



## Mechanisms of Argumentation and Demonstration in Tanzīh al-Qur'ān 'an al-Maṭā'in and Their Implications for Defending the Qur'an's Miraculous Nature

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigates the argumentative and demonstrative strategies employed by the Mu'tazilī theologian Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār in his seminal work Tanzīh al-Qur'ān 'an al-Maṭā'in. The analysis highlights the author's methodical integration of rational inquiry and linguistic evidence in defending the sanctity and inimitability of the Qur'anic text. Grounded in a worldview that positions reason as the primary instrument for understanding and persuasion, 'Abd al-Jabbār confronts objections raised against the Qur'an through a rigorous dialectical framework that fuses intellectual depth with rhetorical precision. The work systematically identifies the problematic issues invoked by critics, articulates their claims, and refutes them using well-structured inferential reasoning. His discourse is distinguished by its deployment of diverse rhetorical and figurative devices that illustrate the elasticity of Qur'anic expression and the internal coherence of its semantic architecture. Moreover, the text demonstrates the functional use of logical and linguistic relations in sequencing arguments toward decisive conclusions affirming God's justice and transcendence. Ultimately, the study reveals the sophisticated interplay between Arabic rhetoric and theological rationalism, offering an exemplar of argumentation that harmonizes demonstrative proof with rhetorical inimitability.*

**Keywords:** Qur'anic inimitability; Mu'tazilī theology; argumentation; rational proof; Qur'anic rhetoric.

## **Résumé**

*Cette étude examine les stratégies argumentatives et démonstratives employées par le théologien mu'tazilī Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār dans son ouvrage fondateur Tanzīh al-Qur'ān 'an al-Maṭā'in. L'analyse met en évidence l'intégration méthodique par l'auteur de la recherche rationnelle et des preuves linguistiques pour défendre le caractère sacré et inimitable du texte coranique. S'appuyant sur une vision du monde qui place la raison comme principal instrument de compréhension et de persuasion, 'Abd al-Jabbār répond aux objections soulevées contre le Coran à travers un cadre dialectique rigoureux qui allie profondeur intellectuelle et précision rhétorique. L'ouvrage identifie systématiquement les questions problématiques soulevées par les critiques, articule leurs affirmations et les réfute à l'aide d'un raisonnement inférentiel bien structuré. Son discours se distingue par le déploiement de divers dispositifs rhétoriques et figuratifs qui illustrent l'élasticité de l'expression coranique et la cohérence interne de son architecture sémantique. De plus, le texte démontre l'utilisation fonctionnelle des relations logiques et linguistiques dans l'enchaînement des arguments vers des conclusions décisives affirmant la justice et la transcendance de Dieu. En fin de compte, l'étude révèle l'interaction sophistiquée entre la rhétorique arabe et le rationalisme théologique, offrant un exemple d'argumentation qui harmonise la preuve démonstrative avec l'inimitabilité rhétorique.*

**Mots-clés :** *inimitabilité coranique ; théologie mu'tazilī ; argumentation ; preuve rationnelle ; rhétorique coranique.*



## Introduction

The Qur'an constitutes the enduring miracle of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and serves as the divine discourse addressed to all humanity, inviting them to relinquish former belief systems and embrace faith in the absolute oneness of God. Its persuasive strategies are remarkably diverse, reflecting the depth and expressive flexibility of the Arabic language in fulfilling argumentative and demonstrative functions. Qur'anic discourse is fundamentally grounded in reason and evidence, integrating rhetorical eloquence and rational argumentation to fulfill its epistemic function: guiding human beings and establishing decisive proof for the authenticity of the prophetic message. Accordingly, the Qur'an may be characterized as an argumentative discourse par excellence—addressed to individuals across varied intellectual, cultural, and ideological backgrounds. Its verses engage believers, disputants, and skeptics through a dynamic communicative framework that interweaves cognitive persuasion with affective appeal.

Among the most prominent scholars to explore the Qur'an's argumentative structure is Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, one of the leading figures of Mu'tazilī thought in the fourth Islamic century. His work *Tanzih al-Qur'ān 'an al-Ma'tā'in* epitomizes the apex of Mu'tazilī rational methodology in defending the Qur'an's inimitability and responding to objections raised against its linguistic, semantic, and theological dimensions. In this text, 'Abd al-Jabbār synthesizes rational proof with rhetorical analysis, drawing extensively on metaphor, analogy, and figurative devices,

and operationalizing linguistic mechanisms—such as *bal* ("rather"), *illā* ("except"), and various forms of negation and exception—to construct a coherent inferential system that affirms the congruence between divine meaning and the dictates of sound rationality.

