Islam and Disability: Perspectives in Islamic Theology and Jurisprudence

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Mohammed Ghaly
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to my wife, Karima

to my cute twins, Khadija and Maryam

to my mother, Fawziyya

&

to the memory of my father, Mostafa

with all love and gratitude
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Mohammed Ghaly,
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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 United Nations Organization: Global Interest in People with Disabilities

According to the latest reports of the United Nations Organization, people with disabilities are the world’s largest minority. They are 650 million people representing about 10% of the global population on earth. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), this figure is increasing through population growth, medical advances and the ageing process. In countries with life expectancies over 70 years, individuals spend on average about 8 years, or 11.5% of their life span, living with disabilities. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) stated that 80% of persons with disabilities live in developing countries.1 The UN Special Rapporteur declared in 2000, “In all countries, in all types of living conditions, the consequences of disability interfere in the lives of disabled persons to a degree which is not at all accepted.”2 These facts have been one of the decisive factors that spurred an increasing international interest in improving the conditions of people with disabilities.

As the main body representing countries all over the world, the activities of the United Nations Organization reflect this international interest. On December 20, 1971, the UN General Assembly proclaimed the Declaration on the Rights of the Mentally Retarded Persons calling for national and international action to ensure that this declaration will be used as a common basis and frame of reference for the protection of the rights of those people.3 This was followed by the Declaration on the Rights of the Disabled People proclaimed by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1975.4 After almost one year, precisely on December 16, 1976, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution no. 31/123 by which it proclaimed the year 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons.5 The period 1983-1992 was declared by the UN as the decade of people with disabilities.6 On December 20, 1993, the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 48/96.7 The latest development in this regard was the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted on December 13, 2006 by the United Nations. The Optional Protocol of this convention was opened for signature by all states at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on March 30, 2007.8

This increasing concern for disability-related issues and the rights of people with disabilities has also evoked interest in the position of religion as part of

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3 Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons (1971).
4 Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (1975).
7 Ibid.
people’s cultures vis-a-vis the phenomenon of disability. Many of the UN documents on people with disabilities made reference to this dimension, especially the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities on which the 12th rule was dedicated to religion.\(^9\) In this framework, religious studies on people with disabilities gained an increasing interest. Before delving into Islam in particular, some remarks on religious studies in general are in order.

### 1.2 Religion and Disabilities

There is a multi-dimensional relation between disability and religion. Broadly speaking religion plays an important role in the lives of millions of people worldwide. Eighty percent of the world’s population identify as adherents of one of the major or minor world religious traditions.\(^10\) Like others in societies around the world, people with disabilities have been directly or indirectly influenced by religion throughout history.\(^11\) Both physical and mental healings have been an integral part of religion throughout the history of humanity.\(^12\) Despite such a relation between religion and disability, literature on the impact of religious beliefs or practices on people with disabilities, however, was sparsely distributed across the fields of studies in health, ageing and disability.\(^13\)

Since the publication of Osler’s article in the *British Medical Journal* of 1910,\(^14\) studies of religion and health have continued steadily over the decades.\(^15\) Of all studies in the area of religion and health, there were only few studies on religion, religious activities, prayer and health in the population of persons with disabilities and especially intellectual disability.\(^16\) Since the 1950s, a number of investigators have examined the role of religion in the lives of parents and caregivers of people with disabilities. They have provided consistent evidence that religious orientation plays an important role as a coping strategy in the lives of those people.\(^17\) In her *The Psychology of Disability*, C.L. Vash was one of the few writers who referred to spirituality in

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\(^18\) See Vash, C.L. (1981), pp. 18 & 19. For an investigation of early reviews on religion and mental health in particular, see Hofmann, Hans (1961), esp. pp. 273-329; Schumaker, J.F. (1992), esp. 11-18; Koenig, H.G. (1992), pp. 177-188; Issa, Ihsan al- (2000), esp. pp. 4-6. As for religion and psychology in general the situation is much better. From the turn of the century until the present day pastors, professors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social scientists and others have produced a formidable literature exploring the relationship between religion and psychology, see Stokes,
relation to disability. She noted that specific religious beliefs may or may not be helpful in defining disability positively. For example, a belief that disability was a form of divine punishment did not aid individuals, whereas a belief that disability was a part of God’s purpose (or interpreted in another way to imbue the experience with meaning and purpose) could prove helpful. Another study dealt specifically with people with disabilities and the effect of religion on their health and well-being. In 1999, a Dutch study entitled *Zorg in Kleur* (Care in Colour) handled the issue of people with mental disabilities of Surinamese and Antillean origins living in the Netherlands. The main aim of this study was to give information on the cultural backgrounds of those people counting belief as one of the cultural aspects. Focusing on belief as an important cultural aspect, the third chapter of this study gave an overall simple information on Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Brua and Winti and the standpoint of these beliefs towards mental disability.

Spirituality appeared lately with increasing frequency in the research literature, and a paradigm involving mind-body-spirit interaction is emerging. The relationship of spirituality to disability and illness is at the centre of a growing body of knowledge. However, observers still argue that much work remains to be done in understanding the religious and spiritual dimensions of disability and rehabilitation. Specifically, more research is needed that examines not only the association of religious and spiritual involvement but also the ways people deploy their religion or spirituality to cope with the challenges of disability and rehabilitation. More specific techniques from the religious counselling literature may also prove useful to those unfamiliar with these techniques.

Another form of response to the dire need of more concern to the issue of religion and disability was holding a number of congresses for the promotion of this issue. For instance, a series of conferences entitled, “That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome for People with Disabilities” have been organised by the National Organisation on Disability (NOD) since 1992.

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25 See http://www.sacredplaces.org (accessed July 15, 2007). In the same year, the American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR) drafted the revised definition of mental retardation which was the first termination and classification system in developmental disabilities to include the importance of spiritual supports. See Gaventa, William C. (2001), pp. 29 & 30-32.
conferences brought together people of every faith to identify and remove physical and spiritual barriers, and to promote dialogue between people with disabilities and religious leaders. In May 1995, a conference entitled, “The Role of Spirituality and Religiousness in Rehabilitation and the Lives of Persons with Disabilities” was conducted in Bethesda, Maryland, United States. This meeting brought together academic researchers from a diverse range of disciplines together with clergy and people with disabilities who were researchers, clergy or advocates. The goals of the meeting were to review the work in the field, provide an opportunity for dialogue among a variety of disciplines, attain a greater conceptual clarity of the different dimensions involved and develop a research agenda. The conference came up with a number of recommendations among which were the encouragement of collaboration among persons from a variety of faiths and cultural groups and also the adoption of a vigorous approach to accessing a broad range of literature relevant to the spirituality and religiousness of people with disabilities. Such reviews should examine the content, implicit methodological assumptions and limitations to knowledge contained in this literature. In the same trend, the International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disabilities (IASSID) held a conference in 2000 whose theme was “From Theory to Practice” focusing on the importance of spirituality and religion in supports and services for people with intellectual disabilities. The aim was to have a series of international voices that could represent practitioners and researchers from major faith traditions and different parts of the world. Papers presented in this conference were published by Journal of Religion, Disability & Health (JRDH), vol. 5, no. 2/3 and simultaneously in a separate book.

Noteworthy in this regard is that a number of modern studies focused on studying people with disabilities within the perspective of one specific religion. Concerning Judaism for instance, Tzvi Marx submitted his doctoral thesis in 1993 to Utrecht University, the Netherlands on Halakha & Handicap: Jewish Law and Ethics on Disability. A reedited and abridged form of this thesis was published in 2002 under the title Disability in Jewish Law. In 1998, Judith Z.

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28 Ibid.
29 Ibid, pp. 256 & 257.
33 He is the director of the Israel-Diaspora Center of Education at the Shalom Hartman Institute of Jerusalem and coordinator of its center for religious pluralism. For more information on his curriculum vitae, see Marx, Tzvi C. (1992-3), p. 945.
Abrams brought out her *Judaism and Disability: Portrayals in Ancient Texts from the Tanach through the Bavli.* Christianity witnessed also a number of crucial studies studying the status of people with disabilities within Christian perspectives. In 1990 Simon Timothy Horne submitted his doctoral thesis to the University of Birmingham on *Injury and Blessing: A Challenge to Current Readings of Biblical Discourse concerning Impairment.* One of the important writers in this field was Nancy Eiesland, an associate professor of sociology of religion, Candler School of Theology, who also spoke out of her own experience with a congenital disability. In 1994, she published *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability.* Four years later, the same author co-edited *Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Religious Practice.* Lately in 2002, Jennie Weiss Block, the non-disabled person who has been an active advocate for two decades in the disability rights movement, published her normative study *The Copious Hosting: A Theology of Access for People with Disabilities.*

### 1.3 Islam

As member states of the UN, Islamic countries were involved in many of the activities promoting interest in people with disabilities such as the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities endorsed by the UN in 1993 and the Convention on the Rights of People

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9. She is the founder and director of *Maqom,* a School for Adult Talmud Study, 1995-present. For more information on her curriculum vitae, see http://www.maqom.com/cv.pdf

37. The author produced other publications some of which are somehow related to this topic, see for instance, Abrams, Judith (1990); Abrams, Judith & David L. Freeman (1999); Abrams, Judith (2003). For a complete list of all Abram's published books and articles, see http://www.cu.edu/ColemanInstitute/archives/webfile_year_1996_Present.pdf


39. Horne, Simon Timothy (1999). I hereby submit my thanks to Tzvi Marx for drawing my attention to this source.


41. See Eiesland, Nancy & Don E. Saliers (eds.) (1998). In the same year, Eiesland published also an article on disabled women in particular. See Eiesland, Nancy (1998).

42. See Richards, Penny (2003), http://www.theouterside.org/resources/disabilities/

43. See Block, Jennie Weiss (2002).

with Disabilities adopted by the UN in 2006. Islamic countries’ interest in this front-page issue was also crystallized in a big number of conferences some of which were organized in cooperation with UN or WHO. For instance, the year 1981 witnessed the Kuwait Regional Conference on the Disabled held in April and issued the Arab Declaration on Work with the Disabled.

Some of these conferences focused on the importance of studying the viewpoint of Islam concerning disability-related issues. For instance, during the period September 29–October 2, 1997, the tenth Juristic Medical Symposium entitled Al-Mushāwarat al-buldāniyya ḥawli tashrīʿūt al-sihha al-nafsiyya bimā ti dhālik al-shariʿa al-islāmiyya (Regional Conference on Legislations of Psychological Health in Different Religious Codes of Law including the Islamic Law) was held in Kuwait. This symposium was organised by the Islamic Organisation for Medical Sciences in cooperation with the World Health Organisation, East Mediterranean Regional Office (WHO, EMRO). Eleven papers submitted to this symposium tackled the topic of disability from an Islamic perspective. A parallel conference was held during the period October 23–26, 2000 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The conference was organised by the Disabled Children’s Association and Prince Salman Center for Disability Research. In this conference, more than 200 papers were submitted. The conference adopted important resolutions among which was the encouragement of research on perspectives within Islam on people with disabilities. The last example to mention in this respect is the international conference entitled “Rehabilitation of the Disabled and Care for the Elderly in the Islamic World: Strategies for the 21st Century.” This conference was held by the Islamic World Council on Disability and Rehabilitation during the period

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45 The list of signatories included a number of Islamic countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Turkey, Morocco, Sudan and Yemen. For a full list of the signatory states and regional integration organizations, see http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/conventionsign.htm (accessed on May 13, 2005).


47 See ʿAwādi, ṬʿAbd al-Rahmān ṬʿAbd Allāh al- & ṬʿAbd Rajaʾi al-Junī (eds.) (1422-2001), vol. 1, pp. 345-372, 395-443, vol. 2, pp. 481-517, 523-538, 601-636, 725-735, 734-775 & 777-833. I hereby submit my due thanks to Dr. Ahmad al-Junid, the general secretary assistant of the Islamic Organisation for Medical Sciences for providing him with a copy of this publication because it was not available for the public.

February 10-12, 2001 in Khartoum, Republic of Sudan. Among the topics of this conference were the rights of disabled persons from the viewpoint of the Islamic Sharia such as medical treatment, rehabilitation, work, training, exemption from tax and custom duty payment, equality, participation, social integration and equal opportunities.

Undoubtedly all these activities participated in evoking considerable interest among modern scholars of Islam as well. More than one scholar expressed his call to promote research studying the status of people with disabilities in Islam such as the two Saudi scholars ʿAbd Allāh b. Jibrīn (b. 1352/1933) and ʿAbd al-Mūhsin b. Nāṣir Āl ʿĀbīkān (the head of the advisory body for legal aspects which participated in drafting the legal code of disability in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia). This holds true to the extent that some scholars called for developing a special branch of Islamic jurisprudence focusing exclusively on people with disabilities under the title *Fiqh al-ʾiṣlaṣa wa al-muʿawqātā “fiqh of disability and people with disabilities”*. This term – as far as I am aware – was coined first by the Shiʿite scholar Muḥammad Shams al-Ḥiḍayatī in a paper presented to the tenth Juristic Medical Symposium held by the Islamic Organisation for Medical Sciences (IOMS) and World Health Organisation (WHO) in 1997, Kuwait. This call was met with approval for instance by the well-known scholar, Ṭūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī.

1.3.1 Modern Studies on the Position of People with Disabilities in the Islamic Normative Sources

The online-published bibliography by the British researcher M. Miles might be the sole instrument, so far, which lists modern studies relevant to the thematic field of “Islam and disability”. The version published on July 24, 2002, entitled *Disability in the Middle East*, listed 1060 items covering the historical period between Antiquity and 2002. An updated version will appear under the title *Islam, Disability & Deafness: A Modern and Historical Bibliography, with some Annotation*. In this new version, Miles reduced the items to about 140 in total, adding a number of the new studies that appeared after 2002. The majority of the studies included in the bibliography were sociological, anthropological or historical in nature.

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54 The bibliography was available at http://www.socsci.kun.nl/whp/histeduc/mmiles/mesab1.html; http://cirri.euffalo.edu/bibliography/MFast3toc.html. However, none of these links is active anymore.
55 I hereby submit my thanks to M. Miles who provided me with this new version he finished on April 10, 2007.
Below, I will review thirteen studies whose writers can be considered as my forerunners in this field. I restricted myself to the books that I could access and which provided information relevant to either Islamic theology or Islamic law. Four of these studies have been cited in the new version of the aforementioned bibliography. With the exception of the earliest study, conducted in 1965, all studies mentioned below were written after 1981, the International Year of the Disabled as declared by the UN. Apparently, the concern given by the UN to the subject also stirred considerable interest in the Islamic milieus. Some of the authors wrote specifically that the UN activities in this regard drew their attention to write about disability in Islam.

The main characteristic of all studies mentioned below is the piecemeal approach which focuses on a specific aspect of Islam or on a specific disability.

The late Egyptian scholar Ahmad al-Sharabashi (1918-1980) chose to write on blind people only in his *Fi 'ilm al-makfufun* (Inside the World of the Blind). The book consisted of two volumes, the first of which was published in 1375/1956 whereas the second is undated; it is however clear from the introduction of the second volume that it was not simultaneously published with the first volume.

As for sources, al-Sharabashi complained that he did not have forerunners in this field, a fact that made his task more difficult. However, it is clear that one of the main sources of al-Sharabashi was *Nakt al-himyan fī nukat al-'umyār*.

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57 For a general idea about modern literary, linguistic or historical works written on people with disability in the Islamic culture, see Ghaly, Mohammed M.I. (2005-2006), pp. 21 & 22.

58 They are Dols, Michael W. (1992); 'Abd Allāh, Laylā Muhammad (1418/1997); Shāyī', 'Abd al-lāh b. 'Uthmān b. 'Abd Allāh (1418/1997); Shāyī', 'Abd al-lāh b. 'Abd Allāh (1419/1998); Rispler-Chaim, Vardit (2007). It is to be noted that two sources were mentioned in the old version but disappeared in the new one, namely Sharabāsi, Ahmad al- (1375/1956) & Matrodi 'Abdulrahman Sulayman al- (1991).


60 On him, see http://www.islomonline.net/Arabic/history/1422/12/article19.shtml (accessed August 14, 2007).

61 Sharabāsi, Ahmad al- (1375/1956).


63 *Himyan* is an arabised word denoting the purse tied on one’s waist where money and precious things are preserved in and *nakr* denotes drawing out or extracting. See Rāzī, Muhammad b. Abī Bakr b. 'Abd al-Qādir al- (1415/1995), vol. 1, p. 291; Ibn Manẓūr, Muhammad b. Makram (1), vol. 15, p. 364. Thus Nakt al-himyan is drawing out this precious stuff kept in the purse. It is clear that al-Ṣafadī realized the novelty of his study’s topic.
(Extracting the Precious of the Anecdotes of the Blind)\textsuperscript{64} written by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafādī (d. 764/1363).\textsuperscript{65}

Information recorded in this book is mainly historical, literary or linguistic in nature. Meager information with relevance to Islamic theology was noted in passing when the author raised, in the first volume, the question, why God created blindness although it is bad and disliked? Although most of these answers were medical in nature, some answers were loaded by theological interpretations. Additionally, the writer wrote a chapter in the second volume where he tried to collect the juristic rulings with relevance to the blind from fiqh manuals. It is clear that the author was not aware of earlier attempts in this respect made by early jurists such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and others (see below 1.4.2 Islamic Jurisprudence).

Sharabāšī’s attempt of collecting juristic rulings on blind people was further developed and detailed by the Jordanian researcher, Muṣṭafā ʿAlīmad al-Quḍāṭ in his \textit{Ahkām al-muʿwaqīn fī al-shariʿa al-islāmiyya: ahkām al-ʿumyān} (The Rulings of the Disabled in the Islamic Shariʿa: The Rulings of the Blind). This is an unpublished M.A. thesis submitted to Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ḥasaniyya in Morocco in 1406/1985.\textsuperscript{66} Similar to his forerunner al-Sharabāšī, al-Quḍāṭ complained the rarity of available sources on this topic. He made reference to al-Sharabāšī’s \textit{Fi ālam al-makṭūṭin} and his main source \textit{Nakt al-hīmyān} by al-Ṣafādī. Al-Quḍāṭ traced the rulings with pertinence to blind people dispersed in different chapters in the fiqh manuals and put them together in one study.

In line with al-Sharabāšī and al-Quḍāṭ, the Egyptian researcher, Laylā ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh wrote on people with dumbness in Islamic jurisprudence. Her study \textit{Ahkām al-akhras fī al-fiqh al-islāmi} (Rulings on the Dumb in Islamic Jurisprudence) was originally an M.A. thesis submitted to al-Azhar University in Cāīro in 1996 and was published in the form of a book in 1997.\textsuperscript{67} Following the same pattern as al-Quḍāṭ in his M.A. thesis, the writer here also divided the rulings with relevance to dumbness into those falling under the category of devotional practices (ibādāt), social dealings (muʿāmalāt), personal affairs (ahwāl shaksiyya) and penal laws (jināyāt).

The last author who focused on a specific type of disabilities is Michael W. Dols in his study \textit{Majnūn: Madman in Medieval Islamic Society} which was posthumously published in 1992 under the redaction of Diane E. Immisch.\textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{64} Two edited versions of this book appeared, the first was in February 1911 at the request of Khedive ʿAbbās Hilmi II to be distributed in the Fourth International Conference for bettering the conditions of the blind, see Ṣafādī, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak al- (1329/1911) and for the other version, see Ṣafādī, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak al- (1397). Dr. Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Razzāq (Lecturer of Arabic literature in al-Imam Muḥammad b. Suʿūd University, Saudi Arabia) found that biographies given by Ṣafādī were not comprehensive. So, he decided to make a supplement in which he added those that were supposed to be recorded in al-Ṣafādī’s \textit{Nakt al-hīmyān} and \textit{al-Shuʿūr bī al-ʿUr}, see Ḥusayn, ʿAbd al-Razzāq (1420/1999), pp. 19 & 28.

\textsuperscript{65} On him, see Rosenthal, F. (2003), vol. VIII, pp. 758-760.

\textsuperscript{66} Quḍāṭ, Muṣṭafā al- (1406/1985).

\textsuperscript{67} ʿAbd Allāh, Laylā Muḥammad (1418/1997).

\textsuperscript{68} Dols, Michael W. (1992).
This work is an extended essay in social history. As indicated from the title, the book is exclusively concerned with people with madness (junūn). This massive study was based on a great number of sources reaching up to 784. This great number comprised sources in wide range of aspects such as medicine, belles-letters, chronicles, biographical dictionaries, geographers’ and travellers’ accounts and Islamic Law.

This study consists of three main sections. The first section “Healing, Natural and Supernatural: Medicine, Religion and Magic” examines the medical context and its relation to the development of the Islamic sciences and institutions and the practice of religious healing in Islam. The second section, “Perception: Profane and Sacred” studied three main varieties of junūn known to medieval Islamic society, viz., the Romantic Fool, Wise Fool and Holy fool. The third section, “Unreason: Privilege and Deprivation” investigated junūn as a condition which affected the takli‘ (legal liability) of the person afflicted with. The main benefit of the book for my dissertation was the discussions on religious healing in Islam when the author spoke about Prophetic medicine.

The main study which reviewed the juristic rulings with relevance to people with disabilities as recorded in early fiqh manuals was Ḥuqūq al-muʾawwaqīn fī al-ṭiḥq al-islāmī (Rulings of the Disabled in Islamic Jurisprudence) by the Jordanian researcher Sarī Zayd al-Kilānī. This is an unpublished dissertation submitted to al-Azhar University in Cairo but the date of which has remained unknown to me.69 Al-Kilānī’s approach is almost the same as that adopted in the two M.A. theses written by Laylā ʿAbd Allāh and al-Quḍāt. He restricted himself to collecting the rulings with pertinence to people with disabilities available in the fiqh manuals. He also arranged the different topics in his dissertation exactly as adopted in these early manuals. However, unlike Laylā and al-Quḍāt, al-Kilānī did not restrict himself to a specific sort of disability.

Recently, Vardit Rispler-Čaim (Haifa University) studied the position of people with disabilities in Islamic law in her Disability in Islamic Law. This work was published in 2007 and I could get a copy of it when I was in the finishing stage of writing my dissertation. Because of its importance and direct relevance to that part of my dissertation which focuses on Islamic jurisprudence, I did my best to incorporate it into the final version of my work. It is to be noted in this respect that the author made use of a study entitled Ḥuqūq al-muʾawwaqīn fī al-sharʿa al-islāmiyya (The Rights of the Disabled in Islamic Sharīʿa) by Mūṣā al-Bāṣit. According to Rispler-Čaim, the book was published in Palestine in 2000. She made an English summary of it at the end of her study. I did my best to get a copy of this book but in vain. However, scanning the summary presented by Rispler-Čaim, one gets the impression that the content is very similar to the other modern Arabic studies mentioned above.

Although the book really forms an addition for the non-Arabic speaking reader, it would have saved the author much time if she had known about the

69 Kilānī, Sarī Zayd al- (1).
other Arabic studies which also collected the juristic rulings with relevance to people with disabilities such as those of al-Quḍāt, Laylā ʿAbd Allāh and especially Sārī al-Kīlānī. In this respect, her book could be seen as a summary and translation of studies conducted by al-Quḍāt, Laylā ʿAbd Allāh and Sārī al-Kīlānī. However, the book also adds many new elements for which the author deserves our appreciation. For instance, the writer was clearly aware that she was writing for Western readers and thus tried and, to my mind, succeeded most of the time in transcending the time-gap between the early fiqh manuals and the modern time. One of the informative parts of the book was the appendix where the author included complete translations of a number of important fatwas with direct relevance to people with disabilities, concluded by an overall presentation of Mūsā al-Bāṣīṭ’s book.

Other studies focused on a specific aspect of Islamic literature. The main example in this regard is the work of the Saudi writer ʿAbd al-Ḥāfīẓ b. Ṣūḥābān al-Shāyī. He wrote a three-book series entitled Ārāʾ al-ʿulāmāʾ al-muslimīn ḥawl al-ʿaqīḍa (Views of Muslim Scholars on Disability), which first appeared in 1996. In this series, al-Shāyī wrote three books where he reviewed the viewpoints of one scholar in each book. The three scholars all belong to the Ḥanbali School. He started by Ibn al-Qayyim (published in 1416/1996), then Ibn Taymiyya (published in 1420/1999) and finally Ibn Qudāma (published in 1420/2000).

The author based himself on sources written by these scholars and available in printed form. The book on Ibn al-Qayyim was based on eighteen works written by him, the book on Ibn Taymiyya on ten of his works and finally that on Ibn Qudāma on his juristic encyclopedia, Al-Mughni (The Sufficient). The author’s methodology was the same in the three books. He started each book with a biographical sketch about the scholar in focus followed by selected passages from the printed books of the concerned scholar deemed by him, without clarifying a specific criterion for selection, as relevant to the issues of disability.

A further publication by al-Shāyī is his Al-Luʾluʾ al-thamīn min fatwāwā al-muʾawwāqīn (The Precious Pearls of the Fatwas on the Disabled) where he focuses completely on fatwas. This book consists of two volumes; the first was published in 1418/1997, the second in 1419/2000. The two volumes were dedicated to fatwas issued by Saudi Scholars with relevance to people with disabilities. Some of the fatwas were responses to questions posed by the author himself to the Saudi Scholar ʿAbd Allāh b. Jibrīn whereas the majority of fatwas were already available in other fatwa collections and the author brought them together.

Two studies focused on the social position of people with disabilities. The Syrian scholar Sāʾdī Abū Jayb (b.1932) wrote Al-Muʾawwaq wa al-mujtamaʾ fi
al-shari’a al-islamiyya (The Disabled and Society in the Islamic Shari’a). This small-size book (78 pages), published in 1402/1982, was originally a paper submitted to a symposium on providing care for people with disabilities held in Damascus during the period April 19-22, 1982. One of the main ideas recurrently elaborated throughout the book was the difference between ostensible (zahir) disability and real (haqiqiya) disability. According to the author, ostensible disability is what afflicts body whereas real disability is what befalls the soul and thus drives the person away from God, the Creator. In the religion of Islam, the author added, it is the real rather than the ostensible disability which injures one’s status and dignity. In the same vein, the Saudi researcher, Abdulrahman Sulayman al-Matrodi wrote The Disadvantaged in Islamic Society. This study is an unpublished PhD thesis presented to the University of Glasgow in 1991. The author made use of the already quoted work by Sadi Abi Jayb. This study, as stated by the writer, is a detailed presentation rather than a critical examination of the Islamic approach to the solution of the problem of poverty as a concomitant result of disability. Adopting a very flexible and broad interpretation for the term “disability”, the researcher divided disabilities into four main categories, viz., physical, mental, social and multi disability. Under the third category, the writer spoke about orphans, widows and divorcees. To the author, those different categories share a common form of social disability. As indicated from the title, all these categories of the disabled are living with troubles. They are, as termed by the author, the “disadvantaged” in society.

Three studies investigated the rights of people with disabilities. Focusing on the financial rights in particular, Mohammed M. Ghaly wrote The Financial Rights of People with Disabilities: The Perspectives of the Islamic Shari’a and the Case of Muslims in the Netherlands, his unpublished M.A. thesis submitted to Leiden University in 2002. This thesis was the starting point of the current dissertation. The first part of it reviewed the main financial rights of the disabled in the juristic sources of Islam. These rights were classified on the basis of the social setting in which a person with disability may live in, namely, family, society and finally state. The second part of the thesis examined the reality of Muslims with disabilities and their families living in the Netherlands focusing on the financial services provided by the Dutch government on one hand and the other on the religious side represented by Islam as understood and practised by disabled Muslims and their families living in the Netherlands.

