

THE HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF ‘ABD AL-JABBĀR
AL-HAMADANĪ’S PHYSICALIST CONCEPTION
OF HUMAN SOUL
KĀDĪ ABDŪLCEBBĀR’IN İNSAN RUHU KAVRAMI İLE İLGİLİ
FİZİKSEL YAKLAŞIMININ TARİHSEL DEĞERLENDİRMESİ

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Kâdî Abdülcebbar'ın İnsan Ruhu Kavramı ile İlgili Fiziksel Yaklaşımının Tarihsel Değerlendirmesi*

Öz: Bu çalışmada, Kâdî Abdülcebbar'ın (ö. 415/1025) insan tasavvuru ilgili bazı argümanları ele alınacaktır. Nitekim Kelâm ilminin erken döneminden itibaren klasik konuların (İlâhî zât ve sıfat, kidemü'l Kurân, Kader vb.) yanı sıra insanın mahiyeti, yani onun ne olduğuna dair farklı kanaatlar gündeme gelmiştir. Bu argümanları üç farklı şekilde ele almak mümkündür. Bunlardan ilki insanın mahiyeti bedenden öte görülmeyen ebedi bir ruh olduğunu illere sürürken, ikincisi insanın ruh ve bedenini bitişik dualite olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Bu iki görüşten farklı düşünen Basra ekolün kurucusu Allaf (ö. 850), Behaşmiyye ekolü ve Mu'tezili kelâmın ünlü isimi Kâdî Abdülcebbar insanı maddî olan bir fiziki yapıdan oluşan bir bütün (*cümle*) olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Bu çalışmamızda Kâdî'nin yaygın olan ebedi ruh algısının reddedilmesine neden olan argümanların, onun kozmolojik zeminde temel bulunduğunu göstermeye hedeflemektedir. Kâdî'nin teolojik anlayışında 'Ruh' atomculuğa dayanmaktadır ki o halde ruh ya cevher yada araz olmalı. Bu durumda ruhun nedenselliği problemi ortaya çıkar. Kâdî, insanın herhangi bir maddî veya ölümsüz ruha sahip olmadığını savunur. Bu çalışma, insanın bu tür özgün bir görüşünün Kâdî'nin kozmolojik teorisinin ve dini meselelere yönelik düşüncesinin doğal sonucu olduğunu iddia etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kelam, Mutezile, Kadı Abdülcabbar, Teolojik Antropoloji, İnsan Kavramı,



The Historical Account Of 'abd Al-Jabbār Al-Hamadani's Physicalist Conception Of Human Soul

Abstract: This study aims to present a brief historical account of Mu'tazilite understandings of the human person and expounds on Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadani's (d. 1025) strong rejection of non-physicalist view of human being. In Classic period of Kalam amongst the Mu'tazilite school prevailed three distinct views on the human person, henceforth of the human soul;

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the non-physicalist tradition represented by Ibrāhīm b. Sayyār al-Nazzām (d. 836) who claimed that man is the dwelling soul in the human corpse. The dualist view as advocated by Mu'ammar b. 'Abbād (d. 830) who understood man as a composite of the material body and immaterial soul. The third view is the so-called physicalist stance on the human being. This view though was initially propagated by Abu'l- Hudhayl Al-Allāf (d. 849-50) remained in BaHashmiyya denomination of Mu'tazilites for few generations. Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025) as their successor advocates this view arguing that man does not possess any immaterial or immortal soul. This study proposes that such a peculiar view of man was the natural outcome of 'Abd al-Jabbār's cosmological theory and his thoughtfulness towards religious matters (*talkif*). 'Abd al-Jabbār's image of man does not need other; a soul, to make him will or capable of certain actions, for man is this corporeal body which could be seen in its actuality, and experienced in its totality. Therefore, he defines man (*šahs*) as a living being (*hayy*), having volition (*murid*), capable of acting voluntarily (*qādir*) and consequently entitles him with the responsibility for moral and religious obligations (*al-mukallaf*). It could be widely observed that Qadi, though admits the presence of soul in the body for its being alive, does not consider it to be living in itself or eternal. The soul, however, is the contingent breath, by which lightweight bodies (air) are inhaled and exhaled. It is an integral part of a living human being such as his flesh, blood or body structures.

Keywords: : Kalam, Mu'tazila, 'Abdu al-Jabbar, Theological Anthropology, Concept of human being,



Introduction

The Mu'tazilite system is though pioneer in its theology, has much in common with early day Ash'arites in its cosmological settings, as they both followed an atomistic solution to understand the world. It is very interesting that how out of atomism emerged very unique ideas of the human soul. The arguments in support of an immaterial soul, which could be found in al-Rāzī's, *Kitāb al-Nafs* or in *al-Mabāhith al-Mašriqiyya* certainly overlap with Avicennian arguments on the same issue. However, this paper intends to give a profoundly different approach to the subject of the human soul.