This study proceeds from the premise that Qurʿanic discourse, as interpreted through the analytical lens of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, integrates rational demonstration and rhetorical persuasion within a unified linguistic structure. Investigating this integration reveals how eloquence and reason operate jointly in the Qurʿanic communicative act to reinforce faith and refute doubt. Therefore, the present research seeks to uncover the argumentative architecture in *Tanzīh al-Qurʿān ʿan al-Maṭāʿin* by analyzing the rhetorical and linguistic strategies that contribute to constructing persuasive proof—such as metaphor, allegory, and analogy—alongside linguistic tools with explicit argumentative value, including *bal*, negation, and exception. Additionally, the study examines the discursive modalities that shape the nature of proof—such as assertion, obligative reasoning, interrogation, and optative structures—thus enabling a more comprehensive understanding of Qurʿanic argumentation within the intellectual framework of Muʿtazilī theology

### **1. Argumentation among the Muʿtazilites:**

Argumentation emerged among the Muʿtazilites as an intellectual and religious necessity in the context of the expansion of the Islamic state and its contact with diverse cultures and religions. They found themselves facing intellectual challenges that required defending Islamic doctrine through a rational and methodical approach. They



relied on reason as a tool for understanding and persuasion, considering it the primary means for knowing truths and distinguishing right from wrong, and believing that revealed texts do not conflict with the requirements of sound reason. For them, argumentation was not merely verbal dispute or rhetorical debate, but an intellectual practice that established the foundations of faith on reason and affirmed that religion is inseparable from logical thinking. Their debates with followers of other religions and philosophies contributed to developing modes of expression and reasoning, making them pioneers of demonstrative discourse in the Islamic heritage, where rational persuasion intertwined with linguistic expression in the service of truth and the defense of the essence of monotheism.

Speaking of bayān and those who were concerned with it, Shawqī Ḍayf notes: "There were teachers who devoted themselves to issues of bayān and rhetoric because of their connection with the oratory and disputation they practiced. By this we mean a group of theologians who, beginning in the late first century AH, divided into sects debating their doctrinal theories—such as *irjā'*, predestination, and free choice. The mosques of Kufa, Basra, and Baghdad after its founding were filled with them from the Umayyad period onward. Among the distinguished groups and the foremost practitioners of bayān were the Muʿtazilites."

They set themselves up to defend Islam against its opponents from among the followers of other religions, just as they engaged in debate with the Islamic sects—Jabrites, Murjiʿites, Khārijites, and Shiʿites—while maintaining a neutral political stance, which is the reason they were called Muʿtazila. Their engagement with philosophy organized

their minds with precise logical structure and enabled them to formulate opinions, identify the properties of things, present proofs and demonstrations, and refine meanings and derive their implications.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the Mu'tazilites based their argumentation on reason and adopted it as a method. This became necessary in order to confront the intellectual challenges Islam faced as its authority expanded, and as the intellectual conflict intensified with adherents of other religions such as Jews, Christians, Manichaeans, Zoroastrians, Sabeans, and Materialists.<sup>2</sup>

For them, argumentation was founded upon reason in confronting the enemies of the faith.

Speaking of proof and argumentation: "Discussing it takes us back to the era in which it was practiced, for Muslims became known from the very beginning for employing it, as well as for the art of dialectic. This is what Abū al-Walīd al-Bāji – may God have mercy on him – mentioned in his work *al-Minhāj fī Tartīb al-Hijāj*, which he derived from the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the debates of the Companions.<sup>3</sup>

This book on the craft of dialectic aims to present its chapters in outline, then its divisions in detail, then its questions analytically, and finally its answers with precision. In reality, it is a treatise on this discipline with an instructional purpose, or a work on this art within the field of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, just as works are composed in other foundational sciences – whether in theology, philosophy, grammar, or rhetoric. As for its author, he regarded it as one of the noblest and most elevated sciences, seeing in it "the path to understanding argumentation and distinguishing truth from falsehood."<sup>4</sup>



From this, we may say that dialectic drew the attention of the Arabs due to its presence in the Qur'an, its involvement in sectarian conflicts, and its connection to debate, which was closely tied to the examination of proofs and the marshalling of arguments. The question that presents itself is: How did the Mu'tazilites argue in refuting the proofs of their opponents, and what were those debates like in their effort to vindicate the Qur'an against the objections raised against it?

The Mu'tazilites, as an intellectual entity with an identity distinct from other sects, developed this identity on the basis of a set of theoretical and practical principles to which they adhered in their reasoning, and through which they established their perspective on the issues subjected to inquiry and examination.

We have previously mentioned the Mu'tazilite sect and the reason for its name. Before discussing disputation and debate and defining their concepts, we will first point to the principles upon which the Mu'tazilites were founded.

▪ **Reason:**

It is a faculty in the human being that apprehends non-material kinds of knowledge. The intellect perceives the essences of material things—their reality, not merely their outward appearance—and apprehends general meanings such as existence, substance, accident, causality and effect, purpose and means, good and evil, virtue and vice. It discerns relations between the parts of a single thing as well as the relations among different things. It also perceives non-material existents, such as the soul and God, along with their essential attributes and the processes of inference.

