the relation of pain with the nature of evil, we can find Abd al-Jabbar's exposition in the second half of volume XIII of the *Mughnī*, where he begins his discussion by citing some ideas held by the different schools of thought available at his time.¹¹⁹ According to the Dualists (*al-Thanaawīyah*), sufferings and griefs (*ghumūm*) are by nature evil, and their existence is evil. Another idea holds that the suffering is evil when it is inflicted undeservedly upon a person, be it for his committing sin or for his neglecting his obligations. This idea is said to be held by the adherents of metempsychosis (*al-Tanāsukhīyah*) and the followers of Bakr b. Ukht `Abd al-Wahid b. Zayd al-Zahid.¹²⁰

Another belief was that sufferings or pains are evil except when they can bring about benefit or are deserved, but they do not say that the benefit which necessitates the goodness of the sufferings is the compensation (*iwad*), but rather because of the *ʿtibār*, an admonition or exhortation by which man

118 *Ibid.*, p. 125. This is another translation for the same phrase used by Peters to explain the meaning of *wahā*, in which the word *iftirāq* is translated with "dismemberment" instead of "cleavage."

119 *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIII, pp. 226-229.

120 Abu al-ʿAla al-ʿAfīfī, the editor of this volume of the *Mughnī*, makes a note for this school by referring to al-Baghdādī's *Al-Farq bayna al-Firaq*, in which he explains that this school is called Bakriyah, referring to Bakr's name. Bakr agrees with al-Nazzām in holding that man is only a spiritual being. But he also agrees with al-Ashʿarī in his rejection of the idea of "generation" (*tawlid*), and holds that God is the creator of pain in the body while beaten. See al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, *Al-Farq bayna al-Firaq* (Cairo: Matbaʿat al-Madanī, n.d.), p. 212. *Al-Tanāsukhīyah* is the sect which holds the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, and denies the resurrection. See Edward W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London & Edinburgh: Williams Norgate, 1974), Book I, part 7, p. 2789. This school of thought is also called *ashāb al-naql* (the adherents of transmigration). In his *Sharh* `Abd al-Jabbār explains his refutation against their idea that human soul will transmigrate from one to another lower form of being if they disobey God; and thus God's punishment is inflicted in this way. (*Sharh al-Usūl al-Khamsah*, p. 487). Another refutation is also mentioned in the *Mughnī*, vol. XIII, p. 429.

takes warning or example from the occurrence of the sufferings.¹²¹ This idea is said to have been held by `Abbad.¹²²

`Abd al-Jabbār then continues by explaining some ideas held by the Mu`tazilite masters. According to Abū `Alī al-Jubbā'ī, suffering is evil because of its being wrong (*ẓulm*), and its being wrong is based on various reasons, such as its lack of benefit, repulsion of harm, and whether or not it is deserved. In addition, the supposition that anyone might have any of these defects is also considered as wrong, because it may cause grief for him. Furthermore, it is also considered as wrong when the suffering happens in a case in which the agent's intention is good but is not received with gratitude, such as that agent has to break another person's arm in order to save him from being drowned. If he did not break the victim's arm he would certainly not be faced with ingratitude. Thus, a man's effort to save the victim turns out to be evil, because it is impossible for the latter to express his gratefulness, inasmuch as he has lost the use of his arm.¹²³

In contrast to the idea of Abū `Alī al-Jubbā'ī, his son, Abu Hashim, considered that suffering is evil because it is harmful (*ḍarar*). On the other hand, he agrees with his father's idea that benefit, repulsion of greater harm and whether or not it is deserved are factors which may deprive suffering of its evil nature. This idea, according to `Abd al-Jabbār, is mentioned in "one

121 The word *ītibār* or "a cautionary example" is frequently used by `Abd al-Jabbār to indicate the goodness that can be derived from suffering. Its most suitable meaning for this context can be as such quoted above. See Edward W. Lane, *Ibid.*, Book I, Part 5, p. 1938. Or, as has been noted previously, *ītibār* means something which prompts men to perform their obligations and persuades them to abandon the evils. See *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, p. 493.

122 The editor suggests that the name `Abbād mentioned by Abd al-Jabbār may refer to `Abbād b. Sulaymān al-Ḍamrī, a member of the seventh generation of the Mu`tazilites.

123 *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIII, p. 227.

place" (*fī mawḍiʿin*), but he gives no further description of this source. Still, as Abd al-Jabbar goes on, most of Abu Hashim's books mention that suffering is evil because of two factors, either because it is wrong or because it is pointless. He defines pointlessness as when something is not done wrongly but for no reason (*lam yakun fihā ma'nā*). For example, if someone allows another person to beat him and then the former asks the latter for money as a compensation, the act of beating is not wrong, but it is still evil because it is pointless. This is the same explanation as that of pointlessness as the ground of evil. According to `Abd al-Jabbār, this is the most reliable of Abu Hashim's points of view. And like his father, Abū Hāshim believed that suffering is evil when it is deprived of one or more of these four aspects: benefit, repulsion of greater harm, being deserved as a punishment, and being supposed to have one of these three.¹²⁴

Based on the previous exposition, Abū Hāshim is reported as to have considered that the sufferings inflicted by God are evil when they are merely for the sake of suffering, without any *ʿtibār*. The evilness of such sufferings is not because they are wrong - as it is believed that God will never inflict any pain without a compensation - but because they are pointless.¹²⁵ Thus, God's inflicting pain is not evil because either God will compensate it or because there will be a certain benefit or *ʿtibār* by which the sufferings are rendered not pointless.

Having mentioned the ideas of these two Mu'tazilite masters, `Abd al-Jabbar suggests that the right thing to believe concerning this issue is that sufferings can be good when they are free from any evil aspect. This is in accordance with his assertion that an evil thing is evil because of the rational

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

aspects (*wujūh ma`qūla*) affirming it. And a good thing is considered as such because of the absence of evil aspects. Therefore, the discussion of suffering should follow this way of thinking.¹²⁶

In spite of `Abd al-Jabbar's assertion that the most reliable idea held by Abū Hāshim is that sufferings are evil because of the two reasons mentioned above (being wrong or pointless), `Abd al-Jabbar cites another of Abū Hāshim's claims, to the effect that suffering is also evil because of its being harmful. In a chapter entitled "Suffering is not evil because it is harmful,"¹²⁷ `Abd al-Jabbar explains that the reason for holding such an idea is that if suffering is known as harmful or is permitted to be so, it will be evidently known as evil, and will be definable as good only in the event of the absence of this quality. For example, if a person were deprived of his clothing for a compensation less than its value, it would be evil, because it is harmful. And, conversely, if the compensation were more valuable, it would be good, even though it originates in a situation which is potentially harmful. In accordance with this argument, the punishment of hell is good, although it is in reality harmful, because the sinner, in his gaining his desires by committing disobedience (*ma`ṣiyah*), is like the one who hastens to acquire profit as a reimbursement for it. A similar case is one where a wage is paid in advance for a certain job; the hardness caused by the work will not be harmful anymore.