The other two studies broadened the scope of the rights of people with disabilities according to the Shari’a. The Moroccan scholar Mufta’ Ibn Hamza wrote Huqooq al-mu’awwaqin fi al-islam (The Rights of the Disabled in Islam), published in Morocco, 1414/1993. Although the book was small in size (64 pages in total), it had a solid scientific content. This book was the first to come

72 Abi Jayb, Sadi (1402/1982).
75 Ibn Hamza, Mufta’ (1414/1993).
across in the beginning of my research and that I benefited a lot from the eruditeness of the author and the divisions he made in it. In this study, the author divided the rights into financial and non-financial and divided disabilities into mental and physical ones.

As for people with mental disabilities, the main rights mentioned by the author were equality to others, integration in the community, education and rehabilitation, familial stability and the protection of their properties. The writer concluded this point by speaking about people with mental disabilities in the Islamic community especially at the time of the Prophet of Islam in order to show to what extent these rights were applied in social life. Concerning the rights of people with physical disabilities, the author mentioned the right of moral esteem or social honour, facilitating their daily activities, guiding and improving their capabilities and the social care in which zakāh is to play a substantial financial role. To conclude this point, the author gave practical examples to show the status of people with disabilities in early Islamic society.

The Jordanian researcher, Muṣṭaфа al-Quḍāt broadened the topic a bit more by conducting a comparative study between Islamic law and positive laws. This was in his Ḥuqūq al-muʿāwaqīn bayn al-sharʿā al-islāmīyya wa al-qānūn (Rights of the Disabled between Islamic Sharīʿa and Law). This is a PhD dissertation, a further development of his M.A. thesis on blind people, submitted to Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ḥasaniyya in Morocco in 1992. The dissertation was published in Jordan in 2002. The researcher divided his dissertation into two main parts. The first part reviewed the main rights of people with disabilities, while the second part discussed the means of realising and guaranteeing these rights. He divided the rights into basic rights on the one hand and civil, political and social rights on the other. Basic rights included the right to live, right of having a name and lineage, the right of secrecy concerning correspondence and private affairs, the right to learn and finally the right to work. Under the category of civil rights, the researcher discussed issues like marriage, inheritance and ownership. Political rights included discussions on nationality and homeland. The social rights comprised health care, transportation, sportive games and means of entertainment.

Critical Assessment
Unaware of the above-mentioned studies, Sara Scalenghe (PhD, Georgetown University) recently wrote “The study of disability in the medieval Islamic world is still in its infancy.” I believe the abovementioned thirteen studies would make us speak about childhood rather than infancy in this field. At any rate, these studies can be all described as pioneering studies and every author

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77 Quḍāt, Muṣṭaфа al- (2002). Being able to get an access to the dissertation rather than the published book, all references below and throughout this study are based on the unpublished version.
78 Among the aforementioned studies, Scalenghe was aware of just one, Dols, Michael W. (1992).
was aware of this fact. Yet, most of the authors were not aware of their forerunners. I hope this study would make them know each other. A number of critical remarks on these studies are due.

The authors tried to gather the scattered information in early sources and collect them in one study. However, it seems that they thought this was possible only in Islamic jurisprudence rather than Islamic theology. Theological discussions on disabilities occupied, if they were ever mentioned, a very marginal position only. Thus discussions on Islamic theology in my dissertation here is a new addition in this field.

As for Islamic jurisprudence, these studies were satisfied with consulting early fiqh manuals to pick out the rulings with relevance to people with different disabilities such as the blind, the lame, the deaf, etc. Doing so, some of the crucial issues for people with disabilities in the modern time were not handled because they were not discussed in a specific chapter in the fiqh manuals. We give here just a few examples.

Speaking about the dignity of people with disabilities, modern studies depended mainly on general remarks stressing the dignity accorded to every human being in Islam or just stating that the juristic rulings with pertinence to people with disabilities indicate that their dignity was guaranteed. To my mind this is half of the story. Main juristic discussions on the dignity of people with disabilities took place outside the fiqh manuals. Physiognomic sources, biographical studies on Muslim jurists and Ibn Fahd’s *Al-Nukat al-zirāf* add credit to this fact. A topic such as medical treatment of people with disabilities was also not seriously handled by any of the above-mentioned studies. That is because medical treatment was handled by early jurists as part of broad chapters such as *janā’iz* (death-rituals). As a pre-death ritual, jurists spoke about sickness and its relevant juristic rulings. Additionally, questions like how people with disabilities would earn their livelihood were hardly the focus of detailed discussions in the modern studies.

### 1.4 Research Question, Methodological Approach and Focus

In this study, special concern is given to the frequently expressed calls of conducting studies elaborating on the status of people with disabilities in Islam and simultaneously to the gaps of the previous studies we have already discussed. Bearing in mind that none of the main Islamic sources consulted in this study formulated a comprehensive survey of the status of people with disabilities in Islam, it would have been anachronistic to approach these sources with the intention of finding such a pronouncement. The attempt here is rather to piece together the disparate and sporadic information on disability in these sources and to mould them into a coherent and systematic form. In this sense, the approach adopted in this study can be characterised as “systematic and constructive”. Another characteristic of the approach in this study is its closeness to the human-rights tendency which is prevalent at present in global discussions and studies on disabilities. The main stream of UN documents on people with disabilities is continuously stressing the rights of this group of
people. The same holds true for a large number of modern studies which handled the status of people with disabilities within an Islamic perspective. The reader searching for the rights of people with disabilities such as medical treatment, employment, financial care, marital life, etc. will easily find suitable information in this study.

Islamic sources present Islam as a religion composed of a number of rules that its adherents are asked to abide by. These rules are divided into those related to beliefs (‘iʿtādīyya) or to practical actions (ʿamaliyya). The former were the subject of Islamic Theology (ʿaqīda) whereas the latter were the subject of Islamic Jurisprudence (fiqh). Thus portraying an over-all view of persons with disabilities in Islam necessitates studying the relevant discussions in these two Islamic sciences. In this sense, surveying the broad spectrum of perspectives and discussions on people with disabilities evinced in these two main Islamic sciences, viz., Islamic Theology and Islamic Jurisprudence will be the main focus of this study. Based on what has been stated here, the main question in this dissertation is: what is the status of people with disabilities in Islam as viewed by Islamic Theology and Islamic Jurisprudence?

This multi-faceted question is handled throughout the eight chapters which compose this dissertation. Besides this introductroy chapter which gives overall remarks, the other seven chapters examine the status of people with disabilities in Islamic Theology and Islamic Jurisprudence. Chapters Two and Three are dedicated to the discussions with relevance to Muslim beliefs. Chapters Four till Eight investigate the status of people with disabilities as revealed in the detailed practical rulings (al-alkām al-ʿamaliyya) reflecting some of the rights of people with disabilities. Before delving into further details, the concepts of these two sciences and the main focus in each of them in this study are to be elaborated.

1.4.1 Islamic Theology

“Theology” is originally a Greek word composed of theos (God) and logos (discourse). This western term was used to denote the science of studying the religious beliefs. The Islamic science studying these beliefs had more than one name, the most famous of which was ʿilm al-kalām. However, there are other names for this science such as al-fiqh al-akbar, ʿilm usūl al-dīn, ʿilm al-

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The subject matter of this science was the religious beliefs (اَقاَئِد) of Muslims. This science was concerned with firmly establishing these beliefs by adducing proofs and banishing doubts. The main themes of this science were in the first place the ābāhīyāt or nazarīyyāt (speculative theology) discussing mainly, on philosophical grounds, the existence of God, the Creation and the necessity of the Prophethood. The second part was the samʿīyyāt (traditional theology) containing a systematic elaboration of the doctrine based on the data of the revelation. The nubuwārat (matters pertaining to Prophethood) were usually classified under the category of samʿīyyāt but, according to some authors, represented a distinct category constituting a link between ābāhīyāt or nazarīyyāt and samʿīyyāt.

Discussions on disability-related issues are to be located in the first theme, i.e., the ābāhīyāt because it dealt with (a) the existence of God (wujūd Allāh) and His attributes and (b) the actions of God (aʿlāhī tāʿād). One of the main topics of ābāhīyāt in which these two items were discussed was al-qadāʾ wa al-qadar (Fate and Predestination). Al-Qadāʾ wa al-qadar in Islamic Theology focused on two main points. The main concern was given to the issue of man’s freedom to act and God’s Predestination. This point falls beyond the focus of this study. The second point was the adversities, afflictions and

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93 “Al-Qadāʾ wa al-qadār” when combined into one expression these two words have the overall meaning of the Decree of God, both the eternal Decree (the most frequent meaning of qadāʾ) and the Decree given existence in time (The most frequent meaning of qadār). For further details over the meanings and definitions of al-qadāʾ and al-qadar, see Mudḥārī, Ḥāḏīm b. Muṣṭafā al-Ḥalābī al- (1358/1939) pp. 32-55. In this book, al-Mudḥārī gave sixteen definitions for the term al-qadāʾ wa al-qadar. See also Nuzāwī, Abū Zakariyyā Yahyā b. Sharaf al- (1392 A.H.), Vol. I, pp. 154 & 155; ʿAsqālānī, Ahmad b. ʿAllāh b. Ḥajar al- (1379/1959), vol. 11, p. 509; Būṭī, Mohammed Saʿd al-Raḏmānī, al- (2001), pp. 37, 38, 371, 372, 221, 223; Gardet, L. (2003), vol. IV, pp. 365-367.
94 This point was one of the very knotty issues that busied the minds of theologians from the
misfortunes befalling creatures as an essential part of God’s predetermined course of events and this point was the focus of this study. It is noteworthy to state that Muslim theologians did not speak about disabilities as a distinct topic. One can hardly find any chapter speaking about people with disabilities in particular. Abū al-Ḥasan Al-Asḥārī’s (d. 324/935-6) chapter entitled Ṣaṣāla fī ilām al-ḍafūl “Question Concerning the Torture of the Infants” in his book Al-Ibāna (Illumination) could be an exception in this regard. In this chapter, Al-Asḥārī spoke about children who get afflicted with leprosy which cuts off their hands and their feet. Disabilities were usually included in discussions on broader terms like musība (affliction or calamity), sayyi’at (misfortune or evil), sharr (evil) and the like. These are Qur’anic terms whose interpretation by the Companions of the Prophet (ṣaḥāba), their Successors (tābi’ūn) and scholars of Qur’anic exegesis (tafsīr) show that different sorts of disabilities were included in their purport.

One of the key-terms which permeated the theological discussions in Islamic sources on disability was ta’līl whose most used English equivalent is “theodicy”. For a better understanding of theological discussions to follow, a note on this Arabic term and its English equivalent is in order.

The term “ta’līl” denoted literally causation or search for the causes and referred to the logical relationship between cause and effect. This term was used by Muslim jurists and theologians in two different contexts. In the juridical usage, ta’līl and its derivative ʿila (effective cause), did not exactly refer to a casual relationship between two phenomena. It meant rather the ratio of the law, its value and its purpose. Besides Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) who discussed the issue of ta’līl extensively in his book Shiḥāz al-ghalīl

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96 For the derivations and meaning of this term, see Fāyūmī, Ahmad b. Muhammad b. ʿAlī al- (1), pp. 349 & 350.
97 For the derivations and meaning of this term, see Ibid, p. 298.
98 For the derivations and meaning of this term, see Ibid, p. 309.
100 See Kamali, Muhammad Hashim (2003), pp. 46-51, see also pp. 27, 280, 299 & 332.
101 For further information on this usage of ta’līl see Hasan, Ahmad (1974), pp. 95-127; Kamali, Muhammad Hashim (2003), pp. 46-51, see also pp. 27, 280, 299 & 332.
(Quenching the Thirst), more than one Muslim jurist composed books bearing the title ta’lil dedicated to investigating the values and purposes of the law.

The theological usage of ta’lil was more concerned with God’s actions. In other words, ta’lil in this sense indicated the quest for the divine wise purposes (hikam) for God’s actions. The purport of ta’lil was not restricted to evolving arguments to clarify or justify pain, suffering, evil and the like. Ta’lil was a generic term indicating that God’s actions can be rationalized whether these actions were deemed good or bad from the human perspective. Ending up in Paradise or Hell in the Hereafter and the question whether this was dependent on one’s good deeds or bad deeds in this life or on God’s foreordained judgment, all such issues were discussed within the broad spectrum of ta’lil.

Considering the main focus of this study, our discussions will be restricted to those bids of developing rational arguments in order to clarify or justify the existence of disabilities and other forms of suffering. This restricted sense of ta’lil is close to the term “theodicy” coined by Gottfried Leibniz (d. 1716) from the Greek theos (God) and diké (justice).

To recapitulate, disability as viewed in Islamic theology is a very under-researched topic if not a completely unstudied subject. This is in spite of the fact that among the voices calling for studying the status of people with disabilities in Islam, clear calls expressed the importance of focusing on Islamic theology in this respect. To my mind, relevant discussions available in theological sources of Islam fall also within the human-rights approach. To a believing person afflicted with disabilities, answering the ontological and theological questions about the existence of disability in life and how to deal with it according to the norms of his religion is by no means less important or less urgent than answering his financial and medical needs.

1.4.2 Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh)

Fiqh is linguistically “understanding, knowledge, intelligence”, and thus applied to any branch of knowledge (as in fiqh al-lughah, the science of lexicography). In the technical sense it is the knowledge of the practical religious rulings from their detailed proofs. “Jurisprudence” is the most common English equivalent for the Arabic term fiqh. However, “Jurisprudence” does not convey the full meaning of “fiqh”. For instance, fiqh handles all issues in life whether

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102 Just to mention some of these scholars, we refer to Ibn al-‘Izz from the Hanafi school, see Zāda, ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Muhammad Shaykh (1), vol., 1, p. 245, ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mājīshūn from the Mālikī school, Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī from the same school, see Ḥāṭib, Abū ʿAbd Allāh al- (1412/1992), vol. 6, p. 93 and a third Mālikī jurist, Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Māzīrī, see Zayn al-Dīn, ‘Abd al-Rahīm b. al-Husayn al-‘Iraiqī (1), vol. 8, p. 100.
those between the humans on one hand and God on the other (ʿibādat) or those between humans only (muʿāmalāt). However, “Jurisprudence” is restricted to the inter-human issues and has nothing to do with what happens between man and God. The subject matter of this science was the practical rulings derived from the detailed proofs of the Sharīʿa, such as the Qurʾanic verses and the Prophetic traditions. These rulings were always discussed by the Muslim jurists under two main headings, i.e., ʿibādat (the liturgical and religious observances) and muʿāmalāt (social dealings) which included more or less the rest. A number of jurists added the heading of ʿuqūbat (punishments) or munakahāt (marriage affairs). Rulings pertaining to people with disabilities were disseminated throughout these chapters. In this regard, the exceptional phenomenon of allotting a specific chapter to people with disabilities in juristic sources is in order.

Speaking about allotting an independent chapter to the juristic rulings of the hermaphrodite, Vardit Rispler-Chaim said, “… the blind and the lame, the deaf and the dumb, whose disabilities are detected in higher percentages in both infants and adults, and are evident, have never been allotted separate chapters and are only sporadically discussed in the fiqh.” This statement should not be taken without reservation especially concerning the blind. For instance, the contemporary Kuwaiti scholar ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh said that the Shāfīʿi jurist, Abū Yāḥyā Zakariyya al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1520) was the first to write a chapter entitled Bāb aḥkām al-aʿmā (A Chapter on the Rulings of the Blind) in his book Tahrīr tānqīḥ al-lubāb. Moreover, al-Anṣārī was not the first in this respect but just following a tradition done by earlier Shāfīʿi jurists such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) in his book al-Rawnaq (glamour), al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), in Al-Majmūʿ sharḥ al-muḥadhdhīb, and al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) in Al-ʿAshbāḥ wa al-naẓāʾir (The Similaris and Parallels).

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112 This has been stated by those who quoted from him such as al-Suyūṭī, see Suyūṭī, Jālāl al-Dīn al- (1403/1983), pp. 251. However, I could not trace this book whether in a manuscript or in an edited form.
113 Nawawī, Yāḥyā b. Sharaf al- (1), vol. 9, p. 368. Al-Majmūʿ lit. is the collected or the grand-total, sharḥ means explanation and Al-Muḥadhdhīb is a title of the book which literally means the refined. Thus the title can be translated as The Collected in Explaining the Refined.
same tradition can also be traced among Hanafi jurists such as Ibn Nujaym (d. 970/1563) in *Al-Ashbāh wa al-naza’ir* (The Similars and Parallels) and the commentary on this book by Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Ḥamawi (d. 1068/1657) in *Ghamz ‘uyūn al-baṣā’ir fī sharḥ al-ashbāh wa al-naza’ir* (Winking the Fountains of Insights in Explaining the Similars and Parallels).\(^{115}\)

To recapitulate, the disability-related issues in this science cannot be adequately studied through the subject matter but through the terms used for denoting disabilities. In a bid to systemise such rulings and put them in a context understandable to the current reality, the main focus of this study was the main practical means by which people afflicted with disabilities can still live, in the social and the financial sense, a fairly satisfactory life. Bearing in mind that these practical means are always produced in the modern time under the broad term “rights”, a note will first be dedicated to the equivalent term in Arabic, i.e., “*haqq*”, in order to avoid any possible confusion or misunderstanding about the use of this modern term in a juristic sense.

Linguistically, *haqq* is either “truth”, i.e., “what corresponds to facts” and its opposite is *bāṭil* (untrue) or the established fact (*al-thābiḥ*) and therefore “reality”.\(^{116}\) In the technical sense, *haqq* had two main definitions based on these two linguistic denotations. In the theological context, derived directly from the first linguistic denomination, it referred to the judgement identical to truth and thus used to indicate the contentions, beliefs, religions and sects in the sense that they include the *haqq*, its opposite is *bāṭil* (untrue).\(^{117}\) In the juristic context, based on the second linguistic denotation, *haqq* referred to what has been established to someone by the Islamic Shari’ā for his/her interest.\(^{118}\) However, there may be a propensity in the classical Islamic sources towards obligations rather than rights. Thus the right to life, for instance, is expressed in the Islamic system as the duty to save life.\(^{119}\) A closer examination, however, reveals that a mere propensity in the style of communication does not have a negative effect upon the substance and the validity of rights in the Shari’ā. The ruling conveyed the notion of right (when viewed from the vantage point of a right-bearer) or the notion of obligation (when viewed from the position of the party responsible for putting this right into practice). Hence, all what was done by the modern studies was that they have just reversed the focal point, i.e., by using “rights” instead of “obligations” but the main content

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\(^{117}\) Wizarat al-Awqâf wa al-Shu’ûn al-Islamiyya bi al-Kuwayt (1), vol. 18, p. 7.

\(^{118}\) Ibid, vol. 3, p. 10.

and purport remained in both cases the same.\textsuperscript{120}

Furthermore, the term *haqq* always involved in Islam a sense of nobility and also sometimes sacredness. The Qur’ānic use of this term indicated that it was sometimes in order to refer to God (Qur’ān 6:62, 20:114, 22:06) and other times to the holy scripture of Muslims, i.e., the Qur’ān (Qur’ān 4:170, 5:48, 10:94). Also guiding to the *haqq* (Qur’ān 10:35), hurling it against *al-bāṭil* (the false) (Qur’ān 21:18) and making it finally victorious is the affair of God Himself (Qur’ān 17:81). All this clothed this term with a specific halo in the Islamic context.\textsuperscript{121}

As for the divisions of *ḥuqūq* (rights), they were divided on more than one level. Here we chose the divisions with relevance to our concern here, i.e., people with disabilities. In terms of the recipient of *ḥuqūq*, Muslim jurists distinguished between two main spheres of *ḥuqūq*, namely, *ḥuqūq* Ḩālāḥ (lit. claims or rights of God or public rights) and *ḥuqūq* al-ʾibād or *ḥuqūq* al-ʾadamiyyin (claims or rights of men or human beings). The first sphere stood for the rights of the Islamic community at large. Attributing these rights to God was only for the sake of glorifying their value and stressing the exhaustiveness of their benefits lest they will be accorded to a specific person. The second sphere covered claims of private individuals in their dealings with each other.\textsuperscript{122}

In terms of their content, *ḥuqūq* were divided into financial (māliyya) and non-financial (ghayar māliyya).\textsuperscript{123} In terms of enforceability, *ḥuqūq* were divided into religious (din) and juridical (qadīḥ). The former, although validated by the Sharīʿa, cannot be proven or enforced by court. Most of the rights of God (i.e. ʾibādāt, kaffārāt, etc.) fell in this category. Rights without a particular party as the right-bearer such as religious endowment (*waqfi*) for the poor and the indigent fell also into this category.\textsuperscript{124} Juridical rights, on the other hand, are susceptible to proof at the behest of the right-bearer, and the Sharīʿa court had the power to adjudicate them. One of the examples of this right was the wife’s right to maintenance by her husband.\textsuperscript{125}

Although the term *ḥuqūq*, pl. *ḥuqūq* was not restricted to people with disabilities per se, it was always connected with them, especially in the modern literature. Expressions like *ḥuqūq* al-*muʿawwāqīn* (rights of people with disabilities) have become key expressions in modern literature on people with disabilities in Islam.\textsuperscript{126} Bearing in mind the prevalence of the term “rights of

\textsuperscript{120} Kamali, Muhammad Hashim (1993), p. 340.

\textsuperscript{121} Abū Ghudda, ʿAbd al-Sattār (1411/1991), p. 216.


\textsuperscript{124} Kamali, Muhammad Hashim (1993), p. 348.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid, p. 349.

\textsuperscript{126} See for instance, Mīlī, M. (1981), p. 128; Awādī, ʿAbd al-Rahmān ʿAbd Allāh al- & Ahmad Rājī al-Jundī (eds.) (1422-2001), vol. 1, p.8 & vol. 2, p. 472; Such expressions have been also used in the titles of some books and articles, see Ibn Ḥamza, Muṣṭafā (1414/1993); Miṇyāwī,
people with disabilities” at the present time, it was a key-term throughout presenting discussions in juristic sources about people with disabilities.

1.5 Structure and Organisation of the Study

Chapters Two and Three, dedicated to studying people with disabilities in Islamic Theology, handles two main questions, viz., “Why does disability exist since Allah is the Omnipotent, All-Just and All-Merciful?” and “What should be done if someone got afflicted with disability?” Theological discussions on the first question can be classified under the theme of “Speculative Theology” whereas discussions on the second questions under the theme of “Practical Theology”. The former represents a bid to explain the ontology of disabilities and sufferings. The latter investigates how to live with such disabilities and misfortunes. These two arguments are respectively the topics of Chapter Two and Three.

Chapter Two (Speculative Theology), handles the theological clarifications and justifications put forward by Muslim scholars in response to the existence of disabilities and evil in general. As a theistic religion, a belief in the perfect image and spotless character of God was always a central point. The existence of disabilities, pains or evils in general should not cast doubts on the perfect character of God. This was a strict guideline or red line that should not be transgressed and different groups, despite their discrepancies, stuck to this line. As exception in this respect, two main groups existed throughout the Islamic history whose contentions were seen as casting doubts on the perfect character of God. The introductory remarks of this chapter showed that one group was declared heretics and infidels. The other group, mainly represented by Sufi figures, was tolerated because expressing such opinions was seen as lovers’ disputes, which might sometimes occur between lovers without disturbing their friendly relations.

Beyond these two exceptions, Muslim theologians tried to come up with solutions that do not harm the perfect character of God. This holds true to the extent that a group of Muslim scholars, especially among Sufis and philosophers, did not see a real paradox. They opined that it was irrelevant to raise the question, “how to understand or justify the presence of nasty and painful things in the light of the fact that God the Compassionate, the Merciful is the Supreme Power and that He has control over this universe?” To them, the existence of disabilities and different forms of pains and sufferings do not cause theological or ontological problems. This approach mainly prevailed within Sufi and philosophical milieus. Each of these two groups had their own method to show that the aforementioned question does not create a real problem. From the side of the Sufis, the most elaborate and comprehensive presentation was given by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111). As for philosophers, Ibn Sinā (d. 429/1037), the most influential Muslim philosopher, will be the main focus in this respect. First of all, he seems to have been the

first among them all to preoccupy himself with the problem of evil.\textsuperscript{127} Additionally, to my knowledge, he is the main philosopher, if not the sole one, who focuses on disability within the broader framework of evil. Shams Inati’s study on Ibn Sīnā’s theodicy of evil is the main study upon which I depended to review Ibn Sīnā’s discussions on disabilities.\textsuperscript{128}

However, the majority of Muslim theologians conceded that the existence of disabilities and other forms of pains and sufferings represented a theological problem that should be handled. However, attempts to explain or solve this problem should not be at the expense of God’s perfect character. Elaborating His perfect divine character in the light of pains prevalent in this life, the advocates of this trend went through heated discussions about two main sides of the character of God, each represented by a number of divine names and attributes. The first side was God’s omnipotence emphasising that nothing taking place in life can escape His unlimited power. The second side was God’s solicitude for the welfare of His creatures. This side shows that God takes care of His creatures and treats them with beneficence, justice, wisdom, etc. Laying more emphasis on one side than the other or trying to create a balance between the two resulted in three main approaches, termed in this study as anti-theodicy approach, pro-theodicy approach and middle-course approach each of which will be discussed in a separate chapter.

It is worthy to note in this regard that the categorization adopted in this regard has been reached after extensive readings. However, it is not directly quoted from one single source and thus remains mine. I have deliberately avoided a school-based categorization by dividing theologians’ viewpoints on the basis of the theological school they were known to abide by. As we shall see, within almost every school, advocates of each of the trends and approaches mentioned can be traced. This holds even true for some prominent scholars such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) whose opinions in one specific source can be classified in one category whereas his opinions in other sources are to be categorized in a completely different cadre. Modern scholars in Islam can also be easily integrated within this form of categorization because they adopt an eclectically-oriented approach combining elements from different theological schools.

The first approach, termed in this study as anti-theodicy approach, stresses that the perfect character of God can be seen first and foremost in the first side of God’s character, especially God’s self-sufficiency and omnipotence. In the case of disabilities and other forms of misfortunes in life, judging God’s acts in accordance with the same criteria used for judging human acts would diminish God’s unlimited power and thus tarnish His perfect character. In this sense, no attempts should be done to search for wise purposes (\textit{hikami}) for God’s acts including pain and all what can be deemed evil. In short, theodicy cannot be


\textsuperscript{128} For an overall presentation of Ibn Sīnā’s discussions on theodicyizing the existence of disabilities, see Inati, Shams C. (2000), pp. 67-85. For a modernized presentation of Ibn Sīnā’s views on evils in general, see Muṭṭalḥari, Muṭṭalā al- (1424/2003), pp. 153-170 & 186.
practised. This approach was mainly theorised throughout the Ash'arī theological manuals. For instance, the founder of the school, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/935-6) wrote a chapter, in his book *al-Ibāna* (Illumination), under the title “Question concerning the torture of the infants”.

In his book, *Al-Mawāqīt* (Viewpoints), the well-known Ash'arī theologian ʿAdud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 757/1355) also wrote a whole chapter on theodicy (*taʿlīl*). Lately, the contemporary Egyptian scholar Muhammad al-Sayyid al-Julaynī (Cairo University) handled the issue of theodicy in the Ash'arī school in his book on good and evil.

Finally, G. Legenhausen, (Texas Southern University, USA) wrote an article elaborating and to some extent advocating the Ash'arī view on the theodicy.