## 2. The role of reason among the Mu‘tazilites:<sup>5</sup>

"The Mu‘tazilites assigned reason a primary role, preceding revelation, and made transmitted proof subordinate to rational proof and dependent upon it. That is, they made rational evidence the foundation and scriptural evidence a branch of it. This does not imply a contradiction between them; rather, they are in agreement and harmony, for ‘there is nothing in the Qur’an except what accords with the method of reason.’ The Mu‘tazilites aimed to rely on reason to understand the Sharī‘ah, which confirms what is already established by rational judgement and agrees with it."

Hāmid Abū Zayd notes that Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār—may God have mercy on him—held that knowledge must be the act of the human being, and that the means by which one attains knowledge is the intellect. Therefore, God must endow the human being with reason so that he may fulfill what he is charged with in the manner that establishes his responsibility for his actions.<sup>6</sup> He defined reason as "a set of specific types of knowledge; whenever they are present in the morally responsible person, he becomes capable of reflection, inference, and fulfilling what he has been commanded to do." Thus, reason is a condition for moral responsibility—whether a person sees good and evil embodied before him or not. Reason alone enables one to know which actions deserve praise and which deserve blame, even without knowing the actions themselves.<sup>7</sup>

## 3. The Five Principles

"They are five: **Divine Unity (al-tawḥīd)**, **Divine Justice (al-‘adl)**, **the Promise and the Threat (al-wa‘d wa-l-wa‘īd)**, **the Intermediate Position (al-manzilah bayna al-**



## **manzilatayn), and Enjoining Right and Forbidding Wrong (al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar)."**<sup>8</sup>

### **3.1. Divine Unity (al-tawḥīd)**

The Mu'tazilite understanding of the principle of divine unity is marked by both depth and precision. They pushed their inquiry into the reality of God's essence and attributes to its furthest extent, seeking to articulate those truths in the most detailed manner possible.<sup>9</sup>

### **3.2. What is divine unity?**

It was said: It is to know that God, exalted be He, is One, without a second alongside Him in pre-eternity; that He alone possesses eternal uniqueness; that He neither begot nor was begotten; that He has no equal; and that everything other than Him is originated, created, and in need (of Him).

### **3.3. Divine Justice (al-'adl)**

Divine justice is the knowledge that God, exalted be He, is absolutely free from all evil, and that all His acts are good. Its explanation is that one must know that all human acts involving injustice, oppression, and the like cannot be attributed to God. Whoever ascribes such acts to Him has forsaken the doctrine of justice and attributed wrongdoing and folly to God. For God does not compel His servants to commit evil deeds; rather, these acts arise from their own choices.

### **3.4. The Promise and the Threat (al-wa'd wa-l-wa'īd)**

It was said: It is the knowledge that everything God has promised, of reward for those who obey Him, and

everything He has threatened, of punishment for those who disobey Him, will inevitably occur. God does not break His word, nor is falsehood possible in His declarations.

### **3.5. The Intermediate Position (al-manzilah bayna al-manzilatayn)**

This was the first theological issue raised by the Mu‘tazila and the one that led to the emergence of the school itself.

It is the knowledge that whoever kills, commits adultery, or perpetrates a grave sin is a **fāsiq** (a morally corrupt person): he is neither a believer nor an unbeliever.

### **4. Enjoining Right and Forbidding Wrong**

It was said: Enjoining right is of two types: the first is obligatory – namely, commanding the performance of religious duties that a person neglects; the second is supererogatory – namely, urging voluntary acts a person has abandoned. As for forbidding wrong, it is always obligatory, provided that preventing the wrong is achievable by the easiest means and does not exceed that which is required.<sup>10</sup>

These five principles constitute the foundation of the Mu‘tazilite creed, and no one is considered a true Mu‘tazilite without upholding them.

After outlining the place of reason in Mu‘tazilite thought and the principles upon which they built their school, we turn now to **disputation (al-jadal) and debate**, and how they were connected to Mu‘tazilite theology as tools for confronting their opponents.



## 5. The Linguistic Definition of *Jadal* According to Ibn Manẓūr

"Al-*jadal* is intense twisting. One says: 'I twisted the rope (*jadaltu al-ḥabl*)—I twisted it firmly.' The term may also derive from al-*jadālah*: a hard, compact piece of land. Al-*jadl* also denotes wrestling or throwing one's opponent down."<sup>11</sup>

From this definition, *jadal* conveys **force, precision, and struggle**, reflected in the exchange of arguments between two disputants.

