

## The Nature of God: Theological Debate and Implications of the Tauhid's Sentences

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### ABSTRACT

The research aims to discuss the debate between the Asy'ariyah and Mu'tazilah about the nature of God. The method used literature study from various sources. The results of this research show that there are the differences between Mu'tazilites and al-Ash'ari in Divine Aspects in Theology. *First, The Nature of God.* The Mu'tazilites stated that Allah is All-Knowing with His substance, not with knowledge, power and life because all of these are qualities while nature is something outside of substance. Meanwhile, the Asy' believe that God has attributes. *Second, The God's Justice,* the Mu'tazilites elive that all of God's actions are good, God does not do bad, and does not forget what He must do. On the other hand *al-Ash'ari* they are not realized by humans themselves, but are created by God. *Three, God's Absolute Power and Will*, the Mu'tazilah argued that God's power is actually no longer absolute. On the other side, the Asy'ariyah were unable to reach the depth of monotheism fi'li while the Mu'tazilah were unable to resolve issues of justice in the right way.

**Keywords:** *Justice; Monotheism; Nature of God*

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## INTRODUCTION

Tawhid is a very fundamental thing in the belief of every Muslim. This concept has great importance in Islam because the understanding and practice of tawhid is the basis of Islamic teachings. Understanding tawhid is the foundation for all teachings, worship, and the relationship between Allah and humans in Islam.

The concept of tawhid excludes man's commitment to anyone. It rejection of all sources of value other than will of Allah (Kounsar, n.d.). The word tawhid contains the meaning than explain the one and unity in the view of Islam, as a religion of monotheism. It is the most important attribute among all the attributes of God. Furthermore, monotheism in Islamic theology is also called the Science of Kalam.

Muhammad Abduh in (Alfina Hidayah & Maghribi, 2022) defines monotheism as a science that discusses Allah, about the qualities that must remain with Him, the qualities that can be attributed to Him and about the qualities that must be completely eliminated from Him; also discusses the apostles of Allah, ascertaining their

apostleship, ascertaining what is obligatory for them, what is permitted to be attributed (nisbah) to them and what is forbidden to be attributed to them.

In Islamic theology, Hamzah (2016) tries to distinguish the form of Allah so that it does not become a problem but the interpretation of His attributes, His words, is more evident in the book *Al-Milal wa Al-Nihal*. Hamzah stated that Tawhid is a science that discusses the existence of Allah, about the qualities that must remain with Him, the qualities that can be attributed to Him and about the qualities that must be completely eliminated from Him; also discusses the apostles of Allah, ascertaining their apostleship, ascertaining what is obligatory for them, what is permitted to be attributed (nisbah) to them and what is forbidden to be attributed to them (Hamzah, 2016). There are four issues that become differences between sects, namely :

1. The issue of the nature and oneness of Allah, including His eternal nature, where some sects acknowledge its existence and others reject it. Likewise regarding the characteristics that are obligatory (necessary), jaiz (possible) and impossible (impossible) for His substance.
2. Problems of qadha, qadar and Allah's justice, jabar and kasab, the desire to do good and bad, problems that are beyond human ability and problems that are clearly known (badhiyah).
3. The problem of wa'ad (promise), wa'id (threat), and Allah's name. Likewise, Allah's laws include matters of faith, monotheism, promises and threats, promises to give hope, disbelief and error.
4. Issues of revelation, reason, prophethood (nubuwwah), Allah's will regarding good and better, imamate, good and bad, Allah's love, the sanctity of the prophets, the requirements of the imamate.

Meanwhile, in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* (Esposito, 2009), theological controversies in Islam center on seven main issues:

1. Analysis of the concept of God;
2. Ontological and cosmological evidence regarding the existence of God;
3. Cosmology of the relationship between God and the world;
4. Theodicy ethics of God's commands in relation to free will, determinism, fate, good, bad, punishment and reward;
5. The pragmatic aspect of religious language and the special function of the part of the imagination which is especially found in prophets, mystics and the heirs of prophets;
6. The relationship between reasoning and revelation;
7. Political aspects of the application of Divine law in society.

Based on the statements above indicated that there are several things of tawhid, but in essence the debate focuses more on the characteristics of God, God's justice, the relationship between revelation and reason and human actions. Concerning controversy, the authors focused on discussing debates about divine aspects in theology

in the Ash'ariyah and Mu'tazilah schools, specifically on three main issues, namely the nature of God, God's justice and God's absolute power and will.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a literature study method with a qualitative approach. Primary data was obtained through collecting and analyzing literature related to the debate on divine aspects in Islamic theology, especially in the Ash'ariyah and Mu'tazilah sects. The literature used includes books, scientific journals, and online articles discussing Islamic, Ash'ariyah, Mu'tazilah theology, and debates related to divine aspects.

