

An Overview of Knowledge-Value Relationship in Mu'tazilite Ethical Theory*

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ABSTRACT

This article is concerned with the problem of the relationship between knowledge and value because the ethical theory of Mu'tazila has an importance in the Mediaeval Age Muslim world. Contrary to Ash'arites, Mu'tazila has supported that some objective value terms whether a religion is sent or not, good, bad, and necessary can be known via wisdom with reference to the relationship of knowledge-value. Mu'tazila supports objectivism in the scope of ethical values; however, we can describe such an objectivist thought, which is supported by them and receives its necessity completely from God, as "divine objectivism", so to speak. These values were placed in both world of objectives and human mind only by God at the beginning. According to Mu'tazila, both wisdom and narration are the essential sources about knowing value concepts like good and bad. Therefore, the wisdom that is supported by Mu'tazila can be accepted as "partial rationalism". Consequently, according to the ethical system of Mu'tazila, human can sustain a moral life by using the competent mind given by God at the beginning of creation.

KEYWORDS

Kalām, Mu'tazila, Ethic, Divine Objectivism, Necessary Knowledge, Value

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Mu'tezilî Ahlâk Nazariyesinde Bilgi-Değer Münasebetine Bir Bakış

ÖZ

Mu'tezilî kelâmcıların ortaya attıkları ahlâk nazariyesi Ortaçağ İslâm dünyasında önemli bir yer işgal eder. Bundan dolayı, bu makale bilgi-değer münasebeti sorununa ayrılmıştır. Eş'arî kelâmcıların aksine, Mu'tezilîler, bilgi-değer münasebetinden yola çıkmak suretiyle, din gönderilsin ya da gönderilmesin, iyi, kötü ve zorunlu gibi bazı objektif değer terimlerinin akıl kanalıyla bilinebilirliği tezini öne sürmüşlerdir. Mu'tezilîler, ahlâkî değerler alanında nesnelciliği savunurlar, ancak onların savunduğu ve zorunluluğunu bütünüyle Tanrı'dan alan bu türden bir nesnelcilik anlayışını, deyim yerindeyse, “ilâhî nesnelcilik” diye nitelendirmek mümkündür. Onlarca, değerler daha başlangıçta hem nesnel âlemine hem de insan anlığına sadece Tanrı tarafından yerleştirilmiştir. Mu'tezilîlere göre, hem akıl hem de nakil iyi ve kötü gibi değer kavramlarını bilme hususunda iki asıl kaynaktır. İşte bu nedendir ki, Mu'tezilîlerin savunduğu akıl “kısmî akılcılık” olarak kabul edilebilir. Sonuç itibarıyla, Mu'tezilîlerin ahlâk sisteminde, insanoğlu daha başlangıçta onu yaratırken Tanrı'nın kendisine bahşetmiş olduğu yetkin aklını kullanmak suretiyle erdemli ve ahlâki bir yaşam tarzı sürdürebilir.

ANAHTAR KELİMELEER

Kelâm, Mutezile Ahlâk, İlahi Nesnelcilik, Zorunlu Bilgi, Değer

INTRODUCTION

Just as the ethical theory developed by Mu'tazila has an importance in the history of general ethical thought, it is also important in the history of Islamic thought. It seems that they pay attention to the potential of knowing some good or bad objective values by mind with reference to logic, mathematics, and experimental principles in relation to knowledge-value relationship,¹ value included notions category, and the principle of the possibility of producing objective knowledge from all these without considering the religion is sent or not.

We can evaluate the ethical theories in the Mediaeval Muslim world primarily in the context of ethics of “happiness”. The essential fact that caused the development of two theories that are debated among Muslim theologians is the problem of whether the origin of good and evil, as being a general tool-value that brings happiness in general, is based on Allah's commands and prohibitions. The first person who had mentioned this, one of the most archaic and important problems of philosophy of ethics, is Plato, and he had influenced² Muslim philosophers by saying, “Is something good because Allah wants it so, or does Allah want it because it is good?”. Then, is something good by its essence, or is it good because it is beneficial to humans?

¹ Majid Fahry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 31.

² Platon, *Euthyphron*, translated by Pertev Naili Boratav (Istanbul: Maarif Publications, 1958), 12-20.

Ash'arītes say that there are no realities that are changeable by their essences as being productions³ of discontinuity, non-continuation and possibility doctrines that are related to substance-accident metaphysics in the world of objectives in which they relate the existence of values completely to the will of Allah, and they say that all these exist with a divine habit, and meanwhile human's mental attitude has a great importance in determining values by constantly emphasizing motives at a humane level, such as emotion, thought, faith, interest, purpose, benefit and profit, and they refuse objective values by using subjective facts as an excuse. Mu'tazila and partially Māturīdīs supported that the existence of values is because of their essences and nature provided that they are placed both in the world of objectives and human mind by only Allah in past eternity, and contrary to Ash'arītes, they tried to base on value's objective realities by saying something is good or evil by its essence and tried to guarantee these objective realities with Allah's justice and wisdom attributes⁴. In that case, we can define such an objectivism that must originate from Allah as “theistic objectivism”, so to speak. Therefore, we can evaluate why the value's quality problem of Muslim theologians, in other words, the matter of good and evil, is debated in this point of view.

The ethical theory that is introduced as closed in the Mediaeval Muslim world by Muslim jurists, and theoretically commenced by Ash'arītes, who accept Allah's absolute power and dominance and servant's absolute resignation and submission to Him as the primary principle of the Qur'ān, is called as “theistic subjectivism”. This theory is subjectivist because by denying anything that is objective in the characteristics of actions themselves, it establishes a connection between a judge or observer's mental attitudes, behaviors, thoughts, observations and opinions, such as desiring and not, commanding and prohibiting, recognition and approving and not approving values of actions. This theory is theistic because instead of various kinds of humane activity, the being that makes decisions and determines as a subject is only the divine being. Nevertheless, this theory is also defined as “ethical voluntarism” as usual because it supports that the value notions like good and evil should be accepted by basing on Allah's will and preference. Accordingly, some ethical values, such as goodness, evil, justice and cruelty do not have meanings other than Allah ordained. In other words, actions can have an ethical meaning by only divine will.⁵

Contrary to theistic subjectivism, the ethical theory is the ethical objectivism that is developed by Mu'tazila and Samarkandī Māturīdīs. Mu'tazila scholars persist in their attitudes that we can know many religious and ethical truths that are true and necessary included Allah's existence and oneness with a mental instinct that works depending on the grace of God, and they attribute the qualities of good and evil to their essences provided that Allah placed them into objectives' essences right at the beginning. Mu'tazila essentially asserts that there is a consistence or coordination⁶ between the objectives in the external universe

³ Muḥammad Âbid al-Jābirī, *Arap-İslâm Kültürünün Akıl Yapısı: Arap İslâm Kültüründeki Bilgi Sistemlerinin Eleştirel Bir Analizi*, translated by Burhan Köroğlu, Hasan Hacak, Ekrem Demirli (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 1999), 254-257.

⁴ İlhami Güler, *Allah'ın Ahlâkîliği Sorunu: Ehl-i Sünnet'in Allah Tasavvuruna Ahlâkî Açıdan Eleştirel Bir Yaklaşım* (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Publications, 1998), 54-66.