Earlier we mentioned that the Mu'tazila, through their engagement in *kalām*, defended matters of faith using rational argumentation. They were also among the most vigorous defenders of Islam against followers of other religions, refuting their objections and dismantling their claims. What we must clarify now is: **How did the Mu'tazila engage in debate with adherents of other religions?**

This methodological orientation began with **Wāṣil ibn 'Aṭā'** (d. 131 AH), the founder and head of the Mu'tazila. Doctrinal views evolved gradually under the influence of foreign sciences and the interaction of Muslims with other nations during the Abbasid era. Mu'tazilite thought reached its mature form in the works of second-generation scholars such as Abū al-Hudhayl al-'Allāf and al-Nazzām. Its foundational principles crystallized in the third generation and took on an increasingly philosophical and rigorous character, culminating in Abū Hāshim's theory of "**states**" (**al-aḥwāl**).

Their approach to establishing doctrinal claims rested almost entirely on **rational premises**, rather than textual (scriptural) evidence. Their trust in reason was limited only by their respect for divine law; every issue was first

subjected to rational scrutiny – whatever reason confirmed, they accepted, and whatever it rejected, they dismissed.<sup>12</sup>

## 6. The Author and His Book

Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Mu‘tazilī is regarded as one of the foremost figures of Mu‘tazilite thought in the fourth Islamic century and among its most vigorous defenders through rational and logical argumentation. His work "Tan h al-Qur’ān ‘an al-Maṭā’in" (Exonerating the Qur’ān from Allegations) is one of his most significant exegetical contributions, presenting a Mu‘tazilite reading grounded in rational interpretation and in refuting objections raised by opponents of Islam or by rival theological schools.<sup>13</sup>

The term "**tan zh**" in the title refers to removing doubts and objections from the Qur’ān. This work holds an important place in the history of Mu‘tazilite thought, as it offers a rational and linguistic analysis of issues pertaining to faith and ethics. The author addresses topics such as marriage, gambling, wine-drinking, death, and striving in the path of God, arguing that divine commands and prohibitions are grounded in rational wisdom and that God creates what is best for humankind while granting humans the freedom to choose the right path.

‘Abd al-Jabbār writes in the introduction to his book:

"We have dictated a book in which we distinguish between the definitive and the ambiguous, presenting the surahs of the Qur’ān in order, explaining the meanings of its ambiguous verses, and clarifying the errors of one group in their interpretations – so that its benefit may be greater. We ask God for guidance to what is correct, God willing."

Thus, as ‘Abd al-Jabbār explains, the purpose of the book was not to produce a verse-by-verse commentary, but rather



to distinguish between clear and ambiguous verses, explain the latter, and expose the interpretive errors of a particular group—by which he primarily meant **the Sunnis**, whose understanding of the Qur’ān diverged from his Mu‘tazilite perspective.<sup>14</sup>

Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār structured his book according to a system of discrete issues (*masā’il*), where each issue consists of a problem and its corresponding answer. At times, the problem arises from the outward form of the Qur’anic expression as it relates to Arabic linguistic usage; at other times, it stems from an apparent tension between the verse and Mu‘tazilite theological principles. Thus, the author begins his work with *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* and concludes with *Sūrat al-Nās*, without attempting to analyze all the *sūrahs* exhaustively or offer detailed commentary on every verse. Instead, he focuses on passages that present linguistic or doctrinal challenges requiring clarification and refutation.

**Mechanisms of Argumentation and Proof in Tanzih al-Qur’ān ‘an al-Maṭā‘in**

The book *Tanzuh al-Qur’ān ‘an al-Maṭā‘in* by Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār illustrates an argumentative method that integrates rational demonstration with refined rhetorical expression in defending the Qur’ān’s inimitability and countering objections leveled against it. The author conducts a meticulous analysis of the Qur’anic text, revealing the harmony of its meanings and its rhetorical eloquence simultaneously. He employs sophisticated linguistic tools that appeal to reason while also resonating with the emotions.

Among the most prominent devices he uses are metaphor, figurative expression, and logical metaphor (*al-*

majāz al-‘aqlī). ‘Abd al-Jabbār deploys these without excessive elaboration, using them instead to illuminate the precision and flexibility of Qur’anic expression in conveying deep and subtle meanings. He hints that such devices are not ends in themselves, but argumentative tools that highlight the sublimity of divine discourse and dismantle the claims of its detractors. His analysis shows that metaphor in the Qur’ān serves doctrinal purposes, while imagery enhances the aesthetic force and suggestive power of the text.

In this way, ‘Abd al-Jabbār transforms rhetorical devices into instruments of proof, demonstrating that the Qur’ān is unmatched in both structure and meaning. What may appear as variation in expression is, in reality, a deliberate rhetorical diversity aligned with the logic of the argument. Thus, rhetoric and reason work together to construct a robust defensive discourse that reflects the depth of Mu‘tazilite engagement with the Qur’anic text and their commitment to defending it through reasoned proof and eloquent expression.

