

# Debating the Doctrine of *jabr* (Compulsion)

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya Reads Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī\*

Livnat Holtzman

## Introduction

The doctrine of *jabr* (compulsion) basically states that human actions are created by God, and forced upon human beings, thus defining God as the real agent of human actions. This doctrine was considered heretical by both rationalist and traditionalist thinkers from the inception of *kalām*ic debates.<sup>1</sup> Traditionalist thinkers in particular were required to address the concept of *jabr* because of its proximity to the concept of predetermination (*al-qaḍāʾ wal-qadar*, hence: *qadar*).<sup>2</sup> This major article of faith in the Sunni creed, which states that all human actions are predetermined by God, was perceived by rationalist thinkers (the Muʿtazilīs) as a denial of free will (*ikhtiyār*). This perception led them to describe the traditionalist concept of *qadar* as *jabr* and to apply the derogatory name Jabriyya (sg. Jabrī; upholders of *jabr*) to traditionalist thinkers (mostly the Ḥanbalīs and the Ashʿarīs).

---

\* I am grateful to Caterina Bori, Anke von Kügelgen, Jon Hoover, Christopher Melchert, and Abdessamad Belhaj for their valuable comments on prior drafts of this essay. This research was supported by The Israel Science Foundation (grant no. 302/06).

1 For the basic definition of *jabr* in the heresiographical literature, and the discussions on *jabr* in early Kalām, see Watt, W. Montgomery: *Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam*, London 1948, pp. 96–104. In his later works, Watt doubted the existence of thinkers holding Jabrī views, Watt, W. Montgomery: *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Edinburgh 1973, pp. 4–5, 118; Watt, W. Montgomery: *Ḍjabriyya* or *Mudjibira*, in: *EP*, vol. 2 (1965), p. 365.

2 I use here *qadar* to denote God's decree and not human freedom. For the problematic use of this term, see Gardet, Louis: *al-Ḳaḍāʾ wa-l-Ḳadar*, in: *EP*, vol. 4 (1978), pp. 365–367.

Traditionalist thinkers reacted to these harsh accusations of heresy by asserting that although human actions are predetermined, they are not forced upon human beings. This assertion was elaborated in different degrees of subtlety and sophistication by traditionalist thinkers primarily to reject the rationalists' claims against the traditionalist concept of *qadar*. The Ash'arī reaction led to their formulating the theory of *kasb*, which, the Ash'arīs claimed, was the golden mean between the concept of free will and the concept of *jabr*.<sup>3</sup>

The traditionalist thinkers attempted to disavow any similarity between their concept of *qadar* and the doctrine of *jabr*. However, they could not ignore the substantial resemblance of *jabr* to *qadar*, and more so the possibility that the concept of *jabr* was but an overzealous version deviating from the belief in *qadar*. This possibility is demonstrated by Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) in the following description of an early debate between the Qadariyya (here the forerunners of the Mu'tazila) and "one of the *muthbbita*" (here a Sunni traditionalist scholar). Ibn Taymiyya argues in this passage that the belief in *jabr* emerged as a reaction to early Mu'tazilī attacks on the Sunni belief in *qadar*:

When the Qadariyya, the deniers of predetermination (*nufāt al-qadar*), first appeared, denying that God leads astray whom He will, and guides whom He will, and that He is the Creator of everything and that human actions are created by Him, people rejected this innovation (*bid'a*). Therefore, one of them [of the Qadariyya], when debating on this subject, said: "This [the traditionalist doctrine of *qadar*] necessitates that God compels human actions on human beings, and that He assigns them with actions they could not possibly have performed." Thus, one of the *muthbbita*<sup>4</sup> who was arguing with them persisted on applying this and said: "Yes,

3 Swartz, Merlin: Acquisition (*kasb*) in Early Kalām, in: Samuel M. Stern, Albert Hourani and Vivian Brown (eds.): *Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition. Essays Presented by His Friends and Pupils to Richard Walzer on His Seventieth Birthday*, Columbia 1972, pp. 355–387; Abrahamov, Binyamin: A Re-examination of al-Ash'arī's Theory of *Kasb* according to *Kitāb al-Lum'a*, in: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1 (1989), pp. 210–221.

4 Ibn Taymiyya, Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad: *Da'r ta'arud al-'aql wal-naql aw muwāfaqat ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl li-ṣariḥ al-māqūl*, ed. by 'Abd al-Latīf 'Abd al-Raḥmān, Beirut 1417/1997, vol. 1, p. 148. See also in the following edition: *Da'r ta'arud al-'aql wal-naql aw muwāfaqat ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl li-ṣariḥ al-māqūl*, ed. by Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, Cairo 1979, vol. 1, p. 254. The *muthbbita* appear in different sources as *ahl al-ithbāt*. Like Qadariyya and Jabriyya, *ahl al-ithbāt* is used to denote different theological trends. Obviously they are traditionalist Sunni scholars, as al-Ash'arī himself saw them as his forerunners. Gardet, Louis: 'Ilm al-Kalām, in: *ET*, vol. 3 (1971), pp. 1141–1150.

*jabr* is necessitated, and *jabr* is true (*naʿam, yalzamu al-jabru wal-jabru haqqun*)”.<sup>5</sup>

The position taken here by “one of the *muthbbita*” is an over enthusiastic application of the Sunni creed, motivated by a desire to attribute to God every existent, human actions included. The prominent traditionalists, such as Abū ʿAmr al-Awzāʿī (d. 157/774) and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) responded to this position by establishing the following rule in order to restrain this overzealous Jabrī doctrine, and at the same time to object to the Qadarī libertarian position: “Whoever says that He (God) compels (*jabara*) is wrong, and whoever states that He does not compel is wrong. Yet, what should be said is: God guides whom He will and leads astray whom He will.”<sup>6</sup>

The foundation of this early traditionalist approach of avoiding a debate on *jabr* and concentrating on the linguistic aspect, namely a rejection of the use of the verb *jabara*, is the prohibition to discuss any matter in the domain of theology.<sup>7</sup> However, other early traditionalists contributed several cogent arguments against *jabr*.<sup>8</sup> Later traditionalists, and particularly in the heresiographic literature mainly developed by Ashʿarī scholars, denounced the idea of *jabr* as heresy.<sup>9</sup>

An interesting turning point in the history of the doctrine of *jabr* occurred in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, with the emergence of the writings of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209). Within the framework of al-Rāzī’s polemics against the Muʿtazila, al-Rāzī provided a rationalized justification for the doctrine of *jabr*, declaring time and again, “affirming the doctrine of *jabr* is inescapable”. This, and other sayings

5 Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾ al-taʾarud*, 1997, vol. 1, p. 148; idem, *Darʾ al-taʾarud*, 1979, vol. 1, p. 254.

6 Idem, *Darʾ al-taʾarud*, 1997, vol. 1, p. 148; idem, *Darʾ al-taʾarud*, 1979, vol. 1, p. 254. See also al-Khallāl, Abū Bakr: *al-Sunna*, ed. by ʿAtiya al-Zahrānī, Riyadh 1410/1989, vol. 1, p. 550.

7 Abrahamov, Binyamin: *Islamic Theology. Traditionalism and Rationalism*, Edinburgh 1998, pp. 9–10. This reluctance to discuss theology is reflected in Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal’s laconic responses to Jabrī sayings, such as “Do not say so!” or “What an evil man is the one who says so!”, al-Khallāl, *al-Sunna*, vol. 1, pp. 550.

8 For a survey of the arguments made by the traditionalists al-Zubaydī (d. 149/766) and al-Awzāʿī see Hoover, John: *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism*, Leiden and Boston 2007, pp. 170–171. Ibn Taymiyya’s description of the traditionalists’ arguments is an accurate rendition from the chapter refuting the Qadariyya, in: Abū Bakr al-Khallāl, *al-Sunna*, vol. 1, pp. 549–557. Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾ al-taʾarud*, 1997, vol. 1, pp. 66–72; Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾ al-taʾarud*, pp. 39–42.

9 Watt, *Free Will and Predestination*, pp. 96–104.

in the same vein, shaped al-Rāzī's image as the first and probably the only theologian, whose reputation as a Jabrī is corroborated by his own written declarations. Even so, he never referred to himself as a Jabrī.<sup>10</sup>

Al-Rāzī's rationalized justification of *jabr* is central to the turbulent polemics between Ibn Taymiyya, his disciple, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), and the Ash'arīs of their times. Following Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya referred to his Ash'arī opponents as Jabriyya. One might assume that this agnomen was given to the 14<sup>th</sup> century Ash'arīs because of their enthusiastic adoption of al-Rāzī's doctrine of *jabr*, although other explanations for naming the Ash'arīs thus may be provided.<sup>11</sup> At any rate, al-Rāzī's pro-*jabr* declarations made the cardi-

10 Fakhr al-Dīn's sayings on *jabr* are unprecedented and discussed in many researches. Ayman Shihadeh gives useful references to all al-Rāzī's writings, in which these bold Jabrī sayings appear. Shihadeh, Ayman: *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, Leiden and Boston 2006, p. 37, n. 104–107. As Shihadeh notes, al-Rāzī was very critical towards the early concept of *jabr*, and argued against the views of famous early *kalām* Jabrīs, such as Jahm b. Ṣafwān (executed 128/746), Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, p. 38. For al-Rāzī's harsh critique against the Jabriyya, see al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn: *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya min al-ilm al-ilāhī*, ed. by Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqā, Beirut 1407/1987, vol. 3, pp. 309–310. Judging from al-Rāzī's own statements against the Jabriyya, Gimaret's assertion, that "Rāzī n'hésite pas à se déclarer ḡabrite", (Gimaret, Daniel: *Théories de l'acte humain en théologie musulmane*, Paris 1980, p. 142) is a bit hasty and inaccurate. Hoover also followed Gimaret's assertion. Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, p. 143. The Zaydī scholar Ibn al-Murtaḍā (d. 840/1437) describes al-Rāzī as "one of the Mujbira [syn. of Jabriyya]", Ibn al-Murtaḍā, Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā: *al-Munya wal-amal fī sharḥ al-mīlāl wal-niḥāl*, ed. by Muḥammad Jawād Mashkūr, Beirut 1410/1990, p. 209.