⁵ George F. Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism: The Ethics of 'Abd al-Jabbar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 12-13.

⁶ Peter Klein, *Felsefe ve Psikopatoloji (Kategorilerin Gelişimi Üzerine)*, translated by Özgür Karaçam (İstanbul: Gendaş Company, 1998), 340-341.

and human mind.⁷ In other words, they try to defend the objectivity of ethical values with reference to external universe because Allah placed the knowledge of good or evil values that are related to objectives in the observable universe in human's mind as a general law. Therefore, we can describe such a discipline as “theistic objectivity”, as being a little different from its modern-day meaning, due to the fact that good or evil values receive their objectivity necessarily from God's act of creation. Likewise, according to Māturīdī, just as Allah created human by providing him with power and capabilities that will help him in reaching true and objective realities, He also provided the world of objectives/nature in a way that helps it in reaching true and objective realities. Therefore, we can say that Māturīdī, who emphasizes the external universe too much and follows a realistic method, pays full attention to the reality of external universe and supports the objectivity of values.⁸

In the Mediaeval Muslim world, debates about philosophy of ethics are centered on two questions that are considerably related to each other. These questions are “What is the origin of the ontological status (objective-subjective) of ethical values, such as good, evil, justice, cruelty, truthfulness and lie and the origin of knowledge (reason-revelation) of aforementioned ethical values?”⁹ In this study, the answer for the second question, which mostly queries the values theoretically, is sought.

Mu'tazila has a tendency for the thought of objectivity in order to support that Allah is a being that has absolute justice, He will never show cruelty, actually He will do only good, and He is excluded from doing evil. They consider good or evil deeds, which humans do with their free wills, and rewarding of goodness and punishing of evils as a necessity of Allah's justice, and they support that this can necessarily be known with an intuitionistic reason that works or performs to honor the grace of God. Thus, contrary to Ash'arites, Mu'tazilates and Māturīdīs tried to base on the theory that human is responsible/obligated by the capability, aptitude, power, will, capability to choose and free will given by Allah at the beginning even though the religion is not sent. For them, describing an act as ethical is only possible by a free will.

Mu'tazila, who represent the rationalist cult in the philosophy of ethics, are regarded as the first real ethicists of Muslims who tried to base ethical provisions on rational principles. They did not only formulated consistent answers for basic ethical problems, but they also triggered the ethical developments that would appear later in theological communities.¹⁰ In this context, they tried to enlighten the nature of some basic ethical notions that include value, such as good-evil, benefit-harm, advantage-beneficial, gratitude-ungratefulness, truthfulness-lying and justice-cruelty, by directing the debates about them. Thus, these had a great importance in their efforts for theorizing the ethics. On the other hand, Ahl al-Sunnah tried to develop an antithesis of ethics of Mu'tazila by focusing more on theistic subjectivism. In other words, Mu'tazila showed

⁷ R.M. Frank, “Several Fundamental Assumptions of The Basra School of The Mu'tazila”, *Studia Islamica* (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve-Larose, 1971), 33:7.

⁸ Hanifi Özcan, *Māturīdī'de Bilgi Problemi* (Istanbul: IFAV Publications, 1993), 51-53.

⁹ George F. Hourani, *Juwaynī's Criticisms of Mu'tazilite Ethics, Reason and Tradition Islamic Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 124.

¹⁰ Fahry, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, 31.

the success of presenting a general scheme about the philosophy of ethics for the first time in Muslim theology. However, it is seen that there are debates about the ethical value notions too in the works of Ahl al-Sunnah.

The Mu'tazilite theory of ethics that holds on to the principle of disclosure of evidence¹¹ in the invisible world with reference to the visible world alternates between divine and humane scope. The philosophy of ethics formed considerably depending on the thought of theistic justice. However, the philosophy of ethics of Mu'tazila is about humans themselves. They attributed the value notions to theistic actions in the same way as the actions of human.¹² In brief, according to Mu'tazila, ethical values, such as goodness, evil, justice, cruelty, wisdom, foolish, advantage, advantageous, truthfulness, lying, praise, scorn, reward and punishment, have a real existence independent of Allah's will. There are objective qualities that make actions or behaviors ethically good or evil. An action's being ethically good or evil is about the beneficial or harmful qualities in that behavior, not about Allah's commanding or forbidding/prohibiting it. In fact, Allah's commanding or forbidding a behavior is about the attributes, which are placed in human's essence at the creation by Allah, in the aforementioned behavior. According to them, divine commands or prohibitions do not necessitate something's being good or evil, but it indicates them. In this matter, Māturīdīs agree with Mu'tazilates, but they attribute Māturīdī's authority for making something obligatory or forbidden to divine command or prohibitions. Then according to Mu'tazila and partially Māturīdīs, ethical values like good or evil that have an objective existence independent of Allah's will is known by reason.

1. THE POSSIBILITY AND DEFINITION OF KNOWLEDGE

Basra Mu'tazilite support that Allah will never allow the corruption of evidences in the external universe. Allah does not deceive His servants by creating an unimaginable, irrational universe. Mu'tazila supports that Allah acts accordingly the rational laws that are completely originated by His essence, not dictated from outside.¹³ "All actions of Allah are good. Allah neither does harm nor violates the necessity obligated for Him; He neither lies about His information nor does an injustice about the judgement He formed. He neither tortures sons of polytheists for crimes of their fathers nor creates a miracle for false prophets. He does not regard His servants as responsible formatters in which they are not strong or well-informed enough to overcome them. He does these so the one that is destroyed is destroyed with a clear evidence, and the one that lives keeps living with a clear evidence as well." Basra Mu'tazila is epistemologically realistic. They say that the essential facts that make up the universe are real beings, not theory, and it is possible to have knowledge about them. It is impossible to think that this realistic thought of knowledge is consistent with the skeptical approach which supports that it is impossible to know objects.

Qādi Abd-al-Jabbār criticizes the skeptical group and supports the correctness of perception. He criticizes the thought 'the reality is whatever a subject believes in' as follows:

¹¹ Abū Ḥasan 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad al-Hamadhānī, *al-Muḥīṭ bi-l- taklīf*, edited by Sayyid al-Azmī (Cairo: Dar al-Misriyye, 1965), 167-168; al-Jābirī, *Arap-İslâm Kültürünün Akıl Yapısı*, 208-209.

¹² George F. Hourani, *The Rationalist Ethics of 'Abd al-Jabbar, Reason and Tradition Islamic Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 101.

¹³ R.C. Martin, M.R. Woodward, D.S. Atmaja, *Defenders of Reason in Islam* (Atlanta: s.n., 1997), 11.

1) Whenever two judgements about the same object are not consistent, that object has contradictory qualities.

2) Humans could change the qualities of object by changing their beliefs about the object. In fact in this context, even Allah's existence and attributes would be linked to our faith. However, the incorrectness of these results are directly known. In that case, faith does not affect the reality.

3) If someone did not believe in anything about something, that thing would neither exist nor absent and neither be eternal nor finite.