### **6.1. Metaphor (al-Isti‘ārah)**

‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī defines metaphor as follows:

"Metaphor occurs when you intend to liken one thing to another but refrain from explicitly stating the comparison. Instead, you take the name of the thing to which it is compared and apply it to the thing being likened. Thus, instead of saying: ‘I saw a man who is a lion, or who is like a lion in courage and strength,’ you simply say: ‘I saw a lion.’"<sup>15</sup>

He further explains that metaphor is the use of a word in a meaning other than that for which it was originally coined, based on a relation of resemblance between the original



meaning and the figurative one, with the presence of a contextual indicator that prevents understanding the term in its original sense.<sup>16</sup>

Metaphor, therefore, is a cognitive act that brings two domains closer by viewing one through the lens of the other. It constitutes one of the forms of figurative language, a well attested stylistic feature in Arabic. And since the Qur'ān was revealed "in clear Arabic," metaphor appears frequently within it.

Among its many types, we choose here to focus on **explicit metaphor (al-isti'ārah al-taṣrīhiyyah)** and **implicit metaphor (al-isti'ārah al-makniyyah)**, as treated by Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār.

### **Example 1: Implicit Metaphor (al-isti'ārah al-makniyyah)**

**Issue:** They said that God's statement:

﴿ حَتَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةً ﴾ (al-Baqarah, /7)

indicates that God prevented them from believing, which contradicts your doctrine. How do you interpret this verse?

**Our response (his argument):** Scholars have offered two answers:

1. God likened their condition to someone whose vision is veiled – despite the removal of all obstacles to guidance, they refused to accept the truth. When truth becomes entirely clear to a person who nonetheless rejects it, one may say metaphorically that he is "sealed" or "dead." God said to the Prophet (peace be upon him): ﴿ إِنَّكَ لَا تَسْمَعُ الْمَوْتَى ﴾ (al-Naml, /80).

Though they were alive, their refusal to heed the message justified likening them to the dead. The poet said:

"You would have been heard had you called on one who lives, but there is no life in the one you call."

Moreover, God reproached them; and had He Himself been the cause of their unbelief, He would not have blamed them. The mention of the "veil" over their hearing and sight—if it were real—would undermine their status as rational, responsible agents.

2. The "seal" is a sign God places on their hearts so the angels may recognize their unbelief and join in condemning them. This, moreover, serves as a form of divine assistance (lutf) by encouraging others who suspect such signs to abandon disbelief. This is the interpretation of al-Ḥasan (may God have mercy on him).[10] For this reason the verse concludes:

﴿وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ﴾ (al-Baqarah, /7)

Thus, this example is considered an **implicit metaphor**. There is no literal sealing or imprinting; rather, the expression refers to their obstinacy, arrogance, and deliberate rejection. It is a case of figurative usage as understood by the Mu‘tazila, and the type of argument employed is **affirmative proof**.

### Example 2: Explicit Metaphor (al-isti‘ārah al-taṣrīḥiyyah)

**Issue:** One may question the verse:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ﴾ (Āl ‘Imrān, /102),

claiming that it implies a level of piety beyond human capacity.

**Our response:** The "true measure of piety" (ḥaqq tuqātihi) can only refer to what they are capable of, for God does not burden any soul beyond its capacity. Immediately afterward, He says:

﴿وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا﴾ (Āl ‘Imrān/103).



This is an **explicit metaphor**, for the word "rope" (ḥabl) is borrowed to signify religion, since a rope binds one thing to another just as religion binds people together in the worship of God.

This type of argument is **obligatory proof (ḥujjah ilzāmiyyah)**.

## 6.2. Figurative Expression (al-Majāz)

Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār interprets many Qur’anic expressions figuratively. Al-Jurjānī defines majāz as follows:

"As for majāz, scholars have relied in defining it on the notion of transference: that every word used outside its original designation is figurative."<sup>17</sup>

In other words, the action – or the meaning of the action – is attributed to something other than that to which it properly belongs.

Figurative usage (majāz) is of two types: **logical metaphor** (majāz ‘aqlī) and **linguistic metaphor** (majāz lughawī).

## 6.3. Logical Metaphor (al-Majāz al-‘Aqlī)

The relations governing logical metaphor pertain to the attribution of an action, and they occur in several forms: attributing the action to its cause, to its time, or to its place; or reversing syntactic roles – assigning what is normally active to the passive, or what is normally passive to the active.<sup>18</sup>

### Example of Logical Metaphor

#### Issue:

It may be asked regarding God’s statement: ﴿ وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ ۗ غُلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ﴾ (al-Mā’idah, /64):

How can this be correct when none among them actually uttered such words – neither literally nor figuratively?

### **Our Answer:**

In the Torah, it is mentioned that some of them secretly attributed their sustenance from God to miserliness. It was concerning these people that the verse was revealed. God clarified that His "hand" is outstretched – bestowing generosity, favor, and provision – though He gives as He wills and in accordance with what is most beneficial.

From the Mu'tazilite perspective, the term "hand" here signifies **divine favor**, as the Arabs say, "I have a hand with so-and-so," meaning a favor or benefaction.