However, `Abd al-Jabbār does not in every respect agree with Abu Hāshim's point of view. `Abd al-Jabbār does not see that disobedience or sin committed by someone is like a wage paid in advance for a certain job, for the reason that the harmful thing may no longer be harmful when it brings

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 293-297.

about greater benefit. Moreover, it is evidently known that the benefit gained from disobedience committed during man's life is not compatible with the eternal punishment that man will undergo in the after-life. Thus, such a thing cannot be said to have been transformed from harmful to beneficial. Another reason is that some sins committed by the responsible agent (*mukallaf*) are not always beneficial for, or desired, by him. This is like the worshipping of idols done by unbelievers. No benefit is gained from such a sinful act, but, nevertheless, they will inevitably be punished for it. Therefore, it is inappropriate to assume that such a punishment is not harmful, and furthermore, it is as well incorrect to say that suffering is evil because it is harmful.¹²⁸

Dealing with the idea that suffering can be good because it can repulse greater injury, there seems to be a similarity with the idea that physical evil in the form of pain is not evil, because it can be justified as a useful and even a necessary warning system.¹²⁹ According to `Abd al-Jabbār it is good for a person to safeguard himself from suffering severe injury by taking a lesser risk, such as to run away in order to avoid the attack of a beast or to avoid the danger of being burnt by a fire.¹³⁰ Thus, although `Abd al-Jabbār thinks that the sick person will only obtain relief from God (since God is believed to be the only agent who causes his sickness, and never to inflict pain pointlessly), it is still good for the person to try to obtain medical treatment in order to avoid more severe injury. In line with this reasoning, `Abd al-Jabbar suggests the necessity of the intellectual exercises for knowing God, by which man will be freed from the terrible fear of the punishment of hell in

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 295-296.

¹²⁹ H.J. McCloskey, *God and Evil*, (1974), pp. 87-90.

¹³⁰ *Al-Mughni*, vol. XIII, p. 335.

the after-life.¹³¹

Regarding the possibility that God may inflict pain, `Abd al-Jabbar explains that it is incorrect to assume that God's inflicting pain is good for the reason that God will repulse another harm with it. Accordingly, it is different from the case of man, for whom pain can be good on the assumption that it is beneficial, repulsing another harm, or because it is deserved. According to `Abd al-Jabbār, God's inflicting pain can be good only when it is for benefit or when it is deserved.¹³² In order to clarify this idea, `Abd al-Jabbār tries to answer an objection raised by an opponent who says that if God's inflicting pain upon a believer is for a benefit, then if such a pain were to be inflicted upon the infidels it should repulse the harmfulness of some of his punishment. Thus, it must be good for God to inflict pain in order to repulse another harm, as well as because it is beneficial. In answering this objection, `Abd al-Jabbār says that all mankind, believers and infidels, deserve a compensation and benefit from God, and that it is even permissible for God to give the infidels their compensation in advance (*mu`ajjalā*). But if he is to postpone it until the day of punishment, it will be regarded as being a part of their punishment. It is not because originally they deserved that the punishment be inflicted in such a way, but because when this punishment is postponed until the time when it is impossible for it to be fulfilled (on the day of punishment), it must be substituted with something else. This is what must generally be done by someone dealing with his debt. When it is impossible for him to pay that debt but he has something else equivalent to it, he must give it as a substitute.¹³³

131 *Ibid.*

132 *Ibid.*, p. 369.

133 *Ibid.*, p. 372.

However, his opponent still argues further that if the sickness (as a type of suffering) deserves a compensation or may serve as an eliminating factor of punishment (*isqāt al-īqāb*), it must be possible to say that pain is good because it repulses harm. But `Abd al-Jabbār seems to deny this idea, by pronouncing that the original thing to be deserved is the compensation (*iwāḍ*), and that eliminating punishment is (only) a substitute for it.¹³⁴ More deliberately, `Abd al-Jabbār explains in his *Sharḥ* that it is incorrect to assume that God can inflict pain in order to repulse a greater harm, because God could repulse harm without it. Thus inflicting pain for this purpose would be pointless.¹³⁵

In general, it can be said that all of `Abd al-Jabbār's discussion of the problem of suffering follows the same line, that it is permissible for God to inflict pain. But, in accordance with the basic concept of divine justice, his inflicting pain is not at all evil. His inflicting pain can even be good inasmuch as it can bring about benefit or because it is deserved as a punishment. Yet, as `Abd al-Jabbār always asserts, it is never inflicted in order to repulse another harm.

D. GOD AND THE REALITY OF EVIL.

Having discussed the nature of evil and other things related to it, now we can proceed to deal with another issue inseparable from the general discussion of the problem of evil. This is the relation of God and the reality of evil.

In establishing their principle of divine justice (*al-`adl*), the

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, p. 486.

Mu'tazilites hold that man is the creator of his own acts. Thus, man is the sole agent responsible for all of his acts, whether good or evil; and he cannot ascribe any of his evil acts to another agent by saying that it is out of his power to evade such an evil act. It is true, as has been affirmed by `Abd al-Jabbār, that an evil act is evil regardless of the agent who does it.

This is in contrast to the compulsionists (*al-Muḥbiḥ*) who hold that man has no act in its real sense, because it is only God who acts; and if the act is ascribed to man, it is only metaphorical. However, for some moderates (the followers of al-Ash`arī), man is still considered as the agent of his acts, or is said to be the able agent (*al-qādir*), but not the creator of his act.¹³⁶ This is the position taken by the Ash`arites, intermediate between the extreme compulsionists and the adherents of freedom of choice.

But concerning the theory that man is not the only agent who causes evil, and that he himself often becomes a victim of evils such as natural disasters, calamities, diseases, famine, physical and mental deformities, etc., it is not always conceivable to claim that such evils are caused by human acts alone. Thus, there must be another agent who may cause them. As has been alluded to in the previous discussion, that it is permissible for God, in spite of the fact that it is not evil of him, to inflict pain, this implies that God can be said to be the agent of evil causes. However, it is not always such an easy thing to decide. Even the Mu'tazilite theologians are not of one mind in their treatment of this issue. Some of their disputes are reported by Abd al-Jabbār in several parts of his books. In the *Mughnī* we can read his account of these disputes under the chapter "That God is able to do what would be wrong and

¹³⁶ *Innā lā naqūl inna al-`abda laysa bi-qādir, bal naqūl innahu laysa bi-khāliq.* Muhammad Imarah, *al-Mu'tazilah wa Mushkilat al-Hurriyat al-Insāniyah* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasat al-'Arabiyyah lil-Dirasat wa al-Nashr, 1988), p. 36, citing from Fakhri al-Din al-Razi, *Itiqadāt Firaq al-Muslimīn wa al-Mushrikīn* (Cairo, 1938), p. 68.

evil if he did it," in which he explains that according to al-Nazzām, al-Aswari, and al-Jahiz, it is impossible for God to have power to do wrong and to tell lies, or fail to choose the most appropriate thing to do (*aslah*), as otherwise it would necessitate defect and want in his essence.¹³⁷

The others, like Abu al-Hudhayl and his followers, Abū `Alī, and Abū Hashim say that God has the power to do what may be wrong or lie, but that God never does that because he knows the evilness of such an act and because he does not need to do it. In addition, according to Abū al-Hudhayl, it is impossible for God to do wrong, although he has the power to do so.¹³⁸

Having mentioned some other ideas held by the other Mu`tazilite scholars, `Abd al-Jabbar suggests that it is true that God has power to do what might be wrong if he should choose it. His argument to support this idea, as restated by Hourani, says:

The proof of our thesis that (that God is able to do evil) is that evil beings, speech, etc. are like good ones in their species, because the evil ones by being evil do not differ from the good ones, as we have shown previously. So if that is true, one who is able to do good (*al-qādir `alā al-hasan*) must be able to do evil, just as one who is able to do one good is able to do another good of the same species. For good and evil have no effect on the aspect (*wajh*) that the power of the able agent attains, because the able agent is just able to produce the species. That is shown by the fact that the judgement of being able (*hukm al-qādirīn*) does not vary so long as they are able to do the species, and it is not true that some of them are restricted to having power over what is evil in the species, not what is good, just as some people are not restricted to going out from one (door) rather than another, or being in one place rather than another, or causing pain in one body rather than in another. So if this is true, and the evil thing is like the good, he who has power over the species must have power over all its kinds, good and evil, just as he has power over its good kinds.¹³⁹

Thus, based on the previous quotation, the main reason for `Abd al-

¹³⁷ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 127.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 129; *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 99.

Jabbār's insistence that God may do wrong is that good and evil things are alike in their genus, and that the capacity of acting must extend to the whole genus. Therefore, since God has power to do good, he must likewise have the power to do evil. By saying that good and evil are alike in their species, he means that : "if we have the power to do a certain species of act, such as inflicting pain, we have that power regardless of the goodness or badness of the acts; and the same must be true of God."¹⁴⁰

The idea held by `Abd al-Jabbār is in fact in accordance with or supports the general belief held by most Muslim theologians that God has unlimited power. `Abd al-Jabbār himself insists in the *Mughnī* that God must have power over every species of acts of capable agents.¹⁴¹ This is also in accordance with the scriptural evidence, where we read: "Surely God does not wrong anyone; they wrong themselves" (Q.S. 10:44); "Your Lord does no wrong to His creatures." (Q.S. 41:46). Following `Abd al-Jabbar's interpretation of these verses, God's not wronging man does not mean that he could not do so, but, on the contrary, his praising himself for not doing so would not be possible unless he were able to do it.¹⁴² That is because his being a wrongdoer is no more than the existence of the potential for such acts on his part, and his not being a wrongdoer is simply because he does not do wrong.¹⁴³

Accordingly, it is evident that `Abd al-Jabbar, like most Mu'tazilite scholars, holds that God can do evil. But it does not mean that they would

¹⁴⁰ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 99.

¹⁴¹ *Anna kulla jins min al-maḡdūrāt yajibu kawnuhu ta'ālā qādiran alayh.* (*Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 59).

¹⁴² *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, p. 316.

¹⁴³ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 134.

say that God really does it. In contrast to the Ash`arites, who maintain that God creates the evil acts of men as their first cause, and claim that it is not evil of him because he is not disobeying any command, `Abd al-Jabbār would not solve the problem in such an easy way. The last idea has been rejected by `Abd al-Jabbar in his discussion that one of the aspects by which an act becomes evil is not because of being prohibited or disobeying command, as has been dealt with in an earlier part of this discussion. In addition, it is clear from the perspective of the Mu`tazilite doctrine that "if God were the cause of evil or had a will for it He would be evil just like anyone else."¹⁴⁴

At the end of volume six, part two of the *Mughnī*, `Abd al-Jabbār explains that God would be foolish if he willed foolishness and evil. This is the true consequence for the willer of evil, as our experience proves. Indeed, by this statement, `Abd al-Jabbār wants to make an analogy between the nature of God and that of man in the possibility of being foolish by willing foolishness and evil. In other words, as it is possible in the human experience that to will foolishness is itself an indication of being foolish, the same proposition must be true in the nature of God. This is what we can understand from Abd al-Jabbār's implicit elaboration by using the words *al-shāhid* and *al-ghā'ib*.¹⁴⁵ *Al-shāhid*, the present, means the present world and visible reality, while *al-ghā'ib* means the unseen world, beyond our experience. More specifically, *al-shāhid* is meant to indicate "man," and *al-ghā'ib* is meant to indicate "God," as can be understood from the following passage:

One thing which necessitates them to hold the saying that God would be foolish if he willed foolishness and evil is that because

¹⁴⁴ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 100.

¹⁴⁵ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:2, p. 341.

this proposition is necessarily true for the present (*al-shāhid*) for those who will evil. And the condition of the willer of evil is indifferent from that of the doer of evil, and thus the unseen (*al-ghā'ib*) should be likewise.¹⁴⁶

In any case, `Abd al-Jabbār insists that there is no distinction in applying such a judgement on a doer and a willer of evil, both in the present world and in the other, or both in human and divine actions. This is also in accordance with the well-known Mu`tazilite principle which is also supported by `Abd al-Jabbār, that things do not differ in their essential natures in this world and in the invisible transcendent world, a good act is good regardless of agent, and evil act is evil regardless of agent,¹⁴⁷ as has been indicated earlier in this chapter.

According to Hourani, the latter idea held by `Abd al-Jabbar has actually brought him back to the same position taken by al-Nazzām and others, viz. that God cannot do evil, because it would make him evil, which of course contradicts his essence. However this is not true, because according to the principles held by `Abd al-Jabbar, God's essence would not be affected by anything he did. On the other hand, to assume that God can do evil may lead to more crucial consequences, because it may imply that it is possible for God to really do it, and thus he would be blamable for it. Therefore, as Hourani goes on, the position taken by `Abd al-Jabbar is that although God is able to do evil, it is not permissible (*lā yajūz*) for him to do it. Yet, as has been alluded to before, `Abd al-Jabbar admits that diseases and pain are inflicted by God. And, it has been shown as well that in any case it is not evil of him to do that, because these diseases and pain are

¹⁴⁶ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:2, p. 341. See also Edward W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Book I, pp. 1611, 2314, on "*shāhid*" and "*ghā'ib*."

¹⁴⁷ Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, p. 236, citing from *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XIV, p. 13.

either deserved as punishment, or because they are trials (*mihnah*) sent by God for man's benefit, which are certainly to be compensated in the after-life.¹⁴⁸

Another consequence resulting from the above assumption is that if God were able to do evil, he would necessarily do it, based on the principle that all possibilities can be realized when the time is available. However, this objection is easily rejected by `Abd al-Jabbār in his *Sharḥ* by stating that not everyone who is able to do evil has necessarily to inflict it. `Abd al-Jabbār explains it by an analogy of one who is able to stand up but remains seated, and of one who is able to speak but wants to keep silence; this does not necessarily mean that they cannot stand up or speak. Likewise, as it is believed that God is able to initiate the resurrection (*qiyāmah*) now, but has not done it as yet, does not mean that God cannot do it.¹⁴⁹ Or, as Hourani has summed up: "just as men do not have to do everything they can do, so God can refrain from doing evil."¹⁵⁰

To fortify the argument that God is not permitted to do evil, `Abd al-Jabbar suggests that since God knows the evilness of the evil thing and he has no need to do it, he will never choose evil at all.¹⁵¹ In order to clarify this idea, again, `Abd al-Jabbār uses the analogy from human experience that if one of us does not need to do evil or to tell a lie, and he knows the evilness of both acts, he will not choose to do them.