4) No one could have admitted that he made a mistake or was uninformed for his all former beliefs would be correct by definition. Furthermore, he could claim that someone else constantly made mistakes or was uninformed. The incorrectness of these claims is known via introspection.¹⁴

According to Abd al-Jabbar, it is impossible for the perception not to show the thing that is perceived as how it is. Therefore, perception is a source of knowledge. Qādī Abd-al-Jabbār insists on the fact that when a subject perceives something, he believes that the object is really just as he perceives, and he is satisfied with this belief. Even though it is skeptical, it is not possible for someone to abandon his belief about the object. A definition of information that is a belief in which nafs is in peace, is formulated by Abū Hashim.¹⁵

According to Mu'tazila, knowledge has both objective and subjective specific differences as emotional satisfaction with mental sense that is appropriate for reality as truth and nafs security. Hereby both of the two distinctive qualities are necessary for knowledge. Mu'tazila theologians did not see a difference between knowledge and faith. Therefore, they thought refusing the imitative faith and supported questioning the faith dependent on others' authority in terms of correctness.¹⁶

According to theologians, the object could not be completely known only by perception as in its essence. They tried to establish a connection between our knowledge about obtaining the object as being a production of object and perception as in its essence in the external universe with reference to the theory of the attributes of objects and emphasized objective and subjective facts in the process of acquiring knowledge. As Qādī Abd-al-Jabbār revealed, the knowledge about the object of perception acquired by the owner of perception corresponds to the way of that object's being perceived. Accordingly, on the basis of object-subject relationship, correctness of knowledge can be shown by considering the form of consistency between being and mind.¹⁷ The attribute that we perceive an object via itself or by its help is the attribute in which this perceptual object is distinguished from all other perceptual object classes via itself. Therefore, this special attribute is one for each perceptual object class, and it is the determinant attribute for that class. If we were to perceive an object with an attribute that does not have a determinant attribute, then the

¹⁴ Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 19.

¹⁵ Abū Ḥasan 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad al-Hamadhānī, *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-'ad* (Cairo: Nashra al-Sharika, 1962), 5:70; Alnoor Dhanani, *The Physical of Kalām: Atoms, Space, and Void in Basrian Mu'tazilī Cosmology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 22.

¹⁶ Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 12:123.

¹⁷ For correspondence see. Harun Tepe, *Platon'dan Habermas'a Felsefede Doğruluk ve Hakikat* (Ankara: Ark Publications, 1995), 81-84.

correctness of perception would not be guaranteed, and the perception would convey us to ignorance because we would not succeed in knowing the object.

2. TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE

According to Ahl al-Sunnah and Mu'tazila, knowledge splits into two parts as necessary and acquired.

2.1. Necessary Knowledge

Necessary Knowledge has two types:

a) Knowledge that is acquired by perception is always about details. This is the most explicit type of knowledge because we do not need evidence for what we have perceived. Theologians consider the perceptual knowledge as necessary knowledge.

Perception either tends to objects of external universe or spiritual realities of interior world. Basra Mu'tazilates regard both our current consciousness such as being angry, frightened, etc., the knowledge about our internal states, and our congenital knowledge about the principle of non-contradiction, incorrectness of two opposites in the same matter or the impossibility of an object's existence at two different places at the same time as direct knowledge. The perceptual knowledge that is perceived is as an important kind of knowledge as our prior knowledge which is about rational principles, such as our existential knowledge that is about our internal states that belong or get into the class of direct or necessary knowledge and the principle of non-contradiction. Qādī Abd-al-Jabbār describes the direct knowledge as a kind of knowledge that appears in us without our efforts and cannot be denied by us in any case.¹⁸ Therefore, feeling pain, heat or cold, having the power to perform an action or not reflects the reality about our internal states.

Mu'tazilates dissented in the matter of separating knowledge into two main categories as “necessary” and “acquired”. They mostly support that Allah can only be known by reasoning. Al-Jahiz supports that all knowledge is necessary.¹⁹ According to Eshres, because goodness and evil are necessarily known by reason and Allah is good, it is necessary to know Allah. Even though prophets did not arrive, reason would still be necessary to know Allah.²⁰ According to al-Balkhī, because of his debt of gratitude towards Allah, it is necessary for human to know Him.²¹

b) Necessary knowledge is obtained explicitly by the rational insight that gives the knowledge of general realities. “To know that justice and truthfulness are good; cruelty, lying and ill-wishing are bad.” can be given as an example for necessary knowledge acquired in this way. Such knowledge is obtained via reason by anyone who has mind because such knowledge is completely about insight, not reasoning. Because necessary knowledge precedes knowing Allah and believing in Him, it does not depend on revelation. Therefore,

¹⁸ Abū Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad al-Hamadhānī, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, edited by Abdulkarīm Osmān (Cairo: Maktab al-Wahba, 1988), 48.

¹⁹ Abū Mansūr ‘Abd al-Qāhir b. Muḥammad al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn* (Istanbul: Matbaa al-Dawla, 1928), s.32.

²⁰ Mir Veliyuddin, “Mu'tezile”, translated by Altay Ünalay, *İslam Düşüncesi Tarihi*, edited by M.M. Sherif (Istanbul: İnsan Publications, 1990), 1:249.

²¹ A.S. Tritton, *İslam Kelamı*, translated by Mehmet Dağ (Ankara: AUIF Publications, 1983), 156.

the ethical realities known as necessary are approved by everyone who believes or not.²² However, Ash'arites does not consider the knowledge of general ethical realities within the scope of necessary knowledge due to some reasons. At this point, they give some rational evidences about the Mu'tazila argument that goodness and evil can be apprehended by reason.

2.1.1. Mu'tazila's Evidences Considering the Mentally Perceptibility of Ethical Values

First, Mu'tazila regards people's having correct ethical judgement without knowing Qur'an as incorrectness of Ash'arī approach. For example, according to Mu'tazila, Brahmins reached the ethical realities owing to the reason given by Allah at birth although they did not receive any divine helps like book or prophet.²³

Second, according to Mu'tazila, humans know before the arrival of prophet that it is good to save someone drowning or dying; cruelty and hostility are evil.²⁴

Third, if someone with reason faces a situation in which it is equal for him to satisfy his needs with a right or wrong method, he knows that choosing the right one is more favorable without receiving a warning or reminder.

Fourth, people used to solve their problems by reasoning and thinking before shari'a/divine law arrived. If there were no goodness or evil in the essence of being, people would not dispute among each other to find it.²⁵

Fifth, if actions were not beautiful and ugly by themselves, messengers would not be able to find a way for theistic invitation by silencing their answerers with evidences.²⁶

Sixth, if we removed the beautiful and ugly qualities from humane actions and transformed them to religious acceptations, the interpretation with reference to revelatory needs that we extracted from judgments' religious originals would be lost for it would not be possible to compare actions and words.²⁷

²² Abū Ḥasan 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad al-Hamadhānī, *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-'ad*, edited by Ahmad Fuād al-Ahvānī (Cairo: Muassasa al-Misriyya, 1962), 6:18,21,63.

²³ Hourani. *Juwaynī's Criticisms of Mu'tazilite Ethics*, 129.

²⁴ Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 6:19.

²⁵ Abū Fath Abd al-Karīm al-Shahristānī, *Nihāyāt al-aqdām*, edited by Alfred Guillaume (Cairo: Maktab al-Mutabanna), 374.

²⁶ Sayf al-Dīn Abū Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Amidī, *al-Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām*, edited by Aḥad al-Afādīl (s.l.: s.n., 1968), 1:84,85.