This type of argument is an **obligatory proof (ḥujjah ilzāmiyyah)**.

## **7. Communicative Methods**

### **7.1. Logical Arguments**

#### **a. Quasi-logical arguments relying on relational structures**

These arguments deal with the interdependence of states or conditions, extending a ruling applied to earlier cases to later ones.

A model of this appears in the example cited by Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār regarding God's statement:

﴿إِنْ تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ﴾ (Muḥammad/7)

It is known that in some of their struggles the believers supported God by striving in His path, yet God did not grant them victory nor establish their footing.

### **Our Answer:**

What is meant by "supporting God" is maintaining steadfast obedience; and the promise of victory may refer to



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the **Hereafter**, where God strengthens their position through reward. This is their true recompense.

The reciprocal relation is thus: "If you support God, He will recompense you for that support." It may also imply that ultimate triumph is destined for them regardless.<sup>19</sup>

This constitutes an **obligatory proof**.

### Another Issue:

It may be asked regarding God's statement:

﴿ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ ﴾ (al-'Asr, /2)

How can this be true when God created the human being for benefit?

### Our Answer:

The verse refers specifically to **the morally responsible human (al-mukallaf)**, indicating that he is in loss –

﴿ ...إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ﴾ (al-'Asr, /3)

Here, the expressions "enjoining truth" and "enjoining patience" reflect the reciprocal relational structure.

### Another Issue:

God obligated His Messenger (peace be upon him) in His statement:

﴿ ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ﴾ (al-Nahl/125)

to call people to the oneness and justice of God and to all aspects of true religion.<sup>20</sup>

This is an **obligatory proof**.

## b. Arguments Based on Transitive Relations (ḥujaj al-ta'adiyah)

This argument asserts that if a particular relation exists between (A) and (B), and between (B) and (C), then it necessarily exists between (A) and (C).

This appears in the following issue:

### Issue:

It may be asked regarding God's statement:

﴿ تَنْزِيلًا مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَاوَاتِ الْعُلَى ﴾ (Tāhā/4)

Why is it followed immediately by:

﴿ الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى ﴾ (Tāhā/5)

### Our Answer:

God magnified the status of the Qur'ān by indicating that it is sent down from the One who created the earth and the lofty heavens. He then followed this with something even greater:

﴿ الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى ﴾

meaning He has full dominion and power over it, for the Throne is among the greatest of His creations.

Thus, if He exercises sovereign control over the Throne, the heavens, the earth, and everything between and beneath them, then one must recognize the majesty of the Qur'ān coming from the One who possesses such attributes. This is a divine summons to uphold the Qur'ān's teachings and commands.<sup>21</sup>

A structural representation:

• **A:**  
﴿ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى • إِلَّا تَذَكْرَةً لِمَنْ يَخْشَى ﴾

• **B:**  
﴿ تَنْزِيلًا ﴾... (20:4)



• C:

﴿ الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى ﴾ (20:5)

The relation binding A, B, and C is unified, forming a coherent argumentative structure. This is an **affirmative proof (ḥujjah ithbātīyah)**.

### Another Example:

It may be said regarding God's statement:

﴿ (الرَّحْمَنُ (1) عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ (2) خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ (3) عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ (4) ﴾ (al-Raḥmān/1-4)

that it shows God teaches both the Qur'ān and articulation. This is not disputed; the debate concerns knowledge, divine unity, and justice—namely, that human knowledge is acquired through human effort.<sup>22</sup>

In this example:

- A: "The Merciful taught the Qur'ān."
- B: "The Merciful created the human being."
- C: "The Merciful taught him articulation."

Thus, the three proofs share one unified relation:

**The Merciful teaches, creates, and teaches.**

This is an **affirmative proof**.

Quasi-logical Arguments Based on Mathematical Relations

### Dividing the Whole into Its Constituent Parts

This method seeks to infer the existence of the whole through the multiplicity of its parts.

This becomes clear in the following issue:

God says:

﴿ مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِذَا لَدَّهَبَ كُلُّ إِلَهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَّ بَعْضُهُمْ ﴾ (al-Mu'minūn /91)

Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār cites this verse to assert God’s transcendence against those who cast doubt upon His oneness.

Accordingly, the verse establishes **the absolute unity of God**, a ruling exclusive to Him.