11 The identification of the Ash'arīs as Jabrīs is one of the fundamentals of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's discourse. See, for example, in Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's long theological treatise in verse, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: *al-Kāfiya al-shāfiya fī al-intiṣār lil-firqa al-nājiya. Al-Qaṣida al-nūniyya*, ed. by ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-ʿUmayr, Riyadh 1416/1996, pp. 203–205 (verses 2631–2677). Or in Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: *al-Fawā'id*, ed. by Muṣṭafā b. al-ʿAdawī, al-Mansoura and Farskour-Damietta 1422/2001, pp. 34–35. In the closing paragraph of the epistle entitled *al-Furqān bayna al-ḥaqq wal-bāṭil*, Ibn Taymiyya enfolds the Ash'ariyya with "Jahm b. Ṣafwān and his followers", and adds: "The Ash'ariyya agree with them on *jabr*, however they have a terminological dispute (*nizā lafzī*) with them in terms of affirming *kasb* and the ability to perform *kasb*." Ibn Taymiyya: *Majmūʿat al-Fatāwā li-shaykh al-islām Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya al-Ḥarrānī*, ed. by ʿAmir al-Jazzār and Anwar al-Bāz, Riyadh and al-Mansoura 1419/ 1998, vol. 13, p. 122. See also Hoover's survey on the Jabrīs as Ash'ariyya, Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, pp. 110–111.

nal textual proofs available for Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, and empowered him to refer to his contemporaries the Ash'arīs as Jabriyya. Still, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, again following his master, never rejected al-Rāzī's theory of the human act altogether, but adopted the lion's share of al-Rāzī's argumentations, while promoting his theory of the human act. Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's theory integrated the concept of free will within the traditionalist teachings on predetermination.

This article deals with Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's critique on the interpretation of his Ash'arī contemporaries to al-Rāzī's writings on the concept of *jabr*. This theme appears in chapter 19 of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's magnum opus on predetermination and human choice, *Shifā' al-'alīl fī masā'il al-qadā' wal-qadar wal-ḥikma wal-ta'līl* (Healing the Person Afflicted with Wrong Concepts about Predetermination, Wisdom and Causality; henceforth *Shifā' al-'alīl*).<sup>12</sup> Arranged as a debate between a Sunni, holding Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's views and a Jabrī, holding Ash'arī views, chapter 19 of *Shifā' al-'alīl* is based on al-Rāzī's discussions on the doctrine of *jabr*. To the best of my knowledge, chapter 19 has not yet been analyzed or even described, thus the link between this text and the writings of al-Rāzī is revealed here for the first time.

Chapter 19 is first and foremost a didactic text, through which Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's unique writing skills are revealed alongside his ambitions to educate and entertain his potential readers. The first part of this article deals with the literary genre of *munāẓara* (debate), on which chapter 19 is modeled. An outline of chapter 19 will be followed by a short discussion of the literary devices used by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya in order to depict a vivid dialogue.

The second part of the article begins with a summary of al-Rāzī's argumentations for *jabr*, and continues with a presentation of these argumentations, as they appear in chapter 19 of *Shifā' al-'alīl*. The concept of *jabr* in chapter 19 is explored on three levels: the first level gives the basic argumentations for *jabr* in an attempt to simplify the doctrine of *jabr* and convert this doctrine into a standard traditionalist profes-

12 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad: *Shifā' al-'alīl fī masā'il al-qadā' wal-qadar wal-ḥikma wal-ta'līl*, ed. by Muḥammad Badr al-Dīn Abū Firās al-Na'sānī, Cairo 1323/1903. This is a reliable edition, but all the same I provide references here to the more accessible and less reliable Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: *Shifā' al-'alīl fī masā'il al-qadā' wal-qadar wal-ḥikma wal-ta'līl*, ed. by al-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Sayyid and Sa'īd Maḥmūd, Cairo 1414/1994.

sion of faith. The so-called profession of faith in *jabr* is based entirely on al-Rāzī's teachings, and differs from the early doctrine of *jabr* as recorded in the heresiographic literature. The second level of the discussion deals with al-Rāzī's theory of the human act, from which his pro-*jabr* statements evolve. On the third level, another theme is integrated, that of "obligating what is beyond one's capability" (*taklīf mā lā yutāq*). This theme represents the moral and practical implications of the concept of *jabr*. In a way, both debaters offer two possible renderings of al-Rāzī's texts on *jabr*, and the theory of the human act: the Jabrī-Ash'arī rendering and the Sunni rendering, which is actually Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's rendering. The second part of this article, following the three levels on which the doctrine of *jabr* is explored in chapter 19 of *Shifā' al-'alīl*, presents the Jabrī-Ash'arī interpretation of al-Rāzī's texts juxtaposed with the Sunni interpretation.

Unlike other parts of *Shifā' al-'alīl* copied from Ibn Taymiyya's works,<sup>13</sup> chapter 19 represents Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's original writing. Chapter 19 is abundant in citations from the writings of al-Rāzī, thus raising the question of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's familiarity with al-Rāzī's thought. Did the Rāziyyan text find its way into *Shifā' al-'alīl* through a direct delving of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya in the writings of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, or through the mediation of Ibn Taymiyya's teachings? This question will be briefly examined in the last part of the article.

## 1. The Dialogue: Setting, Participants, Outline, and Atmosphere

The polemics between Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and a variety of Ash'arī and Mu'tazilī thinkers are most vividly reflected in a series of four successive chapters in *Shifā' al-'alīl*: the last section of chapter 17, chapter 18, chapter 19, and chapter 20. In these chapters, we find a confrontation between Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's views on the theory of the human act and the two opposing theories of the Ash'arī determin-

13 The most conspicuous example is that of chapter 30. See Holtzman, Livnat: Human Choice, Divine Guidance and the *Fiṭra* Tradition. The Use of Ḥadīth in the Theological Treatises by Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, in: Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed (eds.): *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, Karachi 2010, pp. 163–188.

ism and the Muʿtazilī libertarian freedom. This quartet of chapters is a didactic manual guiding its reader through the labyrinth of theological debates, and is primarily meant to provide the reader with the proper arguments for defying Ashʿarī and Muʿtazilī views. Among these four chapters, chapters 19 and 20 stand out, because they present the discussion of *jabr* in the form of a debate between a Sunni, representing Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's views, a Jabrī representing Ashʿarī views, and a Qadarī representing Muʿtazilī views.

The title of chapter 19, *Fī dhikr munāẓara jarat bayna jabrī wa-sunnī jamāʿahumā majlis mudhākara* (A Report of a Debate Between a Jabrī and a Sunni Brought Together in a Memorizing Session, hence: chapter 19), provides several details on the event, its setting, participants, and even the atmosphere.

The event is a debate or a theological dispute (*munāẓara* pl. *munāẓarāt*); the participants have no names, but are distinguished by their typical agnomens, Jabrī and Sunni. A tapestry of citations and counter-citations culled from several theological works, the debate serves a didactic purpose of revealing the inventory of Ashʿarī arguments for the doctrine of *jabr*, and confronting the doctrine with Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's refutation of these arguments.<sup>14</sup>

Several examples of *munāẓarāt* in his works testify that Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya mastered the art of oral debating both theoretically and practically, and accounts of *munāẓarāt* in which he participated appear in his earlier works.<sup>15</sup> In *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā fī ajwibat al-yahūd wal-naṣārā* (Guiding the Bewildered as for the Ultimate Responses to be Given to the Jews and the Christians), he reports on a debate he had with a Jewish scholar in Egypt.<sup>16</sup> In *Badāʾiʿ al-fawā'id* (Amazing Ben-

14 The first to remark on the didactic purpose in Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's writings is Perho, Irmeli: Man Chooses His Destiny. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's Views on Predestination, in: *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* (12) 2001, pp. 61–70.

15 For *munāẓara* as a literary genre and an actual practice, see Wagner, Ewald: *Munāẓara*, in: *EP*, vol. 7 (1993), pp. 565–568; Makdisi, George: *The Rise of Colleges. Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West*, Edinburgh 1981, p. 110. For anecdotes on disputations, see *ibid.*, pp. 135–140. For an interesting example of a 12<sup>th</sup> century *munāẓara* between the Hanbalī scholar Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223) and an unknown Damascene Ashʿarī, see Daiber, Hans: The Quran as a “Shibboleth” of Varying Concepts of the Godhead, in: *Israel Oriental Studies* 14 (1994), pp. 249–296.

16 Two *munāẓaras* appear successively in *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā*: one is supposed to be a record of a debate in which Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya himself participated. During his stay in Egypt, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya confronted “one of



efits), another fairly early work, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya integrates a report of a dispute he supposedly had with a Samaritan in Nābulus. This report appears in a chapter which discusses the art of debating with a special emphasis on Koranic verses, suitable for use in debates with the unbelievers.<sup>17</sup> In *al-Ṣawāʾiq al-mursala ʿalā al-jahmiyya wal-muʿaṭṭila* (Thunderbolts Directed against the Jahmiyya and the Muʿaṭṭila), a later work most likely composed after *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, he cites a *munāzara*, the contents of which he heard from ʿAbd Allāh Sharaf al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d. 727/1326–27), his master’s brother and a scholar in his own right.<sup>18</sup> None of these *munāzarāt* equal chapter 19 in *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, neither in richness nor in the complexity of the theological themes.

The *munāzara* in chapter 19 differs from other *munāzarāt* described by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, since it takes place in the course of a session dedicated to the device of memorizing texts (*majlis mudhākara*). Besides the setting of the debate in a *madrassa*, the term *majlis mudhākara* implies that the dispute in chapter 19 is most likely between two students striving to memorize a text and to quiz one another, and not between two mature scholars.<sup>19</sup> The word *majlis* suggests that the two participants sit together while memorizing their texts. Sitting together means that although presented as bitter rivals, the Sunni and the Jabrī, in fact, belong to the same religious trend (both are actually Sunnis), so their ideological differences are not likely to be revealed at first glance. In comparison, the Sunni and the Qadarī arguing in chapter 20 of *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl* do not sit together but probably conduct their discussion while standing, a clear indication of their belonging to two opposing sides. Actually, they are not allowed to sit together, according to the following prophetic Hadith,

---

the greatest scholars and leaders of the Jews” about the true message of Islam. The other debate is between an anonymous Moroccan scholar and a Jew. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā fī ajwibat al-yahūd wal-naṣārā*, ed. by Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿĀdil b. Saʿd, Cairo n.d., pp. 150–153.

