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MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN  
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

KADI ABDÜLCEBBÂR (1025)

(110074)

Fethi Kerim Kazanç<sup>(\*)</sup>

*"Son Dönem Mutezilesinin  
En Meşhur ve Velûd Temsilcisi"*

## Hayatı

Kadı Abdülcebbâr, Batı İran'ın Hemedân bölgesinin Esedâbâd mevki-  
inde doğmuştur. Doğum tarihi kesin olarak bilinmeyen Abdülcebbâr, ilk  
eğitimi Esterâbâd ve Hemedân'da almıştır. Şâfiî fıkhı başta olmak üzere  
hadis ve Eşarî kelâmı tahsil etmiştir. Dönemin Büveyhî sultanı Müeyyid-  
düvle'nin danışmanı olan ve Mu'tezile kelâmcılarını himaye etmekle taru-  
nan Sâhib b. Abbâd'ın daveti üzerine İsfehân'a giderek orada ilim ve soh-  
bet meclislerine katılmış ve bazı Ehl-i Sünnet âlimleriyle ilmî tartışmalarda  
bulunmuştur. Sâhib b. Abbâd vezir olunca, onu Rey şehrine davet ederek  
başkadılık makamına atamış ve böylece aynı devlette bilfiil Kâdî'l-Ku-  
dât'lık yapmış ve 1025 tarihinde bu şehirde vefat etmiştir.

## Çalışmaları ve Düşünceleri

Entelektüel bir düşüncü olarak Abdülcebbâr, oldukça geniş bilgi ve  
kültürel birikime sahipti. Döneminin en büyük Mu'tezilî önderiydi. Hayatı  
boyunca hacimli ve etkili eserler yazıp öğretim faaliyetinde bulunmuştur.  
Önceleri kelâmda Eşarî, fıkhta ise Şâfiî mezhebinde olan Abdülcebbâr,  
daha sonra kelâm alanına yönelmiş ve akılcı itizâlî fikirleri savunmuştur.  
Böylece o, Mu'tezile'nin son büyük temsilcilerinin başında yer almıştır.  
Bugün Mu'tezile hakkındaki doğru bilgilerimizin pek çoğunu onun ka-  
leme aldığı ve elimize ulaşan eserlerine borçluyuz. Çünkü ondan önceki

\* Prof. Dr., Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi, İlahiyat Fakültesi, fkazanc@hotmail.com

# 'Abd al-Jabbār and al-Ghazālī on Divine Speech and their Theories of Language

Luis Xavier López-Farjeat  
Universidad Panamericana, Mexico

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN  
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

01 Haziran 2022  
0313

Kadi Abdülcebbar (110074)

Gazzali (070151)



## Introduction

In 833 the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mūn (d. 833) began a religious persecution known as the *miḥna* against the opponents of the Mu'tazilite doctrine of the creation of the Qur'ān. With al-Mu'taṣim (d. 842) and al-Wāthiq (d. 847), the two successors of al-Ma'mūn, the persecution lasted for fifteen years.<sup>1</sup> Around 849-850, al-Mutawakkil stopped enforcing the *miḥna*. As with most theological matters in the early Islamic context, doctrinal disagreements took place between Ḥanbalites, Mu'tazilites, and Ash'arites. In this case, while the Ḥanbalites held that the Qur'ān was eternal and uncreated, containing the word of God—as Sunni Islam holds—the Mu'tazilites taught that the Qur'ān indeed is the word of God but is created in time. The Ash'arites, for their part, represented an intermediate position in trying to argue in which sense the Qur'ān is uncreated and in which sense it is not. Behind this theological controversy there are two key philosophical and theological issues, respectively, the definition of language and the way in which divine speech (*kalām*) should be understood. On the one hand, the Ash'arites and al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) hold that divine speech is a divine essential attribute distinct from human speech; on the other hand, 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 1025) representing the Mu'tazilite stance thinks language is not an essential attribute but something created and conventional (*işfilāh*) designed to transmit God's word. In this article I discuss the theories of language and divine speech behind the opposing positions regarding the createdness or

uncreatedness of the Qur'ān from the perspectives of two theologians, 'Abd al-Jabbār and al-Ghazālī, who in their respective works continued this discussion long after the *miḥna*.