The second approach, termed in this study as **pro-theodicy approach**, laid more stress on the second side of God’s character especially on His justice and wisdom. The proponents of this approach tried to explain or justify the existence of evil, pain and suffering in a way that would never harm God’s justice or wisdom. They said that man, because of his freedom to act in life, is the agent of a large part of evils and pains in this life. Such evils are to be ascribed to their agent, namely, man, who is liable to do just and unjust acts. God is not responsible for these evils and cannot be questioned for their existence in our life. However, another part of pains and sufferings take place in life beyond man’s choice such as being inflicted with blindness, leprosy and other illnesses. God is responsible for these pains only and they are just and wise. They have been done by God for specific benefits and wise purposes (*bikān*). In this context, the Muʿtazila refused to call such acts “evils” and say that they are to be classified as forms of *fīṭna* (temptation) or *iḥtīlāl* (test).

Whether disability took place as part of man’s action, other people’s action or directly by God and thus beyond the human control, there should be a specific wise purpose that can be discerned by the human intellect. In this framework, very detailed and sometimes extremely complicated attempts were done to search for these possible wise purposes. The advocates of this approach came basically from the Muʿtazilī theological school. Broad lines of their doctrines in this respect found proponents in the circles of Twelver Shiʿism (Shīʿa Imāmiyya) such as Ibn Bābawīyah known as al-Shaykh al-Ṣādiq (d. 391/1001), al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), al-Shāfirī al-Mūrtaḍā (d. 436/1044), and al-Muṭṭahhar al-Hilli (d. 726/1325). They all held largely

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136 On him, see Madelung, Wilfred (2003), vol. VII, pp. 312 & 313.
137 On him, see Brockelmann, Carl (2) (2003), vol. VII, p. 634.
similar opinions about suffering and its compensation.\textsuperscript{139} Keeping in mind that the Muʿtazili presentation of issues with relevance to this approach was one of the most detailed and elaborated ones throughout the Islamic history, their doctrines were taken as the main points of discussion. Cross-references to Shiʿi sources were given just to know where to trace them and notice they are in line with the Muʿtazili thought. The main source which theorized and developed this approach in the Muʿtazili school was the well-known encyclopaedia of al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025)\textsuperscript{140}, Al-Mughnī fi abwāb al-ʿadl wa al-tawḥīd (The Sufficient on Themes of Justice and Oneness) which recorded the Muʿtazili theology in its complete form.\textsuperscript{141} Muʿtazili contentions, especially as elaborated in Al-Mughnī, on pain and suffering in general have been recently studied by the Dutch researcher Margaretha Heemskerk. She wrote her PhD dissertation on pain and compensation in the Muʿtazili doctrine\textsuperscript{142} which was later on published under the title \textit{Suffering in the Muʿtazilite Theology}.\textsuperscript{143} Heemskerk is the basic study upon which the discussions in this respect are based. As for the Shiʿi sources, three main sources give an overall overview in this issue, namely, Ibn Bābawayh’s Risālat al-iʿtiqād (Treatise on Creed),\textsuperscript{144} al-Shaykh al-Mufīd’s Awāʾil al-maqālāt fi al-madhāhib wa al-mukhtārāt (The First Treatises on Chosen Doctrines),\textsuperscript{145} al-Ḥillī’s Al-Bāb al-ḥadīṯ ʿashār (The Eleventh Chapter).\textsuperscript{146} However, the centrality of the image of God in the theology of this approach escaped the attention of Heemskerk. To compensate this shortage, two main studies were consulted while introducing viewpoints of the advocates of this approach on the perfect character of God. These two studies are \textit{The Islamic Conception of Justice} by Majid Khadduri (1908-2007) and \textit{God and His Attributes: Lessons on Islamic Doctrine}\textsuperscript{147} by the Shiʿi scholar, Sayyid Mujtaba Musavi Lari (b. 1314/1935).\textsuperscript{148}

The third approach, termed as middle-course approach, tried to find a middle ground between the aforementioned two approaches. They first criticised the one-sided tendency adopted by these approaches in interpreting the perfect character of God. Within this approach, all God’s attributes were deemed as complementary rather than contradicting each other. To them, divine omnipotence should be grasped in parallel with His unmatched mercy, justice and all-wisdom. One should not be stressed at the expense of the other.


\textsuperscript{140} On him, see ʿUthmān, ʿAbd al-Karīm (1968); Heemskerk, Margaretha T. (2000), pp. 36-53.


\textsuperscript{142} Heemskerk, Margaretha T. (1995).

\textsuperscript{143} Heemskerk, Margaretha T. (2000).

\textsuperscript{144} Fyze, Asaf A. A. (1942).

\textsuperscript{145} ʿUlūbī, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān al- (Known as al-Sayykh al-Muḥfīd) (1371/1951).


\textsuperscript{147} Lari, Sayyid Mujtaba Musavi (2003).

\textsuperscript{148} On him, see Lari, Sayyid Mujtaba Musavi (2003), pp. 5-7.
As for the theodicy, they also tried to find a middle-ground by saying that behind every divine act there must be one or many wise purposes but they are not necessarily detectable all the time by the human intellect. Basing themselves mainly on the scriptural texts from the Qurān and Sunna on one hand and making use of rational arguments on the other, they counted a number of possible wise purposes for the existence of disabilities and other forms of suffering in life. The advocates of this approach represented the majority of early and late Muslim scholars within the circles of theologians (mutakallimūn) jurists (fuqahāʾ), traditionalists (ahl al-hadīth), interpreters of the Qurān (muḥaffazūn), Sufis, early and late philosophers such as Abū al-Barakāt (d. ca. 550/1155) and a large number of the late Ashʿarīs who departed from their school in this specific respect.¹⁴⁹ In his book, Kītāb al-tawḥīd (Book of Oneness), Abū Maṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. ca 333/944)¹⁵⁰ contributed to this approach by a chapter entitled, al-Dalīl ʿalā anī li al-ṣālim Muḥdīth (The Evidence that the Cosmos has One Who Gave It Temporal Existence). Besides al-Māturīdī, four main scholars played important roles in theorizing this approach and elaborating its doctrines. Dispersed throughout his different works, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328)¹⁵¹ handled recurrently the issue of the theodicy and the divine acts. He issued also a well-detailed and lengthy fatwa on the theodicy.¹⁵² Recently, the dispersed discussions of Ibn Taymiyya were collected and analysed in Jon R. Hoover’s PhD dissertation defended at the University of Birmingham¹⁵³ and published in 2007 under the title Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism.¹⁵⁴ Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751/1350) also dedicated a large portion of his writings to the issue of the theodicy. His main work on this issue was Shītāʾ al-ʿalīl fī masāʾīl al-qadr wa al-qadar wa al-hikma wa al-taʿlīl (Healing the Sick on Issues of Fate, Predetermination, Wisdom and Theodicy).¹⁵⁵ The third figure in this regard was al-ʿĪzz b. ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 660/1066) who wrote a book on afflictions, calamities and misfortunes (Al-Fītān wa al-balāya wa al-mı̂hān wa al-rāzāyā) in which he counted about seventeen benefits (fāwāʾid) for them.¹⁵⁶ Noteworthy to mention in this regard is that al-ʿĪzz b. ʿAbd al-Salām used the term benefits (fāwāʾid) rather than wise purposes (ḥikām). This is may be because of his support of the Ashʿarī viewpoint that God cannot be questioned and that the wisdom behind His divine acts should not be investigated.¹⁵⁷ Anyhow, what al-ʿĪzz termed as

¹⁵⁰ On him, see Madelung, Wilfred (1) (2003), vol. VI, pp. 846 & 847.
¹⁵² Ibn Taymiyya (1), vol. 8, pp. 81-158.
¹⁵³ Hoover, Jon (2002). I hereby submit my deep gratitude for Jon Hoover who provided me with a copy of this dissertation.
¹⁵⁴ Hoover, Jon (2007). Because of the late date of publication, I did not manage to consult this new version of the dissertation. Thus Hoover’s dissertation remained the main source in this study.
¹⁵⁷ See Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām, al-ʿĪzz (1), pp. 73-77.
“benefits” and was classified by the others as “wise purposes” aimed to present a logical justification for the calamities and sufferings taking place in this life. So, difference in terminology, in this respect, is not of great importance. Finally, there is the Yemeni scholar Ibn al-Wazir (d. 840/1436) who studied the issue of theodicy in his well-known book Ḥīthār al-baqq ʿalā al-khalq (Preferring the True [God] to the Creatures).\textsuperscript{158}

Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī was a controversial figure in this regard. According to Ibn al-Wazir, he was one of the main proponents of this middle-course approach.\textsuperscript{159} Sherman Jackson (professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Michigan) also argued that that Ashʿarīs such as al-Ghazālī and later theologians did not reject rational considerations of utility but only Muʿtazilī objectivism.\textsuperscript{160} Muhammad al-Sayyid al-Julaynīd (Cairo University) spoke of two Ghazālīs. The first Ghazālī was the Ashʿarī theologian who abode by the main doctrines of the Ashʿarī School and would rather belong to the anti-theodicy approach. The other Ghazālī was the free thinker who had his own independent thinking and thus spoke about the wise purposes (ḥikāt) of the divine acts.\textsuperscript{161} In response to al-Julaynīd, Hoover stated that “a careful reading of al-Ghazālī’s text reveals that while purpose and causality indeed seem to pervade the discussion, the key term ʿilla does not appear, and the text could be interpreted to exclude causality in God’s will. Also, al-Ghazālī explains that, while mercy involves pain and tenderness from the merciful, this does not apply to God whose perfection does not involve feeling pain for one in need. This fits well with the traditional Ashʿarī understanding of God.”\textsuperscript{162} Hoover advocated his point by Richard Frank’s opinion that al-Ghazālī explicitly denied that God acts for a purpose (gharad) or for compensations (ʿiward).\textsuperscript{163} To my mind, it is unfair to enshrine al-Ghazālī within the traditional Ashʿarī viewpoint concerning theodicy although he unequivocally advocated this viewpoint in some of his works. He has, as al-Julaynīd indicated, expressed other viewpoints which can easily be categorized within this middle-course approach. One of the treatises attributed to al-Ghazālī deals with the divine wisdom to be traced in the created beings (Al-Hikma fi makhliqat Allāh ʿAzz wa Jahl).\textsuperscript{164} However, al-Ghazālī’s writings show that he can still be classified, as shown above, among the Sufis who adopted a no-problem approach.

In the modern time, the middle-course approach was also advocated by a number of scholars and researchers. In his book, Fi ʿīlam al-makhlūfīn (Inside the World of the Blind), the late Egyptian scholar, Ahmād al-Sharabāṣī (1918-1980) raised the question, why God created blindness although it is bad and disliked? Possible answers advanced by al-Sharabāṣī took about 25 pages most

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid, vol. 1, p. 188.
\textsuperscript{160} Jackson, Sherman A. (1996), pp. 32-32; on the same viewpoint, see also Ormsby, Eric L. (1984), p. 47.
\textsuperscript{161} Julaynīd, Muhammad al-Sayyid al- (1981), pp. 198-220.
\textsuperscript{162} Hoover, Jon (2002), pp. 117 & 118.
\textsuperscript{164} Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid al- (1327/1909), pp. 15-96.

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of which were related to medical interpretations rather than theological purposes.\textsuperscript{165} The Saudi researcher Muhammad Rabīʿ Hadī al-Madkhālī wrote his M.A. thesis on the wisdom and theodicy of the divine acts (\textit{Al-Hikma wa al-taʾīl fi aṭ-ṭāl Allāh taʾālā}).\textsuperscript{166} Zuhayr Muḥammad al-Zamīlī made the question, “Why did God make diseases?” a title for his book \textit{Limādḥā jaʿala Allāh al-amrād}.\textsuperscript{167} Besides these two studies, modern Muslim scholars handled the issue of theodicy while studying the broad topic of God’s fate and predestination (\textit{qadā} and \textit{qadar}) such as Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (b. 1926)\textsuperscript{168} and Muḥammad Saʿīd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī (b. 1929).\textsuperscript{169} The late Egyptian scholar Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Shaʿrāwī (1911-1988) also handled the issue of theodicy in his book on good and evil.\textsuperscript{170}

Besides these figures, a huge relevant literature is available in commentaries on Qur’ān and Hādīth and sometimes even in juristic sources. Although there is almost no mention of the term theodicy (\textit{taʾīl}), the scholars discussed calamities, misfortunes and other issues with direct relevance to theodicy. If we classified this huge material as theodicy-related texts, then the statements, given by more than one researcher, on the rarity of theodicy texts and the non-centrality of this issue in Islamic thought should be taken with reservation.\textsuperscript{171}

**Chapter Three (Practical Theology)** handles the question, “What should be done if someone got afflicted with disability?” In their bids to explain the existence of disabilities in the light of the powerful and merciful God, Muslim scholars were aware that their rational arguments may not bring full relief to all questioners nor bring these questions to an end. On the contrary, some of the arguments could trigger more questions on which the answers could endlessly create other questions and fall ultimately in a viscous circle. Restoring relief and maintain peaceful relations with God in such intriguing issues, as the sources indicated, one is in need of both mental satisfaction and spiritual serenity. The aforementioned theological arguments could create a sort of mental satisfaction but not necessarily spiritual serenity. Methods of attaining spiritual serenity are the main focus of this chapter.

Scholars who were engaged in writing about spiritual serenity and the methods to gain it during the times of afflictions came mainly from the mystic milieu because healing one’s soul was one of the main functions of Sufism. However, there is nothing to make us believe that means and methods mentioned below were rejected by scholars who advocated other approaches. The clearest two examples in this regard are the mystic Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) who had an ʿAsh’arī background\textsuperscript{172} and the Muʿtazīlī

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\textsuperscript{166} Madkhālī, Muḥammad Rabīʿ Hadī al- (1409/1988).

\textsuperscript{167} Zamīlī, Zuhayr Muḥammad al- (1409/1988).

\textsuperscript{168} Qaraḍāwī, Yūsuf al- (1421/2000), pp. 82-87.

\textsuperscript{169} Būṭī, Muḥammad Saʿīd Ramaḍān al- (2001), pp. 188-206.

\textsuperscript{170} For some of those who expressed such statements, see Watt, W. Montgomery (1979), p. 5; Ormsby, Eric L. (1984), p. 54.

\textsuperscript{171} On him, see Qushayrī, ʿAbd al-Karīm al- (1668), pp. 4-8, esp. 6; Qushayrī, al- (1990), pp. 1-
scholar al-Zamakhshārī (d. 538/1144) who wrote a book, mentioned below, with relevance to our topic here.

To achieve this spiritual serenity in the case of being afflicted with calamities in general, Muslim scholars evolved two main genres of a psychology-oriented literature. These writings were meant to appease the bitter feelings of sorrow and anguish that can be caused by calamities. Some of them spoke about ʿilāj al-muṣība (curing the calamity). Others wrote on tasliyat ʿabd al-maṣāʾib (consoling people with calamities). Some writings focused on specific calamities, the most well-known of which was the death of one's child. Disabilities, especially blindness, did not escape the attention of writers on this topic. As a good witness in this respect, we mention titles such as Tasliyat al-ḍarīr (Consoling the Blind) by al-Zamakhshārī, Taʿjiʿ al-bishāra li man sabar ʿalā dhaḥāb al-baṣar (Accelerating the Good Omen for Those Who have Patience upon Losing their Eyesight) by the Damascene scholar Muḥammad b. Ṭulūn (1475-1546) and Tasliyat al-aʾrām ʿan balḥiyat al-ʿanā (Consoling the Blind from the Affliction of Blindness) by the Ḥanafi jurist Mulla ʿAlī b. Ṣulṭān al-Harawī al-Qārī (d. ca. 1605). The Meccan scholar Ibn Fahd (d. 1547) concluded his book on people with disabilities with a chapter on the rewards and blessings accorded to those afflicted with calamities.

Besides this genre whose sources are mostly non-extant or either unavailalbe in printed form, there was the broad mystic genre which is also of direct relevance to the topic of gaining spiritual relief in the case of calamities. In this broad mystic genre, Muslim scholars considered calamities and afflictions as one of the obstacles that the servant (ʿabd) undergoes in his travel to the Creator. They elaborated a number of states (ḥaḍāḥ) and stations (maqāmat) that one should pass by. Three main moral attitudes have been recurrently mentioned as necessary tools to overcome the repercussions of afflictions and tribulations, namely servitude (ʿubūdīyya), patience (ṣabr) and gratitude (šukr).

In his well-known Al-Risāla fī ʿilm al-taṣawwuf (Epistle on Sufism) regarded by many as “one of the most comprehensive compendiums of Sufi thought” and the “Bible of Sufism”180 Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) divided the Sufi path into a) states (ḥaḍāḥ) and b) stations (maqāmat); the former are

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174 See for instance, Ibn al-Qayyīm (1407/1986), vol. 4, pp. 188-196
175 Manāẓirī, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al- (1347/1929).
179 Ibn Fahd (d. 954/1547), folios 56b-61a.
always a gift from God whereas the latter can be reached, to a certain extent, by one's own striving. However, both were indispensable in the Sufi path. Servitude (‘ubūdiyya) was the first state in al-Qushayri’s presentation, which serves here as the starting point for the seekers of spiritual relief among those afflicted with disabilities or other forms of suffering. Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) also wrote a short epistle on this topic entitled Risāla fī al-‘ubūdiyya (Epistle on Servitude). Although he did not classify it as one of the states, the Ḥanbali theologian and jurist, Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751/1350) studied this term extensively in his Sufi treatise and opined that all stations and states that one has to pass by are but branches and reflections of servitude. To him, servitude is also the main starting point. Currently, this concept is still vivid among the Sufi orders such as the Shadhiliyya which is mainly based on deep immersion in this state of ‘ubūdiyya. Recent interest in this topic is clear from the comments, abridgements and elaborations made by modern Muslim scholars of the viewpoints of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim in this regard.

According to al-Qushayri, patience and gratitude belong to the stations. These two moral attitudes were classical topics recurrently presented in almost every mystic treatise. The most comprehensive treatment of these two moral attitudes comes from the hand of Ibn al-Qayyim who dedicated a whole book to both topics. This book was the main source in the discussions to follow on these two points. Patience and gratitude are currently fashionable subjects for religious sermons (khutbah) which are available as audiocassettes and sometimes in the form of printed books. One of the well-known books written recently on the topic of patience is that of Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī under the title Al-Ṣābīr fī al-Qur’ān (Patience in the Qur’ān).

Chapters Four till Eight, dedicated to Islamic jurisprudence, focus on what can be termed in our present time as the rights of people with disabilities. The main question can be formulated as, “what is the social and financial position of people with disabilities as recorded in the juristic sources of Islam?” Aspects chosen to fathom out this position were mainly based on the availability of relevant information in juristic sources on one hand and their centrality for making the life of people with disabilities more tolerable on the other. It will be noticed also that the different aspects of the social and financial position of people with disabilities as discussed in this part are also central in modern

181 Ibid, p. 137.
189 Ibn al-Qayyim (1). An abridged translation of this book was recently composed by Nasiruddin al-Khatib, see Ibn al-Qayyim (1998).
190 See for instance, Khālid, Ṭmr (2002).
191 Qaraḍāwī, Yūsuf al- (1410/1989).
discussions on people with disabilities especially as reflected in the UN documents in this respect. Although all five chapters examining juristic discussions with relevance to people with disabilities cover both their social and financial position, Chapter Four can be seen as focusing more on the social side whereas the other four chapters focus more on the financial side.

Chapter Four (Human Dignity of People with Disabilities) fathoms out whether disabilities injure, harm or diminish the dignity guaranteed in Islam for human beings in general. Dignity of people with disabilities is very central at the moment in discussions on the rights of people with disabilities. As early as 1975, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Disabled persons stressed that, “Disabled persons have the inherent right to respect for their human dignity. Disabled persons, whatever the origin, nature and seriousness of their handicaps and disabilities, have the same fundamental rights as their fellow-citizens of the same age, which implies first and foremost the right to enjoy a decent life, as normal and full as possible.”192 The latest UN document in this regard, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, declares in its first principle that “the purpose of the present Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.”193

Broadly speaking, early and modern scholars were unanimous on the fact that dignity has been a proven right conferred by God on every human being irrespective of colour, race or religion. For instance, al-Alūsī (d. 1270/1854) says that “everyone and all members of the human race, including the pious and the sinner are endowed with dignity, nobility and honour whose magnificence cannot be exclusively expounded and identified.”194 The purport of this sentence can also be encountered in statements attributed to the Companions of the Prophet and modern scholars as well.195 Speaking about the dignity of people with disability in Islam, previous studies referred all the time to this generic dignity designated for every human being, including of course those with disability.196 Discussions of Muslim jurists in this regard, which were sometimes heated ones, took place on the dignity of people with disabilities in particular. This dignity is investigated on the theoretical and practical level.

The theoretical level studies physiognomy of which the main purport was that a physical defect or deformity reflects a similar one in one’s soul. In other words, people with bad or ugly outlook have a similar character. In this framework, people with physical disabilities can be easily discriminated and offended because of their apparent physical abnormality. Concerning

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195 See Kamali, Muḥammad Ḥashim (2002), pp. 2-9
physiognomy in general, the late Youssef Mourad (d. 1902-1966), the late 'Abd al-Karim 'Adiyy (1917-1985), Robert Hoyland (University of St. Andrews) and Antonella Ghersetti (Università Ca' Foscari, Venice) are the three main modern researchers who made laudable efforts in studying physiognomy as a topic in Arabic and Islamic literature. Recently Simon Swain edited an insightful study on Polemon's physiognomy from classical antiquity to Medieval Islam. Beyond the cursory references to juristic sources in the aforementioned studies, combining between physiognomy on one hand and the image of people with disabilities in juristic circles on the other hand was a completely unstudied topic prior to this dissertation. Thus, this chapter is a bid to open up this new dimension.

The focus in this regard was on the standpoints of Muslim jurists towards physiognomy and its influence on the dignity of people with disabilities within two main legal schools, namely, the Shafi'i and the Hanbali Schools. It was just the available information that has imposed this choice. Outside these two schools, pertinent information was scanty and within the Hanafi School it was almost absent. Moreover, such information did not make clear what type of firāsa was meant in such discussions. However, a note in passing was given at the end of the chapter to clarify the standpoints of other schools in the light of the available information.

As for the Shafi'i School, available sources indicate clearly that a number of Shafi'i jurists were impressed by the newly-introduced science of Greek physiognomy and its practical benefits. They were advocates of this new science and wrote important books in this field where they did not fail to find arguments from the Qur'an and Sunna defending this science or at least its main premise, viz., “inference from physical makeup about nature/disposition/character” (al-istiqlāl bi al-khalq ‘alā al-khuluq). One of

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199 For more information, see http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/academic/history/arabic/staff/hoyland.shtml
200 For more information, see http://www.unive.it/noccontent.cfm?a_id=415&persona=000943&vista=pubb_sir
203 For a detailed presentations of these argumentations, see Mourad, Youssef (1939), Rāzī, Fakhr
the early texts, which can be an allusion to this premise, is written by the Shāfīʿī prolific scholar, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), “The exterior form that is attractive to look at is the surest indication of a virtuous soul, for the light of the soul, when it fully shines, would penetrate the body. That is because the external appearance (maṣḥar) and the inner nature (makhbār) are most often inseparable. This is why the authorities on firāsa occupy themselves first with the physical looks when getting to know the internal states of people.”

Another context in which al-Ghazālī handled firāsa was his comments on Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Sinā (Avicenna) the first to incorporate physiognomy firāsa in the Greek sense in the recognized Islamic sciences. In his Maqāsid al-falāsīfa (Objectives of the Philosophers) al-Ghazālī mentioned the categorization of Ibn Sinā but in a different order and with committing some sciences including al-firāsa. In Tahāfut al-falāsīfa (Incoherence of the Philosophers), al-Ghazālī mentioned the categorization of sciences including firāsa in the Greek sense. Al-Ghazālī’s comment was that “the Sacred Law does not require a dispute over them except on a few points which we have mentioned”. None of the critical points raised by al-Ghazālī tackled firāsa.

A list of the important names who wrote discrete books or treatises on this science would include Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), Shams al-Dīn al-Dimashqī (d. 727/1327), Ibn al-Durayhim al-Mawsīlī (d. 762/1360) and Zayn al-ʿĀdūnī al-Ghumrī (d. 970/1562).

The main point in this regard is a number of “physiognomic” statements ascribed to al-Shāfīʿī (d. 205/820) which are full of offending and discriminatory remarks. The attempt here is to check the authenticity of these statements and see if they penetrated the fiqh manuals.

Concerning the Ḥanbali School, viewpoints of four well-known Ḥanbali jurists are discussed. Viewpoints of Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) and Ibn al-Qayyīm (d. 751/1350) are presented under the heading “paradoxical standpoints” because their viewpoints, as recorded in their own sources, were sometimes advocating the purport of physiognomy and other times contradicting it. Viewpoints of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and Zayn al-Dīn al-Dīn al-ʿĀdūnī al-Ghumrī (d. 970/1562), pp. 5 & 6; Ansārī, Abū Ẓāhir al- (1332/1914), pp. 2 & 3; Ghumrī, Zayn al-ʿĀdūnī al-Ghumrī (d. 970/1562), fol. 2a-4b; Ibn al-Akūfīnī (889), p. 417; Hoyland, Robert (2005), pp. 363-365.


208 Rūzū, Fakhr al-Dīn al- (1939).


210 Ghumrī, Zayn al-ʿĀdūnī al-Ghumrī (d. 970/1562); Ghumrī, Zayn al-ʿĀdūnī al-Ghumrī (d. 970/1562).


Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1393)\textsuperscript{214} are presented under the heading “counterpoise-trials” in the sense that their viewpoints balanced, at least within the Hanbali School, the paradoxical standpoints expressed by Ibn al-Jawzî and Ibn al-Qayyim.

The practical level attempts to give the issue of the dignity of people with disabilities a practical touch. For instance, would writing a book enumerating prominent figures with disabilities throughout history be seen by a jurist as breaching the dignity of those people? If so, what would be his reaction? A 16th century book entitled \textit{Al-Nukat al-zīrāf ğī man ibrūliya bī al-ʿahāt min al-asīrah} (The Cute Anecdotes on Luminaries Afflicted with Disabilities), which is still in manuscript form, answered these questions in reality. This book triggered vigorous debates that continued from its appearance in 1541 until 1543. By studying this work, this dissertation unfolded this hitherto unstudied work and focused on the two-year debate between the author of the book (Ibn Fahd) and a well-known contemporaneous jurist (Ibn Hajar al-Haytami). It is to be noted that the debate went beyond these two figures to include damaging a book and the issuing of various fatwas from different Islamic cities supporting the author of the book.

To unfold this material, besides the manuscript of Ibn Fahd, we made use of the two-page fatwa published in the fatwa collection of Ibn Hajar entitled \textit{Al-Fatāwā al-Ḡiqhiyya al-kubrā} (Grand Juridical Fatwas).\textsuperscript{215} \textit{Al-Zawāżūr `an iqtirāf al-kabār} (Restraints against Committing Grave Sins) where Ibn Hajar handles the theme of \\textit{ghība} (backbiting)\textsuperscript{216} would be of benefit for comparative reasons. That is because, as indicated by the author in the introduction, \textit{Al-Zawāżūr} was written after 1546, i.e. at least five years after issuing the fatwa under discussion.\textsuperscript{217}

As stated above, the remaining five chapters focus more on the financial position of people with disabilities by elaborating a number of aspects each of them occupying a separate chapter. These aspects are deemed financial in the sense that enjoying them would bring or cost money in the normal course of events. Keeping in view that work is the main financial revenue which brings money; juristic discussions on the employability of people with disabilities were the starting point in this regard and thus are the topic of \textbf{Chapter Five}. Because disability is, normally speaking, the main obstacle to find a suitable job, possibilities of medical treatment for people with disabilities is fathomed out from a juristic perspective in \textbf{Chapter Six}. \textbf{Chapter Seven} and \textbf{Eight} discuss the overall theme of financial security in the case of being unable to achieve any of

\textsuperscript{214} He is known to be the last great representative of medieval Hanabism, see Laoust, H. (2003), vol. III, p. 822; Laoust, H. (2) (2003), vol. III, p. 161.