17 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad: *Badāʾī al-fawāʾid*, ed. by ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʿImrān, Jeddā 1424/2003, pp. 1606–1607. For the chapter on the art of debating, see *ibid.*, pp. 1540–1610.

18 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: *al-Ṣawāʾiq al-mursala ʿalā al-jahmiyya wal-muʿaṭṭila*, ed. by Zakariyyā ʿAlī Yūsuf, n.p. n.d., pp. 42–45. See further details in Bori, Caterina: Ibn Taymiyya. Una vita esemplare; analisi delle fonti classiche della sua biografia, in: *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 76 (2003), p. 52.

19 For *munāzara* and *mudhākara* as two important techniques of learning, see Pedersen, Jens and Makdisi, George: *Madrassa*, in: *EP*, vol. 5 (1984), pp. 1123–1154 (section 6. Courses of instruction and personnel); Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, p. 276.



addressed to the Sunnis: “Do not sit (*lā tuǧālisū*) in the company of the Qadarīs and do not start a conversation with them.”<sup>20</sup>

Although the dialogue is a literary fiction and not an historical record, it is embedded in Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya’s times, that is the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and not much earlier. The substantial use of al-Rāzī’s texts in the debate by both participants, especially by the Jabrī, establishes this assumption.

The debate in chapter 19 comprises nine sections (*faṣl*, pl. *fuṣūl*) of uneven length. Each section (except the fifth and sixth section) begins with a brief statement by the Jabrī. In the first section,<sup>21</sup> the Jabrī professes his faith in *jabr*, while the Sunni rejects *jabr*, seeing it as a dangerous idea. Whereas the Sunni wishes to discuss the dangerous moral implications of the belief in *jabr*, the Jabrī sticks to a theoretical discussion. Using the “preponderance without a preponderator” (*tarjih bi-lā murajjih*) argument, the Jabrī wishes to prove that the belief in *jabr* is unavoidable.<sup>22</sup> The Sunni ignores the Jabrī’s argument. He elaborates at length the views of the Muʿtazila on the motives (*dawāʾi*) of the human act, and concludes that the “preponderance without a preponderator” argument does not lead to *jabr*.<sup>23</sup>

In the second section of chapter 19,<sup>24</sup> the Sunni surprisingly recruits a Qadarī. In his only appearance in the dialogue, the Qadarī voluntarily explains to the Jabrī the Muʿtazilī views on motives. The Jabrī claims, that indeed the motive of the human act is the cause of human action (*sabab al-fīl*), but because the motive is created by God, the human act as a whole is created by God.<sup>25</sup> To this the Sunni seems to agree. However, he modifies the Jabrī’s argument using a new phrase, “a part of a cause” (*juzʿ sabab*).<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, the apparent momentary agree-

20 The Hadith appears in Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī: *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, ed. by Aḥmad Saʿd ʿAlī, Cairo 1952, vol. 2, p. 224. For traditions in the same vein see Abū Bakr al-Ājurri: *Kitāb al-Sharīʿa*, Beirut 1421/2000, pp. 197–201.

21 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, pp. 317–323; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, pp. 139–142.

22 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 319; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 140.

23 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, pp. 321–323; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, pp. 140–142.

24 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, pp. 323–327; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, pp. 142–144.

25 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 324; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 143.

26 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 325; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 143.

ment between the two rivals passes away when the Sunni delves into the definition of *jabr*,<sup>27</sup> while insisting on leading the discussion back to the moral implications of this view.<sup>28</sup>

In the third section,<sup>29</sup> the Jabrī succinctly argues against the Muʿtazilī view, which ascribes efficacy to human power. According to the Jabrī, the human act cannot be a *maqdūr* (an outcome of power) of two agents: God and the human being. The Sunni responds with a lengthy description of the views of Ashʿarī and Muʿtazilī scholars, particularly Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Abū Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044),<sup>30</sup> on the efficacy of human power on the human act. The Sunni concludes this review with his own opinion, according to which the human act is a *maqdūr* of the power of two agents, while applying the phrase *juzʿ sabab*, which he coined earlier.<sup>31</sup>

The fourth section<sup>32</sup> presents the longest argument the Jabrī is allowed to make in this dialogue, which is as follows: had the human being been the effective agent of his actions, he would have known the details of his actions. The Sunni's response, which appears in the fifth and sixth<sup>33</sup> sections, concentrates on the practical aspects of the Jabrī's argument as reflected in the case of a divorce oath taken by a drunkard (*ṭalāq al-sakrān*).<sup>34</sup> Its relevance to the discussion is feeble, as the Sunni

27 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, pp. 326–327; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 144.

28 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 327; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 144.

29 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, pp. 327–331; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, pp. 144–147.

30 For Fakhr al-Dīn's refutation of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's views, see notes 45, 47 below.

31 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, pp. 330–331; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, pp. 146–147.

32 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, pp. 331–333; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, pp. 147–148.

33 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, pp. 333–335; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, pp. 148–149.

34 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, pp. 331–333; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, pp. 147–148. The theme of *ṭalāq al-sakrān* appears in several of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's works, see Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: *Āthār al-imām Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya wa-mā laḥiqahā min ʿimāl. Ighāthat al-labfān fī ḥukm ṭalāq al-ghaḍbān*, ed. by ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Ḥasan b. Qāʾid, Jeddah n. d., vol. 6, pp. 26–28, 41, 64; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *ʾIlām al-muwaqqiʿin ʿan rabb al-ʿālamīn*, ed. by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Salām Ibrāhīm, Beirut 1414/1993, vol. 4, pp. 38–39; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Zād al-māʾād fī hady khayr al-ʿibād*, Cairo 1425/2004, vol. 4, pp. 23–26.

himself admits, while pointing out that *ṭalāq al-sakrān* is a specific case, which does not apply to the general rule.

In the seventh section,<sup>35</sup> the Jabrī mocks the Muʿtazilī view, according to which apostasy and ignorance are created by the human agent. Is there an intelligent man who wants apostasy and ignorance for himself? He wonders and sums up: the human being commits both apostasy and ignorance, but not out of his own choice and will. The Sunni rejoins that that is indeed the case for many people, who, out of their own stubbornness, evil intentions and hatred, wish for themselves to be ignorant and apostates. Eight Koranic verses, describing the reluctance of the apostates to accept the true message of Islam, corroborate the Sunni's claim.<sup>36</sup>

In the eighth section,<sup>37</sup> a new argument is raised by the Jabrī in order to negate the possibility of the efficacy of human power on the human act: if human power affected the human act, it would affect any created thing. The Sunni refutes this argument easily.

In the ninth and final section,<sup>38</sup> the Jabrī refines the statement in which he started the dialogue: the proof of the existence of a sole Creator negates the possibility of the human being as an agent of his actions. The Jabrī concludes that the “proof from reciprocal hindrance” (*dalīl al-tamānuʿ*) proves his point. The Sunni refuses to accept this argument. He tries to make his point, but the irritated Jabrī refuses to listen. The Jabrī and Sunni merely repeat their previous argumentations. The dialogue concludes with the Sunni's speech of victory, emphasizing his view that the human being is indeed an efficacious agent of his actions.

All in all, the Jabrī makes 15 statements, most of which are relatively short, while the Sunni's answers are longer and more elaborated. Most of the Jabrī's arguments<sup>39</sup> rely on single textual proofs, without disclos-

35 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, pp. 335–336; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 149.

36 Koran (7:146; 41:17; 27:13–14; 29:38; 2:102; 2:90; 3:70–72).

37 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 337; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, pp. 149–150.

38 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, pp. 337–341; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, pp. 150–152.

39 Three of the Jabrī's arguments are fairly long and detailed: his first “preponderance without a preponderator” argument (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 319; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 140), his argument that the human act cannot be a *maqdūr* (an outcome of power) of two agents (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, pp. 327–328; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, pp. 144–145) and his argument on the detailed knowledge

ing their source, and the Jabrī refrains from citing the opinions of leading scholars. In most cases, the Jabrī begins his statements with a new idea without referring to the Sunni's rejoinders.

Although the Jabrī sets the agenda, he discovers soon that the outcome of the debate is beyond his grasp. In two cases, the Jabrī reacts impulsively to the prolonged answers of the Sunni. Close to the beginning of the debate, after the Sunni offers a clear response, the Jabrī frowns: "This answer is worth nothing", while making a minimal effort to address this response.<sup>40</sup> Towards the end of the debate, after the Sunni explains why a certain proof given by the Jabrī is irrelevant to the discussion, the Jabrī loses his temper. "Enough of that subject!" he exclaims.<sup>41</sup> The Jabrī's impulsive responses establish his position as the inferior participant in the debate.

The Jabrī is indeed not a formidable rival for the Sunni, whose wits corroborate his erudition. In the heat of the debate, the Sunni cites the positions of leading Ash'arī thinkers, such as Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935–936), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (referred to in his appellation as *Ibn al-Khaṭīb*), al-Rāzī's disciple Sirāj al-Dīn al-Urmawī (d. 683/1283), Abū Ishāq al-Isfarā'īnī (d. 418/1027), Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), and Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013). He also quotes from the teachings of two Mu'tazilī thinkers, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044) and al-Malāḥimī al-Khwārazmī (d. 536/1141). As the Sunni's familiarity with the relevant material is beyond doubt, he explains these scholars' viewpoints to the Jabrī. The Jabrī is depicted almost as a layman, mechanically citing the text in front of him, without making the minimal effort to analyze or even understand the material he cites. In contrast to the Jabrī, the erudite Sunni assumes a well-balanced position, and therefore emerges as the superior participant in this debate. Only in one case does the Sunni allow himself to refer specifically to his opponent, when he sarcastically says: "What a remarkable person you are!"<sup>42</sup>

---

of his actions, which the effective agent holds (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, pp. 331–332; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, 1903, p. 147).

40 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, p. 323; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, 1903, p. 142.

41 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, p. 338; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, 1903, p. 150.

42 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, p. 335; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, 1903, p. 149.