²⁷ Mihrī Ḥasan Abū Sa'de, *al-Ittijā al-aqdī fī mushkila al-ma'rife 'inda Mu'tazila* (Cairo: Dar al-Fiqr al-Arabī, 1993), 304.

Seventh, Allah's commanding or prohibiting something is because that thing is mentally accepted as “evil” or “good” before its being commanded or prohibited.²⁸ Qāḍī Abd-al-Jabbār tries to base on this argument of Mu'tazilite's thesis by explaining Qur'ān's verse(16/90).²⁹

According to Hourani, the efforts of Mu'tazila for basing on the objectivity of ethical values is more suitable for Qur'ān's general tendency. For him, Qur'ān had already used the known language of ethics in the pre-Islamic age of ignorance except from a few semantical corrections and reforms. Allah leads people in matters of good and evil values that are the most debated ones by sending prophets to help humans in their practical lives as a token of his gratitude. Accordingly, Qur'ān strengthened the basic ethical values that already objectively exist in the community of Jahiliyyah by reminding them and based them on capability of sanction of a theistic authority. To prove his thesis by analyzing verses that mention some ethical notions that were important in the period that Qur'ān was revealed, such as husn/beautiful, kubuh/ugly, hayr/goodness, sharr/evil, birr/righteousness, sulh/peace, k̄st/equality, cruelty and justice, Hourani assumes that these ethical messages already exist in the human mind objectively and currently. For him, Qur'ān helps avoiding negative behaviors and applies ethical principles to communal living by using psychological methods like encouragement and motivation with its commands and prohibitions.³⁰

2.1.2. Evidences of Ash'arites and Criticisms of Mu'tazilites about Them

Ash'arites tried to refute the evidences about ethical values by criticizing them. The basis of their refutations depend on two evidences. First one of these is a wise person's attitude towards a mathematical theorem like “Two is bigger than one” and an ethical theorem like “Lying is ugly for it deserves the censure of Allah” even though he did not receive education and religious training. Although that person mentally knows how these two theorems should be in reality, it is seen that he digresses from the mental maturity of the mathematical theorem in the ethical theorem about lying. This being the case, whoever claims in relation to reason that judgements are equal, that person acts stubbornly by getting beyond the scope of mental judgements.³¹

Al-Ghazālī objected that the principles which seem evil and good can be necessarily accepted obviously and mentally, and he said that these are principles that take form depending on humans' customs and traditions.³² For him, these are theoretical statements and judgements such as “Justice is good” and “Cruelty

²⁸ Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 6:65-66; Ahmed Mahmūd Subhī, *al-Falsafa ahlākīyye fī al- fiqr al-Islāmī* (Beirut: Dār Nehda al-Arabiyya, 1992), 128-142; Id, *Fī ilm al-Kalām: Dirāsa falsafīyya li ārā al- firāq Islāmīyya fī uṣūl al-dīn* (Beirut: Dār Nehda al-Arabiyya, 1985), 1:153-156; Muḥammad Ammara, *al-Mu'tazila wa mushkil al-ḥurriya al-insāniyya* (Cairo: al-Muassasa al-Arabiyya, 1988), 143-144; Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 55-62.

²⁹ Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 6:113; Subhī, *al-Falsafa ahlākīyye*, 128-142; Hasan Ḥanefī, *Min al- 'aqāide ilā al-Sevra* (Cairo: Maktab Māḍbūlī, 1988), 3: 456-566.

³⁰ George F. Hourani, *Ethical Presuppositions of the Quran, Reason and Tradition Islamic Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 27-37; Güler, *Allah'ın Ahlākīliği Sorunu*, 36-37.

³¹ al-Shahristānī, *Nihāyāt al-aqdām*, 371-372.

³² Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Miḥaq al-naẓar*, edited by Muḥammad Bedruddīn al-Nasānī (Beirut: s.n., 1966), 63.

is evil” that are accepted by everyone.³³ With reference to the fact that these statements are changeable rights depending on the tradition, Al-Ghazālī has a tendency for the argument of Ash'arī sect, one of whose members is Al-Ghazālī, that ethically good and evil values are relativistic.

The second evidence is about the absence of goodness in lie and the absence of evil in righteousness. Without considering the truthfulness' being good and lying's being evil, a person comprehends the reality of all. Accordingly, goodness and evil show that truthfulness and lie do not have essential qualities and it is possible to think without them. Hereby the objections towards Mu'tazila, which depends on the basis of the nature and reality of an action's being something and the value of judgement related to its being something else, originate from this evidence.

Qādī Abd-al-Jabbār thinks that the aforementioned objections of Al-Ghazālī do not damage the thesis that the things which are regarded as good or evil are mentally acquired principles at birth because for him, no person with reason dissents about accepting the cruelty always as evil; the discord appears in the matter of qualifying actions that depend on the form of cruelty as cruel or not even though they are good. This situation necessitates reasoning and thinking.³⁴

As we come to the objection that qualifying actions with goodness and evil resembles qualifying forms with beauty and ugly and this situation's exiling the necessary knowledge about judgements of actions,³⁵ Mu'tazila evades this with cruel one's deserving to be denigrated if s/he acted deliberately. In fact, this is known as necessary although there are some objections. The discords of people with reason originates from ignorance about the attribution in which the act is beautiful because of it or ugly in terms of complementation of knowing it by reasoning. However, ignorance about attribution does not remove the obligation of knowing the goodness and ugliness principles in general. As for word, form and objects, rational people may not be in accord about their beauty or ugliness, in fact, the same person might see a form sometimes as beautiful and sometimes as ugly. This is because the beauty or ugliness of the relevant form depend on the perceiver, not on the focused object itself.³⁶ Here something like this is contrary to the idea that goodness and evil, which Mu'tazila accepts, are subjective, absolute attributions.³⁷

If qualifications, such as goodness, ugliness, permitted, forbidden, cleanliness and dirtiness, were about original attributions of objects and actions, both a religion's beautifying something and another one's uglifying it and abrogation of religions to change them with forbidden and permitted would be unimaginable. Al-Shahristānī shows the implementation of marriage to a sister of the same father and mother in sharia law of Adam's being contradictory to the law about marrying to two sisters at the same time in the religion that the Prophet Muhammad revealed as an example. In fact, Mu'tazila avoids this evidence by separating two types of judgements from each other. At this point, reasonable judgements that are known via channel of reason in relation to rational goodness and ugliness and religious judgements that are known via the way of sharia in relation to religious goodness and ugliness are in discussion. Thus, Mu'tazila emphasizes the

³³ Necip Taylan, *Mantık Tarihçesi Problemleri* (Istanbul: IFAV Publications, 1996), 135.

³⁴ Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 6:20.

³⁵ Abū Hāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtisād fī al- i'tiqād* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Ilmiyye, 1983), 109.

³⁶ Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 6:19.

³⁷ al-Shahristānī, *Nihāyāt al-aqdām*, 388.

general thought which is good and evil values are absolute and essential attributions that are impossible to change by claiming that changeability of the religious judgements cannot be mentioned within the scope of ethical values.

According to Mu'tazila, reasonable judgements are the judgements that are not disputed by rational people and cannot be acquired by experience as being congenitally necessary. Therefore, the beauty and ugliness of those judgements are about the attributions that extend to them and not extend to others.