In dealing with the idea that God knows the evilness of evil things,

¹⁴⁸ *Islamic Rationalism*, pp. 100-101. A sporadic discussion concerning diseases and pains as trials or *mihnah* is available in the *Mughnī*, vol. XIII, pp. 405-437.

¹⁴⁹ *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, p. 315.

¹⁵⁰ *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 101.

¹⁵¹ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 177.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār asserts that since God knows his own essence (*ʿālm li-nafsihi*), he must know every perceptible thing, and thus he must know the grounds (*illat*, plural: *ʿilal*) by which an evil thing becomes evil. And the reason that God does not need to do evil is based on the reality that God absolutely does not have any want (*hājah*) in his essence. And if such a want is impossible for him, he must not have any need at all (*yajibu kawnuhu ghanīyan*).¹⁵² Thus to say that it is not permissible for God to do evil is based on the fact that he has no motive to do it, and therefore, there is no reason to think that he does it or would do it.¹⁵³

Finally, to say that God never does any evil is something firmly held by the Muʿtazilites as their principal tenet dealing with divine justice. In the beginning of his exposition of the nature of divine justice, ʿAbd al-Jabbar explains that to declare that God is just means to hold that he does no wrong nor does he choose it, that he never fails to fulfill what is obligatory upon him, and that all his acts are good.¹⁵⁴

152 *Ibid.*

153 *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 102.

154 *Sharh al-Usūl al-Khamsah*, p. 301, as cited by Eric L. Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, p. 21.

I. HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY AND THE REALITY OF EVIL

In Arabic, responsibility is called *mas'ūliyah*, a derivative form of *sa'ala*, meaning "to ask" or "to question." This is based on the scriptural passage: "So fear God in whose name you ask of one another (*tasā'alūna*) (the bond of) relationship. God surely keeps watch over you." (Q.S. 4:1); and another verse: "He cannot be questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned." (Q.S. 21:23). The last part of the second verse, "they will be questioned," means that men will be asked about their gratefulness for God's benefaction and blessing upon them as he has created and given them nobility and remembrance (*al-sharaf wa al-dhikr*).¹⁵⁵

Terminologically, the word "responsibility" or *mas'ūliyah* is not widely known in Mu'tazilite thought, and even the word "*sa'ala*" in the above verse appears in their Qur'anic exegesis in connection with elaborating the meaning of divine justice. So, in their interpretation of the verse *Lā yus'alu 'ammā yafalu wa-hum yus'alūn* as translated above, the word *yus'alu* means that man would be questioned about his deeds, for some of them might be pointless, wrong, or evil; and God, the Exalted, could not necessarily be questioned as such, since all his deeds are absolutely good and not evil at all. Therefore, the questioning only applies to man's deeds, examining those faults which occur because of his own choice or freedom of will, and not because they are created by God on his part.¹⁵⁶ This is in accordance with Zamakhshari's insistence in his exegesis that if man were forced to go astray or to accept guidance he could not be questioned for his deeds, since

¹⁵⁵ Samih Dughaym, *Falsafat al-Qudar fī Fikr al-Mu'tazilah* (Beirut: Dār al-Faḥwīr, 1985), p. 303, citing from *Lisān al-'Arab*, vol. XI, p. 318. I am indebted to Dughaym's work in discussing this issue, and thus it will be frequently cited.

¹⁵⁶ 'Abd al-Jabbar, *Mutashābih al-Qur'ān*, vol. II, pp. 497-498.

questioning cannot proceed in the face of perplexity or constraint, but rather in the possibility on the part of the agent to make a choice either to perform or not to perform the act.¹⁵⁷ At this point in the argument, the concept of *mas'ūliyah* is subsumed by the concept of *taklīf* (imposing an obligation), since, based on previous attribution, the *taklīf* requires the meaning of responsibility.¹⁵⁸

Imposing an obligation (*taklīf*), as defined by `Abd al-Jabbar, means to inform another person that he has to do or not to do a certain act either for his benefit or for the sake of repulsing harm, in the face of the possibility that the difficulties might descend upon him, so long as it does not come to the limit of constraint.¹⁵⁹ Imposing the obligation, therefore, implies the meaning of hardness or trouble by which an act may have a value judgement.¹⁶⁰ And in return for that imposition, man will necessarily deserve either praise for his fulfilling the obligation, or, conversely, will deserve punishment for his neglecting it. This, as `Abd al-Jabbar suggests, is in accordance with the purpose of imposing the obligation as an indication of requital, or in order to expose the obligatee to reward (*ta rīd al-mukallaḥ lil-thawāb*), and for his benefit, so long as he deserves it; because reward is not good except if it is deserved. Therefore, it is necessary for God to impose obligations which are hard upon men for this purpose.¹⁶¹

157 Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf `an Haqāiq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-`Arabī, 1947), vol. II, p. 361.

158 Samīḥ Dughaym, *Falsafat al-Qudar*, pp. 303-304.

159 *al-Muḥīt bi al-Taklīf*, vol. I, p. 1.

160 More clearly, it is unnecessary "to impose" upon someone, for instance, to eat a delicious meal already served for him, because it is against the nature of *taklīf*, and therefore has no value. See Samīḥ Dughaym, *Falsafat al-Qudar*, p. 304.

161 *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XI, pp. 387, 393, 409, 410.

But as a consequence of this imposition, man, to be responsible, must have the capability to perform the obligation imposed upon him or with which he is charged. In addition, he must also know its condition (*kayfiyah*), and be willing to produce that act in a certain way. And in order to be able to meet all these conditions, he has to be living and perceiving. This is the criterion established by `Abd al-Jabbār in the *Mughnī*, as he explains that the responsible agent (*mukallaf*) is he who is able, knowing, perceiving, living, and willing,

....for He (God) only charged with an act the (subject who is) able (*qādir*) to bring it (the act) into existence, knowing (*ālim*) how it is (*kayfiya*), willing (*murīd*) to produce it in this and not in another way; an able subject (*qādir*) is only able when he is also living. And the state of the "living" (*hayy*) can only be distinguished from others by his being perceiving (*mudrik*) the perceptible things when the hinderings are taken away, and by the possibility of his being knowing and able.¹⁶²

In any case, it is clear that the basis for imposing an obligation is the possibility either to do or not to do the act. And if there is a difficulty in performing it, such a difficulty should not cause any constraint which eliminates the capability of the agent in performing his obligation. This is in order to establish our notion of the relation between imposing the obligation (*taklīf*) and the responsibility (*mas'ūliyah*). So, the validity of imposing obligation depends substantially on the capacity of the agent to be responsible, and here lies the essential meaning of justice as held by the Mu'tazilites.¹⁶³

Justice, as the second most important of the principal doctrines of Mu'tazilism, has been discussed extensively in the first part of volume six of the *Mughnī*. We can find, however, an explicit elaboration of its nature in

¹⁶² *Al-Mughnī*, vol. XI, p. 309, as cited by J.R.T.M. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, pp. 159-160n.