Data collection techniques were carried out by reading and reviewing relevant literature. The data obtained was then analyzed qualitatively using the content analysis method. Content analysis is carried out by identifying, categorizing, and interpreting the information contained in the literature. This research aims to understand the debate about divine aspects in Islamic theology, especially in the Ash'ariyah and Mu'tazilah schools. It is hoped that the research results can contribute to a deeper understanding of the concept of Tawhid and its implications for Muslims.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Differences in Divine Aspects in Theology**

#### 1. The Nature of God

The Mu'tazilites argue that Allah is *qadim*. It is a special characteristic of His substance. They stated that Allah is All-Knowing with His substance, not with knowledge, power and life because all of these are qualities while nature is something outside of substance. Because if the properties are in the *qadim* substance, while the *qadim* properties are more specific properties, there will undoubtedly be a dualism, namely substance and nature.

Apart from that, Abu al-Huzail (135 H.-235 H.) explained what exactly is meant by *nafyu al-shifat* or the elimination of God's attributes. Huzail, that Allah is All-Knowing with His knowledge. *God's life* is His life and life is His substance. This opinion was taken from the opinion of philosophers who recognized the innumerable substance of Allah Almighty. Properties are not properties that stand alone in substances, in fact properties are substances themselves through the provisions of causality. There is a difference between people who say that God's knowledge is His substance, not the nature of His knowledge, and between those who say that nature is His substance. According to Huzail, if we admit that this attribute exists in His substance, it is the same as admitting that there are divine elements in Christian teachings, or at least it can be said that this attribute is something that cannot be said to exist or not exist.

According to Washil, it is impossible for God to give properties that have their own form and are then attached to God's substance. Because it is *qadim*, then what is

attached to the substance is also *qadim*. Thus the nature is *qadim* as well. According to Washil, if anyone has *qadim* qualities other than God, it will lead to the existence of two Gods, because the only person who can be *qadim* is God. In other words, if something is *qadim*, then it only belongs to God. Therefore, to maintain the purity of monotheism or the Almighty Oneness of God, God cannot be said to have characteristics in the above sense.

Therefore, the most important basic lessons for the Mu` tazilah are al-tawhid or the Almighty Oneness of God. In their understanding, God will truly be Almighty only if God is a unique substance, there is no one like Him. Therefore, they reject the idea of Anthropomorphism, (Anthropomorphism as it is known describes God as closely resembling His creatures).

Furthermore, they also rejected beatific vision, namely that humans can see God with their eyes. Regarding whether it is possible to see the substance of Allah on the Hereafter, the Mu` tazilites reject the possibility of seeing the substance of Allah with their own eyes on the Hereafter, because according to them if the substance of Allah can be seen, it means that His substance is the same as other substances, even though Allah's substance is not in a certain direction, has no place, no form, not composed of matter, does not occupy space, does not move, cannot be said, does not change and is not affected.

Because they say that mutasyabihat verses must be interpreted, such a stance is called tawhid. Furthermore, the Mu` tazilites divided the attributes of God into two groups:

1. Attributes which are the essence of God and are called the nature of substance, which is meant by the nature of the essence, for example, existence (al-wujud), eternity in the past (al-qidam), life (al-hayah), power (al-qudrah );
2. Attributes which are God's actions are called fi` liyah traits. The characteristics of actions consist of characteristics that convey the meaning of the relationship between God and His creatures, such as will (al-iradah), words (kalam), justice (al-` adl) and so on.

Meanwhile, the Asy` ariyah, as stated by al-Ash` ari, believe that God has attributes. It is impossible, said al-Ash` ari, that God knows with His substance, because then His substance is knowledge and God Himself is knowledge. God is not knowledge (` ilm) but rather the All-Knowing (` alim). God knows with knowledge and His knowledge is not His substance. Likewise with qualities such as life, power, hearing and seeing. Then the Ash` ariyah argued that God can be seen in the Afterlife. The reason is that the only qualities that cannot be given to God are those that would bring meaning to the form in which God created them. The nature of God's being seen does not lead to this, because what can be seen does not necessarily imply that it is necessarily created. Thus, if it is said that God can be seen, it does not necessarily mean that God is created. In the Qur'an it says Q.S. Al-Qiyamah: 23:

نَاظِرَةٌ رَّبِّهَا إِلَى

Meaning: (because) looking at God.

## 2. The God's Justice

Regarding justice, the *Mu`tazilites* are of the opinion as expressed by `Abd al-Jabbar, that all of God's actions are good, God does not do bad, and does not forget what He must do. Thus, God does not lie, does not act unjustly, does not torture the children of *polytheists* (worshippers of many gods) because of the sins of their parents, does not send down miracles to liars and does not give burdens that humans cannot bear. Furthermore, this means that God empowers humans to be able to carry the burdens that God places on them, explains the nature of those burdens, and provides rewards or punishments for human actions. And if God gives torture, then the torture is for the benefit and benefit of humans, because if torture is sent down not for the benefit and benefit of humans, God will thereby neglect one of His obligations.