On the other hand, it is possible for religious judgements to change in time and from case to case. In other words, the relativity basis of values has great importance in this matter, and this changeability originates from the principle of Maslaha, which has single signification origin. If the aspects of benefit and harm in these judgements are known, their beauty and ugliness are also known by reasoning.

While Mu'tazila accepts the origin of general good and evil ethical values as reason that functions owing to an ability that is placed in human's mind by Allah, it supports that the judgements about good and evil in religion depend on religion again, not on reason. According to them, reason and religion do not require these two types of judgements at the same time because both judgements precede the signification that indicates the beauty and ugliness that exist together with the action itself.³⁸ Therefore, we can say that Mu'tazila regards reason and religion as sources that indicate goodness and evil.³⁹

In this rational debate between Ash'arites and Mu'tazilates about the nature of good and evil values, we can say that Mu'tazilates, who rely upon the thought of theistic justice, successfully overcame the pressures of Ash'arī thought of absolute power and dominance that degrades the ethical values completely to religious judgements. Essentially, this value for reason that Mu'tazila puts does not decrease the greatness of theistic power contrary to the argument of Ahl al-Sunnah because finally, reason and revelation as being originated from the same source are theistic blessings for responsible people to fulfill their tasks in knowing and accepting Allah, to whom they are responsible to, as one as required.

2.2. Acquired Knowledge

Acquired knowledge is a type of knowledge that can only be obtained by reasoning. The essence or reality of reasoning is the idea because without idea, no one can apply reasoning. Idea means to think about something's form and to compare that thing or fact with others. Reasoning that produces idea in human is the reasoning that is dependent only on evidence. Accordingly, acquired knowledge is a type of idea that is dependent on evidences and does not present transformation. If all philosophers properly apply reasoning on a single thing's evidence, it is impossible to dissent on the idea obtained by this reasoning. Thus, when it is correct that reasoning provides constant, universal knowledge for some people, it is necessary that it produces the same kind of knowledge for all other people.

Rational analysis splits into two: while the first one expresses the rational analysis that is referred in earthly matters such as methods of treatment and the scope of experience, the second one is the rational analysis that is used in religious matters. For example according to Mu'tazila, the mentally necessary reasoning that should be referred in the matter of knowing Allah is the first one of the rational necessities. In that case, because our knowledge about Allah is obtained as a result of the method of reasoning, it is an

³⁸ Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 6:63-64.

³⁹ Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, 75.

indirect knowledge, not a necessary one.⁴⁰ Therefore according to them, there are no doubts that religious obligations come after Allah's knowledge, oneness and justice.⁴¹

According to Jubbāi, the knowledge about Allah that is dependent on evidence is not necessary knowledge. Human knows the knowledge of Allah and the knowledge of good and evil via reasoning. The first thing that human beings should know is Allah given that they did create themselves, because not knowing Allah is rebellion. Prophet can only confirm the realities that are known via the channel of reason.⁴²

There is another special type of acquired knowledge that comes via revelation. Although the ethical judgements that can only be known via the channel of revelation are called as “judgements of revelation”, the ones known via reasoning are called as “reasonable judgements”.⁴³ The ethical knowledge that is obtained by the channel of revelation is acquired knowledge, not necessary because the acceptance of revelatory knowledge comes after the mentally acceptance of the source of revelation. In other words, the revelatory knowledge must be confirmed with rational evidences. The righteousness of the judgements known by revelation can only be possible by rationally knowing that Allah is dominant and just, He will not ethically do evil, He will not break the obligation imposed on Him, He will not command the evil, He will not forbid the goodness, and therefore, his all actions are good.⁴⁴ Because attempting to confirm revelation with revelation leads to a vicious circle.

3. VALUES IN THE ETHICS OF MU'TAZILA AS KNOWLEDGE OBJECTS

Value is anything that is desirable and important to humans. Values are mostly dependent on needs.⁴⁵ It is possible to say that every object is valuable in terms of how much it is desired or served the purpose. The deprivation fact is the thing that determines the worth of value. For example, a person who wastes his time understands the value of time better after what is done is done. Value contains the separation of what is happened and what should happen as a criterion and always seems as something positive as good, beautiful and beneficial or negative as evil, ugly and harmful.

Value splits into categories such as religious, ethical, lawful and aesthetical.⁴⁶ In terms of ethical behavior, value means a standard criterion or benchmark that is referred while evaluating humans, humane

⁴⁰ Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 12:65-66, 67; Marie Bernard, *Le Problème de la connaissance d'après le Muğni du Cadi 'Abd al-Ġabbar* (Algiers: s.n., 1982), 137-141.

⁴¹ Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uşūl al-khamsa*, 75.

⁴² al-Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-mawāqif fī 'ilm al-Kalām* (Cairo: Matbaa al-Saāda, 1907), 8:183-184; Tritton, *İslam Kelamı*, 142.

⁴³ Abū Ḥasan 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad al-Hamadhānī, *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-'ad*, edited by Tāhā Husayn, Amin al-Hūlī (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1963), 17:101-102.

⁴⁴ Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uşūl al-khamsa*, 66, 69.

⁴⁵ Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Bilgi ve Değer* (Ankara: Kürsü Publications, nd.), 218.

⁴⁶ Joseph M. Bochenski, *Felsefece Düşünmenin Yolları*, translated by Kurtuluş Dinçer (Ankara: Ark Publications, 1994), 66.

qualities, wishes and intentions, and actions and behaviors. For example, Ali is a good person. Why? –because he helps people as much as he can, and helping people is regarded as a good behavior.

According to philosophy, there are four basic approaches about the possibility and ways of formally knowing the ethical values:⁴⁷ 1) Absolutism: It expresses that ethical values are real, constant and eternal-everlasting realities that do not show a change from person to person, from age to age and from community to community. These are absolute facts that must be certainly applied to life. 2) Objectivism: It mentions that standards of values, such as goodness, righteousness and justice, exist in the external world independent of our humane perception in that world, and these values are objective realities or facts that do not show a change from culture to culture. 3) Subjectivism: It states that values like goodness, righteousness and justice do not have objective realities; therefore, conditions of mind of the subject have a great importance to know these values, and these values do not have an objective basis in the external world. 4) Relativity: It expresses that values are arranged by personal and social preferences that are determined by person's environment, culture and characteristics.

It is observed that while Ash'arites act accordingly with subjectivism and relativity in general when they try to explain the conditions of values in the ethical scope, Mu'tazilates prefer to explain the ethical knowledge objects with examples from the perspective of objectivity, absolutism and relativity with a method that shows consistency with their system.

Along with the explanation of how people know all kinds of ethical theorems, the scheme of ethical theory of Mu'tazila can be drawn with various types of ethical theorems that people can find in the philosophy of ethics and with examination of other relevant points that are connected to each other, respectively.⁴⁸

3.1. Definitions of Value Terms

In the ethical theory of Mu'tazila, general value notions are terms of goodness or evil that can be defined by the terms that necessitate praise and scorn. Mu'tazila's system related to value terms resembles a network of value descriptions that shows a notable harmony. The most striking feature of these descriptions is the relationship of all actions and praise and scorn of the deserved.