In an early stage of the debate, the resourceful Sunni even invites a Qadarī passer-by to participate, and the Qadarī voluntarily explains his views on motives to the Jabrī. The Sunni interrupts, and negates the Qadarī's views altogether, thus demonstrating his skills in refuting the arguments of two opponents at the same time.<sup>43</sup>

In the few parts of the text where an apparent connection between the Jabrī's statements and the Sunni's responses exists, we encounter a more natural flow of the dialogue, as found in a face-to-face dispute between two students. For example, after the Jabrī presents his 'preponderance without a preponderator' argument, the Sunni rejoins: "Is this one of the arrows in your quiver? Thank God it does not have a quill feather and an arrowhead! On top of that, your arrow is crooked and cannot fly directly to its target."<sup>44</sup>

In these parts of the text, the author provides the dialogue with a sense of reality by placing typical defamations in the mouth of his protagonists. This sense of reality is interrupted by either the lengthy and tiresome responses of the Sunni, or by the discursive nature of the Jabrī's statements. These text features make chapter 19 a typical didactic piece. Therefore, this chapter cannot be considered a recording or restoration of real life polemics.

## 2. A Three-Level Debate on *jabr*

Al-Rāzī's argumentations for *jabr*, which form a part of his ground-breaking theory of the human act, appear in several of his works, including his Koran exegesis.<sup>45</sup> Al-Rāzī's theory deals with the way,

43 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā al-ʿalīl*, pp. 324–325; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā al-ʿalīl*, 1903, pp. 142–143.

44 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā al-ʿalīl*, p. 319; *Shifā al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 140.

45 The relevant texts on *jabr* by al-Rāzī are: al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿālīya*, vol. 3, p. 73, vol. 8, pp. 11–20, vol. 9, pp. 9–173; idem: *Kitāb al-Arbāʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. by Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqā, Beirut 1424/2004, pp. 219–27; idem: *Kitāb Maʿālim uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. by Samīḥ Dughaym, Beirut 1992, pp. 61–69; idem: *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddīmīn wal-mutaʾakkhkhirīn min al-ʿulamāʾ wal-ḥukamāʾ wal-mutakallimīn*, ed. Samīḥ Dughaym, Beirut 1992, pp. 146–156; idem: *al-Maḥṣūl fī ʿilm uṣūl al-fiqh*, 6 vols., ed. Jābir Fayyād al-ʿAlwānī, Beirut 1412/1992, vol. 2, p. 233. Sherman A. Jackson discussed the "preponderance without a preponderator" argument, as it appears in al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl*, vol. 1, pp. 126–128; Jackson, Sherman A.: The Alchemy of Domination? Some Asharite Responses to Mutazilite Ethics, in: *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 31

in which the human act comes into being, while concentrating, among other factors, on the efficacy of human power on the human act. This highly theoretical discussion leads him to deal with the psychology of the human being as an agent. The question, whether this agent chooses to act (*mukhtār*) or whether he is compelled to act (*majbūr*, *muḍṭarr* *‘alā afālihi*), is central to al-Rāzī’s discussions.<sup>46</sup>

The following description of al-Rāzī’s position is based mainly on a theological discussion, which appears in the “commands and interdictions” (*al-awāmir wal-nawāhī*) section of al-Rāzī’s *fiqh* manual, *al-Maḥṣūl fī ‘ilm uṣūl al-fiqh* (What can be Obtained in the Science of the Principles of Jurisprudence; henceforth *al-Maḥṣūl*).<sup>47</sup> This section bears some resemblance to chapter 19, because its format is a theological treatise which refutes adversaries (*al-radd ‘alā*). In this case, the adversary is a libertarian Mu’tazilī. Al-Rāzī toils to convince this adversary of the veracity of his rationalized determinism.

Al-Rāzī’s basic assumption is that the voluntary human agent (*mukhtār*) must act, when the motive of the action (*dā‘ī*, *dā‘iya*, pl. *dawā‘ī*) combines with the human power (*qudra*). Under the influence of the Mu’tazilī doctrines, al-Rāzī builds his argumentations for *jabr* on the motivations for action. Whereas the Mu’tazilīs claim that the human act depends on the motive for an action, and that the motive derives from the human agent himself, al-Rāzī claims that the occurrence of the human act depends on a motive of an act, and that the motive is created by God. With the existence of this motive, the act

---

(1999), pp. 185–201. A source which has received the attention of scholars such as Roger Arnaldez, Daniel Gimaret, Wilfred Madelung, and recently Shihadeh and Hoover, is al-Rāzī’s interpretation of Koran (2:6–7); al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn: *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī al-mushtahar bil-tafsīr al-kabīr wa-mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, Beirut 1414/1993, vol. 1, pp. 55–65; Arnaldez, Roger: Apories sur la prédestination et le libre arbitre dans le commentaire de Rāzī, in: *Mélanges de l’institut dominicain d’études orientales* 6 (1959/1961), pp. 123–126; Madelung, Wilfred: The Late Mu’tazila and Determinism. The Philosophers’ Trap, in: Biancamaria Scarcia Amoretti and Lucia Rostagno (eds.): *Yād-Nāma in Memoria di Alessandro Bausani*, Rome 1991, vol. 1 *Islamistica*, pp. 245–257; Gimaret, *Théories de l’acte*, Paris 1980, pp. 140–144; Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy*, pp. 143–144; Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, pp. 38–39. The reader might want to consult further texts on *jabr* by al-Rāzī, mentioned in Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, p. 37, n. 105.

46 Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, p. 17.

47 Al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl*, vol. 2, pp. 215–233. *Al-Maḥṣūl* is a fairly early work of al-Rāzī, Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, p. 7.

must occur. Hence, he concludes, “the compulsion (*jabr*) of the act is necessary”.<sup>48</sup>

In order to prove that the motive of the human act indeed comes from God, al-Rāzī uses his “preponderance without a preponderator” argument, as follows: first, al-Rāzī states that the human being is capable of either performing an act or not performing it. Al-Rāzī then argues that since performing the act or not performing it are two equal possibilities as far as the human power is concerned, then a preponderator (*murajjih*) which preponderates one action over the other is needed. In other words, preponderance without a preponderator is impossible. The preponderator cannot come from the human being, again since the human power needs a preponderator to preponderate an action over a non-action. Hence, the preponderator, which is actually the motive to act, comes from God. Al-Rāzī concludes: “Since the human act is dependent on a motive created by God, and since the act must occur when this motive is created, then the compulsion of the act is necessary.”<sup>49</sup>

In sum, according to al-Rāzī, the occurrence of human action from the human being is dependent on a motive for an action, which is created by God. Al-Rāzī also declares that this view must be referred to as *jabr*.

Al-Rāzī’s rationalized determinism leads him even further, and he expresses a bold view, that “obligating what is above one’s capability” (*taklīf mā lā yutāq*) is possible. Although this was stated by Ash‘arīs before him,<sup>50</sup> al-Rāzī’s views are much more daring, because he identifies the concept of “obligating what is above one’s capability” as the upshot of his rationalized concept of *jabr*. In *al-Maḥṣūl* he claims, that while God orders the apostate to believe in Him, He orders him what is impossible, since “faith for the apostate is impossible”.<sup>51</sup> In order to

48 Al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl*, vol. 2, p. 225. For an elaboration of the Mu‘tazilī views and al-Rāzī’s refutation, see Madelung, *The Late Mu‘tazila*, pp. 245–257; Gardet, Louis: *Les grands problèmes de la théologie musulmane. Dieu et la destinée de l’homme*, Paris 1967, pp. 130–131; Arnaldez, *Apories sur la prédestination*, pp. 130–131; Gimaret, *Théories de l’acte*, pp. 140–144; Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, pp. 25–26, 29–39.

49 Al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl*, vol. 2, p. 228. See Gimaret, *Théories de l’acte*, pp. 140–141.

50 Abrahamov, Binyamin: *al-Ḳāsim b. Ibrāhīm on the Proof of God’s Existence*, Leiden 1990, pp. 38–39.

51 Al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl*, vol. 2, p. 216; see a parallel discussion in Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy*, pp. 167–169; Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, pp. 101–105.



prove that, al-Rāzī uses several arguments, among which the “preponderance without a preponderator” argument is conspicuous. Al-Rāzī claims, again, that the occurrence of the human act from the human being depends on a motive (*dā'iya*), which is created by God. The existence of that motive necessitates human action; hence the belief in *jabr* is necessary. This motive is a preponderator (*murajjih*), preponderating the existence of the act upon its inexistence. Preponderance without a preponderator is impossible. The preponderator is created by God; hence, again, the belief in *jabr* is necessary. Since *jabr* is necessary, all obligations are actually “obligating what is above one’s capability”.<sup>52</sup>

Turning now to chapter 19, we encounter al-Rāzī’s argumentations for *jabr* as cited and interpreted by the Jabrī and the Sunni. In other words, both the Jabrī and the Sunni accurately cite al-Rāzī in the course of their debate. In fact, the Rāziyyan exact wording is the most conspicuous feature of chapter 19. However, in order to simplify the discussion, any reference to parallel statements or passages in al-Rāzī’s works will be presented primarily in the footnotes; except in cases in which an emphasis on parallelisms between al-Rāzī’s texts and chapter 19 is required.

## 2.1. First Level: *jabr* as a Profession of Faith

The belief in the unity of God (*tawḥīd*) is the first article in all traditionalist professions of faith.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, the Jabrī’s use of the concept of *tawḥīd* in his opening statement actually defines his profession of faith. He claims that the belief in *jabr* is derived from the belief in the unity of God:

Affirming the doctrine of *jabr* is inescapable, since [it establishes] that the belief in God’s unity (*tawḥīd*) is the true faith. Had we not believed in *jabr*, we would have affirmed that another agent, beside God, performs created acts, and that [like God], if he wants, he will perform, and if he does not, he will not. This is pure polytheism (*shirk*), which one can avoid only by declaring his belief in *jabr*.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl*, vol. 2, p. 225.

<sup>53</sup> An accessible source for a discussion of Islamic creeds is Watt, W. Montgomery: *Islamic Creeds*, Edinburgh 1994.