¹⁶³ Samih Dughaym, *Falsafat al-Qadar*, p. 306.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār's *Sharḥ*, where he explains that it used to describe an action, justice means the augmentation of the rights of another person and the fulfillment of what he is entitled to.¹⁶⁴ This augmentation (*tawfīr*) means to provide the person every possible expedient that would enable him to make choices in performing his obligation, whereupon it is possible to ask him why he performs it in such a way. And the fulfillment of what he is entitled to consists in requiting him for his choosing goodness and by inflicting punishment upon him for his wicked choice.¹⁶⁵ On the other hand, if the nature of justice is ascribed to God, this means that God never does an evil act and will never choose to do so, that he never fails to accomplish what is obligatory and that all his acts are good.¹⁶⁶ In accordance with this notion, in his treatise headed "*al-Mukhtaṣar fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*," ʿAbd al-Jabbār also explains that the meaning of justice is knowledge of God's remoteness (*tanzīh*) from three aspects: all repulsive things, the failure to carry out the obligation of giving reward, and devotion to serving the repulsive or opposing favor or benefit; and this emphasizes that all his acts are wise, just and right.¹⁶⁷

By the above explanation, ʿAbd al-Jabbār wants to emphasize that God does nothing except the good, as he must do the obligatory (*al-wājib*), and will not devote himself to anything except for the sake of goodness,¹⁶⁸ and that he never wants to do anything repulsive but only chooses wisdom

164 *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, p. 132.

165 Samīḥ Dughaym, *Falsafat al-Qudr*, p. 306.

166 *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, p. 301.

167 ʿAbd al-Jabbār, "*al-Mukhtasar fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*," in *Rasā'il al-Adl wa al-Tawhīd*, ed. by Muḥammad ʿImārāh (Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 1988), p. 198.

168 *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, p. 3.

and righteousness.¹⁶⁹

The discussion of justice in its connection with the above notion, therefore, also refers to the concept of human action, i.e., by considering its value judgement as either good or evil. In his explanation of the meaning of action, Abd al-Jabbar suggests that the action is something which issues from the potential agent (*al-qādir*).¹⁷⁰ Thus, every action originating from that potential agent should be ascribed to that agent, since this is the direct consideration which is "reasonable for the witness" (*ma`qūl fī al-shāhid*), based on the reality that "the effect of writing is only found in a person who writes," and therefore it should be said that writing is the action of that agent.¹⁷¹

The above explanation of the meaning of action is needed by `Abd al-Jabbar in order to prove that "man's acts cannot all be predestined by God, because in this case man too could never be said to act."¹⁷² And based on this notion, the responsibility of man in all his actions can be established, because the principle of justice comes to stand primarily for the doctrine of free will. Furthermore, in its relation to the meaning of divine justice, man's responsibility for his acts is the basis for both reward and punishment, because "God would be unjust if he punished men for acts for which they

¹⁶⁹ *Rasā'il al-'Adl wa al-Tawhīd*, p. 202.

¹⁷⁰ For further discussion of the nature of human act in `Abd al-Jabbār's thought, see, among the others, *Islamic Rationalism* by George F. Hourani, pp. 37-47. But it is worth mentioning here that the action is not merely something generated (*muhdath*) or an event coming to existence after non-existence. The action must arise from a purposive being with ability to do or not to do it. (*Ibid.*, p. 37). See also, "The al-Qadi `Abd al-Jabbār's refutation of the Ash'arite Doctrine of 'Acquisition' (*Kasb*)," *Israel Oriental Studies*, vol. VI (1976), pp. 229-263.

¹⁷¹ *Rasā'il al-'Adl wa al-Tawhīd*, p. 203.

¹⁷² *Al-Mughnī*, vol. VI:1, pp. 3-4, as cited in *Islamic Rationalism*, p. 37.

were not responsible."¹⁷³

The demand for responsibility is accordingly impossible when the agent is in constraint. This implies that responsibility does not exist unless there is a real freedom of act. Ahmad Amin, in his explanation of the Mu'tazilite understanding of justice suggests that there must be a capability belonging to man either to perform the act or to refrain from it. If he does or does not do the act willingly, the reward or punishment will be rationally just. But if God were to create man and then oblige him to perform the act in a certain manner, such as to oblige one person to obey him and the other to disobey, and he rewarded the former and punished the latter, it would be entirely unjust. Thus, since God will never do evil, he will never impose upon man an obligation unless it can be performed voluntarily, as otherwise it would be possible for God to impose an obligation upon man beyond his capacity, which is truly evil.¹⁷⁴

In addition, the Mu'tazilites definitely attach reward and punishment to acts, and insist that God never fails in his obligation to reward the obedient and to punish sinner. This is the definite law established by God in accordance with his justice and wisdom. Therefore, divine justice necessitates the condition of the responsible obligatee (*mukallaḥ-mas'ūl*) to be capable and to be the author of his own acts. Even if there is difficulty in performing some obligations, it must still be possible for God to question man's responsibility, because along with that difficulty the span of choice and capability will expand, and the efficacy of the human agent in overcoming

¹⁷³ W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1973), p. 231.

¹⁷⁴ Ahmad Amīn, *Duhā al-Islām* (Cairo: Lajnat al-Ta'līf wa al-Ta'jamah wa al-Nashr, 1952), vol. III, p. 69.

such a difficulty will enable him to make his effort more effective.¹⁷⁵ After all, this is to emphasize God's justice, who does not create something pointlessly, and to demonstrate that all his acts are good, and chief among these is the reality of freedom of choice bestowed on human nature. There will be no meaning to divine justice and responsibility without the possibility of freedom of choice.¹⁷⁶

Based on the previous discussion, it is clear that the existence of human responsibility is the basis for God's either conferring his reward or inflicting his punishment upon man. And since man is a responsible agent, all of his acts must be ascribed to himself, or, as `Abd al-Jabbār frequently states in his *Sharḥ*, human acts are not created by God on man's part, but it is man himself who creates them.¹⁷⁷ And in order to clarify this statement, `Abd al-Jabbar explains further by distinguishing between what it means to be a beneficent and an unkind person on the one hand, and between having a beautiful and an ugly face on the other. The two phenomena necessitate different treatments on our part, since the first deals with an ethical value judgement, while the second with an aesthetical one. Thus, we will praise the beneficent person for his benevolence, and blame the unkind person for his misdeeds or insults. But such a treatment is not applicable for a person who possesses either a beautiful or ugly face or a tall or short stature. That is because, according to `Abd al-Jabbār, we cannot address our question to the tall person by asking why he is tall, or to the short person by asking why he is short.¹⁷⁸ This is true, because stature, not being subject to ethical value

¹⁷⁵ Samih Dughaym, *Falsafat al-Qudar*, p. 307.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, p. 332.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

judgement, does not deserve praise or blame; thus it is only human acts which deserve either praise or blame.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār's assertion on ascribing human acts to man himself, and not to God, more or less, comes as a result of his vindication of divine justice. Human acts, which are generally not disentangled from evil matters, cannot be ascribed to God, whose acts are absolutely good, and who himself does not need to do evil.