In this study, I will focus on an important advocate of the physicalist theory of the human soul from the Mutaqaddimūn period of the Basrian Mu‘tazilite tradition. He, namely Qadi ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadani al-Asadabadi, relied on the physicalist understanding of soul and so did classic theologians with fractional differences.¹ The expressions used for explaining human souls such as *jism al-latīf*, an atom (*jawhar e fard*) or thin bodies (*jism daqīq*), I suggest, we have some connotation of physicality in them. The major difference that separates the Basrian (BaHashmiyya) approach from the rest is that they don’t assign any peculiar attributes to soul.

I will begin with a brief overview of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s atomistic cosmology and its development. Afterward, I will tackle the historical background briefly, where I will argue that the physicalist view of the soul was supportive in polemical formulation against Gnostics and Dualists (thanawiyya) denominations but it also helped in forming serious arguments against rival views on human ontology within the circles of the Mu‘tazilites. In this way, I aim to cover ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s view of the soul, its nature and its locus in human ontology. In the concluding section, I would share some of the implications of this view; that is to consider man as a physical being, an agent, a subject of God’s commandments and the comforts it brought to classic theologians.

Atomism

The nature of man is discussed extensively in both Kalam and medieval philosophy. However, this quest took radical shifts depending on which

1 Ayman Shihadeh, ‘Classical Ash‘arī Anthropology: Body, Life and Spirit’, *The Muslim World*, Vol. 102. (July/ Oct., 2012), pp. 433- 477. There Shihadeh expresses on Ash‘arī’s theory of man, as ‘this visible body that is composed in this manner of composition and structured in this specific way’, is very much similar to the physicalist theory Mu‘tazilite advocated. This physicalist understanding of human being in classic Kalam, however evolved and reshaped by Avicennaian philosophy resulting into traditional Soul-body dualism.

school of thought considered it.² For instance, the peripatetic philosophers considered prime matter (*hayūlâ*) as the founding block of existence. They argued that the human soul is an immaterial substance that is the human essence and it precedes bodily existence. Whereas the physicalists (*aṣḥāb al-tabīyyūn*) believed a man as a balance of four prime elements i.e. air, water, fire and earth (*anasir al-arba*). The Dualist denominations, on the other hand, established their belief in opposing forces of light and darkness as the key element to human inquiry. However, classic Mu'tazilite theologians took an interesting position, by adopting the atomism as a tool to defend their explanatory version of the universe, with the same token, they also refute³ other cosmologies of their time.

The concept of atomism was adopted and modified with an urge to establish some reliable ontological grounds of reality. This is why it could be said that Kalam's theory of knowledge is based on two fundamental inquiries; a) what can be known? b) How can it be known? The former is a question of ontology that also marks human intellectual capacity whereas the latter is an epistemological inquiry. So, under these primary questions, the possibility of attaining any knowledge, its sources and its limits were demarcated.

2 The question what is human soul? or what is the nature of soul? could have alternative versions, such as what is a man? who is a mukkalaf etc. For such debates check heresiographic works of Ash'ari, Sharistani, Baghdadi, Ibn Hazm and others. Also see, Majid Fakhry, 'The Mu'tazilite View of Man', *Recherches d'islamologie: Recueil d'articles offert à Georges C. Anawati et Louis Gradet par leur collègues et amis*, (Leuven, 1977) pp. 107-121.

3 Stroumsa mentions that Jewish and Muslim polemics were also very vibrant against dualists such as Manichaeans, as they 'strove to establish' their arguments in favour of an almighty God. The advocated an indivisible and immutable God who created the world out of nothing. For such arguments were also woven in the atomistic frame of Kalam. S. Stroumsa and G. G. Stroumsa, 'Aspects of Anti-Manichaean Polemics in Late Antiquity and under Early Islam', *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 81. No. 1. (Jan., 1988), pp. 37-58.

The primary term which appeared to construct such universal taxonomy of existence is called a thing, *shay*.⁴ The 'thing or existence' is whatever could exist in any given possibility. This initial category is further divided into two classes: the known existence or the intelligibles *Ma'lūm* (whatever is known or can be known)⁵ and *Ma'dūm* (the non-existence). In epistemological settings, however, knowledge is not abstract at all, it has to be the 'knowledge of some 'thing'. Perhaps, this is why 'Abd al-Jabbār elaborates nonexistence (*madūm*) as "known thing which does not exist".⁶ On the same grounds, Ibn Mattawayh, one of his disciple, establishes that 'a thing is known either as existence or non-existence'. These statements clarify that the realm of human knowledge is just of known entities (*ma'lūm*). This known existence is further divided into two categories, the eternal (*qadīm*) and the world (*hādīs* or with beginning in time).⁷ Under such parameters, after establishing the meta-scale scheme of known existence, comes the nature of the physical world and its building blocks, the atoms or 'ajza (*al juz' alladhī-lā yatajazza*) and accidents (*arad*).

4 The term *Shay* or *dhat* could have similarity, the term *dhat* (being) seems technically precise in Basrian theologians, see Alnoor Dhanani, *The physical Theory of Kalam: Atoms, Space, and Void in Basrian Mutazili Cosmology*, (Leiden, 1994) pp. 30. Interpreting the term 'thing' in the context of atomistic predilections, human acts are also things. See J. Meric Pessagno, 'Irada, Ikhtiyar, Qudra, Kasb the View of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 104, No. 1, Studies in Islam and the Ancient Near East Dedicated to Franz Rosenthal (Jan. – Mar., 1984), pp. 177-191.