<sup>54</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-ālil*, Jabrī, p. 317; *Shifā' al-ālil*, 1903, p. 139. See *al-Matālib al-āliya*, vol. 9, pp. 16–17, where al-Rāzī states that there are only two options: either one believes in *jabr* or he denies the existence of the

Although the Jabrī does not define the term *jabr*, here he outlines the first part of the basic rationale of this doctrine: God creates human actions. The Jabrī ignores the second part of this rationale: God compels (*jabara*) the human being to perform these created actions. This avoidance of the basic meaning of *jabr* indicates that the Jabrī's profession of faith is substantially different from the early 8<sup>th</sup> century formula of *jabr*. Except for the use of the term *jabr*, the Jabrī's opening statement could be in complete accordance with the traditionalist Sunni view. It is however not, because the Sunni view rejects the concept of *jabr*.

The first argument for *jabr* is contained in the Jabrī's profession of faith: in an attempt to avoid polytheism, any attribute of creation is denied from the human being. He does not create his actions; hence he does not really perform them. Affirming that the human being is neither the creator nor the performer of his own actions is, as far as the Jabrī is concerned, the belief in *jabr*.

While presenting the doctrine of *jabr* as a profession of faith, the Jabrī uses two *kalām*ic tools, in order to fortify the basis of his belief in *jabr*. The first tool, the proof from reciprocal hindrance (*dalīl al-tamānu'*) is mentioned towards the end of the dialogue, where the Jabrī states that, using the proof from reciprocal hindrance, the human being is not an agent of his actions.<sup>55</sup>

The Jabrī does not identify or explain the proof from reciprocal hindrance, and he does not describe its connection with *jabr* and God's unity (*tawhīd*). This proof is meant to establish the existence of one God by assuming that two or more equal powers cannot act harmoniously, and are bound to either destroy each other or perform nothing.<sup>56</sup> It fits

---

Creator (*nafy al-ṣāmi*). The same view is stated in al-Rāzī's interpretation of Koran (2:7) (*Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 59). Here in J. Hoover's translation: "Establishing the Divinity leads necessarily to the view of compulsion (*jabr*)," Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, p. 144. See also Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, p. 20.

55 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, p. 337; *Shifā' al-'alīl*, 1903, p. 150. See al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Arbā'in*, second proof, p. 214; third proof, p. 217. Both proofs discuss the impossibility of the existence of two gods, without a reference to the human being as a possible creator of his acts.

56 Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology*, pp. 35–36. *Dalīl al-tamānu'* is based on two Koranic verses: "Why, were there gods in earth and heaven other than God, they would surely go to ruin", Koran (21:22), and "God has not taken to Himself any son, nor is there any god with Him; for then each god would have taken off that he created and some of them would have risen up over others", Koran

the Jabrī's argument for *jabr*, in the following manner, which is not mentioned by the Jabrī himself: the concept of *jabr* negates the possibility that the human being is a real agent. Had he been a real agent, he would have been considered a creator of his actions. However, the proof from reciprocal hindrance negates the existence of any other creator but God; hence the proof leads to real *tawḥīd*; hence *jabr* leads to *tawḥīd*.

In order to advance his argument for *jabr*, the Jabrī uses another *kalāmīc* tool, the *ilzām* (lit. coercion), a method of argumentation which forces the opponent to admit that his argument is absurd.<sup>57</sup> Here the Jabrī provokes his Sunni opponent and supposedly causes him to admit that his opposition to *jabr* leads to the conclusion that the human being is the creator of his actions, a concept which the Sunni himself disagrees with. This provocation ends with a Koranic verse, used here because its first part asserts that God is the sole Creator ("is there any creator..."). The second part of the verse ("There is no god but He") is an assertion of God's unity:

In the issue of *jabr* I rely on an edge of a sword you cannot escape unless you are forced [to admit the veracity of] *jabr*. This admittance that your argument is absurd (*ilzām*) goes as follows: were the human being an agent, he would have originated (*muhdith*) his action; hence he would have created (*khāliq*) it. This notion is negated by both Divine law and human reason, as says the Lord: "O men, remember God's blessing upon you; is there any creator, apart from God, who provides for you out of heavens and the earth? There is no god but He: how then are you perverted?"<sup>58</sup>

Both arguments, as presented here by the Jabrī, have their roots in al-Rāzī's writings, however with one conspicuous difference. In *Kitāb al-Arbāʿīn*, when Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī presents *dalīl al-tamānuʿ* in

(23:91). Translation of Koranic verses in this article are taken from Arberry, Arthur J.: *The Koran Interpreted*, Oxford 1962.

57 *Ilzām* is parallel to *argumentum ad hominem*. In its proper variant this argumentation indeed leads the opponent to admit the invalidity of his own opinions, while exploring and inferring conclusions from them. Nevertheless, this argument quite often has abusive and personal variants of merely offending the opponent. Walton, Douglas: Informal Fallacy, in: *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Cambridge 1999, pp. 432–433; Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology*, p. 27; van Ess, Josef: The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology, in: Gustave E. von Grunebaum (ed.): *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture*, Wiesbaden 1970, pp. 25–26.

58 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-alīl*, p. 340; *Shifāʾ al-alīl*, 1903, p. 151. The verse quoted here is Koran (35:3). In his Koran exegesis al-Rāzī does not make a special reference to this verse, al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī*, vol. 13, part 26, p. 5.

order to prove the existence of one Creator, and even when he uses *ilzām* in order to lead his Muʿtazilī opponent to admit that only God is an efficacious agent, he does not conclude that his line of argumentation eventually leads to *jabr*.<sup>59</sup> That is precisely the Sunni's comment to the Jabrī in response to the Jabrī's argument, that *dalīl al-tamānuʿ* is connected to *jabr*. The Sunni remarks, that this proof is irrelevant to the discussion, adding that "the most excellent among your later scholars", meaning Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, used this proof in order to demonstrate that two gods, constantly negating one another, would have prevented each other from creating.<sup>60</sup>

Even the Jabrī's attempt to use *ilzām* does not leave its mark on the Sunni, and he refuses to comply with the Jabrī's demand to admit the veracity of *jabr*. Armed with Koranic verses that indicate that the human being is the agent of his actions,<sup>61</sup> and therefore worthy of reward and punishment accordingly, the Sunni dismisses the Jabrī's *kalāmīc* efforts with open contempt, while indicating that addressing this proof is a waste of time:

We have many such examples in the Koran. Furthermore, the senses indicate so [i. e., that the human being is the agent of his actions]. Therefore, we shall not accept any specious argument (*shubha*) based on [arguments] which are contrary to our proofs. Using this *shubha* is like rejecting necessary proofs, and therefore no attention should be paid to it. A scholar is not obligated to address any *shubha* presented to him, as there is no end to this.<sup>62</sup>

59 *Dalīl al-tamānuʿ* is discussed in the 21<sup>st</sup> question ("which clarifies that the Creator of the world is one"), third proof, *Kitāb al-Arbāʾīn*. There al-Rāzī negates the existence of two gods, when each of them must possess an effective power on all possibilities. In other words, either of the two cannot be more powerful than the other. This leads to three inconceivable possibilities: that both gods create the same thing, that neither gods create, that one of them creates while the other does not. *Kitāb al-Arbāʾīn*, p. 217. The same argument is used by al-Rāzī in the 22<sup>nd</sup> question ("on the creation of human actions"), third proof, in al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Arbāʾīn*. There al-Rāzī refers the readers to *dalīl al-tamānuʿ* in the previous chapter, which helps him to argue that the human being does not have efficacious power. *Kitāb al-Arbāʾīn*, p. 223.

60 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 338; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 150.

61 "And Lot – to him We gave judgment and knowledge; and We delivered him from the city that had been doing deeds of corruption", Koran (21:74); "Are you recompensed but for what you did?" (Koran 27:90); "Every soul shall be paid in full for what it has wrought", Koran (39:70).

62 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 340; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 151.

The Jabrī's attempt to connect *jabr* and *tawḥīd* is refuted by the Sunni several times throughout the dialogue. For example, in the Sunni's second response reflecting Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's own position,<sup>63</sup> the Sunni claims that the belief in *jabr* contradicts both *tawḥīd* and God's justice.<sup>64</sup> This argument is related to the higher level of the discussion on *jabr*, that is, the discussion on the theme "obligating what is beyond one's capability".<sup>65</sup>

While the Sunni totally rejects the doctrine of *jabr* as presented by the Jabrī, he is ready to examine and define the term *jabr*. First, the Sunni indicates that the Jabrī's definition lacks the common meaning of *jabr*, that is, forcing the agent to perform an action against his will.<sup>66</sup> In line with the traditionalist view, the Sunni emphasizes that he is not intimidated by the term *jabr*, but by the harsh deterministic view to which this term indicates. In his response, the Sunni excludes *jabr* as a *kalāmīc* term from what he claims to be the basic meaning of the concept of *jabr*:

*Jabr* is a word laden with meanings. As we have seen before, it can denote either a truth or a lie. If by *jabr* you mean that the human being is forced to perform his actions (*mudṭarr 'alā af'ālihi*),<sup>67</sup> and that his movement while climbing the ladder equals his movement while falling from it, then this is a clear contradiction to reason and natural disposition (*fiṭra*). However, if by *jabr* you mean that there is no power and no strength save in God, what you say is true. *Jabr* in that sense is a general phrase and does not indicate specifically [any of the human's actions].<sup>68</sup>

The Sunni's position here is a later modification of the early traditionalist position, categorically rejecting the penetration of innova-

63 On the contradiction between *jabr* and *tawḥīd*, see Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: *Miftāḥ dār al-sā'ada wa-manshūr wilāyat al-'ilm wal-irāda*, ed. by Sayyid Ibrāhīm and 'Alī Muḥammad, Cairo 1418/1997, vol. 1, pp. 321–322.

64 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, p. 319; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, 1903, p. 140.

65 See below, section 2.3.

66 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, p. 321; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, 1903, p. 141.

67 See "The human is compelled under the guise of a voluntary agent" (*al-insān mudṭarr fī ṣūrat mukhtār*) al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, vol. 9, pp. 25, 258. For further references, see Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, p. 37.

68 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, p. 326; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, 1903, p. 144. The Sunni makes a similar statement in *Shifā' al-'alīl*, p. 320; *Shifā' al-'alīl*, 1903, p. 140. The rhythm and style of that sentence resembles a sentence quoted by Shihadeh from an unpublished work by al-Rāzī. Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, p. 38, n. 110.

tive vocabulary and notions into religious discourse.<sup>69</sup> In other words, more than a rejection of the notion of *jabr*, we have here a rejection of the use of the word *jabr* and its derivatives in theological formulae.