If acts of the limbs were God's act--and among them there is speaking and lying--it would necessarily follow, that God would be lying with every lie that is pronounced in the world. If we allowed this (statement) with regard to Him, one would not trust His word and any of the sign; and one would be compelled to admit everything that the *Mujbirah* are compelled to admit.¹⁷⁹

By the above passage, ʿAbd al-Jabbār denies that God produces human acts by the nature of the body or by direct origination (*ibtidāʿan*). ʿAbd al-Jabbār goes even further by considering those who maintain that God produces such acts would in fact be infidels, "just as the *Mujbriah* are considered infidels for attributing evil things to the Exalted God."¹⁸⁰

Several arguments to support this idea are found in the *Sharḥ*. According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, human acts happen necessarily with regard to his purpose and motive, and necessarily disappear with regard to his aversion and his turning away from them, based on the soundness of his condition, either with certainty or with estimation. If their existence did not need an agent, and did not depend on him, they would not exist on his part. This way of reasoning determines the need of a thing for another, such as the movable thing for movement, and the dormant thing for dormancy.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. IX, p. 18; Hecker, "Reason and Responsibility," pp 27-28.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, p. 336. In the *Mughnī*, the same idea is

Further elaboration to clarify this argument shows us what is meant with each phrase of the above passage. By stating that human acts necessarily happen with regard to his purpose and motive, and disappear with regard to his aversion and his turning away from them, means the persistence of acts (which refers to human's own capability), and not only in the case of the body which is called movable while there is movement in it. By stating "according to the soundness of his condition" he means the extrication (*khulūs*) of his motives from difficulties and hindrances. His saying "with certainty" means that the agent, while performing his acts, must know what is being performed. And his concept of "estimation" refers to the act of a forgetful person (*al-sāhī*), whose acts are performed without certainty. If we suppose that he has a motive for his acts, these acts will not occur on his part except in accordance with his motive.¹⁸²

In short, 'Abd al-Jabbar wants to emphasize that human acts cannot be ascribed to any subject other than man himself, because every act produced on his part occurs only with regard to his motive and purpose. And as a responsible agent, he must know what he is doing as his own act. Again, 'Abd al-Jabbar insists that these acts are not created by God on man's part.

One more argument to prove that God does not create human acts is also offered in the *Sharḥ*, especially applicable to those acts imputed to be evil. 'Abd al-Jabbar explains that according to our experience, the sane person does not want to spoil his appearance, for instance, by affixing some

stated as: "what indicates that Zayd's deed as his act is the fact that it must be produced in accordance with his intention and motives, and that it must disappear in accordance with his rejection and motives, when he is sound (of body and faculties), and in the absence of obstacles." (*Al-Mughnī*, vol. IX, p. 15; Hecker, "Reason and Responsibility," p. 20).

¹⁸² *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah*, p. 336.

bones to his neck, or riding a piece of wood around the market. As it is unthinkable for him to do that, it is also unthinkable for him to ask another person to do so. He does not want to do that because he knows its evilness, and that he does not need it. If such an argument is true for us, analogically, it must also be true for God.¹⁸³ In other words, if God created human acts, among which is evil, it would imply that God has created that evil act as well, and would further indicate that God asks that man to do what will spoil his appearance. May God be exalted far above such a thing, (*ta'ālā Allāh 'an dhālik*).

Besides the above exposition mentioned in the *Sharh*, 'Abd al-Jabbar also explains in his *Mughnī* how such human acts must be ascribed only to man himself for the purpose of preserving divine justice. Samīh Dughaym, after examining 'Abd al-Jabbār's anthropological point of view as discussed in the *Mughnī* and the *Muhīt*, suggests that human acts come forth together from his limbs and mind, since there is no difference between either of them as composites of the human entity.¹⁸⁴ It is clear that although the acts

183 *Ibid.*, p. 344.

184 'Abd al-Jabbār mentions in *Muhīt*, vol. II, p. 241 that "man" is the composite body (*jumlah*) which we see, not something else inside it or outside it. J.R.T.M. Peters, like 'Abd al-Sattār al-Rāwī, considers that based on this description, man, in 'Abd al-Jabbār's point of view is a material unity. (See: J.R.T.M. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, pp. 160-161; al-Rāwī, *al-'Aql wa al-Hurrīyah*, p. 357). But 'Abd al-Jabbar also mentions in the *Mughnī*, vol. XI, pp. 311 and 321 that man is the living being; he is the person (*shakhs*) structured by this special structure (*binyah makhsūсах*), through which he is different from other animals, to whom the command, prohibition, blame and praise are addressed. This description gives an emphasis on another dimension peculiar to man as a "person," which indicates that he is not merely a physical structure (*binyah māddīyah*). More important, he is also attributed with the principle "to whom the command, prohibition, blame and praise are addressed." Thus, it seems based on this idea that Samīh Dughaym, who disagrees with that "material" tendency of human nature, claims that what is called with man must refer to the whole human entity consisting of both body and mind. (*Falsafat al-Qudar*, p. 312).

require certain principal premises such as knowledge and will, they also need the elimination of the obstruction and the ability to carry out the acts with properly functioning physical organs. And the limbs are the physical organs necessary for man's capability to perform an act. Thus, the acts of limbs occur with regard to the capacity existing in them, as `Abd al-Jabbār explains in the *Mughnī*:

the state of a capable human agent varies (with respect to what he is able to do with his limbs) at (various) times: one time he can carry a heavy (load) with his hand, yet another time he can only carry a lighter load. We know that the power of the substrate to sustain the act of carrying is the same in both instances, and that the tool is suitable for both acts.... Consequently, it is learned that in one of these states his limb has such qualification as it does not have it in the other. It is impossible for this to be an attribute which goes back to the limb, since the capable agent is the man and his totality, not all his limb. Now, if this is true, then it is learned that the particular characteristic of the limb is the existence of capabilities in it, and that it is possible to perform an act by the limb in proportion to the number of capabilities which are in it.¹⁸⁵

What is important to note in this passage is `Abd al-Jabbār's assertion that we cannot ascribe the acts of a limb to the nature of its substrate,¹⁸⁶ but only to the capacity prevailing in the limb. If the nature of a substrate were an influential factor in the acts, our ability to carry something would not vary from time to time or from one limb to another, as long as the substrate remains the same. In addition, if the act can be carried out by means of a quality ascribed to the limb alone, the capacity of the limb will not vary while its condition is the same. Therefore, the variety of the limb's capabilities refer

¹⁸⁵ *Al-Mughnī*, vol. IX, pp. 18-19; Hecker, "Reason and Responsibility," pp. 29-30.

¹⁸⁶ "Substrate" or *mahall*, as Peters explains, is another name for a substance or a body as the place where a certain accident (*arad*) inheres. The substrate can be a single or a composite of some atoms, or even an organic body, which is called a "*jumlah*," an aggregate of various substances. Thus, the term substrate always indicates a relationship with an accident which needs to exist and to inhere in it. (J.R.T.M. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, p. 123).

to the diversity of ability existing in them, as is indicated in the statement that "the particular characteristic of the limb is the existence of capabilities in it." More importantly, `Abd al-Jabbār by this argument insists that as man can produce the acts because of his own capability existing in his limbs, these acts are not created by God.¹⁸⁷

In another passage following the above exposition, we find `Abd al-Jabbār's explanation that the acts of limbs increase and decrease in accordance with changes in the state of the capable agent.¹⁸⁸ This idea, which coincides with his explanation in the *Sharḥ* that a man's acts happen with regard to his purpose and motive (and vice versa, as cited previously), clearly indicates that the acts of limbs and will are produced by man. But not only "with regard to his purpose and motive," for in the *Mughnī* `Abd al-Jabbār explains further that human acts inhering in his limbs, such as speech, movement, and others, are produced in accordance with his knowing the manner how they are produced, as well as in accordance with his perception (*idrākihi*) and his "tools" (*ālātihi*), i.e. his limbs, tongue, etc.¹⁸⁹ That is because it is impossible for man to perform his acts perfectly except if he has knowledge of how they are produced, as it is only possible for him to do his acts if he perceives the substrate of his acts. An example to clarify this idea is mentioned in the same passage of the *Mughnī*:

.... it is only possible for a person to put points in books if he perceives the substrate of the act or the place where he performs it. Similarly, it is only possible for him to write if his hand is not crippled, and to speak if his tongue is unimpaired.¹⁹⁰

187 *Al-Mughnī*, vol. IX, p. 19; Hecker, "Reason and Responsibility," p. 32.