The multiplicity of "parts" appears in the preceding verses, such as:

﴿ وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ لَكُمْ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ﴾ (Al-Mu’minūn/78)

﴿ وَهُوَ الَّذِي ذَرَأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ ﴾ (Al-Mu’minūn/79)

﴿... وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ﴾ (Al-Mu’minūn/80)

﴿ قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴾ (Al-Mu’minūn 86)

﴿... قُلْ مَنْ بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ﴾ (Al-Mu’minūn 88)

This final verse functions as a **comprehensive ruling**, while the preceding verses represent its constituent evidentiary parts. Together, they establish God’s unity and absolute power: He creates hearing, sight, and intellect; He gives life and death; He is the Lord of the seven heavens and the Mighty Throne; and in His hand lies the dominion of all things—exalted is He above what they ascribe to Him

## **Arguments Grounded in the Structure of Reality Sequential Relations**

Several arguments fall under this category, among them:

### **1. The Argument of Direction**

This argument consists in warning against adopting a policy of gradual concession, or in cautioning against the spread of a particular phenomenon.



## Co-presentational (Existential) Relations

### 2. The Argument from Authority

These are arguments strengthened by the prestige or authoritative status of the speaker. The foremost exemplar of this type is the **Qur'ān** itself. An example is the following:

#### Issue:

"Why did God say ﴿ ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ ﴾ (This is the Book) in al-Baqarah, 2, and not ﴿ هَٰذَا الْكِتَابُ ﴾ (this Book)?"

#### Our Answer:

God—exalted be He—had promised His Messenger that He would reveal to him a Book that no water could erase. Once that Book was revealed, He said ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ (that Book), meaning "what I had promised you." Had He said **this Book**, the expression would not have conveyed this additional meaning.<sup>23</sup>

This is how Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār argues, and this is what establishes the authority and the rhetorical power of the Qur'ān.

Its type: **affirmative proof**.

## Arguments Grounded in the Fabric of Reality Establishing Reality through Particular Cases

### Analogy-based Reasoning

This argumentative device highlights the similarity of relationships despite differences in their respective domains. Such analogies are abundant in the Qur'ān. For example, the Qur'ān compares those who trade guidance for misguidance to merchants whose trade brings no profit. Qāḍī 'Abd al-

Jabbār responds—on the basis of Mu‘tazilite doctrine—to those who "sold the trade of guidance for misguidance."

### Issue:

What is the meaning of God’s statement:

﴿ اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴾ (al-Baqarah/15)?

Do you allow that God Himself extends them in their disbelief and willed this for them?

### Our Answer:

God intended to extend them **in the recompense** of their rebellion, not in the rebellion itself. It may also refer to the **ultimate consequence** of their persistent refusal to accept the truth. It is the final outcome of their condition. For this reason He reproached them, saying:

﴿ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالََةَ بِالْهُدَى ﴾ (al-Baqarah/16)

The meaning of "**He extends them**" is that He leaves them as they are, exposing the state of their hearts. God illustrates this by saying:

﴿...مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا ﴾ (al-Baqarah/17)

Darkness occurring after light—having once perceived illumination—is more severe than darkness that was never preceded by light.<sup>24</sup>

This is an **affirmative proof**.

### Another Example

#### Issue:

What is the meaning of God’s statement:

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَا بَعُوضَةٌ فَمَا فَوْقَهَا ﴾ (al-Baqarah/26)

Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār argues:



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God had already set forth a parable comparing their false gods to flies:

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا ﴾... (al-Hajj/73)

He also likened them to a spider and its frail web. The disbelievers objected, saying: "How can God strike a parable for our deities with such insignificant creatures?"

Thus, God revealed this verse, meaning that God only strikes the parable with what is **most fitting to the context**, best suited for illustrating weakness. When the purpose is to demonstrate frailty, then mentioning a creature small in size is more rhetorically appropriate.

"A **mosquito or anything above it**" refers to objects greater than it in **smallness and weakness**, for the marvels of divine wisdom in tiny creatures often exceed those found in large ones.<sup>25</sup>

Its type: **affirmative proof**.

### Another Issue:

God forbade believers from invalidating their charity through reminders of generosity, as such reminders cancel the reward.

### Issue:

What is the meaning of God's statement:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَبْطُلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى ﴾ (al-Baqarah/264)?

How does this invalidate charity?

### Our Answer:

What is meant is the invalidation of **its reward** when the giver harms the recipient's feelings – for instance, when the giver complains: "How troublesome you are!" God

disciplines the giver by instructing him not to break the poor person's heart. Just as he did good in action, he must do good in speech. For this reason, God made the parable:

﴿ صَفْوَانٌ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا ﴾ (al-Baqarah/264)

Scholars say: what is obligatory should be expressed openly, while what is voluntary should be concealed, making the act more purely for God's sake.

Its type: **obligatory proof**.

2. Linguistic Strategies in Tanzih al-Qur'ān 'an al-Maṭā'in  
Linguistic strategies involve **connectives and operators**.

Since language has argumentative force, and discursive sequences are shaped by linguistic structure and the elements deployed in speech, natural languages include **specific linguistic indicators of argumentation**. Arabic, for example, contains numerous argumentative connectors such as: *idh*, *li'anna*, *bimā anna*, *ma'a dhālika*, *rubba*, *taqrīban*, *innamā*, *mā...* and many others.