## 2.2. Second Level: *jabr* and the Theory of the Human Act

Amid the second level arguments for *jabr* is a concept shared by the Jabrī and the Sunni, according to which, the components of the human act, that is, the power (*qudra*) to perform an action and the motives (*dāʾi*, pl. *darwāʾi*) of the action, are created by God. From this point forward, the Jabrī will argue that the creation of the human power and the motives of human action eventually lead to the conclusion that the human act is necessary. This concept is the very core of the doctrine of *jabr*. The Sunni will argue that the necessity of human action does not lead to the conclusion that it is forced upon man, as the Jabrī argues, because human actions are the outcome of human choice (*ikhtiṣār*).

The Jabrī's reliance on al-Rāzī's discussions of the human act is made explicit when he assumes that the combined existence of the human power (*qudra*) and the motive (*dāʾi*) necessitates human action.<sup>70</sup>

69 This purist approach is well reflected in the following saying, which Ibn Taymiyya attributes to the prominent traditionists as a whole, without stating whose view he is quoting: "They said: The word *jabr* did not originate in the Koran and Sunna. What we have in the Sunna is the word 'creation' (*jabl*) and not the word 'compulsion' (*jabr*)."  
*Dar' al-tāʾrūḍ*, 1997, vol. 1, pp. 148–149; *Dar' al-tāʾrūḍ*, 1979, vol. 1, p. 255.

70 The Jabrī makes two statements on human power, which are in agreement with al-Rāzī's texts, and with the views of former Ashʿarī thinkers. He claims that human actions are the outcome of divine power and not of human power: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, pp. 327–328; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, pp. 144–145. Towards the end of the dialogue, he claims that human power has no effectiveness over human action, because there cannot be "an object of power" (*maqḍūr*) shared between two potent agents: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 338; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 150. Al-Rāzī himself made these claims in *Kitāb al-Arbāʾin*, the beginning of chapter 22 entitled *khalq al-afʿāl* (the creation of human acts). *Kitāb al-Arbāʾin*, p. 224, proof no. 4; Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, pp. 17–19. According to Shihadeh, the centrality of the notion of 'motive' in al-Rāzī's thought reflects his departure from his early Ashʿarī position under the influence of Muʿtazilī thought, *ibid.*, pp. 21, 27. An interesting remark of the Jabrī on human power: "Had the effectiveness of the human power (*tāʾhīr qudrat al-ʿabd*) been possible with regard to creation (*ijād*), human power would have been effective with regard to the creation of every existent." In other words, had the human being

Another fundamental assumption of the Jabrī is the impossibility of an infinite regress.<sup>71</sup> While this premise does not require any proof, the premise on the necessity of human actions is thoroughly examined by the Jabrī. These two premises combined are the axis of the Jabrī's set of argumentations for *jabr*:

We say: when the human power and motivation are obtained, the origination of the action is either necessary or not. If it is necessary, then human action is necessitated (*iḍtirārī*). That is the essence of *jabr*, because human power and motivation are not originated from the human agent. Were they so, it would have entailed an infinite regress (*tasalsul*), which is quite obvious. Since that is the case, when both of them [i. e. the human power and the motivation] are obtained, the human act becomes necessary (*wājib*). When both of them are not obtained, the human act becomes impossible (*mumtanī*). Thus, *jabr* is by all means necessary.<sup>72</sup>

The necessity of the human act, then, leads the Jabrī once more to assert his belief in *jabr*. But since he is forced to examine this concept throughout the dialogue, the Jabrī focuses his argument for the necessity of the human act on the motive (*dā'i*) of the human act. The motive, claims the Jabrī, is the cause of human action (*sabab al-fīl*), and is created by God.<sup>73</sup> Elsewhere he uses an equivalent term, the preponderator (*murajjih*).

This inconsistent use of both terms in the discourse of the Jabrī is by all means rooted in the works of al-Rāzī himself.<sup>74</sup> The Jabrī seems to use both terms in the same manner: as a major factor which accompanies the human power (*qudra*), and eventually leads towards the production of human action. Following al-Rāzī, the Jabrī defines the motive to act as knowledge:

---

been the creator of his actions, he would have been the creator of every existent. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, p. 337; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, 1903, p. 149.

71 Central to *kalāmīc* argumentation, the impossibility of an infinite regress is employed by Islamic theologians and philosophers in discussions which argue against the eternity of the world. Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, pp. 77–81. For the basic argument in Plato, see Bradely, Raymond D.: Infinite regress argument, in: Robert Audi (ed.): *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Cambridge 1996, pp. 429–430.

72 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, p. 319; *Shifā' al-'alīl*, 1903, p. 140. See al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl*, vol. 2, p. 225; al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-'āliya*, vol. 9, pp. 13–14; Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, p. 29.

73 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-'alīl*, p. 324; *Shifā' al-'alīl*, 1903, p. 143. See al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Arbā'in*, p. 225.

74 Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, pp. 20–22.



Since the motive (*dā'i*) is not one of our actions, and it is the knowledge of the potent agent (*ilm al-qādir*) that he has an advantage (*maṣlaḥa*) in performing this specific action. Since this is embedded in his nature, with which he was created, and this [knowledge] is the outcome of God's act in him. Since the act is necessary as far as he is concerned, this is precisely the meaning of *jabr*.<sup>75</sup>

Elsewhere, the Jabrī adds inclination (*mayl*) and craving (*shahwa*) to this definition, and demonstrates: "Take the thirsty man, for instance. The motive urges him to drink water, because he knows that there is an advantage in it for him, and because of his craving and inclination for drinking it. These craving and inclination are the act of God."<sup>76</sup>

When the Jabrī wants to prove that the motive of action is created by God, he uses al-Rāzī's famous "preponderance without a preponderator" (*tarjīḥ bi-lā murajjih*) argument.<sup>77</sup> This argument seemingly examines the possibility that with the combination of the human power and the preponderator the origination of the human act is not necessary. Thereafter the argument denies it, and finally concludes that human action is indeed necessary:

If the origination of human action is not necessary when the human power and motivation are obtained, then the preponderance of an act (*rujḥān al-fīl*) over the preponderance of an omission (*rujḥān al-tark*) depends on a preponderator (*murajjih*) or it does not. If it depends on it, then when the preponderator originates, the origination of this action becomes necessary. If it does not, it will entail an infinite regress. But since [the action] is required, it is necessitated, and that is the essence of the belief in *jabr*.<sup>78</sup>

According to the Jabrī, the preponderator comes from a source which is external to the human being. The Jabrī states that the preponderator is created by God, and negates the possibility that it comes from the human being himself. This negation appears several times in the narrative of the Jabrī, and is based on two premises: one, that preponder-

75 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-ʿalīl*, p. 323; *Shifā' al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 142. See al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Arbāʿīn*, pp. 224–225. The same text appears in Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, p. 21.

76 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-ʿalīl*, p. 323; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 142; al-Rāzī, *al-Matālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 9, pp. 28–29; al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Arbāʿīn*, pp. 124–125; Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, pp. 20–23.

77 Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, p. 20.

78 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-ʿalīl*, p. 319; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 140. See al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Arbāʿīn*, pp. 121–122; Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, p. 20.

ance without a preponderator (*tarjīḥ bi-lā murajjih*) is impossible, and two, that infinite regress (*tasalsul*) is impossible.<sup>79</sup> The Jabrī's argument goes as follows: to assume that the preponderator comes from a different source other than God leads to an infinite regress, which is impossible. Hence, every preponderator comes from God, and not from the human being. This conclusion, according to the Jabrī, again proves the existence of the Creator (*ithbāt al-ṣānī*),<sup>80</sup> and more so, the veracity of the doctrine of *jabr*: because the preponderator is created by God, the human act is necessitated, "and that is precisely what *jabr* is all about".<sup>81</sup>

The Sunni's responses to the Jabrī's arguments also rely heavily on al-Rāzī's texts. These responses also reveal several points of agreement between the two debaters. The agreement encourages the Sunni to emphasize the difference between his views and that of the Jabrī's. For example, the Sunni seems to agree with the Jabrī's statement that the combined existence of the human power and the motive necessitates human action. However, in order to avoid the Jabrī's conclusion that the necessitation of human action leads to a belief in *jabr*, he adds a reservation, the source of which is absent from the Rāziyyan discourse:

That the human action is necessary, does not contradict that it is chosen (*mukhtār*) by the [human being], wanted (*murād*) by him, and is the object of his power (*maqḍūr*). The action neither is compelled (*mukrah*) nor forced (*majbūr*) upon him.<sup>82</sup>

The way in which the Sunni proves that human action is not forced upon the human being, although it is necessitated with the combination of human power and the motive to act, is interesting. The Sunni compares the action of God, performed through His power and will, with the supposedly compelled action of the human being. He states, that even God's action is necessitated with the combination of power and motive. So, is it possible to conclude that God's acts are forced upon Him?<sup>83</sup> The Sunni uses here an *ilzām* (*argumentum ad homi-*

79 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-ʿalīl*, pp. 325, 339; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-ʿalīl*, 1903, pp. 143, 150. See al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Arbāʿīn*, pp. 121–122.

80 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-ʿalīl*, p. 325; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 143.

81 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-ʿalīl*, p. 339; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 150.

82 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-ʿalīl*, p. 320; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 141.

83 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-ʿalīl*, p. 320; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā' al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 141.