Another feature of definitions is the notion of evil's being in the first place. The followed method is not an ordinary definition. This method reflects the general perspective of Mu'tazila in which the definition of evil depends on someone who is subject and his possessing a positive act, not depends on someone who abandoned as a positive matter. Mu'tazila does not attribute the evil that is done at the humane level by servants to Allah contrary to Ahl al-Sunnah. Therefore, we can deduce that Mu'tazila also presented a realistic approach towards evil in the world of objects just as Ahl al-Sunnah did, in other words, they regarded them as facts that have objective realities. In that case, we should state that the evil that has an importance in the ethical theory of Mu'tazila is regarded as a key notion.

⁴⁷ Bedia Akarsu, *Felsefe Terimleri Sözlüğü* (Istanbul: İnkılap Publications, 1994), 49-50; Ahmet Cevizci, *Felsefe Sözlüğü* (Ankara: Ekin Publications, 1996), 124; Erdal Cengiz, "Törebilimde Değer ve Ölçüt Sorunu", *Doğu Batı*, 1/4 (Ağustos-Eylül-Ekim 1998): 34.

⁴⁸ Hourani, *The Rationalist Ethics of 'Abd al-Jabbar*, 101.

Qāḍī Abd-al-Jabbār explains the notions of praise, scorn and deserving that are mentioned in the definitions of good and evil which he supported as being necessarily known in this way:

1. Evil: Whoever does this deserves scorn.

2. Good: Whoever does this does not deserve scorn.

2a) Permissible (mubah): Whoever does or does not do this does not deserve praise or scorn.

2b) Benevolence (tafaddul) or recommendation (nedb): Although the one who does this deserves praise, the one who does not do this does not deserve scorn.

2c) Necessary (vācib): Whoever does not do this deserves scorn.

Qāḍī Abd-al-Jabbār refers to texts written in modern language to show that a wrong definition and defining are not in the same scope in the debate of definition or how the method used does not comply with a form by including wrong factors.⁴⁹ For example, benefit is used for anything that conveys to pleasure and happiness or to both of them. Thus, benefit has a wider range of meaning than others because when it conveys human to pleasure and happiness, he can benefit from something that directly harms him. Again if the evil only meant “forbidden”, a person who forbids something would make an action evil, and an action that is commanded by Allah and forbidden by a human would be both necessary and evil. In other words, the same action would have two opposite qualities.⁵⁰ Evil’s definition is limited to only religion to avoid this situation, but other similar objections still continue.

Qāḍī Abd-al-Jabbār presents an unprecedented attitude of wisdom about the language in the high literature Arabian culture that controls the Mediaeval Muslim world. For instance, his realization of semantical development explains how the ‘forbidden’ was started to be used as an equal to evil⁵¹ in some communities with examples. As is seen, the definitions in the ethical system of Mu’tazila are discussed separately from reasons.⁵²

3.2. The Values of Action Classes

With the expression of the values of action classes, values like an action’s natural types, killing and torturing are implied.

a) The second type theorems that are discussed in Mu’tazila philosophy of ethics are the theorems which are general realities that are excluded from definitions, that is to say, the statements about which action class provides definitions. Mu’tazilates are aware of that a definition is a general expression of reality that is not about language. For instance, they are aware of the logical difference between the good’s meaning “everything that deserves praise” and the theorem “Justice is always good”. Although Abl al-Jabbar does not make differentiations about analytical and synthetic statements in a way that is seen in the Western tradition of philosophy,⁵³ he knows that justice in the second theorem is not the essence of good, but it is only

⁴⁹ Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 6:7; Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 27, 39.

⁵⁰ Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 6:28.

⁵¹ Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 12:95-96.

⁵² Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 29.

⁵³ For Kant's analytic and synthetic judgments see. Heinz Heimsoeth, *Immanuel Kant’ın Felsefesi*, translated by Takiyettin Mengüşoğlu (Istanbul: Remzi Publications, 1986), 74-75; Cemal Yıldırım, *Matematiksel Düşünme* (Istanbul: Remzi Publications, 1996), 66-67.

one of the reasons that makes an action good; however, the matter and the action in the first theorem belongs to the same essence.⁵⁴ Therefore, we can describe the good and evil notions analytically and a priori in the ethical thought of Mu'tazila. In this context, Qādī Abd-al-Jabbār does not try to show the analytical relationship between any of the most valuable value terms, which is the values of good, evil and necessary, and their reasons, such as justice, cruelty, benefit, blessing and gratitude. However, even though anyone with reason knows the good and evil values obviously or explicitly, that is to say, a priori, he can synthetically understand theorems, such as "Truthfulness is good", "Justice is good", "Lying is evil" and "Cruelty is evil". Essentially, Māturīdī agree with Mu'tazilites on that these kinds of theorems can be known by rational premises.⁵⁵ While the evil is defined accordingly with the standard of judgements about actions like deserving the scorn, cruelty is defined accordingly with the aspect of the action itself like doing harm and stealing someone else's property.⁵⁶

Qādī Abd-al-Jabbār says that everyone can know general ethical realities like "Cruelty is always evil" via direct intuitive reason.⁵⁷ He says that someone with reason does not need to learn the things that he knows directly via revelation, such as cruelty and ungratefulness' being evil and justice and gratitude's being necessary:⁵⁸ "The thing that causes an object to have a quality (evil) can show a change, such as lying is evil because the action is evil and cruelty is evil because the action is evil."⁵⁹

According to Abd al-Jabbar's theory of ethics, such judgements are absolute, general statements that are always correct in reality just because of their forms. Essentially according to Mu'tazila, violation of these kinds of absolute, universal statements depending on some conditions of place and time never harms the essence of goodness or evil. If cruelty is taken into consideration in relation to this class, it is always evil regardless of conditions, the mental state of agent, the ethics of the community that person lives in and even the commands of revelation. We can mention other evil reasons, such as lying, useless actions, not being grateful for blessing, ignorance, wishing the evil, commanding the evil and offering things that cannot be afforded. On the other hand, we can mention justice, advantage, benefit, truthfulness and wishing the good as the absolute reasons of goodness in general. Such realities are in the status of axiomatic which can be known by everyone with reason directly. Essentially, it can be said that these things provide the Mu'tazila philosophy of ethics with characteristics of intuitionism to some extent.⁶⁰

In the Mediaeval Muslim tradition of thought, Mu'tazila scholars, such as Allāf, Nazzam and Kabī, say that the goodness and evil of actions are due to attributions of actions, not the attributions that necessitate

⁵⁴ Hourani, *The Rationalist Ethics of 'Abd al-Jabbar*, 102-103.

⁵⁵ al-Māturīdī, Abū Mansūr. *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, edited by Fethullāh Huleyf (Beirut: Dār al-Mashrik, 2002), 100, 178, 200-201.

⁵⁶ Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 12:309-310.

⁵⁷ Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 6:57-58; 12:302-302, 308.

⁵⁸ Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 14:152.

⁵⁹ Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 6:61.