5 J. R. T. M. Peters, *God's Created Speech A study of the Mu'tazilī Qadī l-Qudāt Abu l-Hasan 'Abd al-Jabbār bn Ahmad al-Hamdānī*, (Leiden, 1976) pp. 106.

6 The non-existence is comprehended as absolute nothingness in Sunni Kalam, since God created the world out of nothing *ex nihilo*. However, *ma'dūm*, 'nothing' is a 'thing' in 'Abd al-Jabbār's setting. It is a part of existence which could be known by reason, the term is close to philosopher's idea of contingent existence (*Mumkin al-Wujūd*). See, Peters, *Ibid.*, pp. 108; 'Abd Al-Jabbār [Mankadīm Shashdīw], *Şarḥ al-uşūl al-ḥamsa*, ed. Metin Yurdağur (Istanbul, 2013), Vol. 1. pp. 177. This version is also published with a Turkish translation by Ilyas Celebi the manuscript could be found in the archives of Topkapi Palace Museum Library under the III. Ahmed collection, No. 1872.

7 Ibn al-Mattawayh, *Tadhkira fi ahkam al-jawahir wa al-arad*. Ed. S. Lutf and F. 'Awn. (Cairo. 1975) pp. 33-34; Alnoor Dhanani, *Ibid.*, pp. 16.

Atom and Accidents

The theologians usually from Baṣrian Mu'tazilites tradition adopted atomism without any hesitation and implored that contingent existence (*muḥdath*) is constituted of theoretically small particles (atoms) and their accidents (*araḍ*). These atoms (*jawḥar*) are the smallest units that could not be further divided. They are created by God and according to some views are numbered particles which are the foundation of the created world. These atoms have primary and secondary properties which are called accidents (*araḍ*). There is a difference however between atoms and accidents. Atoms are neutral particles and do not have opposites. Accidents, on the other hand, are created as opposites to each other for instance motion and rest, black and white, etc.

Accidents can only sustain with an atom or group of atoms. This implies that there are certain necessary properties for atoms, such as being present at a certain space with other atoms, occupying a tiny bit of space (*mutaḥayyiz*), being bound to motion or rest and having a property of adjoining with other atoms (*ta'lif*),⁸ etc.

Since the discrete unit of matter is an atom, so these single atoms come close to one another due to the accident of *ta'lif* and create length, width and depth, eventually creating a single unit of the body (*jism*).⁹ Just like atoms, bodies could not have opposites, since only contrary to each other are accidents that subsist on substrata of body. Since bodies are composed and contingent, they are also subject to motion and rest (*'itimād*) hence, they could not be eternal. In terms of the physical world, one could infer it is composed of atoms and accidents that inhere in them, whereas the known existence also includes God. This is why it was inevi-

8 J. Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, Vol. III Translated by G. Goldbloom, (Leiden, 2018) pp. 241.

9 There are different versions of geometric explanations on nature of atoms and the formation of bodies. For different opinions on how many numbers of atoms, when unite make one unit of body (*jism*) See: Alnoor Dhanani, *Ibid.*, pp. 101-133.

table for 'Abd al-Jabbār' to explain the physical world with fundamental categories of atoms and accidents.

While the existence is a composite of bodies, made up of atoms (*jawāhir*) so is the human being. Man is a part of such a physical world, so he shall be explained within the confines of atomism. Considering this physical theory as a reference point, the human soul could be either a composite of atoms (a body) or would be an accident. If it is a single atom, that would still make it subject to properties of *mutaḥayyaz*; i.e. occupying space, having a position (*makan*) in relation to other objects, etc., making it subject to physical laws. However, if the soul is some sort of accident that dwells in the body making it living. In that case, it is not eternal and cannot sustain without a body as its locus. Conceding this 'Abd al-Jabbār upholds the traditional Baṣrian view as his conceptual foundation, not just for the human soul, but for the entire world.

490

OMÜİFD

Atomism and the Theories of Soul

Mu'tazilite understandings along the path of atomism took three distinct views on man.¹⁰ Such as the non-physicalist, an-Nazzām, who claimed that man is the dwelling soul in the human corpse. The body is dead and the soul is living in it. Then there were dualists, like Mu'ammār b. 'Abbād who understood man as a combination of the material body and an immaterial soul. Finally, 'Abd al-Jabbār, following his predecessors Abū 'Alī Muḥammad al-Jubbā'ī (d. 915), Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī (d.933) and Abu-'l-Hudāil al-'Allāf, had a physicalist and materialist stance on the human person. This stark difference of opinions, I propose, resulted from and was simultaneously affected by their cosmological settings.

It is important to note that the tripartite and hierarchical view of the soul, constituting a vegetable, animal, and human fragment, was yet not the only accepted view in his period. This view became much popular with Avicenna and could be seen extensively in later Kalam.