God, in the view of the *Mu`tazilites*, does not do bad, even according to one group, he cannot (*laa yaqdir*) do bad (*dzalim*) because such actions arise only from people who are not perfect, and God is Most Perfect. Therefore, according to the *Mu`tazilites*, it is obligatory for God to bring good, even the best, to humans.

Furthermore, the question of God's justice raises questions about human actions. Are human actions manifested by God or are they manifested by humans themselves? Concerning human actions, the *Mu`tazilah* adhered to the *qadariyah* ideology, which argued that humans have independence and freedom in determining the course of their lives. According to this understanding, humans have their own freedom and power to carry out their actions. So God would not be called fair, if He punished people who did bad things not of their own volition, but of coercion from outside themselves.

The *Mu`tazilites*, because of their theological system, humans are seen as having great power and are free, of course they adhere to the ideology of *qadariyah* or free will. Al-Jubba`I explained that humans are the ones who create their actions, humans do good and bad, obey or disobey God of their own will and will. And the power (*al-istitha`ah*) to realize this desire is already present in humans before any action occurs. Human actions are not created by God in humans, but humans themselves create actions. Humans are creatures who can choose.

In his book, al-Jabbar explains that God makes humans capable of carrying out their actions, namely that God creates power within humans and it is on this power that the form of the action depends, and that is not what is meant by God creating actions that humans have predicted. It is impossible that God can bring about the actions that humans have put into action.

The verse of the Qur'an relating to this matter in Q.S. As-Sajadah verse seven as interpreted by `Abd al-Jabbar contains two meanings, first: *ahsana* means "doing good" and thus, all of God's actions are benevolent to humans. Therefore, what is meant by *ahsana* here is the second meaning, namely "good". All God's actions are good. Thus, human actions are not God's actions, because among human actions there are evil actions.

According to al-Jabbar, if human actions are God's actions and not human actions, giving retribution from God for human actions as mentioned in the verse above, has no meaning. So that this verse does not contain lies, human actions must truly be human actions. This argument is also supported based on Q.S. al-Kahf verse 29:

Meaning: ...So whoever wants to (believe) let him believe, and whoever wants to (disbelieve) Let him disbelieve". ...

This verse gives humans the freedom to believe or not believe. If human actions were not actually human actions, this verse would have no meaning. So it can be concluded that for the *Mu` tazilites*, human actions are not God's actions, but are human actions themselves. In other words, humans are the creators (*khaliq*) of their actions. This opinion of the *Mu` tazilites* was opposed by al-Ghazali, because in his opinion it was contrary to *ijma`* or the consensus of the ulama regarding the absence of a creator except Allah (*laa khaaliqu illa Allah*).

Regarding human actions, for *al-Ash`ari* they are not realized by humans themselves, but are created by God. The act of disbelief is bad, but the disbeliever wants the act of disbelief to be good. What the disbeliever desires cannot be realized. Acts of faith that are good, but heavy and difficult. The believer wants the act of faith not to be heavy and difficult, but what He desires cannot be realized. In this way, it is not the disbelievers who are unable to make *kufr* good that bring about the act of *kufr*, but it is God who makes it happen and God really wants *kufr* to be bad. Likewise, those who create the work of faith are not believers who are unable to make faith difficult and difficult, but it is God who creates it and God really wants faith to be difficult and difficult. The term used by *al-Ash`ari* for human actions created by God is *al-kasb*. The meaning of *iktisab* according to *al-Asy'ari* is that something happens through the power that is created and thus becomes an acquisition or *kasb* for the person whose power the action exists. About *kasb* based on Q.S. al-Saffat: 96 :

Meaning: Even though it is Allah who created you and what you do."

*Al-Asy`ari* interprets the words *wa maa ta`maluun* as "what you do" and not "what you make". Thus, this verse means that Allah created you and your deeds. So in *al-Ash`ari*'s understanding, human actions are created by God, and there is no maker (*fa`il*) for *kasb* except Allah. In other words, the one who brings about *kasb* or human actions is actually God himself.