⁶⁰ Hourani, *The Rationalist Ethics of 'Abd al-Jabbar*, 103.

their essences. They try to prove the real attributions that absolutely necessitate this in both goodness and evil. In this way, it is seen that they support that the goodness and evil in actions are essential attributes.⁶¹

Qādī Abd-al-Jabbār notes that he adopts the ethical absolutism thought of Ka'bī. According to this thought, because some types of actions like killing are essentially evil, all actions, conditions and states that are included in this group are evil in any case.⁶² Accordingly, an action's being evil is because of that action's having an attribution of killing that is the action itself, that is to say, its essential attribute. There are no essential differences between killing someone with a rightful reason and the action of killing, killing someone unjustly and death penalty because both actions as being the actions of killing are essentially aimed at ending lives with some sort of solid tools.⁶³

b) The statements that we have defined above are valuable, ultimate and absolute judgements because we know that when an action is cruel, nonsense, lie and ungratefulness, it is evil, and when an action is justice, gratefulness and righteousness, it is good. However, some of these reasons, especially cruelty, exist in a complex condition in which all of them have a different value at the first appearance and can be outweighed by other aspects in particular conditions. For example, on the one hand, action is agonizing that is evil; on the other hand, it is a deserved punishment. Therefore, the principle that people should get what they deserve is good. Accordingly, because its rightful aspect outweighs, the action here is partly cruel.

No matter what happens, we have to consider the various aspects of the action before we can determine the value of action as a whole in most cases except from some types of actions that are good or evil. The first step to take in the process of judgement is to know the value of every aspect provided that it is taken as simple. For example, if pain is not essentially a necessary behavior that is aimed at benefits which will be gained in future and a useless suffering rather than being a just punishment for cruelty, then it is evil. In other words, according to intuitionist thought of ethics, it is possible to say that “pain is evil at the first sight”.⁶⁴

What Qādī Abd-al-Jabbār tries to tell about the matter of evil is some particular deeds' being sometimes good and sometimes evil depending on the existence and power of several factors that are suitable for value in actions themselves. For example, pain is evil when it is a useless suffering that does not have any other aspect in its essence. The undeserved pain is primarily evil; on the other hand, pain is good when it is deserved, beneficial or when it fulfills some other positive conditions.⁶⁵ Cruelty, again, is described as harm that does not have benefit and avoiding the harm in itself.⁶⁶ Something like this means to say that harm is evil at the first sight because of cruelty, but it can be justified with the existence of some balancing aspects at the first sight.

⁶¹ Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 6:31; Id, *al-Muḥīṭ*, 236-239; Mihri Ḥasan Abū Sa'de, *el-Ittijâ al-'aqdî fi mushkila al-ma'rifa 'inda Mu'tazila* (Cairo: Dar al-Fiqr al-Arabî, 1993), 295-296.

⁶² Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 64.

⁶³ Hourani, *Juwayni's Criticisms of Mu'tazilite Ethics*, 131.

⁶⁴ Hourani, *The Rationalist Ethics of 'Abd al-Jabbar*, 103-104.

⁶⁵ Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 12:229, 284-286.

⁶⁶ Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 12:298, 306, 312-315. 318, 321-323.

There are two ways of knowing the value of any of these aspects at the first sight such as knowing an action of justice's being good as being justice, and these methods are reason and revelation. According to Abd al-Jabbar, we directly know that it is good for intellectualist scholars to have difficulties in the researches about science and art.⁶⁷ This fact is mentioned to show that pain is sometimes good, and it takes part in the first sight of the pain's scope of value. Directly acquiring such ethical knowledge is an expected approach of an intuitionist theory because in this theory, there are no principles that are never in a connective manner just as the ones of pragmatism and can be extracted from second grade general realities.⁶⁸

It is seen that the way of knowing the ethical values at the first sight is directly by intuitionism for Qādī Abd-al-Jabbār because acquired knowledge is nearly from the same type of the knowledge of general ethical realities.⁶⁹

A particular group of actions that are the second sub-titles of second type theorems are obtained only via the channel of revelation. These are worships, such as prayer, pilgrimage to Mecca and fasting.⁷⁰ If reason did not receive help, it would regard them as useless and tiring. Regarding others, which are known as beneficial owing to reason, as equal can only be possible via revelation. It is possible to explain the classification of worships into goodness that is known by reason with the principle of necessity that makes the abandonment of normal religious tasks possible in difficult times.⁷¹ The actions of worships sustain their tendencies for being necessary at the first sight regardless of being invalid because of exceptional conditions just as other particular action classes.⁷²

Mu'tazila, which supports Allah's existence, attributions and that being a prophet can mentally be proven, says that matters like religion, resurrection and miracles that cannot be known by reason can be learned via the channel of revelation. Matters, such as Allah's existence, attributions and not doing harm that are dependent on the revelation of religion, are the matters known by reason. The matters that are known by religion and reason are dependent of the righteousness of being a prophet just as the oneness of Allah. The matters that are known only via the channel of religion, however, consist of religious benefit and debacles and commands of worships that can be perceived and evaluated a bit more specifically. The matters, such as the duty of prayer's being five times, fasting during Ramadan (the ninth month of the Muslim calendar) and alcohol's being forbidden, are in this category.⁷³ The main scope in which Mu'tazila uses the reason consists of matters related to nature and human, such as substance, accident, object, nafs (soul), will, choice, action and power. Another scope in which rationalism is important is qualities of good and evil,

⁶⁷ Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 12:281.

⁶⁸ Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 33.

⁶⁹ Hourani, *The Rationalist Ethics of 'Abd al-Jabbar*, 103-104.

⁷⁰ Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 17:95; Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uşūl al-khamsa*, 566.

⁷¹ Hourani, *The Rationalist Ethics of 'Abd al-Jabbar*, 104.

⁷² Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 33.

⁷³ Abū Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. al-Ṭayyib al-Başri, *al-Mu'tamad fī uşūl al-fiqh*, edited by al-Sheyh Khalīl al-Meys (Beirut: Dār Kutub al-İlmiyye, 1983), 2:227-228.

goodness and bad in the objects and actions that have ethical extent.⁷⁴ According to Mu'tazila, human is a being who arrived in world with competence, ability and capacity to know these because Allah placed the knowledge of general principles related to good and evil in humans' minds at birth and designed their minds accordingly.

It is correct that reason conveys to the result that it is necessary for humans to feel gratitude towards Allah, but it does not necessitate to know the form of worship which is the way of actualizing this gratitude. According to Abū Hāshīm, worships like prayer and hajj can be known via revelation, not by reasoning. The one who explains how to worship is the prophet, and whatever he says should be true. According to Abū Hāshīm, prophets are needed because they have already arrived to explain the matters that can be mentally known in general in details.⁷⁵

Qādī Abd-al-Jabbār says that while reason is used to know the outlines of religious task, it cannot apprehend the details.⁷⁶ Although reason knows that the doomsday will happen, it is not capable of determining the nature of rewards and punishments that will be received by humans. Qādī Abd-al-Jabbār think that these details can only be known via revelation.⁷⁷

The approach of Mu'tazila confirms the idea that everything cannot be known by reasoning.⁷⁸ Reason needs the assistance of revelation to enlighten the details of things that can be known by general statements. At the same time, revelation exists to confirm these things that can be known via reasoning. In other words, revelation is needed to confirm the rational command as religious command and rational forbidden as religious forbidden. According to Abū Hāshīm, prophets confirm the things that can be known by reasoning. Prophetic religion completes rational truths and makes them matured.⁷⁹

Qādī Abd-al-Jabbār considers the potential problem of incompatibility between the religion dependent on revelation and ethical judgements formed by natural reason. He accepts that sometimes the duties of religion are separated from the tasks that are revealed to us by reason itself. For example, the worship of prayer is good in religious aspects, but it is apparently evil as being useless.⁸⁰ Therefore, Qādī Abd-al-Jabbār tries to clarify that Allah does not make religious judgements good only by revelation. Thus, revelation completes the deficiencies of reason without having contradictions with it. Revelation does not change something naturally evil to good or something naturally good to evil.⁸¹

⁷⁴ M. Sait Özervarlı, “Mu'tezile Akılcılığı”, *Uluslararası İslam Düşüncesi Konferansları 2* (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Publications, 1997), 105-106.