10 Richard M. Frank, *The Metaphysics of Created Being According to Abu l-Hudhayl Al-Allaf A Philosophical Study of the Earliest Kalam*, (Istanbul, 1966) pp. 3-4.

'Abd al-Jabbār's strict opposition to dual and multiple human essences could be seen regarding eternal or immaterial imagery of soul in his theological summa, *al-Muġnī's* book XI *al-taklīf* where he catalogs the views of his adversaries and disprove them with extensive rhetoric. The tradition of Kalam prior to al-Ghazali and Avicenna uphold a unique way of argumentation, unlike crafting axioms in Aristotelian syllogism,¹¹ they relied mostly on the revelation (*burhan*) as their inductive truth, rhetoric with *ad hominem*, and human sense experience (intuitional knowledge) as their evidence. In the case of 'Abd al-Jabbār, we would see these all with regard to his position of the human soul.

Non-physicalist Conception of Soul

A few elaborations on non-physicalists' views are as follows; they define the soul as 'light from lights'.¹² The soul is eternal, ultimate good and pure being. The soul is a lightweight or translucent body (*jism al-latīf*), which resides in the human heart¹³ and at other times its place is ambiguous. An-Nazzām is a peculiar example of this kind. He renounced atomism while adopting the divisibility of matter ad infinitum. Unlike Ibn Rāwandi (d. 911), who thought of the heart as the locus of living souls,¹⁴ an-Nazzām considered that the soul resides in the body as rosewater in roses or oil in olives. So, it interacts with all bodily organs however heart

11 Sarah Stroumsa, "Early Muslim and Jewish Kalām: The Enterprise of Reasoned Discourse," in Christoph Marksches and Yohanan Friedmann, ed., *Rationalisation of Religion: Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Jerusalem and Berlin: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities and de Gruyter, 2019), pp. 202-223.

12 Hisham also had (ghulat) Shia propensities and he is known as deliberately preaching reincarnation of light (soul) from one body to another. Same goes for an-Nazzam, See; Saul Horovitz, 'Über den Einfluss der griechischen Philosophie auf die Entwicklung des Kalam' (Breslau, 1909) Turkish translation Ö. Taşcı., Yunan Felsefesinin Kelāma Etkisi, (Istanbul, 2014) pp. 56.

13 This is the view of Ibn Rāwandi (d. 854) it overlaps with understanding of an-Nazzam and Hisham See: Al- Muġnī Vol. XI, pp. 312-18.

14 Perhaps ibn Rawandī with the (fi al badani'arwāhun ḥayyun) implied not only the soul, but a soul having multiple facades in relation to the human body. One can also observe the traces of this idea, of a universal human soul from which each individual soul takes its portion. Such claims Qadi rejects for having ambiguous argumentations of opponents, Al- Muġnī Ibid., pp. 313.

is considered the origin of it.¹⁵ This light body of the soul is interpenetrated or interwoven and diffused (*mudakhhalat mushabaka*)¹⁶ in the dense body of the matter.

An- Nazzām who is considered a pioneer for introducing the concept of the immortal soul in Muslim theology, also propagated the notion of the soul as an unlimited being that suffers being imprisoned in a body.¹⁷ The human body is only instrumentalized by the soul, which is the source of volition and action. Even though the soul resides in the body, its function is none other than that of intellect and reasoning.¹⁸ Such expressions could give ample proof of his close affinity with the Gnostics and Manicheists anthropology.¹⁹

After careful analyzes of the non-physicalist view, ‘Abd al- Jabbār argues that if a soul is an active agent and body is only an instrument, how can we be sure that the soul is not the instrument of another free agent and so on. Mu‘tazilite though had different versions of human on-

15 Shahrastānī (d. 1153), *Milel ve Nihal*, (turkish trans.). Mustafa Öz (Istanbul, 2011) pp. 64.

16 Al- Muğnī *Ibid.*, pp. 312.

17 Patricia Crone, ‘The Dahris According to al-Jahiz’, in H. Siurua (eds.), *Islam, the Ancient Near East and Varieties of Godlessness*, Vol. 3. (Leiden, 2016) pp. 319; ‘Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdadi, ‘Al-Farq bayn al-Firaq’ Turkish translation by Ethem Ruhi Fiğlalı *Mezhepler Arasındaki Farklar* (Ankara, 2017) pp. 95.

18 In an-Nazzām one cannot find the classic three phase division of soul as it could be found in antiquity; the vegetative soul, animal soul and the rational soul. Human soul very likely has different faculties by which it does thinking, perception and motion. Cengiz calls these Quwwa faculties as mental processes. See: Cengiz, Yunus, ‘Two Competing Approaches in the Mu‘tazilite View of the Human Being: The Traditions of Abu al Hudhayl and al-Nazzam’, *Nazariyat Journal for the History of Islamic Philosophy and Sciences*, 4/2 (May 2018) pp. 57-73.