\textsuperscript{215} Haytami, Shihāb al-Dīn Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Hajar al- (1403/1983), vol. 4, pp. 82-83.


the first two rights. In other words, how can such a person with a disability still enjoy financial security if he/she cannot work and his disability cannot be treated?

By discussing employment, Chapter Five handles one of the fundamental rights of people with disabilities. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), work of decent quality is the most effective means of escaping the vicious circle of marginalization, poverty and social exclusion.218 The United Nations report published in August 2006 states that unemployment among the disabled is as high as 80% in some countries. Often employers assume that persons with disabilities are unable to work. However, an estimated 386 million of the world’s working-age people are disabled.219 This large-scale prevailing unemployment costs the global economy an estimated 1.9 trillion US dollars per year.220 ILO appeals that barriers which disabled people face in getting jobs and taking their place in society can and should be overcome through a variety of policy measures, regulations, programmes, and services.221 In this vein, the latest UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, article 8, asks for promoting the recognition of the skills, merits and abilities of persons with disabilities and of their contributions to the workplace and the labour market.222 The Optional Protocol of this convention opened for signature by all states and by regional integration organizations at United Nations Headquarters in New York on March 30, 2007. The list of signatories includes a number of Islamic countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Turkey, Morocco, Sudan and Yemen.223

As for Islamic sources, we find that ‘amal, the most well-known equivalent now for “work”, is one of the most repeated words in the Qur’an. The different derivatives of this word are mentioned almost 330 times in the Qur’an. If we count the references to the notion of work without being limited to the term ‘amal, the aforementioned number will be easily doubled.224 However, this Qur’anic term which is now standardised in modern Islamic and Arabic literature speaking about work, work opportunities and rights of workers does not help a lot to trace the juristic discussions with relevance to this topic. The two chapters entitled “jīṭra” and “jī’ālā” in classical fiqh manuals represent the main door to trace relevant juristic discussions on employability of people with disabilities. After a general introduction about these two terms, the chapter

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223 For a full list of the of signatory states and regional integration organizations, see http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/conventionsign.htm
reviews the juristic discussion on employing people with disabilities in four jobs which are always associated with high prestige especially in religious milieus. The list would include the positions of muezzin (one who makes call or adhān for prayer), imām (one who leads the ritual prayer), judge and the chief leader of the state.

Chapter Six reviews the juristic sources searching for viewpoints and attitudes towards treating disabilities. Two main methods are traced. The first method, termed in juristic sources as “physical medicine”, is based on using medicines and drugs as known within the realm of medical science at the present time. The second method, called “spiritual medicine”, makes use of specific religious formulae including texts from the Qur’an, words ascribed to the Prophet of Islam, etc. This chapter gave a detailed overview of these two methods within Islamic jurisprudence, the attitudes of Muslim jurists towards these two methods and finally “treatments” developed within each method to prevent the occurrence of disability or to cure it.

In the midst of the immense literature available on medicine in Islam, one can hardly find something specific on treating disabilities. The only book I am aware of on this topic is Al-Taqā fi al-turāth al-ʿarabī al-islāmī (Disability in the Arabic Islamic Literature) which collected the scattered sections and information on different mental and physical disabilities in medical sources written by early Muslim physicians. Mental disabilities might be more fortunate mainly because of the writings of Michael Dols (d. 1989). Studies which handled disability within Islamic jurisprudence (īqāḥ) are almost silent on the issue of the treatment of these disabilities. Mustafa al-Quḍāt (Jordan University) could be the main exception by his reference, under the heading “the right of people with disabilities to live”, to two main points, viz., abortion and transplanting amputated organs. The same points are discussed by Vardit Rispler-Chaim (Haifa University) in Islamic Medical Ethics in the Twentieth Century. The present chapter, by studying the opinions within early and modern Islamic jurisprudence on different methods of treating disabilities, tackles an almost non-trodden field in modern literature.

Bearing in mind the possibility of being neither able to find a paid job nor to cure the disability, Chapters Seven and Eight focus on the means of achieving financial security for this group of people. These two chapters are based mainly on information available in my M.A. thesis, The Financial Rights of People with Disabilities, which collected sporadic discussions of early and modern jurists.

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229 See for instance, Quḍāt, Muṣṭafā al- (1406/1985); Kīlānī, Šaṭr Zayd al- (1); Rispler-Chaim, Vardit (2007).
231 Rispler-Chaim, Vardit (1993), pp. 7-18 & 28-43. As the title of the book indicates, the topic of the whole book, and this goes also for the few discussions with relevance to disability, is limited to the twentieth century.
throughout many and different sources. However, the previously mentioned modern studies on people with disabilities were of great benefit in this chapter.

Surveying the juristic sources shows that if disability was a barrier to find a job and if this disability could not be cured, ending up in a miserable destitution should not be the third option. These sources presented a number of financial revenues through which this group of people can afford their needs. In this chapter, five main financial revenues are in focus. Failing to fulfil the financial needs of a person with disability within the family circle, society and state still have their own roles in securing financial security for people with disabilities.

Chapter Seven reviews the main financial revenues within one’s family through which the financial needs of people with disabilities can be afforded. As a form of social solidarity among the family members, maintenance (nafaqa) is incumbent upon the well-off members in order to support the poor members of the family. People with disabilities such as parents, children, wives and relatives are entitled to receive nafaqa from the rich members of the family. As family members, people with disabilities can still enjoy financial support from a bequest (wasiyta), or family endowment (waqf ahlī). Detailed juristic discussions on the regulations of these three financial revenues are elaborated focusing on those with relevance to people with disabilities.

Chapter Eight discusses two main financial revenues which people with disabilities can benefit from as members of society. These two revenues are welfare endowment (waqf khayrī) and zakāt. These two are supposed to fulfil the financial needs of people with disabilities. In case they are not sufficient, jurists discussed whether extra financial obligations can be imposed on the rich to fill in this financial gap. Relevant juristic discussions are elaborated in detail in this chapter.

1.6 Terminology Used

Approaching Islamic sources to search for relevant material on “disability” is practically impossible without understanding the terminology used.

Information available in Islamic sources indicates that using precise and non-offensive terminology was a point of consideration in Muslim milieus. It was related, for instance, that some of the Companions of the Prophet called a person with mental insanity “majnūn (insane)” in a context that could indicate contempt. Thereupon, the Prophet, in a bid to restate the term, is reported to have said, “This [man] is musābī, (sick or ill). Junūn (insanity) comes [only] as a result of constant disobedience of God – The Almighty.”\footnote{Qaysarānī, Muhammad b. Ţahir al- (1415/1994), vol. 1, p. 679; Ḥusaynī, Ibrāhīm b. Muhammad al- (1401/1980), Ḥadīth No. 692, vol. 1, p. 260; Abū Ghadda, ʿAbd al-Sarār, (1411/1991), p. 227; Ibn Ḥamza, Muṣṭafā (1414/1993), p. 18.} In the modern time, changes in terminology reflect a different logic of the understanding of disability as a phenomenon. That is why it has undergone an unremitting process of revisions.\footnote{The International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH), 1980}
1.6.1 English Usage

There are two main stages to be observed in the development of the English terminology used in this regard. The first stage is represented by the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH) which was first published by the World Health Organization for trial purposes in 1980. This classification adopted three main terms, viz., impairment, disability and handicap. Impairment was used to mean “any loss or abnormality of psychological or anatomical structure or function.” Disability was interpreted as “any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.” Finally, handicap was defined as “a disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability, that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normal, depending on age, sex, social and cultural factors, for that individual.”

Commenting on these definitions, Deborah Kaplan (Director of the World Institute on Disability) said that handicap is therefore a distortion of the relationship between disabled persons and their environment. It occurs when they encounter cultural, physical or social barriers, which prevent their access to the various systems of society that are available to other citizens.

After these three terms, a new stage was presented by the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). This new classification replaced the old one after systematic field trials and international consultation over years and had been finally endorsed by the fifty-fourth World Health Assembly for international use on May 22, 2001 (resolution WHA54.21). New terms were used in this classification with specific meanings that differed from everyday usage and were intended to allow positive experiences to be described.

In the 2001 version of ICF, “disability” was defined as an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. It denoted the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual’s contextual factors (environmental and personal factors). Again the main items of this definition were further defined as follows:

Impairment is “a loss or abnormality in body structure or physiological function (including mental functions).” Abnormality here is used strictly to
refer to a significant variation from established statistical norms (i.e., as a deviation from a population within measured standard norms) and should be only used in this sense.

Activity limitations are “difficulties that an individual may have in executing activities. An activity limitation may range from slight to a severe deviation in terms of quantity or quality in executing the activity in a manner to the extent that is expected of people without the health condition.”

Participation restrictions are “problems an individual may experience in involvement in life situations. The presence of a participation restriction was determined by comparing an individual’s participation to that which is expected of an individual without disability in that culture or society.”

Despite all these collective efforts exerted by the WHO, there is still no consensus among specialists on either the preferable or the objectionable terminology. For instance, expressions such as “cripple” and “gimp” have gone out of favor within the disabled community because of their negative connotations of passivity and the implication that impairment is the primary identifiable attribute. Nonetheless, some people with disabilities continue to use “cripple” as a rhetorical device. Also, euphemisms for persons with disabilities such as “differently abled”, “physically challenged” and “handicapable” have been rejected by some people arguing that they are verbal garbage describing everyone and no one.

Rispler-Chaim was right when she pointed out that quarrels around the right term or definition for “what is disability?” or “who are people with disabilities?” are not only semantic in nature. Political, economic and cultural dimensions can also play crucial roles in this regard. For instance, being classified as a person with disability in many societies and countries today would entail social and legal alleviations and economic assistance from the state, either as direct financial support or as discounted services offered to this category of people. What is and is not viewed as disability, Rispler-Chaim added, depends on cultural criteria. The same holds true for terminology, the terms seen as offending in a specific time or specific place can be welcomed in other times or other places. Thus relativism remains the dominant factor in all terms and definitions used in this field.

In this study, the first person language, i.e., “persons with disabilities” is the most frequent used in this study. That is because it is the phrase acceptable to most people with disabilities. Moreover, this usage underscored the conviction

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245 Rispler-Chaim, Vardit (2007), p. 2
that an individual’s disability is just one of many personal characteristics, rather than being synonymous or coexistent with that person’s self. In recent civil rights legislation, including the American Disabilities Act of 1990, the expression “persons with disabilities” was employed most regularly. In the literature of the disability rights movement, this designation is also the prominent one.

1.6.2 Arabic Usage
The most common Arabic equivalents used now for disability are ḍʿāqī, ḍʿāqī and ṭaʿwīq. The passive participles of these verbal nouns, a person with disability, are respectively ṭuʿaq, ṭaʿuq and ṭuʿawwaq. There are also various euphemisms used in the modern literature to refer to people with disabilities such as al-fṭʿāt al-khāṣṣa (special groups), dhawū al-ḥḥtiyājāt al-khāṣṣa (people with special needs), al-ʿātrād gḥayr al-ʿādīyyīn (the abnormal individuals), etc.

Also the terminology used in the aforementioned (ICF) international classifications issued by the WHO was rendered into Arabic. For instance, ʿajz was used as an equivalent for disability, ṭalāl for impairment, al-waẓāʿīf wa al-bunā al-jismiyya for body functions and structures, al-anshīta for activities, al-taḥadud fī al-anshīta for activity limitations, al-musāḥama for participation and al-taqallīs fī al-musāḥama for participation restrictions.

However, these terms cannot be traced in early Islamic literature. Even if we come across one of the derivatives of such terms, the significance would not be the same as that of the modern term. To give just one example, the stem ʿ-ṣaq – of which the derivatives ṭaʿwīq and ṣaṣq are the most common in this regard – is recorded in the classical Arabic lexicons but with other meanings. For instance, ṣaṣq [pluralized, ʿawaṣq ] is that [thing] driving away from what is

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246 Ibid., p. 27; http://www.sacredplaces.org/PSP-InfoClearingHouse/articles/That%20All%20May%20Worship.htm
247 Ibid., p. 27.
248 This is the most common Arabic equivalent for disability. However some scholars indicate that it is linguistically incorrect and prefer the other two terms, see Ibn Ḥamza, Muṣṭafā (1414/1993); http://www.qaradawi.net/arabic/meetings/shreai–&–hayaa/prog–27.htm
251 Munāẓẓamat al-Sīḥṭa al-ʿĀlīmīyya (2001), p. 327. Pajing is based on an electronic version. I hereby submit my deep thanks and gratitude for the Regional Office for Eastern Mediterranean, WHO especially to Dr. Muḥammad Ḥayrī Ḥayyāt and Dr. Kasem Sara.
253 Ibid., pp. 31, 193, 346 & 354.
254 Ibid., pp. 22, 28, 340 & 346.
255 Ibid., pp. 31, 193 & 346.
good (khayr) such as ‘awā‘iq al-dahr (Impediments of Time). In this sense the plural form of the active participle mu‘awwīq, i.e., mu‘awwīqūn was used in the Qur’ān (33:18) to denote those who drive people away from practising Jihad.

As for terminology used in classical Islamic sources, Rispler-Chaim remarked:

“I could not identify any single general term that would combine all people with disabilities as a group […] It is only in contemporary literature that we find sometimes generalized terms, such as asḥāb al-‘āhāt or dhawū al-‘āhāt (“owners” or bearers of impairments, defects), mu‘awwaqūn or mu‘aqūn (literally those held back by difficulty and limitations on their mental or physical functions) and ‘ajaza or ‘ajīzun, pl. of ‘ajīz (weak person, unable to do things like the old)”

According to Rispler-Chaim, the only exception was the term marīd (sick or ill person) which can be a general term used to denote a wide range of disabilities.

A trawl through early Islamic sources in general and those on Islamic jurisprudence in particular shows that the abovementioned observation is imprecise. First of all, the term asḥāb al-‘āhāt or dhawū al-‘āhāt is not a prerogative of contemporary literature. For instance, dhawū al-‘āhāt was a common term in early Arabic literature under which people with different disabilities were enlisted. In juristic literature, ‘āha was defined as a legal term originally used for describing the defects striking plants and animals and later on also used to denote the chronic defects and infirmities that afflict humans. Furthermore, when Ibn Fahd wrote in the sixteenth century his book on people with disabilities he called them dhawū al-‘āhāt as the title of his book indicated, Al-Nukat al-zirā‘ fī al-maw‘īza bi dhawī al-‘āhāt min al-ashrāf (Cute Anecdotes of Seeking Admonition from the Luminaries of People with Disabilities).

At any rate this was not the sole term used in classical literature in order to refer to people with disabilities in general. We give just a few examples. ‘Adbh

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261 Ibid, pp. 4 & 5.


264 Exploring the denotations and connotations of such terms without giving direct English
is a verbal noun denoting *shalal* (paralysis), *khabal* (insanity) and *ʿaraj* (lameness). The passive participle, *al-maʿdūb*, denoted the weak person who cannot hold fast on the riding camel.265 *Al-Ḍaʿūf* (pl. *al-ḍuʿāfāʾ*) literally means the weak. This term occurred in the Qurʾān (2:282) and was interpreted as referring to people with different sorts of mental and physical disabilities such as lunacy, dullness, speech disorders or missing one of the limbs and thus synonymous with *mukhdāj* clarified below.266 *Aḥl al-balāʾ*7 (people of affliction) was used, especially in sources on theological issues,268 to signify people with physical or mental disabilities.269 In this sense, this term was used in a number of Prophetic traditions such as the tradition speaking about the state of *aḥl al-balāʾ* and *aḥl al-ʿāfiyya* (people of wellness) on the day of Judgement.270

*Ashāb al-ʿaḍḥār* (people with excuses) was used, especially in sources on Islamic Jurisprudence, to refer to those people whose disabilities have been recognised as excuses from specific religious obligations.271 *Muḥāb* literally means smitten. It was sometimes used independently to denote a person afflicted with sorts of mental disability.272 However, it was often used with the preposition *bi* denoting smitten with or by. For instance *muḥāb bi ṣaḥārah* or *bi ḫadā ṣaynayhī* means smitten with disorders in eyesight and so on.273

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which can be pronounced also as nughāshiyy or naghghāsh means dwarf or someone who has a sort of physical or mental disability.274

Besides these terms denoting disabilities in general, other terms were used for physical rather than mental disabilities and vice versa. As for terms used to denote physical disabilities in particular, we can mention the following examples. Al-fālḍī (hemiplegia) defined as a disease hitting longitudinally one of the sides of the body, and maybe both, and causing paralysis.275 Khādīj, literally denotes incompleteness and the passive participle, mukhadj denotes the baby whose pregnancy period was incomplete and also the person whose body is incomplete, i.e., defective by missing one of the limbs or the senses.276 For instance, mukhadj al-yad means the one without a hand.277 Mīdan and mathīlūn have synonymous denotations.278 Nāqīs al-khatlq, literally means one whose creation is incomplete. The term was commonly used in Islamic literature referring to people suffering physical deficiency or defectiveness.279 Qiḍād originally denoted a disease striking the camels’ hips and thus tipping them to the ground. The passive participle, muqʿād denoted one afflicted with an illness in body so that he/she cannot walk.280 Terms like aʿrāf and aksāḥ have synonymous denotations.281 Finally, zamāna denoted a long-lived illness and comprised almost every defect such as blindness, lameness, amputated limbs and the like which hinder the person from earning his livelihood by his own work. The person afflicted with zamāna was called zāmin and zāmin.282

As for terms denoting mental disabilities in particular, Abū al-Qāsim Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 406/1015) for instance counted more than thirty terms in this regard such as majnūn, ahmaq, maʿūh (denoting especially one who is born mad), akhraq, etc.283
Noteworthy is that the terms denoting specific disabilities such as blindness (ʿamā), deafness (sānām), dumbness (khāras) and so forth have not been discussed here because there is no difference between the Arabic terms and their English equivalents in this regard. Just one point is in order here to avoid possible confusions. References to specific sorts of disabilities such as blindness, deafness, dumbness and the like occur frequently in the Qur'ān (e.g. 2:18 & 171, 6:39, 11:24, 13:19, 17:72, 47:23) in very negative contexts. Neglecting all commentaries on the Qur'ān and depending solely on internet sites containing a directory of the Qur'ān text with web search facility, the contemporary researcher Majid Turmusani made use of such verses to claim that the Qur'ān adopted a negative attitude against people with disabilities. For such Qur'ānic verses, Rispler-Chaim consulted two Qur'ān translations and two early commentaries which suggested that the verses refer to such disabilities in the metaphorical rather than the literal sense. However, she concluded that it remained uncertain for her whether these verses referred to real disabilities or metaphorical ones. Checking the context of these verses and consulting a large number of early and modern Qur'ān commentaries would show that the Turmusani’s claim was baseless and Rispler-Chaim’s doubts were unnecessary. The main context of such verses was a number of stubborn people who repeatedly refused to listen to the divine message conveyed by His Prophets. Due to this misbehaviour, they were punished by being deprived of God’s mercy because their eyesight, hearing and other senses did not lead them to grasp the Divine message. At the end they were like the deaf who cannot hear and the blind who cannot see and thus there was no hope anymore that their situation would get better and that they would give an ear to the prophets’ admonitions. At any rate, the Qur’ānic verses did not mean that those people cannot, in the literal sense, see or hear anymore. This metaphorical usage of disabilities was also very common among the Arabs and not a Qur’ānic prerogative. Qur’ānic references to people with disabilities, in the literal sense, made such people liable to legal alleviations rather than reproach or blame (e.g. 24:61, 48:17, 80:1-11). It is to be noted that Sufi literature and some modern studies such as the study by Sa’dī Abū Jayb made the Qur’ānic distinction between disabilities in the metaphorical sense and those in the literal sense a base for their viewpoint that the real disability which degrades one’s position is that one afflicting one’s heart and soul rather than...

284 Turmusani, Majid (2001), pp. 77 & 78.
one’s body.

The above-stated facts concerning the usage of English and Arabic terminology were the main guidelines in this study. The Arabic usage was the tool to search for the relevant discussions on people with disabilities in the classical Islamic sources. By the help of the English, such classical discussions were presented in a modern language considering the latest developments in the terminology used in this field. However the transliterated Arabic classical terms were sometimes used besides the modern English terms in cases in which doing otherwise could harm the clarity of the text.

Footnote: It is to be noted that more than one contemporary Muslim scholar found no harm in using the modern terminology – as long as they are understandable and inoffensive – and also used such terminology in their writings on disability in Islam and the titles of such writings. See for instance, Abū Jayb, Sa’dī (1402/1982), pp. 11-16; ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, al-Sayyid Muhammad (1418/1998), pp. 7-10; ‘Abd Allāh, Muhammad ‘Abd Allāh (1422/2001), p. 667.
Chapter Two: Speculative Theology

2.1 Introductory remarks

The existence of disabilities and other forms of suffering raised always perennial logistical questions such as “How to understand or justify the presence of nasty and painful things in the light of the fact that God the Compassionate, the Merciful is the Supreme Power and that He has control over this universe?” Providing an answer to this question has occupied the minds of people throughout human history. Some explanations were at the expense of God by denying His existence or by ascribing evil to one god and goodness to another, etc.

However, for thinkers who adopted the theistic position and believed in a revealed faith, there were strict guidelines to be followed in any resolution of the tension between the affirmation of God’s existence and the reality of the existent evil in what He created.

In the Islamic tradition, the first one to raise the aforementioned question was the arch-father of humanity, i.e., Adam. In a Prophetic tradition, it is related that God showed Adam his offspring, and he found remarkable discrepancies among them; rich and poor, strong and weak etc. In another tradition, Adam saw among his offspring people with leprosy (baraq), elephantiasis (judhám), blindness and other forms of illnesses. Adam asked his Lord, “Why did you do so with my offspring?” Another form of the question was “Would not you [better] have made them equal?” God answered, “[I did so] in order to be thanked” and in another version, “so that My gift will be thanked for.” The simplistic presentation given in this tradition did not put an end to this complicated issue. The question posed by Adam continued to be posed in Islamic tradition.

For a good understanding of the theological discussions on this issue, a note on the image of God, His attributes and names in the Islamic tradition is indispensable.

The main entry to God’s character in Islam is His names and attributes. Studying these names and attributes has always been a central point of concern for Muslim scholars. For instance, it is a habit that a chapter in the theology manuals and hadith collections is devoted to the Divine names and attributes.

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This holds true to the extent that a vast genre of literature was developed on God’s attributes and names. This genre set up, according to some scholars, an independent science known as *Iltm al-asma’* and *al-sifāʿ* (Science of [Divine] names and attributes).

The central point of agreement was the perfect and spotless character of God implying that no defect or deficiency can be attributed to Him, neither to His mercy, wisdom, justice nor omnipotence. This is traced back to more than one point.

First, His names are described in the Qur’an as *Al-Ḥusnā* indicating that these Names denote the fairest, most beautiful and perfect meanings. Secondly, there are a number of God’s names whose meaning clearly and directly indicate this perfect character. The most well-known name in this regard is *Al-Qaddās* (The Holy) which indicates the absence of all blemishes, and also that neither imagination nor sight can penetrate the mystery of God. Finally, the Qur’an harshly warns those who practice *ilḥād* concerning these Names, “…. but shun such men as use profanity in his names: for what they do, they will soon be requited” (8:180). Linguistically, *ilḥād* means deviating from the right path. Used in this context, it refers to those who deny any of these Names or their connotations. In short, the perfect character of God as depicted by these names was, for Muslim scholars, a red line that should not be overstepped.

In this vein, the overarching concern, while fathoming out the issue of pain and suffering, continued to be that if adversity and suffering are to be confronted, this must proceed in acknowledgment that no human catastrophe can call into question the omnipotence and all-embracing will of God, or place in doubt His justice, mercy and solicitude for the welfare of mankind. These remained red lines of which the transgression was not allowed.

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8 See Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, Muḥammad, (1), vol. 1, p. 130.

9 Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn al- (1400/1980), p. 47. God’s Names have been described as *Al-Ḥusnā* four times in the Qurʾān; 7:180, 17:110, 208, 59:24.


Two main groups transgressed these lines. The first group included those who were declared to be heretics and infidels. The main representatives of this group were Jahn b. Ṣafwān (executed 128/745), to whom the Jahmiyya is ascribed, the poet Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī (d. 1057), the philosopher Abū ʾĪsā al-Warrāq (d. ca. 247/861) and his pupil Ibn al-Rāwandi (died at the middle or at the end of the 4th/10th century). The joint thesis of this group concerning the justification of evil and pain was read by Muslim scholars as casting doubts about the perfect and spotless character of God.

Jahn b. Ṣafwān outspokenly denied that God is merciful. To him, this denial was the way to glorify God and distinguish Him from His creatures and also to understand suffering in life. It is related that he used to gather his followers by the lepers rotating in sufferings and started to deide by saying, “The most merciful of the merciful [i.e., God] does such things!” To him these evils showed that there was no space to speak about mercy but just about might and power void of mercy or wisdom. Such ideas cost Jahn b. Ṣafwān many charges and ultimately his life. The Ashʿarī heresiographer ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) says about him, “We condemn him as a heretic for all his errors and the Qadarites (Indeterminists) declare him a kāfīr (non-believer) for his assertion that God is the Creator of the acts of mankind. The various divisions of our community therefore coincide in charging him with unbelief.”

Doubts about the mercy of God were also uttered by the blind poet Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī. Deeming that slaughtering animals caused undeserved and unjust pain, he decided to stop eating meat and eggs. According to the historians, al-Maʿarrī lived more than eighty years, forty-five of these as a vegetarian. The Hanbali theologian and jurist Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751/1350) called him, “the one whose eyes and heart are blind (aʾmā al-baṣar wa al-baṣira).” Contrary to Ibn al-Qayyim, the late Egyptian scholar, ʿĀhmād al-Sharabāṣī (1918-1980), although disagreeing with al-Maʿarrī on this point, he opined that al-Maʿarrī adopted this point out of his tenderness, mercy and compassion for animals. Like al-Maʿarrī and for the same reasons, Abū ʾĪsā

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18 For an overall ideal of this sect, see Ibn al-Qayyim (1358/1939), vol. 1, p. 239; Subhan, Abūs (1937), pp. 221-227; Frank, Richard (1965), pp. 395-424.
al-Warrāq wrote his book *Al-Nawḥ ʿalī al-ḥayawānāt* (Lamenting the Animals) in which, according to Ibn al-Qayyim, the author disclosed his clear infidelity (*al-zandāqa al-surāḥ*). As for Ibn al-Rāwandī, he was accused of adopting a jeering and personal attack on God by claiming that God is vindictive, quarrelsome, weak in arithmetic etc. Speaking about this figure, Ibn al-Jawzī said that Ibn al-Rāwandī, “added his ill manners and tasteless humor, and spoke of the Creator in a way in which it would be inappropriate to speak even of one of the common people. We have not heard of any one who spoke of the Creator with such disrespect and jeering as this cursed one.” In another place, Ibn al-Jawzī described him as “the pillar of heresy” (*muʿtamid al-malāḥida wa al-zanādīqā*). The other transgression of the red lines, discussed earlier, was made by some Sufis. Contrary to the first group who were declared heretics and infidels because of their viewpoints, criticism of God expressed by the Sufis was permitted to a certain extent and did not end up by placing those who uttered such statements beyond the boundaries of Islam. That is because they criticized the divine government but continued to submit with resignation to what God had ordained and decreed. Additionally, their claimed intimacy with God was so well-founded and secure that it could not be disturbed by occasional audacities, like in the case of reproaches and lovers’ disputes, which sometimes occur between lovers but do not disturb their friendly relations. Besides this class of God’s friends, there were also the saintly or religious fools who benefited from ostensible lunacy as a special privilege when speaking to God more audaciously than other people. Some of them complained and criticized the activity of God. The story of the great mystic al-Shibli (d. 334/945) with the young madman in the lunatic asylum serves as a clear example here. The young madman begged al-Shibli to ask God, why He was tormenting him so much, why he was keeping him in a place away from home, far from his parents, hungry and shivering with cold. When al-Shibli was about to go, the young madman cried, “No, do not tell God anything! Otherwise He will make it worse. I shall not ask Him for anything. For nothing can impress Him. He is self-sufficient.” The German orientalist Hellmut Ritter (d. 1971) commented on such stories by saying, “Whatever happens to them is, in their eyes, always a direct action of God or on His behalf. Always they have to deal with God directly. And this direct and intimate relation to God characterizes them as genuinely mystic, as mystical fools, and distinguishes them from heretics and philosophers, who have become alienated from God altogether like Ibn al-Rāwandī and Abu al-ʿAlā al-Maʿarri.”