188 *Ibid.*, p. 20; p. 33.

189 *Al-Mughnī*, vol. IX, p. 21; Hecker, "Reason and Responsibility," p. 37.

190 *Ibid.*

In general, all these expositions fulfill the purpose of insisting that all human acts originate from man himself; otherwise, it would not be necessary for them to happen dependent on man's states and in the manner suitable to his will.¹⁹¹

Finally, as it is clear that human actions are produced by man himself and none of which is created by God on his part, all these actions must be ascribed to man alone as a responsible agent capable of performing them independently by his own will, power, and knowledge. Thus, man is responsible for every action he takes, either good or evil. More deliberately, all evil actions occurring on his part are also of his responsibility. They cannot be ascribed to any agent other than himself, and likewise, cannot be regarded as willed by God.¹⁹² God, the most wise and just, does not will any evil act nor create them on man's part. In this sense, `Abd al-Jabbār's point of view seems to agree with the general tenet held by Mu'tazilites, especially that of Wāsil b. `Atā', as reported by al-Shahrastānī :

The Creator, being wise and just, it is forbidden to establish a relation between Him and evil (*sharr*) or wrong (*zulm*). So it cannot be conceived that His will regarding His servants should be different from His command; likewise He would not punish them on account of His own decisions. So man is the author of good, evil, faith, unbelief, obedience and transgression, and is rewarded or punished for his acts, but the Lord gives him power for all this
...¹⁹³

All these explanations are devoted to fortifying the notion of divine

191 *Ibid.*

192 This reminds us to `Abd al-Jabbār's insistence that an act is evil not because of certain states (*ahwāl*) present in the agent, such as being generated, subjected, obliged, or subdued by God, as has been shown in the earlier part of this chapter.

193 Abū al-Fath Muhammad `Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, ed. `Abd al-`Aziz Muhammad al-Wakīl (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), vol. I, p. 47, as cited in A.J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1965), pp. 81-82.

justice, whose very essential meaning is that God does not will any evil act, and that he never fails to fulfill what is obligatory, among which is to carry out his promises and threats (*al-wa'd wa al-wa'id*), because if he failed to do so, he would not only be unjust but also a liar.¹⁹⁴ Again, Allah the Exalted is far above such a thing, *ta'ālā Allāh `an dhālik*.

¹⁹⁴ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 2nd Edition (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 89.

C O N C L U S I O N

The problem of evil is a crucial problem that has resulted in much dispute among theologians and philosophers, and has aroused much speculative thinking on their part concerning the nature of God. In its simplest formulation, the problem of evil is usually stated thus: if God is believed to be perfectly good and ultimately powerful, then he must be able to abolish evil; but, since evil remains present in the world, it is possible to presume that either God is not perfectly good or he is not ultimately powerful. Or, in another expression: God cannot be both all-powerful and perfectly good if evil is real, because if God cannot abolish evil, then he is not all-powerful, and if he will not abolish it, then he is not all-good. Furthermore, this formulation also implies that the reality of evil is incompatible with the belief that God is the all-powerful and all-good. The problem of evil, which received much attention from classical thinkers and mediaeval theologians, is, therefore, still of great interest to scholars of recent times, who see the problem of evil as a continuing puzzle.

Evil can be differentiated into two types: moral and non-moral evil. Moral evil is whatever evil human beings originate, and non-moral evil is the evil that originates independently of human actions. In the work of 'Abd al-Jabbar, both types of evil receive equal treatment, although his concern seems to be more concentrated on moral evil. According to his point of view, the true nature of *al-qabīh*, the word he usually employs to express the

meaning of evil, lies in its signification of ethical qualities, such as disgraceful, shameless, and so, evil and bad. Thus, he defines evil as "an act for which, if it occurs in any way on the part of one who knows it will occur from him in that way, and lets it happen, he deserves blame, unless there is a restricting reason," or, as he also quotes from his teacher Abu Hashim, "evil is something that deserves blame when it is taken in isolation." In each of these two definitions `Abd al-Jabbār emphasizes that the basic characteristic of evil is something that deserves blame, which in itself signifies ethical value-judgement.

According to `Abd al-Jabbār, the nature of evil is something objectively knowable. He disagrees with the subjectivists, his main opponents, who maintain that the value of an action is determined exclusively by the will of God. `Abd al-Jabbār insists that the blameworthiness of a particular act is a fact that cannot be altered by the wishes, utterances, thoughts, or feeling of any spectator or judge, even if he be God himself. This is based on the concept commonly held by the Mu'tazilites that natural reason can serve as a sufficient source of ethical knowledge, which means that man has the capacity to know the right and the good by his own unaided intellect, and even to define them, independently of the divine will. More deliberately, man can grasp the knowledge of good or evil actions just as he grasps "directly perceived phenomena" (*al-mudrakāt*). Thus in the same way as he can know at once that injustice, lying, and ingratitude are evil, he similarly knows straight away that justice, truthfulness and gratitude are good. This idea, to some extent, agrees with `Abd al-Jabbar's insistence that the most important duty imposed by God upon mankind is the use of his intellect to acquire true knowledge about God, the neglect of which, if not repented, would result in deserving blame.

In his effort to defend the belief that God is the most powerful and just, Abd al-Jabbar insists that God's omnipotence is unlimited. However, it must be kept in mind that while God can do anything he wills himself to do and anything that it is possible to do, God cannot do what is logically impossible. This is not because his power is limited, but only because what is logically impossible cannot really be thought or conceived of. Thus, God cannot create a "square circle," as we cannot ask or desire him to do so, because the very idea of a square circle is nonsense.¹ But can God do evil? With regard to the idea that God's omnipotence is unlimited, `Abd al-Jabbār admits that God can do evil, because good and evil are alike in their genus. Since God has power to do good, he must likewise have the power to do evil, just as one who is able to do one good is able to do another good of the same genus. Yet, unlike the Ash`arites who hold that God creates the evil acts of men as their first cause, `Abd al-Jabbār suggests that God would be foolish if he willed tolly and evil. Accordingly, `Abd al-Jabbār insists that although God is able to do evil, it is not admissible (*lā yajūz*) for him to do it. God does not do evil because he knows the evilness of the evil things and has no motive or need (*hājah*) for it. If God does evil, he may do so in a variety of ways such as telling lies in his scriptures, rewarding the Pharaohs, and punishing the Prophets.