19 Though Baghdadi reports an-Nazzam as extensively writing and debating with dualists Crone’s argument have more weight that he got influenced by their cosmology. See. J. Van Ess, *Ibid.*, pp. 361; al- Baghdadi, *Ibid.*, pp. 100; Patricia Crone, *Ibid.*, pp. 99. For Manihist See Mirecki, P., and Beduhn, J., *The Light and the Darkness studies in Manichaeism and its World*, (Leiden, 2001) pp. 11; John C. Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism* (Canada, 2011) pp. 160.

tology, they agreed on some sort of human freedom of action.²⁰ This human ontology in which the active role is played by the human soul would eventually lead to the doctrine of determinism. Whereas it is the basic Mu'tazilite thesis, that 'God has not preordained human actions, they are free in their choices', making it incoherent within Mu'tazili theology.

An-Nazzām's understanding came up with new complexities, such as does the human soul subsists after death? If the soul is the true agent, then how does body function. What anchors a soul to a particular body?²¹ What is the status of the soul after it leaves the body, and before that where does it reside? This also raised the issue of the animal soul, its immateriality, and its immortality as they are also living and procreating creatures. One possible answer came from Aḥmad b. Ḥābiṭ (d. 847) a disciple of an-Nazzām, that a soul goes through recurring imprisonment from one body to another body (*tanasukh*),²² in humans and animals alike. This response as al-Baghdadi noticed created an infinite regression and a logical impossibility hence was never welcomed in theological circles.

493
OMÜFD

The consequences of such a view of body and soul motivated radical asceticism, rejection of bodily needs and life-negating atmosphere.²³ In conjunction with, negating body not as being one's own self but rather a prison, helped the narrative of a self-induced pain and flogging to attain

20 Majid Fakhry presents the view that not all Mu'tazilites were on the same ground as far as human free will is concerned, even if it was asserted that man is free in his actions and choices it was not more than a verbal assertion. Their primary motive was to safeguard both God's omnipotence and human free will, however in doing so the results turned in to complex and paradoxical solutions. See, Majid Fakhry, 'Some Paradoxical Implications of the Mu'tazilite View of Free Will', *School of Oriental and African Studies*, pp. 95- 109.

21 One answer would be, which philosophers hold, soul upon descending inheres in a particular body 'out of love for it'. However, there are no valid arguments why a soul should choose body A over body B, or a sick body over a healthy one. For more details see arguments of W. Madelung, 'Ibn al-Malāhimi on the human soul', *The Muslim World*, Vol. 102., (2012), pp. 426-32.

22 Šahrastānī *Ibid.*, pp. 68; J. Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, trans. J. Marie Todd. (London, 2006) pp.111.

23 J. Van Ess, *Ibid.*, (Leiden, 2018) pp. 402-405; John C. Reeves, *Ibid.*, pp.108.

salvation.²⁴ This idea of imprisonment of soul in the human body gave birth to a whole soteriology with an infinite incarnation of soul in different bodies, until it attains salvation. ‘Abd al-Jabbār espouses his materialistic stance on such grounds since there is no possible refuge from consequences otherwise.

‘Abd al-Jabbār doubts an-Nazzām and ibn Rāwandī’s esoteric approach.²⁵ He defends the view that this totality of being (*jumla*) could be understood in an atomistic sense, as the atoms unite with each other forming a particular body they inhere the accident of life, which consequently turns the body atoms into unity and interconnectedness. With the accident of life, the body becomes living, perceiving and deliberately moving. Likewise, when the body moves, it moves as a whole, when it wills, it wills as a single being.

494 Soul- body Dualist Approach

OMÜİFD Mu‘ammar b. ‘Abbād (d. 830), unlike Nazzām, observes a rather strong dichotomic view, stating that the soul is not found in the body, however, it controls the body and executes its affairs. Mu‘ammar views the soul not as a light body, but as a distinct and discrete single atom, perhaps a qualifier (*ma‘na*) that exercises power and manages the body.²⁶ A particle that is neither connected nor fully aloof from the human body carries qualities of *mukallaf* such as life, volition, and capacities of action. However, it could not be seen or observed through senses. ‘Abd al-Jabbār in this scenario resists any definition which could not be perceived by ordinary senses or comprehended by reason. In his settings, rationality or other

24 There were theologians of antiquity who thought of soul as the root cause of suffering and evil. Such as Paul the Persian, Zacharias or Titus of Bostra, who claimed since soul is the root cause of evil it is not divine in its source. See, S. Stroumsa and G. G. Stroumsa, *Ibid.*, (Jan., 1988), pp. 37-58.

25 It is normally accepted that an-Nazzam found inspiration in teachings of Hisham b. al Hakam See, Ibn an-Nedim, *el-Fihrist*, edited by M. Yolcu., (İstanbul, 2017) pp. 480; J. Van Ess, *Ibid.*, (London, 2006) pp.109; *Al- Muğnī* Vol. XI, *Ibid.*, pp. 333

26 *Al- Muğnī* Vol. XI, *Ibid.*, pp. 313. “inn al-insan juzun laa yatajazza’; al-Ash’ari, *Kitab Maqalat al-Islamiyin wa-khtilaf al- Muslimin* (n.d); J. Van Ess, *Ibid.*, (Leiden, 2018) pp. 90-92.

novel phenomena are not quiddities of the soul but are reduced to accidents (*araz*) or the abilities of the human body. The soul since has no ontological structure or empirical evidence.