Apart from such exceptional cases, the main line in Islamic theology continued to be devoted to the belief in God’s perfect and spotless character including all divine names and attributes reflecting this character. Scholars of Islam remained unanimous on the fact that the existence of pains in life cannot be a valid reason for casting doubts on the perfect character of God. As stated in the introduction, two groups of Muslim scholars, namely Sufis and philosophers approached the phenomenon of pain, evil or afflictions in general as no real problem. Below, we give a summing up of their viewpoints in this regard.

2.1.1 Sufis
The method adopted by the Sufis was highly spiritual and focused on the nature of God and the spiritual relation that creatures can develop with Him as Creator. Al-Ghazālī’s starting point was that a proper knowledge of God and developing a spiritual relationship with Him, based mainly on mutual love, would eliminate any sense of being in trouble. The distinction between good and evil would be meaningless since everything coming from God was good.³⁰

From the side of God, an important sign of loving His servant was to make him an object of afflictions and difficulties (iḥtīlāl). The Prophet is reported to have said, “When God loves a servant, He will visit him with afflictions. When He loves him, with a fully-fledged love, He will preserve him.” Being asked what ‘preserve him means’, the Prophet said “God does not leave for him family or property.” One of the scholars said, “When you love God and notice that He is visiting you with afflictions, know that He wants to purify you.” One of the mystic teachers advised his student by saying, “O my son, do not aspire for love as He does not give it to anybody without testing him with afflictions first.”³¹

From the side of the human being, always named a servant (ʿabd), an important sign of being in love with God is to love what his Beloved (God) loves. Al-Ghazālī related the story of one of the Companions of the Prophet who, at the eve of a battle, invoked God to face in the battle a strong man to fight with and that this enemy would cut off his nose and ears and pierce his stomach. The purpose of this invocation was clarified by the Companion as follows, “When I meet you tomorrow [on the Day of Resurrection], You will ask me, O servant of God! who cut off your nose and ears? I will say, for the cause of You and Your Messenger. You will say, you have spoken the truth.”³²

It is clear here that disability is invoked because in the Hereafter it will prove the servant’s sincere love for God.

Such mutual spiritual love strengthens the bonds between the lover (servant) and the Beloved (God). Concerning physical pains, someone experiencing such a relationship finds himself in one of two main states. First, being immersed in love with God would remove the sense of physical pain. When severe

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³⁰ Kader, Abdel (1954), pp. 222 & 223.
³¹ Ghazali, Abū Ḥāmid, al- (1), vol. 4, p. 329.
afflictions befall a lover, they cannot cause him pain. In order to rationalize this argument, al-Ghazâlî recalled here the example of a fighter in the battlefield who, at the time of fear and wrath, does not feel pain because his mind is fully engaged at this critical moment. The same holds true for the case of one immersed in love with his beloved to the extent that he cannot feel physical pains such as the ladies who wounded their hands with knives and remained unconscious of the pain because they were in deep love with the Prophet Joseph as mentioned in the Qur'ân (12:31). The common rationale here is that when the mind is fully engaged with one thing, it cannot grasp another thing at the same time.

In the second state, one would feel the pain but be satisfied with it at the same time and even willing to experience it although one could detest it by nature. A mystic leader said in this respect, “He who sees the rewards of afflictions will not desire to get out of them.”

Al-Ghazâlî was aware of the eccentricity of experiencing these two states while having pain and troubles. To prove the validity and practicality of this rationale, he quoted a long list of statements and stories of pious figures. Here we just mention one example which has direct relevance to the case of disability. The well-known mystic Bishr al-Ḥâfî (d. 226/840) is related to have met, at the beginning of his religious life, a man afflicted with blindness, elephantiasis, madness and epilepsy. Bishr saw that ants were eating the man’s flesh and thus raised up his head, put it in his lap and tried to speak to him. The man recovered his consciousness and wondered, “Who is this curious man who interferes [his nose] between me and my Lord. Had he cut me into pieces, it would have done nothing but increasing my love for Him.”

While some mystics were content to pursue a pious life motivated by the love of God, others became involved in esoteric and even antinomian practices in which they hoped to experience oneness with God or to be “annihilated in His unity” as expressed in the mystic doctrine of fānâ (lit. passing away, effacement). In such a state, in which the Sufi experiences the passing away of the consciousness of all things, including him/herself, and the annihilation of the imperfect attributes of the creature and their replacement by the perfect attributes of God, the question about the wise purposes of evil in life will be

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irrelevant. That is because such an experience will leave no room for experiencing evil not to mention asking why it exists.

The real disability which men should deem as a real problem, according to this approach, is the type of disability afflicting one’s heart and soul rather than one’s body. One of the mystic authorities explained this point by saying “What heartbreak, one can suffer, would be greater than seeing the one with blindness in this life as a sighted person in the Hereafter, while the sighted one in this life will be blind?!”. This is a reference to the Qur’anic verses (20:124 & 125) speaking about the person who suffered this real disability which diverted him from the right path to God in this life. As a punishment, this person, who was sighted in the worldly life, gets afflicted with blindness on the Day of Resurrection. Modern Muslim scholars paid considerable attention to this type of disability. As mentioned above, the Syrian scholar Sa’di Abū Jayb said that the disability which impairs one’s soul and thus drives the person away from God is the true (haqiyya) disability. One’s status and dignity in Islam are to be injured by this type of disability rather than that afflicting one’s body.

2.1.2 Philosophers
A number of Muslim philosophers shed light on the necessity of understanding the general nature of suffering or evil on the one hand and the life we are living on the other hand. To them, comprehending these two dimensions would demonstrate that actually there is no real problem.

In this vein, suffering is simply an inevitable concomitant of existence in this life. So, it is something that must happen rather than that could happen.

Ibn Sinā, the main exponent of philosophers in this regard, advanced a Neoplatonic ontological analysis of the problem of evil, which aims to prove that God, the absolutely good First Cause, produces a good world. He said in this respect, “There is nothing whatsoever in the entire world, and in all its high and lower parts, which is excluded from the statement that God is the cause of its being and its origination in time, that God has knowledge of it and disposes it and that God wills it to exist […] For if this world were not compounded of good and evil forces and of producing of both righteousness and corruption in its inhabitants, the world order would never have been fulfilled completely.”

As for disabilities in particular such as the absence of an arm or sight, Ibn Sinā classified them under the category of essential evil (al-sharr bi al-dhāṭ) because they imply the lack of perfections that are fixed for the nature of human beings. Some of the examples of fixed perfection given by Ibn Sinā are

40 Alūṣī, Abū al-Fadl Mahmūd al-(1), vol. 16, p. 278.
organs, such as the human eye; some are capacities or powers, such as human sight; and some are the act or fulfilment of such powers, such as the act of seeing. The real perfection among these three is the act because, for instance, what is the human eye or its capacity to see, if it does not actually see? This type of evil, according to Ibn Sinā is evil in all respects, “As for the lack of perfection and health [of the harmed thing], it is evil not only in relation to [the harmed thing] so that it would have a presence by virtue of which it is not an evil. Rather, its very presence is nothing but an evil in it, and in the manner of being evil. Thus, blindness cannot be except in the eye; and, inasmuch as it is in the eye, it cannot but be evil, with no aspect to it by virtue of which it would be other than evil.”

In his bid to justify the existence of such evils, Ibn Sinā placed himself within the aforementioned limits by assuring his firm belief in God’s absolute goodness which leads to providence (ʿināya) whose presence is evident. Thus, the explanation should not be at the expense of the divine perfection of God. The question now is how can we understand the reality of this world including evils in the light of God’s absolute goodness?

Ibn Sinā advanced two main arguments both of which are applicable to the case of disabilities. First, essential evil, to which the phenomenon of disability belongs, is privation of being. For instance, disability is privation of ability which is being and blindness is privation of seeing which is being. Because essential evil is non-being, it is uncaused. In other words, it cannot have a cause for a cause is always the cause of something. By “cause” here is meant an agent or efficient cause, not just any principle required for the production of an effect. The agent or efficient cause always produces something and not nothing. It follows that no being, including God can be a cause of essential evil.

However, whether considered as being or non-being, human beings still experience suffering because of the disability. This was the criticism of Fākhūr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210). He countered Ibn Sinā’s ontological and cosmological theodicy with the very human experience of suffering. This is what “minds and hearts are perplexed by” and consequently any attempted theodicy ought to address. Ibn Sinā’s theodicy merely circumvented the real problem of evil. Al-Rāzī wondered why Ibn Sinā attempted a theodicy in the first place, given that he is not a moral realist and that he did not consider the Creator to be a voluntary agent, in which case He cannot be morally responsible for His acts. His introduction of the terms “good” and “evil” into the context of ontology is superfluous (fudūl) and inapt. Instead, al-Rāzī added, Ibn Sinā should have left the attempt to justify evil in this world to those for whom it is a real problem, since they adhere to these two doctrines, namely the Muʿtazila. However, this argument and the following one are meant rather to

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46 Ibid., p. 70.
47 Ibid., p. 81.
48 Ibid., p. 127.
49 Ibid., pp. 81 & 148. See also Ghoraba, Hammouda (1956), pp. 81-83.
minimize the problem than to solve it. By the last argument, it will get clear that Ibn Sinā also sees no real problem. It is to be noted here that the mystic Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) advocated this argument of Ibn Sinā in his work Ṭāj al-rasāʾīl (The Crown of Epistles) written in 600/1203. He said in this regard, “Existence in general is purely good and non-existence is purely evil. However, such evil that may exist is imbued with good [...] For one cannot appreciate anything without relating it to its opposite [...] The whole world then enjoys complete happiness.” Again this approach is rejected by the modern researcher Adīb Nāyif Diyāʾ (PhD Cambridge University, 1981). He criticized Ibn al-ʿArabī for following the footsteps of traditional philosophy which seems to be incompatible with the conventions of common sense and with the reality of human suffering, quite apart from the obscurity of “nothingness” as a concept.52

The second argument advanced by Ibn Sinā in this regard is that there is more good than evil in the universe, “Evil only strikes individuals, and at certain times. The species are preserved. Except for one kind of evil [i.e., accidental evil], real evil does not extend to the majority of individuals.” This is of course easily applicable to people with disabilities that represent a minority among the populations on earth. However, Ibn Sinā’s view in this respect was not generally accepted by other philosophers. For instance, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 313/925) opined that evil is prevalent in this world, a contention which follows from his notion that pleasure is purely relief from pain.54 Now, suppose that the evils are few, why would this life be free from these few evils?

Here comes the third argument of Ibn Sinā, namely, that the universal order cannot be sustained without the occurrence of evil. “This was not possible in a mode of existence such as this, even though it was possible in the absolute existence, since that mode of absolute existence free from evil is other than this one.” By extending this notion to disability, one would say that being human necessitates that one would be prone to both ability and disability. If we want to remove disability, the human being will not be a human being anymore. In this vein, although God’s unrestricted power is not denied explicitly, it is denied implicitly. If God is the cause of everything, including this sphere, and if this sphere cannot be other than it is, it would follow that its cause has no power to make it other than it is. Everything that God does is done necessarily. It is “necessity” that seems to have the upper hand in every action in the universe, including the divine ones. God, like everything else, is an instrument in the hands of necessity. It is true that Ibn Sinā speaks of God’s will and sometimes of God’s choice, but even God’s will runs by necessity.57 Despite his...

disagreement with Ibn Sinā in the aforementioned arguments, Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī inclined to concede the logicality of this specific argument in his *Al-Mabāḥīth al-mashrūqīyya* (Oriental Themes).\(^{58}\)

### 2.2 Anti-Theodicy Approach

The proponents of this approach laid more emphasis on the second side of God’s character, especially God’s self-sufficiency and omnipotence, than on the first side. To them, the main manifestation of God’s perfect character was His omnipotence and limitless power.

Exposing the main articles of the Ash‘arī school, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī elaborated this theme as follows, “We assert that God has prowess (*quwwa*), as He says “Saw they not that God who create them mightier than they in prowess” (Qur’ān 41:14) […] and that there is not good nor evil on earth, save what God wills and that things exist by God’s will and that not a single person has the capacity to do anything until God causes him to act and we are not independent of God nor can we pass beyond the range of God’s knowledge; and that there is no creator save God and the works of human beings are things created and decreed by God. He has says ‘God has created you and what you make’ (Qur’ān 37:94). Human beings have not the power to create anything but are themselves created […] Human beings do not control for themselves what is hurtful or what is helpful, except what God wills and that we ought to commit our affairs to God and assert our complete need and dependence upon Him.”\(^{59}\) Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), one of the towering personalities in the Ash‘arīte School, reiterated this theme by affirming that God can inflict pain on man – indeed He can torment man – without hope of reward and for no reason.\(^{60}\) In this sense, all sorts of disabilities and by default sufferings and evils are to be traced back to God. He is the one who created them, willed them and did them and man has no role in this regard. The question then is, why does God create and will all these evils? What is the wise purpose (*ḥikmā*) behind all this? Where is the justice of God in this case?

The Ash‘arites in fact condemned posing questions to God because He is the Almighty who runs His own kingship (*mulk*) as He pleases and thus is not to be questioned.\(^{61}\) This point is also advocated by the Zāhirī scholar Ibn Ḥāzīm (d. 456/1064).\(^{62}\) Furthermore, searching for the wise purposes (*ḥikmā*) of God’s actions is not only meaningless, but also grave disobedience to Him.\(^{63}\)


\(^{59}\) Ash‘arī, Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Ḥusnā’l al- (1940), pp. 50 & 51.

\(^{60}\) See Ormsby, Eric L. (1984), p. 237, quoting from Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid (1334/1916), vol. 1, p. 99. It will be noticed down that Imam al-Ghazālī himself, in the light of criticism directed to the Ash‘arītes that they have neglected the role of divine wisdom, he pronounced emphasis on the role of wisdom but this was something repugnant to many of his fellow Ash‘arītes, for whom any attempt to rationalise God’s actions was suspect. See Ormsby, Eric L. (1984), p. 47. Cf. Ibn al-Wazīr, Muhammad b. Ibrāhīm (1987), vol. 1, 202.


The Ashʿarites considered this contrary to the perfect and spotless character of God. Defending their contention, the Ashʿarites advanced more than one argument.64

First, if God’s act is precipitated by a cause (ʿillā) then that cause is originated (ḥādithā) and requires a cause, and so on ad infinitum. If God acted or originated on account of a cause or wise purpose, this would entail an endless chain or infinite regress (tasaksul) of causes, which the Ashʿarīs deem impossible.

Second, it implies need in God. They argued that one acting by virtue of a specific cause will be perfected by it, because if the occurrence of the cause were not better than its nonexistence, it would not be a cause. One who is perfected by another is imperfect in himself. This is impossible for God. It is clear that the Ashʿarīs’ concern to deny need in God is rooted in their belief that God’s acts are completely free and unbound by any necessity. A God who acts for a wise purpose must be acting out of prior lack and imperfection.

The third argument was directed specifically against the Muʿtazīlī account which maintained that God acts for a cause that is disjoined (munfaṣīl) from His essence. The Ashʿarīs countered that this cause must have some impact on God; otherwise it would not be a cause. If then it is disjoined from God, His acting for its sake implies that the cause – which is something outside of Himself – perfects Him. Conversely, if the cause is “subsisting in Him” (qaʿim biḥ), the Ashʿarīs argue, “It necessarily follows that He is a substrate (mahāl) for originated events (ḥawādith).”

It is noteworthy in this regard to state that by denying the wise purposiveness of God’s acts, the Ashʿarīs did not deny the name of God, al-Hākim (All-Wise). To them, God was undoubtedly All-Wise but they had their own specific understanding of this name. Al-Ghazālī explained this name by saying, “Al-Hākim is the one who has wisdom. Wisdom is equivalent to knowledge of superior things through the highest modes of knowledge [...] He is the truly wise because He knows the most sublime things by the most sublime modes of knowing.”65 Thus God’s wisdom was, to the Ashʿarīs, knowledge and does not necessarily entail purposiveness in His acts. The same holds true for the name al-ʿAdl (All-Just). They did not deny the name but they had their own understanding of its purport, i.e., justice which they saw as expression of God’s will, only. The prominent Ashʿarī scholar, Ṭāḥṣib al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) defined this term as “what the doer can do (mā li-āl-tāflī an yatʿalāh)”. On the other hand, the antonym of justice, i.e., injustice is “Dispose of someone else’s property without his consent (taṣarruf ﷽ milk al-

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64 The Ashʿarī arguments in this regard are sporadic throughout their sources and manuals. For one of the extensive and detailed presentation of these arguments, see Īlī, Ḥādīṣ al-Dīn Ṭāḥṣib al-Rahmān b. Ahmad al- (1997), vol. 1, pp. 422-474. These arguments have been summed up in three main points by the Hanbalī scholar Ibn Taymiyya and translated by Jon Hoover. See Ibn Taymiyya (1406/1985), vol. 1, pp. 144 & 145; Hoover, Jon (2002), pp. 85 & 86.

In this sense, it is inconceivable to classify any of God’s acts as injustice because He runs His own kingship as He pleases and He is in no need of other’s permission to act.67

Another important point in this regard, in which the Ashʿarites contradicted the Muʿtazilites, was that God’s acts are not subject to the human intellect and thus cannot be measured thereby. For instance, the value of justice, injustice and so forth are to be specified solely by the Lawgiver, i.e., God. Accordingly, God does not command an act because that act is just and good; it is His command (anur) which makes it just and good.68 One of the main advocates of this argument at the present times is the Syrian scholarly Muhammad Saʿid Ramaḍān al-Būṭī (b. 1929).69

In this theological framework, the Ashʿarites would not face considerable troubles in explaining the existence of disabilities, evils and sufferings. For instance, speaking about torturing infants in this life with leprosy which cuts off their hands and their feet, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī stressed that the Muʿtazilī theology cannot explain the justice of God in such a case. However, such an act is just and wise, according to the Ashaʿārī theology, because God is running His own Kingship.70 Recently, this approach was advocated by G. Legenhansen stating that this way “solves the problem of evil not by limiting God, but by exalting Him above human morality.”71

2.3 Pro-Theodicy Approach

To the proponents of this approach, the divine perfection of God’s character is to be measured by His oneness and justice. From these two qualities, the Muʿtazilī derived their name, the Partisans of Justice and Oneness (Ahl al-ʿAdl wa al-Tawḥīd). Justice in the Muʿtazilī thought is even more central, for if Oneness describes God’s existence as One, justice is His very essence. It is His unique nature that distinguishes Him from everything else.72 This holds true to the extent that the Muʿtazilī were also known as al-ʿAdliyya (Advocates of Justice).73 Like the Muʿtazilī, the Shīʿa have selected justice, out of all attributes to be a principle of their creed. They believe that justice is the basis of God’s acts, both in the ordering of the universe and in the establishing of laws.74

In the Shīʿī tradition, justice included naturally the avoidance of oppression and all foolish acts. Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) explained God’s justice by saying, “Justice in the case of God means that you should not ascribe

anything to God that if you were to do it would cause you to be blamed and reproached.” Al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq defined justice as requiring a good act with a good act and an evil act with an evil act.75 Besides avoiding injustice and foolish acts, justice also implies benefiting others.76 Doing service for others, appears also an important element of justice in Muʿtazilī thought. The prominent theologian ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025) defined a just act as an act performed by man not necessarily for his own advantage but for the advantage of another man for whom the act is intended. Thus just acts may, generally speaking, be defined as those acts which promote the welfare of other men, and the man who performs them would be called a just man.77

As for wisdom, it has always been seen as closely connected with justice. The modern Shiʿī scholar, Sayyid Mujtaba Musavi Lārī (b. 1314/1935), says in this regard, “When we see that God is just, it means that His all-knowing and creative essence does nothing that is contrary to wisdom and benefit.”78 In this sense, all God’s acts are both just and wise.79 The Muʿtazilīs unanimously declare that God does nothing without wisdom, and in all He does, He intends benefit.80 The Muʿtazilīs affirm that God acts for wise purposes (ḥikam), otherwise He would be aimless and foolish. However, they also tried to uphold God’s complete lack of need by clarifying that the sole beneficiaries in purposive divine acts are His creatures. God created human beings to profit them. God does not act in self-interest because He has no need.81

The other side of God’s character, mainly revealed in His omnipotence, occupied a subsidiary role in the thought of this approach. Attributes indicating God’s omnipotence were seen by Muʿtazilī scholars as something implied in the fact that God exists and they do not represent a separate category of attributes. Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. 226/840-1)82 argued that the mere fact that God exists implies that He is knowledgeable and powerful. Other Muʿtazilīs like ʿĀmir b. Ṭ. ʿAmr (d. ca. 200/915) and al-Naẓẓām (d. ca. 231/845),83 said that God’s essence implies knowledge and power, as it is inconceivable that God is ignorant and powerless.84 At any rate, this divine omnipotence cannot supersede or deviate from the divine justice and wisdom. Some of the Muʿtazilīs such as al-Naẓẓām and al-Jāḥīz (d. 255/868-9)85 denied that God has the capacity to

85 On him, see Pellat, Ch. (3) (2003), vol. II, pp. 385-387.
do injustice. However, ‘Abd al-Jabbar and later Mu‘tazilites pointed out that this would be inconsistent with God’s omnipotence. However, it remains inconceivable that God will ever do injustice because it is contrary to His perfection to associate His name with injustice.86 Thus in one way or another, God’s omnipotence is allowed to work only within the realm of His justice and wisdom. For instance, divine wisdom as an essential attribute of God contradicts committing any bad act (qabīl), a premise which leads to the conclusion that such acts are impossible (muhāf) to be done by a wise God. By the same token what is impossible in a specific case means that it is beyond the ability to be done (ghayr maqḍūn). The Shi‘i perspective reiterates the same theme by opining that the Divine Might relates to things which are only possible. Things that are rationally impossible are entirely outside the sphere of His power. It is related that someone asked ‘Ali b. Abī Ṭālib, “Is your Lord able to fit the whole world into a hen’s egg?” He answered: “God Almighty is, indeed, able to do anything, but what you ask is something impossible.” So, although God’s sacred essence is utterly free of all impotence and inability, it is meaningless and irrational to ask whether God can do something inherently impossible.87 Daud Rahbar (b. 1927, Pakistan) is a good example of modern figures supporting this tendency. He believes that God’s justice is the dominant theme of the Qur‘ān.88 In Rahbar’s theodicy, the world exists to demonstrate the justice of God. To him, the full display of justice requires good and evil both, the former for reward and the latter for punishment.89 When criticized for limiting God’s power by making room for human responsibility in evil, he countered, “God Himself exercises self-restraint from evil and thus limits His own power. To know Him as a moral Being in Qur‘anic terms we must know Him as such, and not as a Force ‘let loose.’”90

Finally God’s justice and wisdom are to be measured by the same scale as the one applied to human actions. This is based on the analogy to be drawn between the Present world (al-shāhīd) and the Absent (Divine) world (al-ghāʾib) because of which the justice, wisdom and goodness of God’s acts can be recognized by human intellect.91

According to these doctrines, whether disability or afflictions in general occurred due to man’s action, other people’s action or due directly to God and beyond human control, there should be a specific wise purpose that can be discerned by the human intellect. The main question will thus be; what are the wise purposes of befalling people with afflictions? For a systematic presentation of answers provided to this question within this approach, a distinction will be made between persons with legal liability (mukallatūn)92 who thus can be

87 Lar, Sayyid Mujaba Musavi (2003), pp. 124 & 125.
92 By “mukallatūn”, we refer here to those who can be punished for violating the laws. In Islamic tradition, one falls under this category by being a human with sanity (‘aqīl) who reached the age of
responsible for the evils they committed and those without legal liability (ghayr mukallafu) such as children, insane people and animals.

2.3.1 Afflictions Befalling those with Legal Liability (Mukallafu)

Basing the discussion here on Mu'tazilite doctrines, disabilities occurring in this life, as can be traced within the broad concept of afflictions, can be divided – on the basis of the liable agent of affliction – into three main categories, namely, a) self-inflicted, b) inflicted by humans or animals and c) inflicted by God. Each of the disabilities is to be judged as a) good (hasan) and just (ャadл) or b) bad (qabīl), where bad can be further categorized 1) unjust (zulm) or 2) a useless act ('abath).

To the Mu'tazilites, inflicting pain in general is bad (šarr) but it is still possible to inflict harm in such a way that the act in question is judged as good. This means that doing harm can be good only by exception. 'Abd al-Jabbar (d. 415/1025) pointed this out by stating that doing harm is an injustice unless this harm:

- Involves a profit greater than the harm,
- Averts a harm greater than the inflicted harm,
- Is deserved, or
- Is done on the assumption that it is one of the three cases as mentioned above,93
- If the harm is done to someone else, the act must be done with the intention of providing a profit, and
- If the harmed person is an adult of sound mind, then he must give his consent to be harmed for this profit.94 However, in the case of living beings that are not in the full possession of mental faculties and are put into one's care, it is deemed good if one harms them when one assuming that this will lead to a profit for them in the future or that it will avert an expected harm.95

Thus self-inflicted disability or disability inflicted by others is good as long as such conditions are fulfilled. However, disability inflicted to avert an equal harm suffered is deemed a useless act ('abath).96 Basing our discussion on what has been stated here, the three sorts of afflictions can be analysed as following:

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The first type, namely, those self-inflicted afflictions, which do not involve gaining a profit or averting harm greater than the harm suffered, is deemed by the Muʿtazilites a bad act because it is a form of injustice (zulm) to oneself and thus not compensated by God or anyone else. However such pain is to be compensated if it is done with the intention of averting a harm, because the person in that case does not obtain a profit that can take the place of compensation. Also self-inflicted affliction is to be recompensed in case it is done on the assumption that it will yield a profit in the future but it did not do so. In these two cases pain is to be compensated by God.

As for the second type in this regard, viz., afflictions inflicted by others, the main rule is that the initiative to inflict pain or cause disability determines who compensates. Thus both mukallaṭ and non-mukallaṭ must compensate for the pain they inflict on another living being even if he/she does not know that they are entitled to compensation equal to the quantity of pain. However, humans cannot know precisely how much compensation they must make for pain. This means that they are unable to fulfil the obligation to compensate for pain. Thus it is God who will mediate in executing the process of compensation. God is Omniscient and therefore knows exactly how much compensation must be given for each pain. ʿAbd al-Jabbar opined that this mediation is obligatory for God: after having enabled a wrongdoer (zalim) to wrong someone else and not having prevented him from doing so, God is obliged to pass a verdict on this wrongdoer and to administer justice between the wrongdoer and the wronged (maẓlum).

God is going to administer justice in this case by taking the required quantity of compensation from the person who inflicted the pain and transfer it to the person who suffered the pain. It is to be noted that administering justice in this respect does not mean that God may take part of a wrongdoer’s reward and transfer it to the person wronged by him. That is because reward can be earned only by fulfilling a difficult task. Administering justice in this regard will be done by transferring the compensation from one account to another.