⁷⁵ Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Muḥīṭ bi-l- taklīf*, 22.

⁷⁶ Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Muḥīṭ bi-l- taklīf*, 12, 31.

⁷⁷ Abu'l-Fath Abd al-Karīm al-Shahristānī, *al-Milal wa al-nihal*, edited by Muḥammad Sayyid Ghaylānī (Beirut: s.n., 1986), 1:45.

⁷⁸ Ibn al-Humām Kemāleddīn, *al-Musāyara fī ilm al-Kalām* (Istanbul: Cagri Publications, 1979), 153.

⁷⁹ Albert Nasrī, Nāder, *Falsafa al-Mu'tazila* (Baghdād: Matbaa al-Rābiṭa, 1951), 2:42; Ḥanefī, *Min al- 'aqīde ilā al-Savra*, 4:45.

⁸⁰ Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 6:64; Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 33.

⁸¹ Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 6:53.

According to Mu'tazila, revelation's duty of determination of ethical rules is to either confirm and strengthen the mentally known or to give complementary information to reason.⁸² They say that revelation performs a duty that is incentive and has power of sanction in implementation of ethical duty and rules to social life in the scope of ethics because Allah reports that He will reward the ones who fulfill their ethical duties and punish the ones who shirk their duties.⁸³

As being Muslim rationalists, Mu'tazilites support that reason can prove the existence of Allah and social, ethical duty and responsibility of human. They rely upon the faith that revelation will be extremely beneficial for those who know Allah. In fact, Mu'tazila says that all actions of Allah are good, He will never do evil and He will never fail the task. They support that revelation is a benefit that knows the existence of Allah and exceeds the limits of mind with reference to the principle that revelation looks out for their servants more than themselves in terms of religion.⁸⁴

3.3. Values of Particular Actions

Finally, the third type ethical theorems are particular theorems. These are the theorems that are associated with the rightness, wrongness and obligation of an action that is done by someone under certain conditions in particular place and time. Such theorems have a great importance in practical life because all decisions that we make in practical life are special decisions in a certain sense.

Conditions such as not deserving and abusing without gaining any benefits are understood from reasons in relation to particular actions. It is necessary to determine the reasons that can be related to a particular action in order to show its value and to evaluate these reasons together.

The ways of judgement logically come out from sub-classes of second type theorems according to the quality of sub-class in which the special theorem exists. Thus, they can be explained quite easily.

a) If the special action is one of the actions that are absolute principles, we need only one comparison for this. For example:

Truthfulness is always good.

This action is truthfulness.

In that case, this action is good.

b) Provided that the action is not within any absolute rule, we have to evaluate its various aspects at the first sight together and decide according to the thing that outweighs. For example, this action directly and considerably abuses someone, and the pain becomes undeserved, but it brings benefit to other people. Apparently, the problem of evaluating different factors as being pain and deserving is not only a tough issue for intuitionists, but it is also tough for Mu'tazilites.⁸⁵

⁸² Recep Kılıç, *Ahlâkın Dinî Temelî* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Publications, 1992), 99-101.

⁸³ For detailed information about Wa 'd and Wa'id see. Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uşūl al-khamsa*, 123, 611-514; George F. Hourani, *Divine Justice and Human Reason in Mu'tazilite Ethical Theology: Ethics in Islam*, edited by Richard G. Hovannisian (California: Undena Press, 1985), 75.

⁸⁴ Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uşūl al-khamsa*, 132-133; Martin, Woodward, Atmaja, *Defenders of Reason in Islam* (Atlanta: s.n., 1997), 12, 92-93.

⁸⁵ Hourani, *The Rationalist Ethics of 'Abd al-Jabbar*, 105-106.

If the action becomes a special type of action that is commanded by revelation, we refer to religion to learn this reality. Then again, this probably gives us a value only at the first sight because we have to consider also the other aspects of action at the first sight according to the doctrine of necessity⁸⁶ in which even Qur'anic commands can be suspended in the conditions of extreme distress or harm. In these conditions, a special decision is taken again by evaluating all factors at the first sight including the command of revelation. This is a situation that can happen under natural conditions. For example, carrion, blood, pork meat and an animal that is cut for the sake of someone else rather than Allah are absolutely forbidden in the verse of Qur'an (2/173). However, if someone has to eat something forbidden unavoidably, he can eat it to the amount of necessity that will not let him die of starvation and not exceed limits. There is no religious objection or harm in this action; in other words, this person is not considered as he committed sin. Accordingly, the principle, 'necessities make the objections permissible', is presented as an important perception in Islamic law.⁸⁷

CONCLUSION

According to Mu'tazilites, the good and evil values have unchangeable qualities contrary to Ash'arites. For them, the absolute and objective reason of existence for good and evil values is only Allah. Mu'tazila says that the reason of existence of values originates from the essence and nature of object provided that they are placed both in the world of objects and human's mind in the past eternity only by Allah Himself. Such thought of objectivity of Mu'tazila that receives its all necessity from Allah can be defined as "theistic objectivity". In this context, because they embraced the objective reality of world, Mu'tazilites try to ground their objectivist approaches by saying that Allah is an equitable being that has wisdom, He has to do what is best for His servants in earthly and spiritual matters and He will never do evil; thus, He will never deceive us.

Consequently, Mu'tazila considers that by establishing a relationship between knowledge and value someone with reason can objectively know some ethical values whether 'religion is sent or not' because for them, some part of values like the goodness of justice and evil of cruelty are known by necessary knowledge, and other parts of values like the evil of beneficial lie and goodness of harmful truth are known by acquired knowledge. Necessary knowledge does not depend on revelation because it precedes knowing Allah's existence and oneness. For this reason, the correctness of ethical realities that are necessarily known are confirmed by anyone rational whether that person believes in (Allah) or not.

Even though good and evil value terms and absolute ethical judgements like "Justice is always good" and "Cruelty is always evil" are necessarily known, Mu'tazila supports that the values of special actions can only be obtained by acquired knowledge. Therefore, they consider Allah's existence and oneness and religious knowledge within the scope of acquired knowledge. However, they say that revelation is at a position that reason cannot reach because it can inform and judge about revelation's afterlife conditions and lawful

⁸⁶ Hourani, *Islamic Rationalism*, 33.

⁸⁷ Muḥammad Abū Zahrā, *İslâm Hukuku Metodolojisi*, translated by Abdulkadir Şener (Ankara: Fecr Publications, 1986), 322-324.

conditions of worships like prayer. In that case, it is possible to interpret the reason Mu'tazila supports as partial rationalism rather than absolute rationalism.

According to Mu'tazila, reason and revelation are two main sources in knowing the good and evil values. To be more precise, reason and revelation are considered as important sources in knowing and revealing the scope of values in this thought of ethics. While revelation only confirms some realities that can be known mentally, it reveals the matters that cannot be known mentally. Consequently, according to Mu'tazila, reason knows religious and ethical goodness and evils and can form an ethical system of values by properly using its abilities which are independent of revelation.

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