'Abd al-Jabbār does not find a need for demonstrating the status of soul in the human body as the free agent or as the governing administrator of bodily affairs. He would rather indulge in refuting and critiquing the opinions held otherwise. In his dialectical setting, Qadi would argue with the opponent using rhetoric (*jadāl*) and *ad hominem*; by finding a flaw, ambiguity, contradiction or self-negation in the opponent's argument.

For instance, an opponent makes a statement, saying *a* is *b*.

On such a premise, 'Abd al-Jabbār would make his relation of *a* and *b* and then reverse the statement to accuse his [hypothetical] opponents that in given situation why don't they accept *b* as *a*. To make this clear, in his arguments against Mu'ammār's conception of the soul; which is neither attached to the physical body nor is close to it (*mujāwara*) and is neither subject to motion nor rest. This soul or *ma'na* as Mu'ammār asserts, cannot be seen or observed through senses.

Qadi reject this statement arguing that,

If the soul is *per se* living, free agent *qādir* and is potent *mudabir* then

- a) It should be living, with and without body,
- b) It should be able to do and act freely and since it is potent *per se* it could not have any hindrance by any means, however, this is not the case in everyday experience.
- c) So, if it is not the case, then there is no soul with such attributes and if it is the case, this makes the soul a being with the same qualities as transcendental God.

Given that Mu‘ammar should have to accept that this being (soul) is God since it is God we attribute with these qualities.²⁷ Mu‘ammar perhaps has intended to rather not to describe the soul itself but to apprehend it through its actions. However, this again would not be a satisfying attempt, as ‘Abd al-Jabbār elaborates, considering an immaterial soul being living *hayy* and potent *qādir* per se makes it a partner in God’s attributes of essences creating the ontological borders ambiguous. He continues, say, *if there are two things which are black (sawādāin) and you call one of those black, the other could be none other than black (too).*²⁸ If there are exactly the same attributes it has to be the same thing, in this case, God or soul.

Unlike body-soul dualism, the expression of ‘totality of being’ *jumla* often emphasized in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s readings. ‘Abd al-Jabbār criticizes the notions of multiple active agents within a human being and relates such views with the Trinitarian approach. An annotated translation goes; *‘we would accuse him (Mu‘ammar) of similarity with Christians in their belief of unity (itihad) as when they say that God worked through Jesus, as it was God in him. And when they are asked in what manner (the spirit of) God gets incarnated in (the flesh of) Christ. They say it is neither different nor combined but is a kind of union, and He (God) cannot be attributed to a place or to motion [...] same is said for human being by our opponents, even worse [...].’*²⁹ So, in this way, ‘Abd al-Jabbār argues, that there is only one human being having parts and particles making it a whole, not a singularity that comes out of fusion or mixing up of different ontologies, soul, holy spirit or God, etc.

It is the unifying quality of the accident of life that the body organs under different sensations give a single experience to self. Once a body part is separated from the totality it cannot be called living. Likewise, ‘Abd al-Jabbār would insist that living is neither heart nor soul, the living

27 Al- Muğnī, Vol. XI: Ibid., pp. 324-327.

28 Al- Muğnī, Ibid., pp. 324.

29 See Al- Muğnī, Ibid., pp. 328, for detailed series of refutations against Christians see Muğnī book V and Gabriel Said Reynolds, A Muslim Theologian in the Sectarian Milieu ‘Abd al-Jabbār and the Critique of Christian Origins, (Brill, 2004).

is the totality in itself (*al-Jumla hiya al-ḥayya*).³⁰ Death, in this case, is explained as a stage when the atoms are no longer able to retain the proper structure of jumla in its shape and thus the accident of life cannot inhere anymore.

This notion of the unity of being is pivotal to his theory of knowledge, as he would state, knowledge is believing something as it is, with the tranquility of soul', *ma' sukun nafs'* is also a strong indicator that the tranquility of soul or mind could only be achieved by a self, only if it is a unity.

Physicalists' Defense of Soul

In Abu Huzayl al-Allaf's paraphrasing, who is 'Abd al-Jabbār's point of reference, 'human being is an eating and drinking person (*haza al-jasad al-zahir al mar'ii*), with two legs and two hands'.³¹ In its outlook, such a description seems superficial, nonetheless, it defines man as an observable entity. This eating, drinking body is an aggregate (*jumla*) of living and nonliving features, such as Allaf would continue, 'the hairs, the bones and nails' on which no sensation is found are not living. Since they are attached to the visible body (*jumla*) they are a part of it. These sensations of warmth, cold or pain are the primary indications of an object being living. He continues, 'for the soul is an accident and it is other than life'. This statement is later made clear by 'Abd al-Jabbār as life (*ḥayāt*) is different from being living (*ḥayy*). Life in this regard is an accident when subsists in a particular body and makes the body living. The indication of a body, being living is that it begins to sense warmth, cold and feels pain.