Regarding human actions, according to *al-Ash'ari* there are two elements, the mover that creates movement and the body that moves. The mover, namely the real maker of movement (*al-fa`ill aha haqiqatiha*) is God and the one who moves is man. What moves is not God because movement requires a physical place. God cannot have a physical form. *Al-Kasb* is similar to this involuntary movement, also having two elements, the maker and the person who gets the action. The real creators are humans. God does not become the one who obtains actions, because *al-kasb* occurs only with created power, and God cannot possibly have created power.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the meaning of God

creating human actions is that God is the actual creator of human actions, and the meaning of the emergence of actions from humans through the created power is that humans through the created power are actual humans. It is a place for God's actions. Therefore, in the theory of *al-kasb*, there is actually no difference between *al-kasb* and acts of unwillingness by humans. The creator of these two things, as emphasized by al-Ash'ari himself, is God, furthermore, in both cases humans are only the place where God's actions take place.

The *Asy'ariyah* in terms of human actions are closer to *Jabariyah* understanding. Humans, in their weakness, depend much on God's will and power. The argument put forward is Q.S. al-Insan: 30 :

Meaning: And you are not able (to take that path), unless Allah wills it. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

This verse gives the understanding that humans cannot will something, unless Allah wills it, then humans will that something. Meanwhile, according to *Asy'ariyah*, it opposes the notion of God's justice, according to him God has absolute power and nothing is obligatory for Him. God does as He pleases, so that He puts all humans into heaven, God is not unjust and if He puts all humans into hell, God is not unjust.

Meanwhile, the understanding of justice for the *Mu'tazilites* means obligations that must be respected by God. Justice does not only mean rewarding those who do good and punishing those who do wrong. The understanding that God is obliged to do what is best for humans has a very broad meaning, such as not giving too heavy a burden to humans, sending apostles and prophets, giving humans the power to carry out their obligations and so on. All of these are God's obligations towards humans. Justice requires that God carry out his obligations.

The *Asy'ariyah* gave a different meaning to the meaning of the *Mu'tazilites*, in accordance with their tendency to review everything from the perspective of God's absolute power and will, justice, they interpreted it as placing things in their true place, namely having absolute power over the property that was owned. owned and used according to the wishes and knowledge of the owner. Thus, God's justice means that God has absolute power over His creatures and does as He pleases in His kingdom.

His greatness and might do not cause God to act arbitrarily, although if He wanted to, of course nothing would be able to stop Him. Herein lies His wisdom. On the contrary, He is very affectionate towards His creatures, including humans.

### 3. God's Absolute Power and Will

In explaining the absolute power and will of God, the *Mu'tazilah* argued that God's power is actually no longer absolute. God's absolute power is limited by the freedom given to humans in determining their will and actions. Furthermore, absolute power is also limited by the nature of God's justice. God can no longer do as He pleases. God is bound by the norms of justice which, if violated, makes God unfair and even tyrannical. God's absolute power and will are also limited by God's obligations

towards humans. God's absolute power and will are also limited by nature or natural law (Allah's sunnah) which does not change, as the Qur'an states in Q.S. al-Ahzab: 33:

Meaning: As Allah's sunnah applies to those who came before (you), and you will never find any changes to Allah's sunnah.

Meanwhile, the Ash`ariyah in explaining the absoluteness and will of God, the Ash`ari say that God does not submit to anyone, above God there is no other substance that can make laws and can determine what God can make and what God cannot make. God is absolute in His will and power. God is the Supreme Owner (al-Malik) who is absolute and does whatever He wants in His kingdom and no one can criticize His actions, even though human reason considers those actions to be bad and unjust.

According to Murtadha Muthahari, the Asy'ariyah were unable to reach the depth of monotheism fi'li while the Mu'tazilah were unable to resolve issues of justice in the right way ((Kompasiana, n.d.). However, these opinions are all based on arguments based on the Koran. Apart from that, Seyyed Hossein Nasr said that in Asy'ariyah all humans are servants of God's will. Meanwhile, the Mu'tazilah understand that humans are in unity and divine justice.

## **CONCLUSION**

There are the differences between Mu`tazilites and al-Ash`ari in Divine Aspects in Theology. First, The Nature of God. The Mu`tazilites argue that Allah is qadim. It is a special characteristic of His substance. They stated that Allah is All-Knowing with His substance, not with knowledge, power and life because all of these are qualities while nature is something outside of substance. Meanwhile, the Asy` believe that God has attributes. It is impossible, said al-Ash`ari, that God knows with His substance, because then His substance is knowledge and God Himself is knowledge. Second, The God's Justice, the Mu`tazilites are of the opinion as expressed by `Abd al-Jabbar, that all of God's actions are good, God does not do bad, and does not forget what He must do. On the other hand al-Ash`ari they are not realized by humans themselves, but are created by God. The act of disbelief is bad, but the disbeliever wants the act of disbelief to be good. Three, God's Absolute Power and Will. The Mu`tazilah argued that God's power is actually no longer absolute. God's absolute power is limited by the freedom given to humans in determining their will and actions. On the other side, the Asy'ariyah were unable to reach the depth of monotheism fi'li while the Mu'tazilah were unable to resolve issues of justice in the right way.

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