ʿAbd al-Jabbar explained this by saying that every living being is entitled to Divine compensation for pain and harm that God made him suffer. From this

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theory, it can be concluded that God is a sort of bookkeeper, who keeps the accounts of the compensation that each creature is entitled to receive from Him and transfers amounts from one account to another. However, in the light of this theory, what would be the case of the malicious person who inflicted so much pains and harms on other living beings that he does not have enough “credit, i.e. in the Hereafter” to be transferred to all those who have been wronged by him? For this question, three main answers are provided by Mu’tazilite theologians with a common stress on the fact that people who are wronged must be compensated anyhow:

**The first**: If these people who have been wronged cannot get compensation from that malicious person, God will ensure that they are compensated by Him as a donation (tasfi’dul) from Him.

**The second**: If a wrongdoer does not have enough compensation to compensate for crimes that are committed on his orders, he must compensate only for crimes he has committed with his own hands. In that case, those who acted on his command must themselves make compensation for these acts unless they acted under constraint.

**The third**: It is a sort of exaggeration to think that some people even if they are tyrants could have insufficient divine compensation for all of their acts of injustice. ʿAbd al-Jabbār advocated this idea by saying that we cannot know how many sorrow, pain, misfortune and terrifying events have happened to this wrongdoer and how much compensation will be given by God for these sufferings.

The only exception concerning the obligation of compensating for the pain inflicted is made for pain that is not inflicted on one’s initiative. Thus, if a judge wrongly decreed that someone’s hand be amputated in a *hadd* punishment and the executor carried this decree out, then it is the judge who must compensate the wrongly condemned person and not the executor because amputation here is done on the initiative of the judge. Also the pain that leads to a greater profit needs not be compensated because the profit acquired

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105 ʿAbd al-Jabbār, al-Qāḍī Abū al-Ḥasan (1380-1389/1960-1969), vol. XIII, p. 540; Heemskerk, Margaretha T. (1995), p. 184. This suggestion was rejected by ʿAbd al-Jabbār on the ground that giving the compensation as a donation to the person wronged is as if a donation is given to the wrongdoer and then transferred to the person wronged. It is, ʿAbd al-Jabbār declares, unthinkable that God would make donations to wrongdoers. For further details on this point, see ʿAbd al-Jabbār, al-Qāḍī Abū al-Ḥasan (1380-1389/1960-1969), vol. XIII, pp. 543 & 544.


replaces the compensation. Thus, a surgeon by performing a surgery, in which he excised his patient’s gangrenous hand, is not obliged to pay compensation. That is because the profit acquired; saving the patient’s life by preventing the gangrene affecting other parts of the body, is greater than the harm caused by the disability inflicted.

As for the moment of providing compensation and its duration, this is to be discussed when we speak about compensation provided by God for harm and the pain He inflicted on living beings.

The purpose of setting the aforementioned conditions was to draw an analogy between the Present world (al-shāhīd) and the Absent (Divine) world (al-ghāʾib) and finally to confirm that the third type of afflictions, those inflicted by God, are always good; the good that can be recognised by human intellect. However, such analogy was not always exact or without problems. For instance, three prominent Muʿtazilite theologians, namely, ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025), Mānikdim (d. 425/1034) and Ibn Mattawayh (d. ca 468/1075) put aside the aforementioned second and fourth conditions in the case of pain imposed by God. They crossed out the possibility that God’s infliction of pain is good because it averts a greater harm. They pointed out that this would be in conflict with God’s Omnipotence. Also the possibility that God’s infliction of pain is good because it is done on the supposition that it involves a profit or averts harm is dropped. That is because Allah’s Omniscience implies that supposition (zann) is impossible for Him.

Also, by applying such an analogy between the Present world and the Absent World, the last condition placed the Muʿtazila in an awkward position. How could God’s imposition of illnesses on adult people of sound mind be deemed good while they did not give Him the consent to be harmed? Muʿtazilite scholars provided three answers to this question:

The first answer was that the relation between God and humans is like the relation between the caretaker and children, madmen and animals under his custody. The caretaker is entitled to inflict pain on them without their consent if the pain would lead to a profit greater than the pain or avert harm greater than the pain, because they are put into his care and he knows what is best for them. Hence God does not have to ask for the humans’ consent when He imposes pain on them. That is because it is God who created them and gave them life and is therefore in the best position to know what is good for them.

This solution is rejected by other Muʿtazilite scholars. For instance, ʿAbd al-Jabbār saw that this solution was in conflict with the theory that God imposes

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obligations on humans. He argued that this presupposes that they are adults and of sound mind, otherwise it would be wrong to impose obligations on them. That they are adults of sound mind implies that they should give their consent.

The second answer is based on thinking out a situation in which it is good to harm an adult of sound mind, even if he has not given his consent beforehand. Such a situation is obtained, if the compensation for the harm is so great that it is indisputable that all adults of sound mind (mukallaf), different as they are, would choose to bear this harm to obtain the compensation awarded for it, and the person who would not, must be considered as not being of sound mind. 115

The third answer was suggested by Ibn Mattawayh who believed that those who are mukallaf have given God some kind of silent permission to inflict pain on them. His opinion is that if they know God, they also know that God will certainly compensate them for the pain He inflicts on them, and that He will make compensation so great that each of them would choose to bear the pain for it. To him, this amounts to giving permission to God to inflict pain. 116

Apart from such nuances, Mu’tazilite scholars agree that disability – or harm in general – inflicted by God on the mukallafūn is good because it is either 1) deserved punishment or 2) because it involves a profit or benefit (maṣlaḥa). 117

2.3.1 Wise Purposes (Hikam)

2.3.1.1 Deserved Punishment

Inflicting pain as a deserved punishment is a point of disagreement among the Mu’tazilite theologians. There are two main opinions in this respect:

The first, articulated by Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/915), 118 is that pain can be a divine punishment that God inflicts in advance, like the prescribed punishments (ḥudūd). Ḥadd punishments are only given to Muslims, so it is also possible that illnesses which unbelievers suffer are punishments inflicted on them instead of ḥadd punishments. 119 However, he made an exception for illnesses suffered by living beings that according to his doctrine cannot have deserved punishment, such as prophets and animals. Prophets cannot have deserved punishment from God because they do not commit grave sins and animals are not legally responsible (non-mukallafūn). 120 Abū ʿAlī therefore

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118 He is Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥāb al-Jubbāʾī, on him see Ibn al-ʿImād (1), vol. 2, p. 97.
believed that the prophets’ illnesses are a trial (mihna) imposed on them by
God and not a lutf (Divine Assistance).121 The difference between lutf and trial
is that a lutf can motivate not only the person who suffers but other persons as
well, whereas a trial only concerns the person who suffers.122

The second was held by Abū Ḥāshim (d. 321/933)123 and ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025). In this regard ʿAbd al-Jabbār was initially keen to reject the idea that
illnesses and pains are deserved punishments as was believed by whom he
called the adherents of the transmigration of souls (ašhāb al-tanāsukh).124 By
this, ʿAbd al-Jabbār refers to those who believed that living beings suffer in this
life because of their bad acts in their previous lives. Consequently, those who
had sinned less and obeyed more were given a body more beautifully formed
and their sufferings were less. Those whose sins were more were given a body
less beautiful in form and suffered more.125

The two main proponents of this opinion stated that illnesses in general can
not be intended as punishment. They cited two arguments in support of this
contention. First, it is wrong to punish someone unless he knows what he is
being punished for. Someone who is ill does not know whether his illness is a
punishment, and even if he did understand that it was a punishment, he would
not know which offence he was being punished for.126 Such a person may think
that an injustice is being done to him and this may prompt him to do bad acts.
This makes it clear, they add, that illnesses are not a punishment from God.127

Even the illnesses of people who are aware that they have failed to fulfil the
obligations of God’s taklīf (charge) and know that they deserve punishment are
not a punishment. Inflicting illnesses on them as a punishment conflicts with
the theory of God’s taklīf. According to this theory, God threatens those who
fail to fulfil the obligations with a severe punishment. This means that their

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123 He is Abū Ḥāshim ʿAbd al-Salām ibn Abī ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī, on him see Dhahabī, Muhammad b.
    Ahmad b. ʿUthmān al- (1413/1992), vol. 15, pp. 53 & 64.
125 The most well-known Muʿtazilī theologians who accept the doctrine of metempsychosis is
    Ahmad b. Khābiṭ [according to other readings Ahmad ibn Hāʾīf, on the different readings
    of Ahmad’s father, see Baghdādī, Abū Maʿṣūr ʿAbd al-Qāhir al- (1920), p. 260 ff.; Friedlaender,
    Israel (1968), 10 ff.] and his followers (al-Khābiṭiyya or al-Hāʾītīyya). See Şahrastānī, Muhammad
    b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al- (1416/1996), vol. 1, pp. 74-77; Şahrastānī, Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm
    667; Baghdādī, Abū Maʿṣūr ʿAbd al-Qāhir al- (1920), p. 93; Baghdādī, Abū Maṣūr ʿAbd al-
    Qāhir al- (1977), p. 255. Also among the Muʿtazilīs who advocated this doctrine are al-Faḍl al-
    Ḥadathī and his followers al-Hadathīyya, Ahmad ibn Ayūb ibn Yanūṣ and Muḥammad ibn
    Ahmad al-Qahṭābī, see Baghdādī, Abū Maṣūr ʿAbd al-Qāhir al- (1977), p. 255; Baghdādī, Abū
punishment must be more than only suffering illnesses in this world. It implies that they will be punished in the Hereafter. Secondly, prophets and pious people suffer from illnesses, although they cannot have deserved punishment from God. This is an indication that illnesses are not a punishment.

However, 'Abd al-Jabbār – one of the proponents of the second opinion – does not deny that there is pain in this world inflicted by God, or on His command, that is meant to be a deserved punishment. However, in these cases the punished persons know why they are punished. An example of such a deserved punishment from God is a hadāl punishment, although it is carried out by humans, it is considered to come from God because it is done on His command.

In this regard it was asked what God would do in the case of a believer whose hand had been cut off and who then apostatised, and conversely in the case of an infidel whose hand had been cut off and who then came to believe. The simplest response was that he would be compensated by God; another hand would be substituted. By other Mu'tazilites it was held that the hand of the apostatising believer would be attached to the repentant infidel, while the infidel's hand (which had been amputated while he still disbelieved) would be affixed to the apostate. Still others rejected this on the ground that the believer and disbeliever are not “the hand and the leg”.

2.3.1.1.2 Divine Assistance (Luṭf)

132 It is difficult to find an adequate translation for this term. Abrahamov held that translating luṭf as “Divine Assistance” is preferable to “Grace”. See Abrahamov, Binyamin (1993), p. 43, note 16. But it can be objected that this translation (Divine Assistance) suggests that luṭf is only produced by God. However in the Mu'tazilite theology, humans can also produce alṭāf (the plural of luṭf) by their acts such as performing the Prayer (Ṣalāh) in the sense that it motivates other people to be obedient as well. See 'Abd al-Jabbār, al-Qāḍī Abū al-Hasan (1380-1389/1960-1969), vol. XV, p. 22. Luṭf therefore may be translated as “Actions that assist and motivate people to fulfilling the obligations of God's taklīf” but this translation is not feasible because it is too long. Here “Divine Assistance” has been chosen in this regard due to the fact that the term luṭf is used in a context referring mainly to acts produced by God only. For further details on this point, see Heemskerk, Margaretha T. (1995), p. 157. On the definitions of the term luṭf given by Mu'tazil theologians, see Ash'arī, Abū al-Hasan 'Ali b. Ismā'il al- (1), p. 246; Ash'arī, Abū al-Hasan 'Ali b. Ismā'il al- (1), p. 246; Shahrastānī, Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al- (1416/1996), vol. 1, p. 79 & 94; Shahrastānī, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al- (1848), pp. 56 & 57; 'Abd al-Jabbār, al-Qāḍī Abū al-Hasan (1380-1389/1960-1969), vol. VI/1, p. 188; Heemskerk, Margaretha T. (1995), p. 156. It is to be noted also that as regards bestowing luṭf upon man, the necessity of this is disputed in the Mu'tazilite School. See Ash'arī, Abū al-Hasan 'Ali b. Ismā'il al- (1), pp. 246 & 247; Shahrastānī, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al- (1416/1996), p. 57. On the Shi'i doctrine on this point, see 'Ukbarī, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān al- (Known as al-Shaykh al-
As for the nature of the benefit (maslaha) ensuing from God’s infliction of pain, opinions in the Mu’tazili School fluctuate between lutf (Divine Assistance) and ’ıwad (Compensation). Broadly speaking, several of God’s actions towards humans have a relation to God’s taklīf (charging).133 God imposes obligations on all adults of sound mind (mukallaftūn) with the purpose of giving them the opportunity to earn a reward.134 This means that if God’s purpose is to give people the opportunity to earn a reward, He must impose on them something difficult but not so difficult that it is impossible, because it is bad (qabili) to impose an impossible task and of course God does not perform the bad.135 Thus God is obliged to do certain things and acts to enable people to fulfill that which He has imposed on them.136 These acts are performed with the purpose of a) informing people about which obligations are imposed on them or b) motivating them to fulfill these obligations. These acts of God are deemed altf (the plural of lutf). For instance God’s sending of prophets to the people in order to inform them about obligations imposed on them is a lutf.137

In this sense, pain from God is an important lutf and a warning (’tibār) as well. Abū Hāshim argues that God’s infliction of pain would be a useless act (’abath) if it was not a warning.138 Mankdīl added that the warning is intended either for the person in pain or for others or for both.139 By this, Mu’tazilite scholars could mean that pains in this life warn people for a painful punishment in Hell if they fail to fulfill the obligations imposed by God.140 Although there is no direct reference specifically to disability in the Mu’tazilite sources, one can still think of a relevant argument. For instance, disabilities could be deemed as warning people against those sorts of disabilities taking place in the Hereafter. For instance, the Qur’ān states that those who went astray from the Straight Path in this life will be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection having blindness, dumbness and deafness, “It is he whom Allah guides, that is on true Guidance; but he whom He leaves astray – for such wilt thou find no protector

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133 Taklīf is the verbal noun of kallāta. Taklīf is defined by the Mu’tazilite scholar Abū ’Alī al-Jubbā’ī as “Willing an act [to be done] that involves discomfort (kułā) and trouble (mashāqa) to the person on whom it is imposed” or “Commanding and willing something that involves discomfort for the person who is commended to do it.” See ’Abd al-Jabbar, al-Qādi Abū al-Hasan (1380-1389/1960-1969), vol. XIII, pp. 293; Heemskerk, Margaretha T. (1995), p. 152.


besides Him. On the Day of Judgment We shall gather, them together, prone on their faces, blind, dumb, and deaf: their abode will be Hell: every time it shows abatement, We shall increase from them the fierceness of the Fire” (Qur’an 17:97).

2.3.1.1.3 Compensation (‘Iwad)

As stated above the initiative to inflict pain or cause disability, whether done by a *mukallaf* or a *non-mukallaf* determines who compensates. As usual, by drawing an analogy between the present and the transcendent (divine) world, Mu’tazilite theologians stated that pain inflicted by God or by His command or permission is compensated for by Him. God gives the compensation in order to ensure that His infliction of pain is not a bad act. Without such compensation God’s act would be an injustice.

As for the time of providing compensation, some Mu’tazilites such as al-‘Allâf (d. between 227-235/841-849) and Abû ‘Ali al-Jubbâ’î (d. 303/915) stated that it must be in the Hereafter whereas some others including Abû al-Jabbar and Abû Hâsim opined that it can be provided by God in this life or in the Hereafter. But anyhow God gives the compensation after the harm is done and not beforehand. However there are some particular cases of pain for which compensation cannot be given in this world. For instance, those who suffer pain while dying can be compensated for this pain only after their death. Broadly speaking, it is God who determines whether a person will be compensated in this world or in the Hereafter. Being Omniscient, God compensates each creature at the best moment for him. However, compensation to be given by God in the Hereafter can not be remitted by the

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144 He is Abû al-Hudhayl Muhammad b. al-Hudhayl al-‘Allâf, on him see Dhababî, Muhammud b. Ahmad b. ‘Uthmân al- (1413/1992), vol. 10, pp. 542 & 543.
person entitled to. That is because the possibility of remitting compensation is related to the possibility of claiming it and compensations to be given in the Hereafter cannot be claimed in this world.151

Concerning providing the compensation in the Hereafter, ʿAbd al-Jabbār stressed that God’s giving of compensation in the Hereafter should not lead to a situation where someone who has not fulfilled the obligations of the taklīf would receive something that amounts to a reward from God.152 But this does not negate the fact that even people in Hell will receive the compensation they are entitled to. That fact that these people deserve a punishment does not nullify their right to be compensated for the pain and illnesses they suffered. That is because compensation, unlike reward, is not given with honour or respect for the recipient. Hence, there is no reason to think that people in Hell will not be compensated.153 However, compensation given to people in Hell cannot consist of the same things that are given to people in Paradise. Rationally, giving pleasure can be equated with taking away pain. It is therefore possible that God diminishes the punishment of people in Hell in proportion to the compensation they are entitled to receive.154

2.3.2. Afflictions Befalling those without Legal Liability (non-Mukallafūn)

Broadly speaking, the Muʿtazilites devoted much ingenuity to the problem of the seemingly unmerited suffering, particularly that of infants and animals.155 As stated above, in the Muʿtazilite view God does nothing without purpose and in all that He does, He intends only benefit. How might this tenet be reconciled with the sufferings of the non-mukallafūn especially the innocent children. More than one answer was given to this question. Here opinions are to be categorised into two main groupings, namely, the ḥṣb al-tanāṣukh (those who believed in metempsychosis or the transmigration of souls) and the majority view maintained by the Muʿtazila:

2.3.2.1 Adherents of Metempsychosis (Aḥṣāb al-Tanāṣukh)

That disabilities, illnesses and misfortunes inflicting the children, insane people and animals are sorts of deserved punishment is a contention advocated by

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They held that God created men healthy, sound in body and intelligent, in an adult state, and in a world other than this one in which they now live. He created in them the full knowledge of Himself and showered on them His blessings. God then placed them under an obligation to show gratitude to Him. Some of them obeyed him in all, that he had commanded and some disobeyed in all whereas the third group obeyed in some things and disobeyed in others. God allowed those who obeyed in all things to remain in Heaven where He had placed them from the beginning. Those who were disobedient in all things God cast them out of Heaven and put in a place of punishment, namely, Hell. Those who were partly obedient and partly disobedient God sent them to this world and clothed them in these gross bodies. He also subjected them to adversity, suffering, hardship and comfort, pain and pleasure. In this life, too, He gave them different forms, some having the form of men and some of animals according to the measure of their sins. Those who had sinned less and obeyed more were given a body more beautifully formed and their sufferings were less. Those whose sins were more were given a body less beautiful in form and suffered more. Henceforward these will not cease to be an animal over and over again, one form succeeding another, as long as their acts of obedience and disobedience remain.\footnote{Furthermore, the adherents of this doctrine claimed that even all species of animals are charged with the duty of observance (taklīf) and upon all of them ordinances and prohibitions have been imposed in accordance with their diverse forms and methods of expression. Moreover, a messenger from God to every kind of living being even the bugs, lice and fleas will never cease to appear, while God's charge to the living being will always continue.}

They held that one's pains and illnesses in this life are because of one's sins committed in a previous life. They said that one's pains and illnesses in this life are because of one's sins committed in a previous life.
2.3.2.2 The Majority View

The Muʿtazilites could not comfortably claim that children underwent pain as a means of 
lutf for them. Nor could they claim that children’s suffering was the requisite 
tribulation through which reward might be won. That is because children possess no 
juridical status for responsibility (taklīf) under Islamic law. Various solutions were 
offered to this seemingly insoluble problem.160

Some Muʿtazilites denied that God caused any undeserved pain.161 Thus, 
they added, children only feel pain inflicted on them by humans and not pain 
inflicted by God.162 ʿAbd al-Jabbar refuted this opinion by pointing out that 
every adult knows that during his childhood he suffered pain in the same way 
as in his adulthood.163 Children become ill just as adults do. From this, ʿAbd 
al-Jabbar concluded that children suffer from illnesses produced by God.164 
Others, including al-Nazzām (d. ca. 231/845),165 held that children’s suffering 
is, indeed, God’s doing but that it occurs through “the necessary course of 
events.”166 However, in the majority view, God inflicted pain on infants for two 
main purposes:

2.3.2.2.1 Divine Assistance (Lutf)

Each illness is a lutf. Adults of sound mind can profit from the motivation 
contained in illnesses and deserve a reward by fulfilling the obligations of God’s 
taklīf. Thus, after having reached maturity, children become mukallaf so that 
they can also profit from the lutf contained in their illnesses. However, children 
who die before reaching maturity cannot do this: they cannot deserve a reward, 
as they never become mukallaf. However, such children’s suffering is not 
useless: adults living near to them can profit from the lutf contained in their 
illnesses. Generally speaking pain suffered by a non-mukallaf can be a lutf for a

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161 ṢrmsṬy, ḤrḌē L. (1984), p. 245; Al-NāshḌʾ Īl-AkṬĪr (d. 293/905), Ḍn ḥosef vĪn (1971), p. 98.
and animals do not feel any sort of pain. See Ḥī, ʿAdud al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ahmad al- 
165 On him see Dhahabi, Muhammad b. Ṭahmān b. Ṭahmān al- (1413/1923), vol. 10, pp. 541 & 
mukallaṭ: Illnesses and disabilities of children serve as a clear example here because they are a sort of lutf for parents.167

2.3.2.2.2 Compensation (ʿIwad)

Being a lutf for the mukallaṭūn around them does not fully justify the disabilities and sufferings of children who die before reaching maturity. There must be a profit for the children as well. It would be bad, Muʿtazilites argued, if God inflicted illnesses on them from which only other people can profit and not they themselves.168 The profit that children can get from their illnesses is a compensation (ʿIwad) given to them by God.

As for compensation given to children, the majority of the Muʿtazila stated that those children who have not received all their compensation in this world, it is inevitable that God will revive them, together with the mukallaṭūn, on the Day of Resurrection so that they can receive their compensation in the Hereafter.169

2.4 Middle-Course Approach

The advocates of this approach pondered over the clashing arguments presented by the first two groups and contended that truth lies in a balance between these two. The pro-theodicy group was criticized because their understanding of the divine justice ultimately placed the sayings, actions and movements of Angels, human beings and jinns beyond God’s power, will and creation. The anti-theodicy group was criticized for overemphasizing the divine omnipotence by which they negated the freedom of human beings to act in life according their own will.170

Combining between divine names and attributes expressing God’s omnipotence and those indicating His justice and wisdom was seen as a Qur’anic phenomenon. For instance, the name indicating divine omnipotence, Al-ʿAzīz (the Powerful) occurs eleven times in the Qurʾān in combination with the name indicating God’s mercy, Al-RĪḥīm (the īerēḌful).171 This combination occurs for instance in the context of afflicting previous nations and peoples with severe punishments for disobeying God’s Messengers (Qurʾān 26:9, 86, 104, 122, 140, 159, 175 & 191). The same name, Al-ʿAzīz, occurs also in the Qurʾān twenty-nine times in combination with the name Al-Ḥākīm (the All-

171 Qurʾān 26:9, 68, 104, 122, 140, 159, 175 & 191; 30:5; 32:6; 44:42.
A trawl through a number of these verses shows that some references are relevant to disability. For instance, the seventh instance of this combination (3:06) refers to the shaping of embryos in the wombs according to God’s Will. Thus the wide range of differences among new-born babies; white, black, healthy, sick and those with disabilities is not an expression of one side of God’s character. It is an indication of both His Omnipotence and His All-Wisdom. The fourteenth instance of this combination (5:38), conveys the divine order of amputating the hands as a punishment for committing the crime of robbery. The verse is concluded by these two names indicating that this order implying such punishment indicates, rather than contradicts, that God is both All-Powerful and All-Wise. In this vein, when Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1786-1818) wrote a commentary on Kitāb al-tawhīd written by his grandfather Muḥyād-din b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1703-1792), he gave it the title, Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd fī sharḥ kitāb al-tawhīd (The Facilitation of the Powerful the Worthy of Praise: A commentary on the Book of Unity). This indicated that the phenomenon of combining names that would seem, at first contradictory, was common among the advocates of this approach.

As for the perfect and spotless character of God, advocates of this approach believed that the aforementioned two approaches portrayed ultimately an inadequate view of God. The retributive justice advocated by the Muʿtazilites and the voluntaristic divine justice promoted by the Ashʿarites were both criticized. Denying the wise purposiveness of God’s acts done by the Ashʿarites and the wise purposiveness promoted by the Muʿtazilites to be measured by human standards are also both rejected. The standpoint adopted in this third approach is epitomized in the following statement of Ibn Taymiyya, “Injustice is putting something in another than its proper place (waqt al-shayr fī ghayr mawḍū' ilh). Justice is putting [every] thing in its proper place. He-Glory be to Him- is a wise arbiter and just, putting things in their places. He puts everything in its place, which corresponds to it and which wise purpose and justice require. He does not differentiate between two identical things, and He does not equate two different things. He punishes only whomsoever deserves punishment and puts it in its place on account of the wise purpose and justice in that. As for the people of righteousness and God-fear, He does not punish them at all.”