*nem*), which, he declares, he adopted from al-Rāzī. He even gives a fairly accurate citation of that argument from al-Rāzī.<sup>84</sup>

It is through his detailed discussion on the human motivation that the Sunni unfolds his doctrine. At first, the Sunni says, he agrees with the Jabrī that the motive (*daʿī*) of human action is the cause of the human act (*sabab al-fil*), and is created by God.<sup>85</sup> However, soon enough he clarifies that the motive is not the efficient cause (*muʾaththir*) of the action, nor the *only* cause (*sabab*) of the action, although at the beginning of his response he agrees with the Jabrī on this issue. The Sunni sees the motive, like other factors connected to human action, as a condition (*shart*) or a part of a cause (*juzʾ sabab*) of the action.<sup>86</sup> Reducing the status of the motive from the cause of the action to a partial cause is meant to elevate the weight of human power, human will and more so, human choice in the performance of the human act.<sup>87</sup> According to the Sunni, many factors beyond human control are parts of the cause of action. The fact that all causes are created by God does not mean that the human being is not the agent of his action. In the beginning of his response, the Sunni clarifies this view:

The motive is created by God in the human being, and it is the cause of action. The action is attributed to its [human] agent, since it was originated from him, and occurred through his power, will and choice. That does not prevent the action from being attributed in general (*bi-tariq al-umūm*) to Him, the Creator and Almighty.<sup>88</sup>

He concludes:

The power of the human being, his will and motives are but one part of the many parts of the complete cause (*sabab tāmm*), which necessitates the act [...]. Whoever claims that the human being has no effect, some way or the other, on the action, that the existence of his power and will is the same as their inexistence, as far as the action is concerned, arrives at a conclusion which contradicts reason and the senses.<sup>89</sup>

84 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 320; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 141. See al-Rāzī, *al-Matālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 9, p. 15.

85 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 324; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 143. See al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Arbāʾin*, p. 225.

86 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, pp. 324–325; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 143. See al-Rāzī, *al-Matālib al-ʿāliya*, vol. 9, p. 257.

87 For the use of the term *ikhtiyār* (choice) in *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, see Holtzman, *Human Choice*, p. 181.

88 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 324; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 143.

89 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 325; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 143. The part omitted here is a refutation of the Muʿtazilī perception on the efficacy of the human power.

The Sunni gives a statement in the same vein towards the end of the dialogue, but then he uses the term preponderator (*murajjih*) instead of the term motive (*dāʿī*). After declaring that he is satisfied with the Jabrī's "preponderance without a preponderator" argument, and agreeing that there must be a preponderator preponderating the action, the Sunni clarifies that the existence of the preponderator does not negate the existence of human choice.<sup>90</sup>

But does the Sunni equate the terms motive (*dāʿī*) and preponderator (*murajjih*)? According to the Sunni, the motive of human action can indeed be, as the Jabrī claims, knowledge of the benefits which result from the performing a certain action, but it can also be ignorance (*jahl*) and error (*ghalaṭ*), as these also lead a man to perform an action.<sup>91</sup> As for the preponderator (*murajjih*), the Sunni examines the possibility that the *murajjih* is the entire set of inborn faculties in the human being, which include, among others, human will. Hence, like the Muʿtazila claim, the preponderator is the human inborn tendency to act using the human being's own will and choice.<sup>92</sup> This definition, which might have served as a very powerful interface between the traditionalist concept of *fiṭra* (natural disposition) and the Muʿtazilī concept of free will, is ruled out by the Sunni. This definition suggests that once created, the human being acts without the guidance of God. Hence the Sunni immediately retracts to the comfortable point of disagreement with the Muʿtazila, and declares that everything in the human being, including his power, will, and motivation, is created by God.<sup>93</sup>

### 2.3. Third Level:

#### *jabr* and Obligating What Is Beyond One's Capability

In one of al-Rāzī's most notable declarations he defends the doctrine of "obligating what is beyond one's capability" (*taklīf mā lā yuṭāq*), and

90 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 339; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 151.

91 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 323; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 142. This point is elaborated and serves as an introduction to the brief appearance of the Qadarī participant in the dialogue, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, pp. 323–324; *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, pp. 142–143.

92 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 326; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 144.

93 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 326; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 144.

asserts that it is possible that God will command the human being to do what is beyond his capacity.<sup>94</sup> One might expect a similar statement from the Jabrī in chapter 19, however any reference to this statement appears only in the Sunni's responses.

The Sunni, with his keen desire to lead the discussion into the domain of “obligating what is beyond one's capability”, actually takes the Muʿtazilī position. He even promises that this theme will be discussed at length later on,<sup>95</sup> but this promise is never fulfilled in this debate. Thus, this theme is never exhausted in chapter 19.

In the beginning of the dialogue, the Sunni accuses the Jabrī that his belief in *jabr* means that all which God obligates the human being to perform is “obligating what is beyond one's capability”. The whole system of reward and punishment is superfluous, if the Jabrī's position is accepted:

[The belief in God's unity] is what [God] has entrusted His messengers with. For the sake of it He brought down His books, incited the human beings to believe, and set reward and punishment. He made laws in order to obtain the [belief in God's unity], and to perfect it. But from what you say, Jabrī, the human being has absolutely no power to obtain it, he cannot affect it, [the belief in God's unity] is not his action. Therefore, obligating him is obligating what is beyond his capability.<sup>96</sup>

Furthermore, the Sunni depicts the belief in *jabr* as absurd: God forbids the human being to perform certain acts, and then punishes him for performing those acts, although he has not actually performed them, as the real agent of those acts is God Himself. In sum, the belief in *jabr* makes laws, orders, and prohibitions, superfluous, as the following examples demonstrate:

It is you, who declared, that God punishes the human being for not obeying His commands and performing what was prohibited on him. It is as punishing him for failing to fly to the sky and failing to move the mountains and the waters of the oceans [...]. It is you, who declared that what God obligates His servants is similar to obligating the blind to write and the chronically ill to fly.<sup>97</sup>

94 Al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl*, vol. 2, p. 215; Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, pp. 103–104.

95 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 327; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 144.

96 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 318; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 139.

97 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, p. 318; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, 1903, p. 139.

The second part of this argument, usually entitled “obligating the incapable” (*taklīf al-‘ājiz*), is that obligating he who has no ability to perform a certain act is of no avail (*‘abathan*). It is an absurdity to attribute to God an action which is of no avail.<sup>98</sup> The Sunni in the dialogue indeed defines the acts in the passage above as acts which are evidently of no avail (*‘abath zāhir*).<sup>99</sup>

The Sunni’s accusations, to which the Jabrī does not respond directly, seem disconnected from the general flow of the dialogue, because the Jabrī never refers to the theme of “obligating what is beyond one’s capability”. The Sunni’s accusations here are therefore addressed to al-Rāzī’s position on the same issue. Al-Rāzī, as elaborated before, argues that “obligating what is beyond one’s capability” is possible.

In the chapter on “commands and interdictions” in *al-Maḥṣūl*, al-Rāzī presents his adversary’s arguments against the possibility of “obligating what is beyond one’s capability”. The adversary, a libertarian Mu‘tazilī, defies al-Rāzī’s stand:

We agree that what you have said proves what you claim [that “obligating what is beyond one’s capability” is possible]; however it is contradicted by textual and rational proofs. As for the textual evidence, the Koran states “God charges no soul save to its capacity” (Koran 2:286) and “[He] has laid on you no impediment in your religion” (Koran 22:78). Is there a greater impediment than “obligating what is beyond one’s capability”? As for rational evidence [...], it is evident that he, who obligates the blind to vocalize copies of the Quran, or obligates the chronically ill to fly, is considered a fool. God is, of course, exalted above that.<sup>100</sup>

The resemblance between the Mu‘tazilī’s arguments in *al-Maḥṣūl* and the Sunni’s accusations in the debate of chapter 19, is quite evident. That the Sunni takes a Mu‘tazilī position is also evident from his frequent use of the term “justice” (*‘adl*), one of the pillars of the Mu‘tazilī doctrines. The Sunni uses this term immediately after the absurd description of obligating the blind to write and the chronically ill to fly, when he states that the doctrine of *jabr* contradicts God’s justice.<sup>101</sup>

98 See Ibn Taymiyya’s definitions in *Majmū‘at al-Fatāwā*, vol. 10, p. 200 (*al-Tuḥfa al-‘irāqīyya*); al-Urmawī, Sirāj al-Dīn: *al-Taḥṣīl fī al-maḥṣūl*, ed. by ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ‘Alī Abū Zayd, Beirut 1408/1988, vol. 2, p. 317.

99 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā‘ al-‘alīl*, p. 318; *Shifā‘ al-‘alīl*, 1903, p. 139.

100 Al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl*, vol. 2, p. 220. The Mu‘tazilī adversary presents two more rational proofs, which I have omitted here. See Al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-‘ālīya*, vol. 3, p. 309 (the fourth proof), vol. 3, p. 310 (the ninth proof) and vol. 3, p. 312 (the sixth and seventh proofs).

101 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā‘ al-‘alīl*, p. 319; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā‘ al-‘alīl*, 1903, p. 140.

In *al-Maḥṣūl* al-Rāzī provides a direct rejoinder to the comparison between “obligating what is beyond one’s capability” and ‘obligating the incapable’.<sup>102</sup> Unlike al-Rāzī, the Jabrī in chapter 19 does not address this theme directly, but answers with his “preponderance without a preponderator” argument. This however follows al-Rāzī’s response in several sources.<sup>103</sup>

### 3. A Threefold Cord: Ibn Taymiyya – Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī – Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya

In the dialogue, the Jabrī presents a straightforward approach towards al-Rāzī’s complex theory of the human act: al-Rāzī’s pro-*jabr* declarations are elevated to the rank of a Sunni profession of faith corroborating the concept of God’s unity (*tawḥīd*). The kernel of the Jabrī’s worldview is the “preponderance without a preponderator” argument, the bottom line of which is that God creates the human act. We do not find in any of the Jabrī’s statements a trace of the 8<sup>th</sup> century formula of God compelling the human being to act. The Jabrī’s reliance on al-Rāzī should have led him to state that “obligating what is beyond one’s capability” is possible. This, however, is only implied by the accusation which the Sunni addresses to him.

The Sunni in the dialogue offers a different perspective on al-Rāzī’s argumentations. This perspective aims at reconciling his theological formulae on the human act with Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya’s views, while rejecting al-Rāzī’s pro-*jabr* declarations in several places. The Sunni rejects *jabr* altogether, and refuses to acknowledge the linkage between *jabr* and *tawḥīd*. However, the rationalized course leading towards al-Rāzī’s/the Jabrī’s declaration of *jabr*, he embraces willingly. In other words, the Sunni adopts the “preponderance without a preponderator” argument, thus acknowledging that human acts are created by God, but rejects the conclusion that this argument fortifies the concept of *jabr*. In fact, when discussing the “preponderance without

102 Al-Rāzī attacks the Mu’tazilī, as follows: “If by ‘of no avail’ (*abath*) you mean, that this cannot benefit the human being, why do you not say that this is absurd (*muḥāl*)?” This leads him to a short discussion on the term “absurd”, al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl*, vol. 2, p. 223.