This controversy requires a prior understanding of the debate over whether or not speech is a divine essential attribute. Hence, in the first section I provide the theological framework concerning the different conceptions of divine attributes with special emphasis in the attribute of *kalām*. Then, in the second section I explain 'Abd al-Jabbār's conception of human language and divine speech in one of his major works, the *Kitāb al-Mughnī*. 'Abd al-Jabbār's conventionalist position on language endorses the necessity of the human interpretation of the Qur'ān, challenging the literalism advocated by the traditionalist theologians, namely, the Ḥanbalites. A reaction against 'Abd al-Jabbār and the Mu'tazilites is found in al-Ghazālī's *Iqtisād fī al-'Itiqād* (usually translated as *Moderation in Belief* and sometimes as *The Economy of Belief*).<sup>2</sup> In the third section, I display al-Ghazālī's arguments against the Mu'tazilites' stance, explaining in which sense the Qur'ān is uncreated and in which sense it is not. Finally, I provide some reflections regarding the way in which both theologians understand the createdness of the Qur'ān and the consequences of their positions for the conceptualization of Islam.

## The Discussions on Divine Attributes in Islamic Theology

The problem of divine attributes (*ṣifāt*) is crucial in Islamic theology and is one of the most controversial subjects since the earliest theological discussions.<sup>3</sup> The treatment of this problem is focused, on the one hand, on the question of whether or not these attributes are constituents of the divine essence (the 'ontological aspect'), and on the other hand, of the meaning of the terms predicated of God in the Qur'ān (the 'semantic aspect'). Early Mu'tazilites in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, represented by their founder Wāṣil ibn 'Aṭā' of Baṣra (d. 748), radically rejected the existence of real divine attributes. The core of this rejection rested on the assumption that

<sup>1</sup> For more details concerning the *miḥna*, see W. M. Patton, *Aḥmed ibn Ḥanbal and the miḥna: A biography of the imam including an account of the Moḥammedan inquisition called the miḥna* (Leiden: Brill, 1897), 218-34; W. Madelung, "The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran," in *Orientalia Hispanica sive studia F. M. Pareja octogenario dicata*, ed. by J. M. Barral (Leiden: Brill, 1974) 504-25; J. A. Nawas, "A Reexamination of Three Current Explanations for Al-Ma'mūn's Introduction of the *Miḥna*," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26 (1994): 615-29; M. Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophet in the Age of al-Ma'mūn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); N. Hurvitz, "*Miḥna* as Self-Defense," *Studia Islamica* 92 (2001): 93-111; N. Hurvitz, "al-Ma'mūn (r. 198/813-218/833) and the *Miḥna*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. by S. Schmidtke (London: Oxford University Press, 2016), 649-59; S. Nusseibeh, *The Story of Reason in Islam* (California: Stanford University Press, 2017), 28-48.

<sup>2</sup> The *Iqtisād* is not the only work where al-Ghazālī deals with this matter. However, in my view it is the place where he argues most clearly and directly against the Mu'tazilites. In the sixth discussion of the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* he presents interesting arguments against 'the philosophers' and finds several coincidences between their arguments and those of the Mu'tazilites, but there he does not deal in particular with divine speech and its relation to the Qur'ān (see al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, ed. by M. Marmura (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2000), 96-109.

<sup>3</sup> See H. A. Wolfson, "Philosophical Implications of the Problem of the Divine Attributes in the Kalam," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 79 (1959): 73-80; *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976) 112-234; R. M. Frank, *Beings and their Attributes: The Teaching of the Basrian School of the Mutazila in the Classical Period* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978); P. Adamson, "al-Kindī and the Mu'tazila: Divine Attributes, Creation and Freedom," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 13 (2003): 45-77; C. Belo, "Mu'tazilites, al-Ash'arī and Maimonides on Divine Attributes," *Veritas* 52 (2007): 117-31; El-Bizri Nader, "God: Essence and Attributes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. by T. Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 121-40; C. Gilliot, "Attributes of God," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. by Matringe Krämer and Rowson Nawas (2013), <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3.htm> (Accessed February 4, 2017).