Although `Abd al-Jabbār's discussion of the problem of evil is focused more on moral evil, he also provides an extensive examination of non-moral evil dealing with suffering, calamities, diseases, deformities, etc. But in an attempt to defend the concept of divine justice, `Abd al-Jabbār's discussion of the issue concentrates on whether or not God really inflicts such evils and

¹ Ronald M. Green, "Theodicy," *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol. XIV, p. 432.

whether or not suffering is evil. According to his point of view, suffering is caused and inflicted by God. However, God's inflicting pain or suffering is not evil of him, since he never desires any evil act, and has no need for it. Accordingly, God's inflicting pain is either because it is deserved as a punishment or because it will be compensated with another reward in the after-life. Indeed it is not difficult to accept this doctrine, since Islam has established the belief in the reality of the after-life as its principle tenet.² On the other hand, suffering is also considered as a trial (*miḥnah*) which may be inflicted upon any person. Even the prophets themselves frequently suffered pains.³ If suffering is not inflicted as a punishment, it must be regarded as a trial and must be compensated, because it has been inflicted undeservedly. The same judgement is also applicable to accidents, diseases, calamities, or deformities. `Abd al-Jabbār's assertion in this regard is based on a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet which states that whoever is deprived of his two eyes in this world God is not content until he should indemnify him for them with paradise.⁴ This *ḥadīth* reveals that the deprivation of one's eyesight (as a suffering caused by the deformity) necessitates a great compensation, since one has been prevented from possessing what one needs in order to be able to live properly.

The notion that God may inflict pain upon men, not out of evil intent but because it is deserved as a punishment, and with the promise of

² Al-Sayyid Sābiq, *al-'Aqā'id al-Islāmīyah* (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1964), p. 259.

³ See, Imām Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1950), vol. III, p. 46.

⁴ The *ḥadīth* is quoted in the *Mughnī*, vol. XIII, p. 446, without mentioning its source. Another *ḥadīth* similar to the above cited but with different expression is reported by Imām Ahmad b. Hanbal in his *Musnad*, vol. XIV, pp. 29-30.

compensation in the after-life, seems to agree with the idea that "evil is real but justified." According to this idea, certain good cannot be achieved without the endurance of suffering, and some sufferings are unavoidable, since they result from necessary operation of natural law. In addition, the idea of "justified evil" also suggests that certain physical evils occurring in the world, such as calamities, diseases, famines, etc., may be intended by God as a reminder to mankind of his power over the universe, by which it is hoped that men will respond through fear and then subjugate themselves to the power of God and become morally better. While `Abd al-Jabbār did not suggest this in so many words, nevertheless in referring to the concept of divine grace (*lutf*), he suggests that if men had bestowed upon them perpetual delight and felicity, they would be oppressive and haughty. `Abd al-Jabbār fortifies his argument by citing the Qur'anic verse: "If God were to give in abundance to His creatures they would fill the earth with oppression. He gives according to measure as He will. He knows (what is good for) His creatures." (Q.S. 42:27).

Thus, as divine grace is aimed at making the performance of the imposed duties possible, the reality of suffering might serve as a means to remind mankind that they should be aware of God's omnipotence by which God has imposed his order upon the whole universe. On the other hand, `Abd al-Jabbār's insistence that suffering is inflicted upon men either because it is deserved as a punishment or that it will be compensated in after-life is also meant to repudiate the belief held by the adherents of metempsychosis (*aṣḥāb al-tanāsukh*). According to their point of view, God's punishment is only inflicted in this world through men's enduring their transformation from one being to another that is worse. `Abd al-Jabbār's objection to this idea is based on the reason that the nature of suffering as a punishment is that if it

were inflicted upon the infidels, it would be a part of their punishment in the after-life, and if inflicted upon the believers it would reduce the punishment which they would have to endure in the after-life.

As it is clear that although it is possible for God to do evil, since God's power is unlimited, this does not mean that God really does it, because if God had a will for evil he would be himself evil, just like anyone else. `Abd al-Jabbār insists that God would be foolish if he willed foolishness or evil. Based on this idea, any evil taking place in a human act cannot be attributed to or willed by God. Such an evil should be ascribed to man himself as a responsible and free agent. As a Mu`tazilite, `Abd al-Jabbar firmly holds that man should be a free, responsible agent, in accordance with which God's imposing duties upon man (*taklīf*) is possible. Furthermore, freedom and responsibility together form the basis for establishing the concept of divine justice, whose essential meaning is that God does nothing except the good, as he must do what is obligatory (*al-wājib*), will not devote himself to anything except for the sake of goodness, and never desires to do anything repulsive but only chooses wisdom and righteousness. By insisting that God does nothing except the good and that he must do what is obligatory, it is impossible to say that God wills any evil to happen on man's part. Whatever evil act takes place on man's part should be man's own full responsibility. Man is the author of good, evil, faith, unbelief, obedience and transgression, and is rewarded or punished for each one of them. This is to be the basis for God's either conferring his reward upon those who obey him or inflicting his punishment upon those who disobey him.

`Abd al-Jabbār's insistence on maintaining that man should be the author of his good and evil acts seems to agree with McCloskey's point of view that moral evil results from man's exercising of free will, which it is

claimed not only outweighs the existence of moral evil and the vast amount of non-moral evils, but also the eternal suffering of the damned. But, knowing that it will lead the men to commit evil, why did God who is wholly good give them free will? According to J.L. Mackie, it is still better for men to act freely than to be innocent automata, acting rightly in a wholly determined fashion. Men, as another writer, G.H. Joyce, suggests, should have the power to commit wrong, as God has given them great privilege in the form of their final blessedness. This blessedness represents the fruit of their exertion and is a reward for their hard-won victory which is a considerably higher accomplishment than it would have been if they had achieved it without exercising any effort. Men may not deserve the reward due to victory without being exposed to the possibility of defeat. This idea also seems to agree with `Abd al-Jabbār's conception of *taklīf* which is made possible because of God's grace and is aimed at exposing mankind to requital or reward.

The above exposition has given us another positive assertion that evil is real but justified, and free will, therefore, has been vindicated as justifying God's allowing moral evil to happen. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that none of the solutions to the problem of evil proposed by `Abd al-Jabbār and other thinkers can stand up to criticism. With regard to `Abd al-Jabbār's elaboration of his concept of divine justice, for instance, we find Aḥmad Amin, one of the modern Egyptian writers, criticizing the Mu'tazilites in general for having exaggerated in applying the analogy between what might be true of God with the truth resulted from human intellectual exercises. This, to some extent, could be considered as an arrogant and presumptuous stance on the part of man, as he judges God on the basis of his limited

human reason.⁵ But, in any case, since `Abd al-Jabbar's concern is to maintain that God is the most just and wise, who never desires any evil and will not inflict his punishment undeservedly, `Abd al-Jabbar has done his best in formulating how men should understand the nature of divine justice in the face of the problem of evil. On the other hand, he has deliberately repudiated his opponents' point of view that God, being the most powerful, can do anything he wills regardless whether or not it is logically conceivable. In contrast to their view, `Abd al-Jabbār maintains that both good and evil have an objective value accessible to the human capacity to know and to define, and not merely determined by the will of God.

⁵ Ahmad Amīn, *Duḥā al-Islām*, vol. III, pp. 69-70.

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