Although they uphold in principle the Muʿtazilī view that God’s acts have always a wise purpose (hikma), the advocates of this approach have their own reservations in this respect. Ibn Taymiyya accused them of ending up in contradictions when they said that God acts for a wise purpose that is disjoined


174 See Wahhāb, Sulaymān b. 'Abd al- (4).

175 For an overview of the arguments advanced against both Muʿtazilīs and Ashʿarīs concerning divine justice, see Hoover, Jon (2002), pp. 270-284. For wise purposiveness, see Hoover, Jon (2002), pp. 86-113.

from Him and that benefits creatures but not Himself.\textsuperscript{177} For him, it is irrational that any agent should do good to others without some judgement (\textit{buk\textbar{m}}), profit, or praise accruing to the agent himself. Someone to whom praise and beneficence is ultimately indifferent- as in the Mu’tazila view of God- is acting aimlessly, which, ironically in Ibn Taymiyya’s view, is precisely what the Mu’tazila seek to avoid by attributing purpose to God’s Will.\textsuperscript{178}

According to the advocates of this approach, the theodicy of divine acts can be characterised by four main elements. The first element was the ongoing emphasis that no justification for the existence of evil and affliction should injure the perfect and spotless character of God. Contrary to the Ash’arites who stressed on the divine power at the expense of divine justice and the Mu’tazilites who did the opposite, this approach strove for a middle ground by maintaining balance between all Attributes of God and the emphasis on one of them should not be at the expense of the other.\textsuperscript{179} They found it necessary to extract what is useful and appealing from both sides and to cast a side what they deemed harmful.\textsuperscript{180}

The second element was that attempts to search for the wise purposes behind the divine acts do not represent an eccentric phenomenon or an innovation in Islam. Recalling the prophetic tradition relating that Adam, having seen those with blindness, dumbness and the afflicted among his progeny, asked God, “Why did not you make all my progeny equal?”,\textsuperscript{181} they concluded that what is inadmissible in Islam is only to make such endeavours out of objection, casting doubts and the like.\textsuperscript{182}

The third element was the firm belief that no aspect of this world, however insignificant it may seem, is without a redeeming reason.\textsuperscript{183} This holds true to the extent that wise purposes (\textit{bikam}) of pains befalling different creatures are too many to be fully enumerated.\textsuperscript{184} However, this belief should never lead to think that all wise purposes (\textit{bikam}) of divine acts are traceable by the human intellect. That is because the human intellect is finite and limited whereas God’s wisdom is infinite and unlimited.\textsuperscript{185} Thus, once there is a case or incidence

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\textsuperscript{178} Hoover, Jon (2002), p. 110.
\end{footnotesize}
whose wisdom cannot be fathomed out, a charge should be directed to the incapable mind of the humans not to the All-Wise God.\textsuperscript{186}

After mentioning the example of amputating a gangrenous hand and the possible goodness implied in it, al-Ghazālī elaborated on this point by saying, “Now, if a particular evil occurs to you without your seeing any good beneath it or you should think that it is possible that a particular good be achieved without being contained in evil, you should query whether your reasoning might not be deficient in each of these two trains of thought… So accuse you reasoning in both ways and never doubt that He is the most merciful of the merciful or that ‘His mercy takes precedence over His anger’”. Concluding this discussion with a mystic touch, al-Ghazālī says, “Beneath all this lies a secret whose divulgence the revelation prohibits, so be content with prayer and do not expect that it be divulged.”\textsuperscript{187} The well-known mystic Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), in his \textit{Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya} (Meccan Illuminations) shared al-Ghazālī’s viewpoint stressing that there is a wise purpose for every mode of being which, if still hidden from our vision, will appear through deeper insight in the course of time.\textsuperscript{188} In this vein, ʿĀzīz al-Nasafī, a thirteenth century mystic, compared the person who does not realise that the world is perfect to a blind man who enters a house and complains that everything is in his way.\textsuperscript{189}

In modern time, Abū ʿAlā al-Mawdūdī (d. 1903-1978) condemned those who argue that the existence of widespread suffering is inconsistent with the image of a Wise, Merciful and All-Powerful God. In his article, \textit{Kotah nazari} (Short Sightedness), al-Mawdūdī replied to this argument by drawing attention to two familiar cases. First, governments who take measures, which may involve some unavoidable suffering for a few, to promote the general welfare. Had they been aware of the real purpose of the government, those who suffer lodge complaint and abuse the governments would not have complained and condemned them. Another example al-Mawdūdī gives is that of a gardener. In order to maintain his garden properly and make it look more beautiful, the gardener must trim some plants, change their locations, even throw some out. Had the plants that are affected in the process had tongues, they would have certainly lodged their complaints. But if they could look at the whole garden and understand the entire planning of the gardener and his working, they would not raise an objection. Al-Mawdūdī argued that our position in this infinitely vast, immensely complex and extremely beautiful world is not at all better than a few sufferers among the masses of a country, or some plants in a garden. We are, he added, in no position to scan the entire universe and far less to comprehend its workings. If we pose the presence of evil in the world against the existence of God, our complaint will be in no way better than the complaint

\textsuperscript{186} Ghazālī, Abū Hāmid al- (1407/1987), p. 65.
\textsuperscript{187} Ghazālī, Abū Hāmid al- (1992), pp. 55-57.
\textsuperscript{188} Diyāb, ʿAdb al-Nāṣir (2000), p. 34
of a few sufferers against the working of their government, or the complaints of some plants in the garden against the gardener.\textsuperscript{190}

The same line was also adopted by the Syrian scholar Ṣaʿīd Hawwā (1935-1980)\textsuperscript{191} who accused such people not only of short-sightedness like al-Mawdūdī, but even of craziness.\textsuperscript{192} Adopting a less harsh tone, Yūsuf al-Qarāḍāwī (b. 1926) speaks about a sacred or inviolable area (\textit{mantiqat harām}) of God’s predestination that should not be frequented and one of the inscrutable meanings (\textit{asrār}) that should not be investigated. To him, fathoming out the wise purposes of pain and suffering in life is a thorny issue whose questions cannot be satisfactorily answered. What cannot be known in this regard is much more than what can be known.\textsuperscript{193}

**The fourth** element which characterised the middle-course approach in this regard was the priority of revelation over reason. The \textit{hikma} propounded by revelation cannot be contradicted by rational arguments or thoughts.\textsuperscript{194} That is because revelation is infallible whereas reason is prone to err.\textsuperscript{195} By the same token the \textit{hikma} proposed by the mind should not oppose any of the basic tenets of Islamic belief.\textsuperscript{196}

As was the case with the pro-theodicy approach, wise purposes of the existence of disabilities, within the broad framework of pain or suffering, will be divided into those related to the \textit{mukallafūn} and those related to the non-\textit{mukallafūn}. Contrary to the pro-theodicy approach, categorisation here is highly subjective and not always based on the strict separation between the two categories by the advocates themselves. Thus the possibility of overlap between \textit{hikam} classified in these two categories should be kept in view.

### 2.4.1 Afflictions Befalling those with Legal Liability (\textit{Mukallafūn})

#### 2.4.1.1 Disabilities: Punishment for Sins Committed?

In the introduction of her recent study on \textit{Disability in Islamic Law}, Vardit Rispler-Chaim (University of Haifa) said in this respect, “It is never proclaimed that the disease is predestined by Allah so that the ill Muslim has an

\textsuperscript{190} Ansari, M. Abdul Haq (2003), pp. 529 & 530.
\textsuperscript{191} On him, see Weismann, Izchak (1997), pp. 131-154.
\textsuperscript{192} Hawwā, Saʿīd (1424/2004), pp. 89 & 90.
\textsuperscript{193} Qarāḍāwī, Yūsuf al- (1421/2000), p. 82. In a personal discussion with him about that opinion, al-Qarāḍāwī told me that he did not mean that God’s actions are unjustifiable. However, he added, stating that all God’s actions can be justified and their wise purposes can be fathomed out could be misunderstood as conducive to endorsing the Muʿtazīlī principle that God’s actions are to be evaluated by the same criterion used for assessing human actions. This discussion took place in January 2003 in Dublin during the proceedings of 10th session of the European Council for Farwa and Research.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibn al-Qayyīm (1398/1977), vol. 1, p. 302.
\textsuperscript{196} It is however believed that the straightforward reason (\textit{ṣiq satīlī}) can never disagree with the authentic text of revelation (\textit{nāṣī satīlī}). Imam Ibn Taymiyya wrote a famous book on this topic see Ibn Taymiyya (1409/1988). See also Ibn al-Qayyīm (1398/1977), vol. 1, p. 302.
opportunity to repent, or that disease is a way of punishment for certain sins. Nowhere in the Qur’an, Sunna or fiqh is a clear causality established between Allah and the onset of a disease and/or disability in a believer.\textsuperscript{197}

Such a statement might find support among a number of the Mu’tazili scholars, as noted above, who refused a link between sins and inflicting pains. However, the statement remains blatantly contradictory to clear texts in the Qur’an and Sunna not to mention the writings of scholars advocating the middle-course approach. The possibility of a cause-effect link between committing sins on one hand and disabilities or diseases in general on the other cannot be denied. For instance, among early scholars, Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim regarded people’s sins the main cause of misfortunes, pains and diseases in this worldly life.\textsuperscript{198} This is also the case among many modern scholars such as the late Egyptian scholar Ahmad al-Sharabāšī (1918-1980),\textsuperscript{199} the Syrian Muhammad Saʿīd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī (b. 1929)\textsuperscript{200} and the Iraqi ʿAbd al-Karim Zaydān.\textsuperscript{201} More than one Qur’anic verse were understood to support this viewpoint (e.g. 4:79 & 123, 8:53 30:41, 42:30). Take for instance, the Qur’anic verse, “Whatever misfortune happens to you, is because of the things your hands have wrought, but for many (of them) He grants forgiveness” (42:30). Some commentators interpreted “misfortune” (muṣāba) as illness, punishment or any other form of affliction in this life\textsuperscript{202} and “What your hands have wrought” as one’s sins and misdeeds.\textsuperscript{203} Upon the revelation of this verse, the Prophet is reported to have said, “No scratch of a stick, shudder of a vein or stumble of a foot befalls a man but because of a sin, but what Allah forgives is more.”\textsuperscript{204} The same purport is also encountered in the Qur’anic verse, “Whatever good [ḥasanā], (O man!) happens to thee, is from Allah; but whatever evil [sayfizā] happens to thee, is from thy (own) soul” (4:79). Ḥasanā (good) and sayfizā (bad) in this verse are interpreted respectively as favours, e.g., prosperity, health and wellness and misfortunes, e.g., infertility and calamity.\textsuperscript{205} “From thy (own) soul” here means because of your sins.\textsuperscript{206} It is to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[199] Sharabāšī, Ahmad al- (1375/1956), vol. 1, p. 264.
\item[200] Būṭī, al- (2001), pp. 199-204.
\end{footnotes}
be noted that “thee” and “thy” here refers originally to the Prophet Muhammad but the purport of the verse is applicable to every Muslim and according to some scholars to all humans. Finally, it is related that on the revelation of the Qur’anic verse “[…] Whoever works evil, will be requited accordingly” (4:123), Muslims found it too hard and conveyed their complaint to the Prophet. Asking him if it was true that the purport of the Qur’anic verse would be precisely applied, the Prophet replied in the affirmative. However, he pointed out that such requital is not inevitably to take place in the Hereafter. It could also, he added, take the form of calamities and afflictions visiting one’s body or property in this life.

The purport of these verses was also vivid in the minds of early Muslims as reflected in many reports about them. For instance, the Companion ʾImrān ibn Ḥusayn (d. 52/672) was befallen by a physical disease. Some of his friends paid him a visit and said, “We feel sorry for what you suffer.” He said, “Do not feel sorry. This all happens because of a sin but what Allah pardons is much more”. Then he recited the previous verse (42:30). Being afflicted with facial paralysis while performing the Hajj, the Companion Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān (d. 60/680) conceded that this could be because of having committed a sin. In the same vein, al-Qāḍī Shuraṭh (d. between 76/695-6 & 80/699-700) was asked about an ulcer in the palm of his hand. He said that this was because of what “your hands have wrought, but for many He grants forgiveness.”

As for disabilities in particular, a number of these traditions were reported to take place during the lifetime of the Prophet in which disability appears as concomitant with committing grievous sins such as lying to the Prophet or disrespecting him out of arrogance and pompousness. Some of the perpetrators’ names recorded in this context include a woman called Jamra bint al-Ḥārith b. Ṭawf who was afflicted with leprosy, Yazīd b. Bahrām who was

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209 On him see Dhabâhi, Muhammad b. Ahmad b. ʾUthmân al- (1413/1992), vol. 2, pp. 508-512
afflicted with paralysis and therefore later on known as al-muqʿād (the seated) because he could not walk any more.216 and Busr (in another reading Bishr) al-Shujāʿī whose hand was paralysed.217 These traditions also paved the way for other stories with the same purport said to have taken a place after the death of the Prophet and related by well-known Muslim scholars such as Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 507/1209),218 Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (748/1348)219 and Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqālānī (d. 852/1449).220

Although such traditions are extremely few compared with other traditions promoting forgiveness and tolerance with people committing sins, their purport of a possible link between disabilities, diseases or misfortunes in general on one hand and committing sins on the other cannot be ignored. However, a deep-sighted survey of Islamic sources on this issue shows clearly that a generalizing understanding of the disabilities-sins link is also a mistaken one. To provide a well-balanced presentation, two one points are in order.

In the first place, the abovementioned traditions indicate that disabilities can be but must not necessarily be the result of committing sins. For instance, when Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān was afflicted with facial paralysis, he mentioned three possible reasons, i.e., gaining reward, receiving punishment and finally receiving a disciplinary reproof.221 According to this view, the normal course of events was that disobedient people receive more than one warning before being punished. Disabilities or misfortunes, as punishments, befall those who insist on paying no attention to such warnings and exert no efforts to return to the straight path and declare no repentance to God and continue delving into disobedience.222

But even as a form of punishment, disabilities must yet have their beneficiary functions. They may have a cathartic function by purging the sinner from his sins and bringing him relief from greater torment in the Hereafter. A great number of prophetic traditions stress the expiatory role of suffering and its purgative effect on the life of the faithful.223 To give just a few examples, one

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of these traditions said, “No calamity befalls a Muslim but God expiates some of his sins even if it were a thorn being pricked with.” Another tradition stated, “The calamity continues to afflict the believing man and woman in body, property and progeny until he/she meets God [on the day of Resurrection] without any sins cleaving to him/her.”

Based on the aforementioned traditions, Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449) characterised misfortunes as divine medicines by which man gets cured from the diseases of fatal sins. In the same vein, another authority said, “Had there been no worldly afflictions, we would have come insolvent [with bad deeds outnumbering the good ones] on the Day of Resurrection.”

Understanding disability as a punishment in this context was seen as a sign of God’s mercy and benevolence rather than of His anger and wrath. As a comment on the aforementioned Qur’anic verse (4:123), the Prophet is reported to have said, “Whatever befalls you of illness, punishment or misfortune in the worldly life is because of what your hands have wrought, but God is more tolerant than doubling the punishment [by inflicting it again] in the Hereafter. As for what God has pardoned in [the worldly] life, one should know that] God is more bountiful than reverting [to punishing] after His pardon.”

No matter how extreme they could be, the Qur’ān recurrently confirms (13:34, 20:127, 39:26, 41:16, 68:33) that the punishments in this life are much more lenient than those in the Hereafter. Commenting on such traditions, Zuhayr Muhammad al-Zamili wondered what grace can be greater than this?

Another sign of God’s mercy mentioned in the Tradition in this regard concerns the rewards of good deeds that the afflicted person used to do before the affliction hindered him/her from continuing to do them. In Hadith collections, one finds separate chapters on the reward of the sick (ajr al-marih). These chapters comprise a number of prophetic traditions purporting that the rewards of such deeds continue to be recorded as if the person is still doing

them. One of these traditions said, “No Muslim would be visited with an affliction in his body save God would order the Guardians [Angels] who guard him by saying, ‘Write down for My servant every day and night the equal [reward] of the good [khayr] he was doing as long as he is confined in My fetter [i.e., sickness].’” By extension to disability, we may conclude that one who used to listen to a specific portion of the Qur’ān every day and later on was hindered by deafness serves as example in this regard. The divine rewards accorded to this pious act would remain to be counted for him as if he is still doing his habit of listening to the Qur’ān every day.

In the second place, people cannot be afflicted with disabilities as a punishment for sins committed by others. This thesis is advocated by the Qur’ān that recurrently states that every one is responsible for his/her own acts and cannot be burdened by the consequences of others’ sins (e.g. 6:164, 17:15, 35:18, 39:07, 53:38). Commentaries on these Qur’ānic verses show that this point is not only a point of agreement among the advocates of the middle-course approach but among Muslims scholars at large. On the Qur’ānic verse (6:164), the well-known Qur’ān exegete, Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272) said that the occasion of revelation was to rectify the pre-Islamic (jāhili) custom of punishing people for offences committed by their parents, children or their allies. According to Ibn al-Qayyim, one of the main tenets of Islamic belief is that no one is punished without committing a sin. Hence, punishing someone for someone else’s sins is injustice and it is impossible for God to be unjust (zālīm). Strikingly enough, a number of noted scholars such as Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) and the Ḥanbalite theologian Marī b. Yūsuf al-Karmī (d. 1033/1624) ridiculed those who would maintain that children might be afflicted with disabilities so that their parents could gain more rewards from God. They said that it is impossible for God to do so because it is injustice (jawr) and futility (ṣabath). Consequently, the belief among some Muslim parents that their disabled child is a punishment for sins committed by one or both of them is contrary to the clear text of the Qur’ān. One still wonders; where does this common belief come from?

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237 On him, see Bell, Joseph Norment (1979), pp. 185 & 186.
A possible source could be the references in a number of Islamic sources, although very few, to this possibility. Vardit Rispler-Chaim was right when she described the viewpoint expressed in a publication from Iran as “exception” in modern Islamic literature. The author of this book, a certain Qudsiyah Hijazi (a psychologist or sociologist, according to Rispler-Chaim), claimed causality between the parents’ misconduct and their offspring’s disability and regarded this outcome as a punishment from God. Ignoring the divine laws, the author elaborated, concerning proper sexual conduct leads to the birth of retarded children. To her, the parents’ genes are influenced by their emotions, thoughts, moods and actions and thus immoral behaviour is bound to affect the fetus. The viewpoint, as recorded by Rispler-Chaim, is really an “exception” in the sense that it contradicts the abovementioned quotations from the Qur’ān and the contentions of Muslim scholars. However, it is not “exception” in the sense that Qudsiyah Hijazi is the only one to hold this viewpoint. The late Egyptian scholar, Ahmād al-Sharabāṣī (1918-1980) stated also explicitly that sinful parents can be punished by having blind children. To him, such punishment is a disciplinary warning by which parents should always avoid disobeying God because His punishment can strike the children who are most beloved to the parents. Strikingly enough, the same author rejected a historical report purporting that someone was afflicted with blindness because his grandfather made a pious man angry who thus supplicated God that he and his offspring will be blind. Al-Sharabāṣī cast doubts on the authenticity of this report and commented by saying, “Then what is the guilt of the children as long as the sinner is the father himself?” This question raised by al-Sharabāṣī remained to be posed to himself and to all those who claim that children’s disability can be a punishment for the sinful parents.

2.4.1.2 Gaining Reward (Tahṣīl al-Thawāb) and Elevating the Ranks (Raf al-Darajāt)

Besides expiating sins, two other closely interrelated hikām were mentioned, viz., gaining reward and upgrading one’s level of faith and enabling the person who suffered to attain lofty ranks in Paradise.

As for gaining reward (tahṣīl al-thawāb), a number of prophetic traditions clearly indicated that afflictions can be a source of bountiful reward from God. For instance, the Prophet is reported to have said, “The magnitude of reward is contingent upon the magnitude of affliction.” In another tradition, the Prophet said, “Nothing befalls the believer even if it were a thorn being pricked

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with but Allah records thereby [the reward of] a good deed (ḥasanā) for him or expiates a sin for him.”

As for “elevating the ranks”, disability as a form of affliction with its inherent suffering was seen as a possible instrument of attaining lofty degrees and ranks in Paradise that would have been unattainable by one’s good deeds only. A large number of prophetic traditions were also related to purport this fact and some traditionists collected these traditions in a discrete chapter entitled, Bāb bulūgh al-darajāt bi al-ibālā’ (Chapter on Attaining the [honourable] Ranks by Affliction)245 or Dhikr anna Allāh yarfa’ darajāt al-mu’min bimā yusīlubu min al-balā’2 (Mentioning that Allah Elevates the Status of the Believers by the Afflictions that Befall them).247

In his commentary on the aforementioned Qur’ānic verse (42:30), al-Baydāwī (d. ca 685/1286)248 said, “The purport of this verse is restricted to people indulged in guilt and misdeed. As for the others, misfortunes befall them for other reasons such as gaining the great reward.”249 Al-Suyūṭī (1445-1505)250 added the elevating of the ranks.251 In the same line with al-Baydāwī another authority said, “Allah visits people He loves with affliction so that He will give them reward in return.”252

However, al-Qāḍī Ṣyāḥ (d. 544/1149)253 reported that some scholars maintained that sickness only expiates the sins, excluding the possibility of gaining reward or elevating the religious ranks because of being sick. According to al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) such scholars reached this conclusion because of being unaware of the aforementioned prophetic traditions which explicitly indicated that sickness can be also a cause of gaining rewards and elevating the religious ranks.254 In a bid to compromise these two contradictory contentions, Ibn Hajar al-Ṣaqqālī said that it is possible that sickness and pains are means of atoning sins for the sinful and means of gaining rewards and elevating religious ranks for those who have no sins. Because the overwhelming majority


252 ʿAsqālānī, Ahmad b. Ṣafī b. Ḥajar al- (1379/1959), vol. 10, p. 108. See also the same opinion expressed by imām al-Zurqānī in Zurqānī, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Baqī b. Yūsuf al- (1411/1990), vol. 4, p. 414.


254 Nawawī, Yahyā b. Sharaf al- (1392/1972), vol. 16, pp. 128 & 129. For further discussions on this point see also ʿAsqālānī, Ahmad b. ʿAbd b. Ḥajar al- (1379/1959), vol.10, pp. 109 & 110; Zurqānī, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Baqī b. Yūsuf al- (1411/1990), vol. 4, p. 413.
of humans are erroneous, Ibn Ḥajar added, some scholars said that sickness can be conceived as a means of expiating sins only.²⁵⁵

The most well-known example of those people whose afflictions let them gain more rewards and loftier ranks in Paradise rather than expiating the sins, are the Prophets.²⁶⁶ They are sent by God to epitomize the model example of obedience and piety among humans and thus committing sins are restricted to the minimum.²⁵⁷ That is why some scholars excluded the possibility that the painful sufferings of Prophet Job (ʿAyyūb) can be interpreted as expiatory tools for sins he had committed.²⁵⁸ It is noteworthy in this regard that Muslim scholars do not agree on whether prophets can be afflicted with disabilities.²⁵⁹

Beyond their disagreements on different details, Islamic sources spoke about a number of Prophets who were visited with afflictions some of which can be classified as disabilities.²⁶⁰ For instance, in their commentary on the Qur’anic verse (12:84), a number of Muslim scholars said that the prophet Jacob (Yaʿqūb) suffered a severe feebleness in his eyesight and according to some of them, even suffered blindness for six years after which his eyesight was miraculously restored.²⁶¹ According to some scholars, the prophet Shuʿayb was also afflicted with blindness.²⁶² Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī related that the Prophet

²⁵⁷ According to some scholars, prophets are infallible and thus exempted from committing both major and minor sins. For further details and discussions on the infallibility of prophets, see Ibn Ḥazm, Abū Muhammad ʿAlī (1), vol.4, p. 136; Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn al- (1990); Ḥārīm, ʿAbd al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Ahmad al- (1997), vol. 3, p. 415 & 423; Sabitī, Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ahmad al-Umawī al- (1990), vol.1, pp. 32 & 138.

It is to be noted that the possibility of having a blind Prophet is a point of disagreement. The weighty opinion among the Sunnī Orthodox is that none of the Prophets was a blind. Also the Muʿtaṣī scholars maintained that the blind cannot be a Prophet because blindness breaches the conditions of Judgeship and testifying. Thus blindness is more breaching for the qualifications of prophethood. Moreover the blind person usually cannot preserve himself from dirtiness. In response it is said that testifying and judgeship necessitates distinguishing between the plaintiff and the accused whereas the Prophet does not need to identify the one who calls to belief and prophet is also infallible. As for safeguarding against dirtiness, real life proves that it is not a rule that blindness is always a barrier preventing from taking a stand from filthiness. On the contrary, some people with blindness are more cautious than the others in this regard. See Alūsī, Abū al-Faḍl Māḥmūd al- (1), vol. 12, pp. 123 & 124.

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Job (ʿAyūṭb) was the first to suffer smallpox.263 In their commentary on the Qurʿānic verses (20:25-28), a number of Qurʿān exegetes opined that the prophet Moses had a speech-disability; lisping according to some traditions. Being commanded by God to go to the Pharaoh and convey the message of the faith to him, Moses asked God to cure this disability.264

2.4.1.3 A Faith-Test

Testing people’s faith to show whose faith is truthful and firm is one of the central themes in the Qurʿān (2:214, 3:141 & 154, 9:126, 21:35, 29:02, 49:03, 76:02, 89:15 & 16) and thus in Islamic sources as well.265 Words such as ṭittina, miḥbana, tambiš, ibtila’ and imtiḥān and their derivatives are used interchangeably to convey this concept. The primary meaning of these terms revolves around “putting to the proof, a discriminatory test as gold is tested by the fire.”266 A sagacious statement said, “O my son! Gold and silver are to be examined by fire but the believer is to be examined by affliction.”267

In this vein, interpreting disabilities, as a one out of many afflictions that may befall people, as a test from God to His servants’ faith is the most obvious answer provided by early and late Muslim scholars.

The Prophet is reported to have said, “Truly God may examine you with an affliction (balā’) the same you may examine your gold with fire. As a result, some people will come out of it [i.e., affliction] as pure gold. These are the persons whom God has guarded against doubts (shuʿbūḥāt). [Others] will come out [with a result] less than this. These are the ones who had some doubts. The last will come out like black gold. These are the ones who failed the test.”268

According to Ibn al-Qayyim, one of the main functions of creating this life was to serve as the transient abode of takliʿ (charging) where people are tested by going through different difficulties, ups and downs, pains and pleasures, etc. to prove to what extent they are obedient to the commandments of their Creator in different situations. On the basis of such tests, people are admitted to Paradise (the abode of pure pleasures) or Hellfire (the abode of pure pains) in the Hereafter.269

Anyhow, the reports cited above is not to state that one of the Prophets was blind but to say that some of them, according to authentic traditions, was inflicted with blindness and this does not cross out the possibility that their eyesight was restored thereafter as indicated in other traditions about Jacob and Shuʿayb.

Ibn al-Jawzi divided the afflicted people, on the basis of their response to affliction (al-bala'), into four main categories arranged in an ascending order. First are those who consider al-bala’ an easy test compared with its ensuing reward. Secondly, there are those who see afflicting people with al-bala’ as if an owner is discharging his own possession to which they have to submit without objection. Third, there are those whose are overwhelmed by the love of God to the extent that they will not even ask for lifting al-bala’. Finally, the highest group are those who savour al-bala’ because it has taken place out of the Will of God.270

Concerning disability in particular, the magicians of the Pharaoh who believed in Moses and his Lord declaring publicly their disbelief in the Pharaoh as god are central in this respect. The Pharaoh, according to the Qur'an (e.g. 7:124, 10:83, 20:71), tried to test the firmness of their faith by his threat to cut off their hands and feet on opposite sides. According to some Qur'an exegetes, Pharaoh was the first in history to apply such a punishment. However, the magicians stood fast and the pharaoh’s threats did not make them change their faith. These people, the exegetes added, started their day as magicians and finished it as martyrs.271

The faith-test argument is also very common among modern Muslim scholars.272 In his study on the wise purposes of creating diseases, Zuhayr Muhammad al-Zamili mentioned tamhīs al-muʾminīn (testing the believers) as the first possible wise purpose (hikma).273 In al-Būṭī’s presentation, it was classified as the second hikma. Had life been created free from calamities and misfortunes, al-Būṭī explained, man’s takhīf (legal liability) would be meaningless. That is because the sincere and the hypocrite in this case can claim sincerity and love for God in the absence of serious instruments to check their claimed sincerity and love. The calamities and misfortunes are the main instruments by which one’s endurance for the sake of God and submission to His will can be measured.274 However, al-Zamili broadened the scope of faith-test (ibtilāʾ or tamhīs) to include not only those afflicted with calamities but those living with them including their direct families and societies at large as well. A sick person is a test for his own family and society to show who is going to take up his responsibility of taking care of such a dependent person and who is going to give him the helping hand. The presence of sick people in a society is a criterion by which goodness in such a society can be measured.275

2.4.2 Afflictions Befalling those without Legal Liability (non-Mukallafūn)

Searching for the hikam of disabilities and other afflictions befalling the non-mukallafūn such as children and animals, advocates of the middle-course

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approach were sometimes very timid. Some of them said that providing discursive reasoning and justifications is possible only for what befalls the mukallafūn. As for pain and illnesses befalling the non-mukallafūn, it is sufficient to state that there is an inscrutable wisdom and unknown wise purposes behind these afflictions but they cannot be discerned by the human intellect. That is because delving into this knotty issue, they added, could entail big misunderstandings, aberrations, deviations and perversities. However, such arguments did not halt other advocates of this approach to fathom out this subtle issue searching for possible wise purposes.

2.4.2.1 A Proof of God’s Existence and Oneness

The existence of evils and abnormalities in life is a proof that God exists and that He alone has created this life and all creatures therein. This argument is peculiarly Maturidian and, according to some researchers, no earlier philosophers or theologians are known to have advanced such an argument.