This characteristic of a living being, borrowing Frank's wording, is a 'fundamental outward orientation'.³² This orientation is the perception of one's self and the physical world alike. The living being is oriented to-

30 Al- Muḡnī, Ibid., pp. 316.

31 Al- Muḡnī, Ibid., pp. 312; Hākīm al-Jusheymi, 'uyūn al-Masāil fi Usūl al- Taklīf, ed. Ramzan Yıldırım (İstanbul, 2018) pp.137.

32 R. M. Frank, 'Several Fundamental Assumptions of the Basra School of the Mu'tazila', *Studia Islamica*, No. 33 (1971), pp. 5-18.

wards the outer world with its whole self. This orientation could be marked by its motion or rest, which implies it is being able to act (*fā'il*). Life as an accident inheres a body. On the other hand, the soul is one of the phenomena which is integral with such a living body as heartbeat, growth, appetite, etc. One could deduce from such an explanation that 'Abd al-Jabbār was very cautious in demarking human ontology without any extension. The flesh is the body, with muscles, bones, blood and other interrelated organs. Some are crucial to others for life.

He argues that man does not possess any immaterial or immortal soul. He defines, man "The living agent (*ḥayy*) who has the power of action (*qudra*) is this particular body (*bunya al-makhsusa*), by which he is distinguished from the rest of animals (*yufāriq bi-ha sa'iral ḥaywān*), commands and prohibitions, praise and blame are all attributed to this totality (aggregated individual)".³³ Along these lines, 'Abd al-Jabbār asserts that man is experienced instantly with his unique body, a shape having a unique structure (*būnya al-maḥsūsa*). In the same manner, the self-experiences itself as a unity (*jumla*). There is no need for further rationalization.

A profound change that might emerge through these differences of approaches is marked by Cengiz; the non-physicalists such as an-Nazzam considered human beings as having natural dispositions and perpetual inclinations by birth.³⁴ This is why they could not consider man fully free due to bodily influences. On the contrary, the physicalist school insists on no essence before the existence of human beings. Once a person is born, his outer conditions and his life experience shapes him as he is. In this way, the tradition of 'Abd al-Jabbār undermines human nature (*taba'*) as a determining force of his choices.

One might resolve that it is 'the body', the existence that precedes any religious identity or moral obligation of the agent. 'Abd al-Jabbār

33 Al-Muḡnī, Ibid., pp. 314

34 Cengiz, Yunus, Ibid., pp. 57-73.

may be called a realist or in a sense an empiricist in this regard. He also stresses his claim of human freedom and his utter newness on the face of the earth, without any preceding sin(s) from a former life. One could assert that the dualistic approach emphasizes on human inborn nature whereas Basrian school gives importance to a man's nurture and immediate surroundings.

The intentions behind defining man are not as philosophical as it may seem, however, the motive was perhaps theological. i.e. to find the agent of obligation, the agent worthy of blame or praise (*zam wal madh*). Along these lines 'Abd al-Jabbār also mentions, the general use of the expression, when someone commits a crime, his soul is never accused of such an action, likewise, on appraisal, it is always the body known as the person himself. The imposition of the obligation is on the body, this is why the mukallaf by definition requires a body. A body by which the moral agent can fulfill God's commandments. Otherwise, commandments would be of no use, and it would be God's action in vain (*'abas*). It also possesses an ethical factor, as a free agent (*mukallaf*)– that man must will and act as a whole. So, he is appraised or condemned as a single unity. The other fundamental accidents that come along being living, are also in totality, like belief, motion, capacity to act (*qudra*) appetite, pain, and pleasures.

It can also be seen in 'Abd al-Jabbār 's notion of the usefulness of creation. What might be the scale of usefulness of an eternal soul in a mortal human body, if a body can act on its own? Existence as the human body, with its structure, precedes any attributes of being living or being able to communicate (*hayvan nātiq*). Because 'Abd al-Jabbār is well aware that the definition of the human being should encompass only human distinction. The difference of man from other animate beings is neither life nor motion. Living 'hayy' is also a quality found in other animals as they also move, feel pain and procreate. The attribute of man as being able to speak or rational was also an unjustified trait because the speech was believed to be a quality of other beings, such as angels. However, the

quality of reasoning or *t'qul* which separates human species from other living forms is a slow process that evolves with experience and reaches its heights with maturity. If reasoning shall be taken as the only distinguishing mark that would exclude children or irrational people. So, the feasible mark that separates humans from the rest is his physical shape which can be seen from the naked eye and one intuitively knows the other as humans.

In this regard, 'Abd al-Jabbār clarifies that not any appearance or shape of inanimate material that resembles a human figure such as a statue could be called a human being, because it lacks flesh, blood or any sensation in it.³⁵ This implies that flesh, blood, and humidity are integral to this specific structure called *insān*. So, man is the set, 'a totality of different accidents and functionalities' integral for being living. But above all, what makes him a man is his very form, the biological structure which we inherently know of, or the phenotype features which differentiate one person from others.