103 In *al-Maḥṣūl*, al-Rāzī does not attack the opponent. In *al-Maṭālib al-‘āliya*, al-Rāzī first presents his stand, then the adversaries’ arguments, to which he does not respond, *al-Maṭālib al-‘āliya*, vol. 3, pp. 305–315.



a preponderator” argument, the Sunni prefers “complete cause” then “preponderator”. Last but not least, the Sunni is concerned with the moral implications of the Jabrī’s worldview, thus rejecting completely the possibility of “obligating what is beyond one’s capability”. This rejection is based on the Sunni’s conviction of God’s justice.

The entire spectrum of al-Rāzī’s views is not revealed in the Jabrī’s narrative. The Jabrī consistently emphasizes the creation of the human act by God through a persistent repetition of al-Rāzī’s argumentations for *jabr*. Still, al-Rāzī has also expressed a view reconciling between human psychology and his rationalized determinism.

The [description of] an agent choosing his act (*mukhtār*), as far as we are concerned, is as follows. With the combination of the power and the motive, the act necessitates. Upon this assumption, the human being is truly (*alā sabīl al-ḥaqīqa*) an agent (*fā’il*), but at the same time his acts are determined by God’s predetermination (*qada’ Allāh wa-qadaruhu*).<sup>104</sup>

The Jabrī in chapter 19 does not make such a statement, however the Sunni does. In fact, this is his goal in the debate: declaring that the human being is truly a voluntary agent, whose acts God creates. In his closing triumphant statement, the Sunni defines the human being as an agent (*fā’il*). This agent, however, does not create his act independently. The act indeed originates through the combination of the human will and motive, but this combination, as other factors affecting the origination of the act, are but “a part of the cause” (*juz’ sabab*) of the human act.<sup>105</sup> As these factors are created by God, the human act is indeed created and determined by God.

The Sunni’s discourse reflects both Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya’s position towards al-Rāzī’s arguments for *jabr*, and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya’s adoption, albeit reserved and selective, of the jewel in the crown of the Rāziyyan discourse: the “preponderance without a preponderator” argument. Ibn Taymiyya preceded Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya in this. While adopting al-Rāzī’s argument Ibn Taymiyya converted the term “preponderator” into the term “complete cause” (*illa tāmma*).<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, the view that the human being is truly

104 Al-Rāzī, *Ma‘ālim uṣūl al-dīn*, p. 61. See also Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy*, p. 143. *Ma‘ālim uṣūl al-dīn* is al-Rāzī’s last theological work, Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, p. 10.

105 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Shifā’ al-‘alīl*, pp. 340–341; *Shifā’ al-‘alīl*, 1903, p. 151.

106 Ibn Taymiyya, Taqī al-Dīn: *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya*, ed. by Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, Beirut 1404/1986, vol. 3, pp. 31, 50, 117–119; Ibn Taymiyya,

an agent of his acts, while God creates his acts, is expressed several times by Ibn Taymiyya, as a guiding principle in his theory of the human act.<sup>107</sup> The Sunni's discourse in chapter 19, then, is based on Ibn Taymiyya's teachings.

The influence of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on Ibn Taymiyya's theological terminology and argumentations has been discussed in previous researches.<sup>108</sup> Much less, if anything, has been said on the influence of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's thought. According to Ibn Taymiyya's biographers, he taught al-Rāzī's theological work, *Kitāb al-Arbāʾin fī uṣūl al-dīn* (The Book of Forty, on the Principles of Religion), to several students, including Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya.<sup>109</sup> The complexities of al-Rāzī's methodology both in the classroom and in his theological writings led Ibn Taymiyya to compose a two-volume commentary on *Kitāb al-Arbāʾin*, which is unfortunately no longer extant.<sup>110</sup>

As reflected in his theological writings, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, following Ibn Taymiyya's example and lead, enthusiastically attacked the fundamentals of Ashʿarī *kalām*. Nevertheless, the biographical sources, which are in the case of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya very scarce indeed, specifically indicate that Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya received a formal Ashʿarī education, while he himself declares that before meeting his master, he was deeply affected by Ashʿarī *kalām*.<sup>111</sup> In the list

---

*Majmūʿat al-Fatāwā*, vol. 8, p. 83 (*Risāla fī al-Amr*). These texts were discussed in length by Gimaret, *Théories de l'acte*; and Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, pp. 146–147.

107 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿat al-Fatāwā*, vol. 3, p. 99 (*al-ʿAqīda al-wāṣiyya*); Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj al-sunna*, vol. 3, pp. 12–13.

108 Laoust, Henri: *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Takī-d-dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya, canoniste Hanbalite. Né à Harrān en 661/1262, mort à Damas en 728/1328; thèse pour le doctorat*, Cairo 1939, p. 724 (index); Daniel Gimaret: *Théories de l'acte humain dans l'école Hanbalite*, in: *Bulletin d'études orientales* 29 (1977), 156–178; Anawati, George C.: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, in: *ET*, vol. 2 (1965), pp. 751–755; Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics*, pp. 36–37, nn. 99, 109, 199; Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, pp. 111–112, 138–139, 141–145, 169–173; in an introduction to the 2004 edition of al-Rāzī's *Kitāb al-Arbāʾin*, the editor, Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqā, provides several interesting insights, mainly based on the biographical literature, on Ibn Taymiyya's controversy with al-Rāzī's theological doctrines, al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Arbāʾin*, pp. 5–11.

109 See references in the preface of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Arbāʾin*, p. 6.

110 Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, pp. 9–10 and especially p. 10, n. 21.

111 In his theological treatise in verse, *al-Kāfiya al-shāfiya fī al-intiṣār lil-firqa al-nājiya* (The Sufficient and Healing [*qaṣīda*] about the Victory of *al-Firqa al-Nājiya*), Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya describes his enchantment of Ashʿarī *kalām*. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: *al-Kāfiya al-shāfiya fī al-intiṣār lil-firqa*

of books, which Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya read and probably memorized with his teachers, the theological works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wal-muta'akhhirīn* (A Summary of the Opinions of Earlier and Later Scholars) and *Kitāb al-Arba'īn*, stand out. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya read portions of these books aloud in front of two teachers: Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Hindī (d. 715/1314–15), the Shāfi'ī kadi of Damascus, and Ibn Taymiyya himself.<sup>112</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya also read with Ibn Taymiyya “a part of *al-Maḥṣūl*”.<sup>113</sup>

The exact citations from al-Rāzī's writings, and especially from *al-Maḥṣūl* might indicate that Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya was savvy of the Rāziyyan text. *Al-Maḥṣūl* is probably the text which the Sunni and Jabrī are toiling to memorize in the debate in chapter 19. In other words, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya used *al-Maḥṣūl* as the substratum of the dialogue in chapter 19. His former Ash'arī education helped him formulate the Jabrī's discourse, but it was his joint reading of *al-Maḥṣūl* with Ibn Taymiyya, that directed Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya towards the Sunni's discourse, and more so, the Sunni's triumphant closing statement. For Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, as for Ibn Taymiyya before him, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī played a triple role: as a source of inspiration, a theological authority, and a worthy ideological rival, whose teachings demand rigorous and serious attention.

## Conclusion

Chapter 19 in *Shifā' al-'alīl*, an original piece of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, offers the author's coherent critique on the Ash'arī exploitation of al-Rāzī's texts. According to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, the Ash'arīs used al-Rāzī in order to promote the heretical doctrine of *jabr*. The Ash'arī position and its refutation are presented in the guise of a

*al-nājiya*, ed. by 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-'Umayr, Riyadh 1416/1996, pp. 180–181, verses 2271–2280.

112 Al-Ṣafadī, Ṣalāh al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak: *al-Wāfi bil-wafayāt*, Istanbul, n.d., vol. 2, pp. 270–273. For further biographical details on Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: Abū Zayd, Bakr b. 'Abd Allāh: *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. Ḥayātuhu, āthāruhu, mawāriduhu*, Riyadh 1412/1992; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1423/2002; Krawietz, Birgit: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. His Life and Works, in: *Mamlūk Studies Review* 10 (2006), pp. 19–64; Holtzman, Livnat: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, in: Devin J. Stewart and Joseph E. Lowry (eds.): *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography 1350–1850*, Wiesbaden 2009, pp. 202–223.

113 Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bil-wafayāt*, vol. 2, p. 196.

debate between a Jabrī and a Sunni. Written from the Sunni's point of view, chapter 19 presents two possible readings of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's arguments for *jabr* within his theory of the human act: the standard Ash'arī reading, manifested in the narrative of the Jabrī, and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's reading, manifested in the narrative of the Sunni.

As a typical didactic piece, chapter 19 cannot be considered a recording or restoration of real life polemics. However, the chapter demonstrates the acceptance of al-Rāzī's writings in the Damascene scholarly circles of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Al-Rāzī's writings were enthusiastically read and discussed by both the Ash'arīs and the members of the Taymiyyan circle. The Rāziyyan discourse and style which are present in almost every sentence that the Jabrī and the Sunni utter, indeed authentically reflect the real interests of the students of Islamic theology in Mamluk Damascus.

The parallel established in this article between al-Rāzī's *al-Maḥṣūl* and chapter 19 of *Shifā' al-ʿalīl* is not based merely on common ideas or identical lines of argumentation. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya placed in his protagonists' mouths exact citations from *al-Maḥṣūl* and other writings of al-Rāzī. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya also shaped his protagonists as striving with the Rāziyyan text and toiling to interpret it. Reading chapter 19 in itself without addressing al-Rāzī's *al-Maḥṣūl* is bound to leave a great deal of the picture in the shadow.

Chapter 19 also reflects Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's theological perception of human actions. Adhering to the viewpoint of Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya embraced certain arguments from Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's theory of the human act. In chapter 19, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, in fact criticizes the Ash'arīs for not understanding al-Rāzī's nuanced theory. This criticism is made explicit by both the ridiculous presentation of the Jabrī and the Sunni's well-structured interpretation of al-Rāzī's argumentations.

Chapter 19 demonstrates more than a clash between the Ash'arī theories of the human act and the so-called Sunni doctrine of the human act: this chapter raises the possibility of reconciliation between the Rāziyyan and Taymiyyan-Jawziyyan positions.