In his book, Kitab al-tawhīd (Book of Oneness), Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī (d. ca. 333/944) elaborated this argument in a chapter entitled, Al-Dāhil ‘alā anna li al-‘ālam Muḥādith (The Evidence that the Cosmos has One Who Gave It Temporal Existence). We quote here what is of particular interest to our topic:

“And the second proof that the world has one who gave it temporal existence is that, if the world existed by its own essence, no instant in it would be truer (‘abqaq) than any other, no state (ḥāl) more appropriate (awdā) than any other, no characteristic (ṣifā) more seemly (‘abqāq) than any other. But, since it exists with instants, states and characteristics which differ from one another, it is proven that it does not exist by its own essence. Furthermore, if it did, it would be possible that each thing would create for itself such states and characteristics as are the best and most beautiful, and, so, by doing this, it would be false to say that moral and physical evils exist. But, the fact of their existence shows that the existence of the world came about by something other than itself (bi-ghayrih).

Thus, what proves to al-Māturīdī that the cosmos is not self-existent is the presence of “more” and “less” degrees therein. The forms of imperfection in the universe show that the universe is not self-existent, i.e., eternal, but rather it exists temporally. In being self-existent, everything would simply be perfect in regard to points of time, states of being and qualifications of being. But, in the world as it is, al-Māturīdī noted that this is not the case. No being which had complete control of its own existence would want for itself anything other than the best in all respects. Now, if it were true that each thing were in control of its own existence, it would follow that no one would choose for painful disabilities, sufferings or evils in general to take place in life. Since they do, it

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277 Māturīdī, Abū Mansūr al- (1), p. XXXV.
278 On him, see Madelung, Wilfred (1) (2003), vol. VI, pp. 846 & 847.
must be that beings are not in control of their own existence. Thus the existence of evil, moral and physical, is made the explicit basis for coming to know that there is a God and that He is a Creator.\(^{281}\)

As for the oneness of God in particular, al-Māturīdī found an evidence for this oneness in the fact that there is no single substance whose existence can be related to one quality only such as harmfulness or benefit, evil or goodness, or blessing or trial. Rather, each thing is characterized by evil which then can be judged as good from another perspective. Created beings are neither beneficial nor harmful in every state. Thus, al-Māturīdī added, it is proven that the one who directs all that must be one because he can combine aspects of the harmful and the beneficial in the created beings, “You also see that all substances fall under the category of material and are an assemblage of mutually opposed natural elements whose real nature should lead to mutual aversion and estrangement because mutual hostility exists among them. Were it conceivable that their nature abandon their being together, that would cause the destruction of the whole. Thus, it is proven that the one who directs the union among them must be one, joining them together because of his benevolence toward the world and keeping the potential harm of each one from the other by an act of remarkable wisdom which human imagination cannot comprehend.”\(^{282}\) In another place, he added, “Thus, in that creation of things which combine the beneficial and the harmful, there is the wondrous manifestation of His wisdom, that He combines the harmful and the beneficial in one being, as well as good and evil, in spite of the mutually contradictory natures of both, as the indication for His oneness and the testimony that His Lordship is one.”\(^{283}\)

By extension to disability, one may reformulate al-Māturīdī’s argument as follows. Man did not create himself, otherwise he would have chosen the best and most perfect form of being which would naturally have been free from any form of physical or moral defect. Keeping in mind that this is not the case, it is proved that man is a created as a being rather than a creator. Additionally, mankind in general comprises able-bodied as well as disabled people and each human being can have some parts of his body which are working properly whereas others are not because of a disability. These seemingly contradictions which can exist simultaneously in one single being indicate there must be a higher power that can combine these contradictions in a coherent form which does not lead eventually to the destruction of this being. According to al-Māturīdī, this higher power is God who is the Creator of this world.

In his article published in 1984, Jerome Meric Pessagno said that the extent of his own research has not revealed any thinker after al-Māturīdī who picked up the thread and the style of this argument.\(^{284}\) However, statements closely related to the purport of this argument can still be traced. Al-\(^{4}\)Izz b. \(^{5}\)Abd al-Salām (d. 660/1066) opined that knowing the glory and omnipotence of God is

\(^{284}\) Pessagno, J. Meric (1984), pp. 72, 73, 80 & 81.
the first benefit of being visited by calamities and afflictions. Speaking about the wise purposes of having disabilities in life, Muhammad Mutwalli al-Sha’rawi (1911-1988) said, “The second purpose is for us to recognise that no organ of our bodies acts by its own abilities but only because God has subjected it to us to act as it does. We say ‘I see with my eyes.’ So God Almighty brought into existence someone who has two eyes but cannot see so that you know that you only see by the power of God, who has given the eye the property of sight. The same applies to walking. God brings into existence people who have two feet but cannot walk, so that we will know that we only walk by the power of God.”

The same point is also stressed by al-Būṭī and al-Zāmilī.

2.4.2.2 Realizing God’s Threats and Promises in the World to Come
One of the general beliefs in Islam is that God created three abodes; one composed of pure goodness and pleasures and this is Paradise, the second is composed of pure evils and pains and this is Hellfire whereas the third, that of worldly life, is composed of contraries and opposites such as good and evil, pain and pleasure, illness and health and so forth.

The advocates of this approach state that one of the aims of creating this worldly life is to give people an idea about pains prepared for the disobedient and infidels in the Hell and pleasures awaiting the obedient in Paradise.

Speaking about children in particular, Ibn al-Qayyim argued that going through pains and sufferings in this life would deepen those children’s feeling of the pleasures of Paradise in the Hereafter. He said, “Testing pleasures, joys and delights in Paradise after undergoing pains and illnesses in this life is much more pleasant and enjoyable than getting such pleasures without prior experience of pains in this life. For instance, the enjoyment of eating and drinking after extreme hunger and thirst is much greater than the enjoyment of eating and drinking without prior hunger and thirst.”

The same argument has been reiterated by modern scholars. For instance, al-Būṭī opined that sufferings and pains in this life serve as a recurrent warning for those living in this life that it is not eternal and that there must be another sort of life which is free from such contraries of health and sickness, richness and poverty, etc.
Chapter Three: Practical Theology

As mentioned in the introduction, three moral attitudes were presented by Muslim scholars as the main pillars of an ideal human response in the case of being afflicted with disabilities or calamities in general. A note on each moral attitude, mainly focusing on information with relevance to disability, will be elaborated now.

3.1 Servitude (‘Ubūdiyya)

According to al-İzz b. Abd al-Salām (d. 660/1066), realizing one’s servitude to God is one of the main benefits of being visited by calamities.582 The main purport of servitude is conceding that man in this universe is but a poor servant (‘abd faqīr) who is always in need of his Lord (rabb). Al-Qushayrī quoted his master saying, “Just as ‘lordship’ is an eternal quality of God [may He be exalted], so is ‘servitude’ a quality of man that stays with him as long as he lives.”583 The favoured example among scholars to explain this type of relationship is the ordinary man who is always raising objections against the precise works of physicians or engineers on the pretext that there is no point of doing this and omitting that, just because much of what they do is not understood by him.584 In such a case, a wise person has the right to investigate the efficiency of the physician or the engineer he wants to deal with but once he gets sure that such a person is trustworthy, it is no more wise, and sometimes even boorish, to raise every now and then senseless questions and objections for every detail. In the same vein, the servant (‘abd) should believe in God on the basis of a firm conviction that God is the only and real Lord that can run his affairs and take care of him in the best way. Once the ‘abd acquires this belief, it is completely unwise to think that God has to explain to him the rationale of every delightful and sorrowful incidence taking place in life. It is sufficient to be sure that it is good (khayr), Hard times manifest clearly those living in the state of servitude and those who are not.585

According to al-Qushayrī, a mystical authority is reported to have said, “Worship is for those who strive, servitude is for those who excel in bearing hardships.” A mystic was asked, “When is servitude sound?” He replied “When a man surrenders himself completely to his Master and has patience with Him in the tribulations He imposes.” 586 This all explains the intense fear of the many early pious figures (salāf) of falling into the pit of questioning God, out of doubt or objection, about what He has foreordained for them. In this regard, one of them is reported to have said, “To get my flesh gnawed by scissors, is more beloved to me than saying to something that God predestined, had he

584 Ḥabīb al-Qayyīm (2), vol. 1, p. 273.
better not predestined it!”

This total submission to God's will should be espoused with investigating and criticizing one's affairs seeking for possible errors in relations with God. Once a calamity befalls a Muslim, the first charge should be levelled against his own-self and that he/she falls short to observe the Islamic instructions properly. Imam Abū al-Hasan al-Qaṭṭān (254-345/868-956) is reported to have said, “I have been visited with affliction in my eyesight as a punishment for speaking too much during the journey [of searching for knowledge]. To avoid any further deterioration, the sinful person was always advised to start immediately serious and ongoing bids to give up such sins. In his book Al-Kabā’ir (Grave Sins), Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (748/1348) related a story whose purport coincides with the aforementioned thesis. The story is about an unnamed influential person who made misuse of his political position and influence by subduing a poor fisherman and taking his fish illegally. Feeling the bitterness of injustice, the fisherman supplicated God by saying, “O God! This one made use of his power against my weakness and took what you provided me with out of injustice. Show me [what] Your Power [can do] with him”. Being bitten by this fish, the unjust person suffered great pain in his thumb and thus went to the doctor who diagnosed his case as gangrene. As a remedy, the doctor said, the thumb must be amputated. Although the infected thumb was amputated, the gangrene continued spreading and consequently the man’s palm, forearm and later on the whole arm was intermittently amputated. Knowing the background story of the man’s sickness, some people advised him to go to the fisherman himself and ask forgiveness, lest the gangrene would spread throughout his whole body. This person went to the oppressed fisherman kissing his foot, crying and asking for forgiveness. Having been forgiven by the fisherman, he also declared his repentance (tawbah) to God in order not to undergo such circumstances again in his life.

Fearing that servitude would be restricted to passive acts, the Hanbali scholar Ibn Taymiyya stressed that making use of all possible means in life to combat afflictions in life is an essential element of paying service to God (‘ubūdīyya). This notion was further elaborated by modern scholars who stressed the importance of positive acts as an essential element of servitude. Speaking about accepting God’s predestination of illnesses and afflictions, al-

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587 Ibid.
589 “Speaking too much” in this context could mean being over proud of one’s knowledge and hence speaking too much about one’s scholastic abilities.
592 Dhahabī, Muhammad b. ʿUthmān al- (1), pp. 113 & 144.
Būṭī reproached those who think that this acceptance of and surrender to God’s will would imply passivity. Adopting a passive attitude towards afflictions and ignoring means of resisting them or minimizing their repercussions is actually, according to al-Būṭī, a rebellion against God’s predestination and disrespect for the universal norms and natural laws He has enacted in life.596 According to al-Qarāḍāwī, one of the fruits of belief in God’s predestination is moving towards performing more fruitful and constructive activities in life instead of just experiencing passive regret and sorrow.597 In order to simulate people with disabilities to remain positive and to overcome their disabilities, modern scholars frequently recalled the prominent figures whose disabilities did not hinder them to participate in the development of their societies. The Moroccan scholar Muṣṭafā b. Ḥamza said, “So were the disabled Muslims peerless. They gained science, literature, wisdom and virtue and left behind them a good reputation and excellent stories.”598 The Syrian scholar Sa’di Abū Jayb said that the number of such prominent figures throughout Islamic history is countless.599 Recently a separate genre on those figures, depending heavily on a number of early sources in Islamic history,600 came to exist.601

3.2 Patience (Ṣabr)

Ṣabr is usually rendered as “patience, endurance.” The significance of this concept can hardly be conveyed in a Western European language by a single word. According to the Arabic lexicographers, the root ṣ-b-r, of which sabr is the nomen actionis, means to restrain or bind.602 There is an expression in Arabic, “so and-so was killed sabran,” which means that he was captured and detained until he died. In the spiritual sense, patience means to stop ourselves from despairing and panicking, to stop our tongues from complaining, and to stop our hands from striking our faces and tearing our clothes at times of grief and stress.603

Practising sabr at the time of being afflicted with disability or any other sort of calamity is seen not only as one of the noble ethics that man can practise out of showing his chivalry or manliness. It is also a religious duty that every Muslim has to observe.604 According to Ibn al-Qayyim, as patience is fard

598 Ḥamza, Müṣṭaṣṣāf (1414/1993), p. 54.
600 Ḥusayn, ʿAbd al-Razzāq (1420/1999), p. 16-29.
(obligatory) in that case, God has provided people with ways and means of obtaining and strengthening the quality of patience, for He has never instructed them to do something without providing them with ways and means of achieving it. Here two main means are to be quoted from Ibn al-Qayyim:

The first means is, if one does not naturally possess the characteristic of patience, to act as if you do possess it, until it eventually becomes your second nature. The Prophet is reported to say, “Whoever tries to be patient, God will help him to be patient.” The second means is to seek the help of God. To possess the characteristic of patience especially “patience for the sake of God” which is one of the highest grades of sabr, one has to seek the help of God. The Qur’an says, “And do thou be patient, for thy patience is but from God[...]” (16: 127). Thus man should realise that he has no patience himself and no power to acquire patience. Rather he knows that, “there is no power and no strength except by (the help of) God.” It would be felicitous to quote here Ibn al-Qayyim’s advice of how to maintain patience at times of trial and adversity. According to him patience during difficult times may be achieved by:

1. Thinking of the good reward that lies ahead. The more one believes in the rewards that are waiting for him, the easier it becomes to have patience. If it were not for the anticipation of the rewards, no goals or objectives pertaining to this life or the Hereafter would have been achieved. Human nature loves instant gratification, but reason and maturity make one think of the long-term outcome, which helps to strengthen patience in enduring whatever one faces, whether there is no choice or otherwise;

2. Expecting and hoping for a time of ease. This hope in itself offers a measure of immediate relief;

3. Thinking of God's countless blessings. When one realizes that one cannot enumerate the blessings of God, it becomes easier for a person to exercise patience in facing the current adversity, because the present troubles are like a raindrop compared to the vast ocean of God's blessings and favours;

4. Thinking of previous blessings of God. This will remind one of God’s care, and strengthen his hopes and expectations for a time of ease to come.

Practising patience in general has been elaborated and extolled in myriads of Qur’anic verses and Prophetic traditions. Great and matchless rewards are dedicated to those who endure patiently when befallen by specific sorts of

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605 Manbiji, Muhammad b. Muhammad al- (1347/1929), pp. 116-118; On the ruling of sabr on different occasions, see Qaraḍāwī, Yūsuf al- (1410/1989), pp. 29-32.
611 Ibid, p. 18.
613 Ibn al-Qayyim (1), vol. 1, pp. 44-47.
illnesses that could be counted as disabilities such as epilepsy and blindness.

As for epilepsy, there is the famous story of the epileptic woman who asked the Prophet for his supplication (dhu ‘ā’) for her healing; he replied to her that, if she refrained from her request and exercised ṣabr, paradise would be her portion.614

As for the virtues and rewards of enduring patiently the affliction of blindness, compilers of prophetic traditions dedicated specific sections to that topic.615 To mention one of the most famous texts in this respect: “If I test My servant (‘abdī) by depriving him of his two precious ones [meaning his eyes or eyesight] and he faces that with patient perseverance, I shall compensate him with Paradise.”616

It is to be pointed out in this regard that the laudable ṣabr in Islam was seen as the patience practised on time and not after it is too late.617 At any rate, every person has to exercise patience in order to face difficulties, whether he does so willingly or unwillingly. The noble person, Ibn al-Qayyim elaborated, exercises patience willingly, because he realizes the benefits of patience and he knows that he will be rewarded for his patience and will be criticized if he panics. He is aware that if he does not have patience, panicking and impatience will not help him to regain missed opportunities, and will not take away things he dislikes. Whatever is decreed by God cannot be prevented from happening, and whatever is decreed not to happen cannot be made to happen. So an attitude of patience and panic actually causes harm. A wise man said: “A man with wisdom does, as soon as adversity appears, that which a foolish man does after a month (i.e. he resorts to patience).”618 On the other hand, the ignoble man exercises patience only when he realizes that he has no choice. After wasting a lot of time and energy in panicking and struggling, he realizes that his impatience will not help him. Then he exercises patience in the same way a person who has been tied up to be whipped exercises patience.619 Patience of such people is as useless as the patience of those people screaming and crying out in Hellfire, “[...] To us it makes no difference (now) whether we rage, or bear (these torments) with patience: for ourselves there is no way of escape.” (Qur‘ān 14:21)620

Within the context of practising patience at times of afflictions and

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615 See for example Bukhārī (1407/1987), vol. 5, p. 2140, Bāb faḍl man dhababas baṣāruh (section on the merit of one who lost his eyesight); Ibn Abī Usāma, al-Ḥārith (1412/1992), vol. 1, p. 351, Bāb ṭī man ibtuṣyā bi baṣāruh (Section on one who has been afflicted with [losing] his eyesight. See also Mundhirī, Abū Muhammad ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm b. ʿAbd al-Qawwāl al- (1417/1996), vol. 4, p. 139.
617 Qaradāwī, Yūsuf al- (1410/1989), p. 34.
619 Ibid., p. 24.
620 Ibid.
adversities and rewards attached, Ibn al-Qayyim spoke about two main misunderstandings that should be pointed out and corrected:

**The first** misunderstanding is that there is no contradiction between being patient on one hand and crying out and complaining to God on the other.\(^{621}\) This is not going to diminish the reward of patience. Complaining to God at times of afflictions has been demonstrated by several of the Prophets. Jacob (Yaʿqūb) said “ṣābrun jamīl,” which means “patience is most fitting for me”, then he said, “I only complain of my distraction and anguish to God.” (Qurʾān 12:86). The Qurʾān says also about Job (ʿAyūb), “And (remember) ʿAyūb (Job), when he cried to his Lord, ‘Truly distress has seized me […]’” (21:83). Ibn al-Qayyim said that even the Prophet Muhammad, the epitome of patience, prayed to his Lord: “O God, I complain to You of my weakness and helplessness.”\(^{622}\) However, complaining to people, either directly, through words, or indirectly, through the way we look and behave, is contradictory to patience.\(^{623}\)

**The second** misunderstanding is that time of wellness and ease is better than that of illness and adversity. This does not contradict the prophetic tradition that “no-one has ever been given a better gift than patience,” because this refers to the case after a trial has befallen a person. But ease is still better.\(^{624}\) The real spirit of Islam is to ask God to provide you with wellness (al-ʿāfīya) in this world and the Hereafter. In concrete incidents the Prophet guided people to this spirit of Islam. It was related that he paid a visit to a man who was so sick that he looked like a nestling bird. The Prophet asked him, “What was your supplication [to God]? Did not you ask your lord for wellness (al-ʿāfīyah)?” The man said, I used to say, “O God, what you are going to punish me with in the Hereafter, make it happen rapidly in this world.” The Prophet said, “Glory to God! You cannot stand it. Would not you say ‘O God! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter.’”?\(^{625}\) According to some narrations of this hadith, after having performed this duʿāʾ, it took only a few days for the man to be restored to health.\(^{626}\)

We conclude the discussions on patience, by citing the story of ʿUrwa Ibn...
al-Zubayr (d. ca. 93/711), always regarded as one of the most moving stories in the context of showing patience in the case of calamities. It has been chosen here because it has also something to do with disability in particular.

ʿUrwa Ibn al-Zubayr got gangrene in his leg, and the doctors suggested that the leg should be amputated, lest the gangrene would spread to the rest of his body and kill him. ʿUrwa agreed and the doctors asked him whether he would drink intoxicants to ease the pain. He said, “God is testing me to see the extent of my patience. How could I go against His commands?” The doctors began to amputate his leg, using a saw. When the saw reached the bone, ʿUrwa fainted, and when he came around, sweat was pouring down his face, and he was repeating, “There is no god but Allah. Allah is the Greatest.” When the operation was over, he picked up his leg and kissed it, then said, “I swear by the One Who mounted me on you, I never used you to walk to any place of wrong action or to any place where God would not like me to be.” Then he gave instructions that the leg should be washed, perfumed, wrapped in a cloth and buried in the Muslim graveyard. When people went to offer him their condolences, the only reply he made was to quote from the Qurʾān, “[...] truly we have suffered much fatigue at our journey” (18: 62) Later on, one of his friends came to visit him and said, “may your enemies’ lathers perish!” and asked him, “show me the affliction for which I have come to console you.” ʿUrwa uncovered his stump, and his friend said, “By God, we were not preparing you to wrestle! God has saved most of you: your sanity, your tongue, your eyesight, your two hands, and one of your two legs.” ʿUrwa told him, “Nobody has consoled me as you have.”

3.3. Gratitude (Shukr)

Shukr denotes a state of feeling gratefulness because of a benefaction or favour (niʿma) and showing the effect of having that niʿma (blessing). Thus originally shukr is shown for blessings and that is why its opposite is called kufr (ingratitude). Consequently, practising shukr at times of enjoying luxuries should be done by everybody. However, giving shukr in the case of calamity is something to be practised by those of real piety and real understanding (fuqī) and is thus of a higher status to be aspired. A well-known conversation between two Muslim scholars known for their piety and deep sincerity could add more elaboration on this point:

Shaqqīq al-Balkhī (d. 194/809), came from Khurāsān to pay a visit to Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. 162/778) in Iraq. On seeing Ibrāhīm b. Adham, Shaqqīq al-Balkhī asked him about the current state of his poor fellows. In a bid

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627 See Aṣfāhānī, Rāghḍ Īl- (1), vol. 1, p. 256
628 See Aṣfāhānī, Rāghḍ Īl- (1), vol. 4, pp. 421-437.
to praise his fellows, Ibrāhīm b. Adham replied, “When God sends them something they eat it and are grateful, if not, they endure patiently and refrain from begging.” Whereupon Shaqīq replied, “This is how I left our dogs in Balkh.”

Thereupon Ibrāhīm b. Adham asked him about the state of poor people in Khurāsān. Shaqīq answered, “When they have anything they prefer others to themselves [i.e., then give it away]. If not, they occupy themselves with giving thanks.” On hearing this answer, Ibrāhīm b. Adham kissed Shaqīq’s head and said, “You are right, master!”

This story clearly shows the higher rank of those who offer thanks at times of adversity or calamity.

Although practising gratitude in the case of afflictions is described as a wild bird that one can hardly catch and fetter, Ibn al-Qayyīm confirmed that it can still be made possible by two main means.

Firstly, remembering the other untold blessings provided by God that one is rolling in. This principle is experienced in the following story retold by the Companion Salmān al-Fārīsī (d. ca. 36/656).

“There was a man who was given many of the luxuries of this world, and then they were taken away from him. But he continued to praise and thank God until everything had been taken from him, even his bed. He then still praised and thanked God. Another man, who had also been given many of the luxuries of this world, asked him, ‘What are you praising and thanking God for?’ The man said, ‘I am praising and thanking Him for blessings which, if others asked me to give them in return for all that they have, I would never give them up.’ ‘What can they be?’ asked the second man. ‘Can’t you see?’ asked the first man. ‘I have my eyesight, my tongue, my hands, my feet’...”

Muslim scholars also state that man should firmly believe that one’s deeds cannot pay for even one of the blessings of God, because even the smallest of God’s blessings and favours far outweigh the deeds of man.

The second means to help man practise gratitude during afflictions is to keep in mind that blessings always assume the guise of afflictions. In this sense, one of the scholars defined gratitude as follows, “To imagine the rose from the thorn and to imagine the non-visible part to be the whole.”

Those who knew this fact and instilled it into the depth of their hearts did not see much difference between those times when they enjoyed luxuries and other times when these luxuries were kept away from them. That is why Sufyān al-Thawrī (97-126/715-743) said, “He does not understand religion properly who does...”

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635 He is one of the Companions of the Prophet of Islam. On him see Dhahābī, Muḥammad b. Ahmad b. Uthmān al- Ṭ, vol. 1, pp. 505-557.
637 Ibid, pp. 67 & 68.
not count affliction as a blessing and ease as a disaster.”

Attaining such a grade of shukr was seen as closely connected with two other highly praised Islamic moral principles, that is, ṭīyḍ41 and love for God. Shukr is related to ṭīyḍ, which is not a patient bearing of all the vicissitudes of life but happiness in the bitterness of the affliction. The well-known mystic, Dhunnūn (d. 859)642 said, “Ṭīyḍ is the joy of the heart in the bitterness of the divine decree.”643 However ṭīyḍ itself, as stated by ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān al-Hujwīrī (d. ca. 1071), is the result of love inasmuch as being content with what is done by the beloved.644 In their love for God, people practise two main types of love, namely, purposive love (hubb ḡaradī) and pure love (hubb ḥaqiqī).645 As for the first type, people love God for the divine beneficence and favours that people can not even fully count. Ibn al-Qayyim elaborated on this type of love by saying, “How then such a one [God] would not be loved, and how should man not blush to direct a particle of his love to an object other than Him? Who is more worthy of praise and love than He? This unmerited kindness of which man is the recipient is visible to all and it is the gate through which one must pass to enter into a relationship of love with God.”646 However, to love God as a benefactor is only a first step on the way and never a destination. That is because love for beneficence alone is inherently inadequate since it comes to an end when the benefactor ceases to bestow his favour.647 By extension, those who love God only because He provided them with good health will cease to love Him once they fall sick or get afflicted with disabilities.

Hence this purposive love should be seen only as a gate to the pure love. Based on what he has known from the goodness of the Creator, the lover may infer what he does not know. “God calls men to Himself through this gate. So that when they enter it, they are called through the other – the Gate of Names and Attributes through which pass only the elite.”648 There is no doubt that love for God as Perfect and Beautiful is a higher stage than love in response to His kindness.649 Furthermore, God alone may be rightly loved as an end in Himself. All other objects of love, therefore, must be loved only for the sake of

641 Usually rendered in English as acquisescence, contentment or approval but in the general sense the significance of this conception can hardly be conveyed completely or precisely in English by a single word. See Watt, W. Montgomery (1979), pp. 17 & 18.
642 His name is Thawbān b. ʿIbrāhīm and it is said that it is Fāy d b. Ṭhālīm or Fāy d b. ʿIbrāhīm, on him see Dhahābī, Muḥammad Ṭ. ʿUthmān al- (1413/1992), vol. 1, pp. 532-536.
645 For further elaborations on these two types of love see, Ibn al-Qayyim (1375/1956), pp. 18-52 esp. pp. 45-47, 51 & 52; Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid, al- (1356/1937-1357-1938), vol. XIV, p., 51; Bell, Joseph Norment (1979), pp. 148 & 149.
646 Ibn al-Qayyim (1358/1939), pp. 410 & 411; Bell, Joseph Norment (1979), p. 120.
647 Ibn al-Qayyim (1358/1939), pp. 415; Bell, Joseph Norment (1979), p. 120.
648 Ibn al-Qayyim (1358/1939), pp. 412; Bell, Joseph Norment (1979), p. 120.
649 Ibn al-Qayyim (4), vol. 2, pp. 89-91; Mubāṣṣir, al-Ḥārīṣ b. ʿAsad al- (1), pp. 94 & 95; Bell, Joseph Norment (1979), p. 120.
Those who practise this type of love – pure love – are also those who give thanks and show gratitude even at times of afflictions because they believe that whatever comes from the lover is something to be loved. The well-known Companion, Sa‘d b. Abī Waqqās (d. 55/675) was famous for his accepted supplication to God (al-duʿāʾ al-mustajāḥ) and people used to ask him to pray for them. Being blind, people deemed it strange that he did not pray God to give him back his eyesight. Asked about this seemingly eccentric behaviour, he smiled and said, “The divine predestination is more beloved to me than my eyesight.”

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650 Ibn Taymiyya, (1346/1927), pp. 77 & 78; Bell, Joseph Norment (1979), p. 84.