'Abd al-Jabbār while debating on his physicalist stance presumes a speculative setup, where if he is asked, about the human body parts undergoing through various changes or the problem of change in the physical appearance of a man, who has gone through serious physical deformation, for instance, does it imply that a person's identity after losing or gaining weight changes? Abd al-Jabbār's answer is a clear no, in the sense of the totality of being, self as itself remains the same, remains a physical body. As there are temporal and relatively permanent characteristics of any physical object, so would be the case with the human body.³⁶ A change in these characteristics does not change the sense of self in that person.

35 'Abd al-Jabbār, here clarifies the statement of his mentor Abū 'Alī Muḥammad al-Jubbā'ī that human being is made of clay does not mean an idol or a statue made of clay could be called a human being since it lacks physical organs as such flesh, blood and qualities of living. Al- Muḡnī, Vol. XI: Ibid., pp. 315.

36 Wilferd Madelung, 'Ibn al-Malāhimi on the human soul', The Muslim World, Vol. 102., (2012), pp. 426-432.

This raises the question of our corporeal organs and external characteristics of the body for they are always under constant change and deterioration, whereas the soul that apprehends body remains the same. One could use Avicenian argument, in favor of an incorporeal soul, that the only thing that remains consistent is a person's knowledge of herself, whereas the body is an object of generation and corruption. 'Abd al-Jabbār's response to this identity problem is rather nominal.³⁷ He would insist that a person with a proper name, say, Ahmad would remain Ahmad as a primary knowledge in a social setup. Any weight gain or weight loss, likewise hair loss, cannot modify his sense of being unity and neither him being Ahmad, as a known fact.

Another argument comes from everyday human perceptual experience. It is observed that man finds himself as a unity,³⁸ and there is no element of him that intuitively perceives a soul, an observable soul. Since God is the creator of this initial experience it must be real. Perception is considered a source of immediate knowledge in 'Abd al-Jabbār. Since the source of such knowledge is God and God could not create immediate knowledge as false knowledge. This would be very much contrary to how Mu'tazilites perceived God in their deontological ethics.

Perception (*idrak*) is also the only parameter of a living being. For 'Abd al-Jabbār it is not a property of soul likewise, knowledge, will, and action is necessary accidents that inhere in body successively. So, the body parts that cannot sense heat, cold or pain such as hair, nails, bones and bodily fluids such as blood, saliva, bile, etc.³⁹ were excluded as non-living components of human anatomy. However, they are necessary for life, likewise, the soul is neither living nor is connected to the human totality.⁴⁰ Though it is important for living creatures. The soul is understood as the "thin body" (*jism al daqīq*) the contingent breath by which

37 Al-Muġnī, Vol. XI: Ibid., pp. 346.

38 Al-Muġnī, Vol. XI: Ibid., pp. 318.

39 Al-Muġnī, Vol. XI: Ibid., pp. 314.

40 Margaretha T. Heemskerk, Ibid., pp. 127-156.

lightweight bodies (air) are exhaled and inhaled and are an indispensable component of being living.⁴¹ The only difference is the locus of air, while it is inside the human body, it is called soul (*rūh*). It is an integral part of a living human being such as his flesh, blood or structure.

We can remember that life can only inhere in a substrate maḥl that is formed as a specific structure, for instance, a human body, a horse, a sheep, etc. Since air does not have such a 'specific structure' and cannot have necessary accidents of perception of heat, cold or any pain. Air or soul cannot be a living being. This inhaled breath is a part, a non-living part of the human body. It is not living, it cannot move, motivate or affect man's freedom of choice, his actions alike. So, soul and a human being are not one and the same thing. It cannot be taken synonymous to a human being or his totality (jumla).

Conclusion

502

OMÜİFD

Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbār's such imagery of man and soul make it very clear that all existence is one, in its essence made of atoms. The thing which distinguishes man from the rest of beasts is his relation with God via obligation. It could be concluded by summarizing the notion of the soul that life as an accident subsists in a body, with a specific structure, makes it a living being that perceives and acts freely. The reason which was in later Kalam considered as a vital function of the human soul i.e. intellection of universals, would not be an ability of soul per se but of human being that relies heavily on a sound mind and body.

So, the soul or the breath is one of the phenomena which is integral to the human body for its survival i.e. heartbeat, growth, appetite, etc. One could induce from it that for 'Abd al-Jabbār the meaning or telos of human life shall be found in his fulfillment of divine commands and bodily sufferings.

41 For more detailed discussion Margaretha T. Heemskerck, *Ibid.*, pp. 134.

'Abd al-Jabbār's solution to the quest of the human soul in absolute physicalist sense also become more valuable since he emerged on the theological stage after the Inquisition period *mihna* and before al-Ghazali. The consequences of holding such a view reduce the problems that come along with belief in eternal souls, reincarnation, predestined meaning of life and above all non-acceptance of the body as one's own self. As can be seen, for 'Abd al-Jabbār, man is not a mere linguistic expression that has no reference in the real world but is a physical reality. Perhaps this is why he, along with his predecessors pointed towards the human body as this body. This linguistic index could also shed some light on the classical belief in a reality that can be known by a man with intuition and pure reasoning (*aql*).

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