### 2-1 Argumentative Connectives

These connect two statements—or two arguments—and assign each a specific role within the overall argumentative strategy. Among them: *bal*, *lākinn*, *ḥattā*, etc.<sup>26</sup>

#### We take "bal" (rather) as a model

Example:<sup>27</sup>

When *bal* appears between statement A and statement B, it establishes a contrastive relation:

- Both A and B are arguments.
- Argument A is directed toward conclusion N.



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- Argument B is stronger, so the speaker presents it second.
- Argument B leads to the opposite conclusion: **not N**.
- Thus, **bal** produces an **argumentative contradiction** between what precedes it and what follows it.

## Application in Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Argumentation

Issue:<sup>28</sup>

God says:

﴿ أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ ﴾ (al-Anbiyā’/24)

meaning: Whoever lacks proof, his position is invalid.

Then God says:

﴿ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْحَقَّ ﴾ (21:24)

He thereby indicates that the truth lies with the minority.

After that, He refutes the Christians, saying:

﴿ وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا... بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُكْرَمُونَ ﴾

The final verse is the example of the connector "**bal**", which establishes a contrastive argumentative relation:

- **A:** "The Most Merciful has taken a child" (i.e., angels as daughters of God).
- **B:** "Rather, they are honored servants."

Argument B is stronger and overturns the false assumption.

Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār further explains:

"The rank of Jesus and the prophets is that they are honored and exalted; God is exalted above having offspring, and He denies that angels are His daughters."

Thus, the conclusion is:

**Angels are not the daughters of God, and God has not taken a child; He neither begets nor is begotten.**

The connector *bal* thus joins two opposing arguments – A and B – where B is stronger.

Its type: **contextual proof**.

### Another Example: The Conjunctive "wa" (and)

The conjunction *wa* is used argumentatively to link proofs together and reinforce them.

For example, God says:

﴿ أَوْلَمْ يَرَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا ﴾ (al-Anbiyā' / 30)

Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār states that this indicates the origination of bodies, for their states of separation and conjunction (rent and split) demonstrate createdness. Even if this were the only Qur'ānic proof of divine unity and justice, it would suffice.

The full sequence of *wa*-linked statements strengthens the argument:

﴿ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ... وَجَعَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ... وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا... فَجَاجًا ﴾

These proofs collectively affirm God's oneness – precisely what Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār seeks to demonstrate.

Its type: **affirmative proof**.

## 2-2 Argumentative Operators

Argumentative operators do not link argumentative variables (i.e., arguments and conclusions), but rather **restrict and delimit the possible argumentative interpretations** of a given statement. Among these operators are: *rubba*, *taqrīban*, *kāda*, *qalīlan*, *mā illā*, and the various forms of **restriction (ḥaṣr)**.<sup>29</sup>



Thus, they **do not link** arguments to conclusions; instead, they shape the argumentative force of the utterance.

To illustrate this, we select **restriction using negation and exception**.

### Restriction (al-Ḥaṣ r)

Restriction means assigning a particular attribute to something through a specific linguistic device. It is one of the strongest means of emphasis in Arabic rhetoric.

### Negation and Exception

This method uses a negating particle followed by an exception particle, producing a sentence that begins with negation and ends with affirmation. What is negated before the exception is affirmed for what comes after it.<sup>30</sup>

Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār cites the following issue

It was said: God states,

﴿ فَأُولَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ ﴾ (al-Furqān/70).

How can this be correct when it is impossible for past misdeeds to be transformed into good deeds?

### Our Answer:

What is meant by "misdeeds" is their **punishment**, and by "good deeds" their **reward**. Thus, when they repent, punishment is replaced by reward.

In God's statement immediately following,

﴿ إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ ﴾

after mentioning disbelief, murder, and adultery, there is an indication that repentance is accepted for **every sin**, contrary to those who claim it is not accepted for murder.<sup>31</sup>

### **Another Issue:**

It is said regarding God's statement:

﴿وَلَوْ أَنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْ اقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ أَوْ أَخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ مَا فَعَلُوهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ مِنْهُمْ﴾  
(al-Nisā' /66):

How could God command them to kill themselves when a human being is naturally compelled to avoid self-destruction?

### **Our Answer:**

According to the exegetes, "killing" here means exposing oneself to causes of destruction. This is also the view of the Qādī.

The element relevant to **restriction through negation and exception** is:

﴿إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ مِنْهُمْ﴾

Its type: **an obligatory proof**.

The Argumentative Scale (al-Sullam al-Ḥijāji)

The argumentative scale is a hierarchical relationship among proofs.

Every statement occupies a certain level; the proof above it is stronger with respect to conclusion N.

Thus:

- **B, C, and D** are proofs supporting conclusion N.
- If **B** leads to N, then necessarily **C** or **D** – which stand above it – also lead to N.

This hierarchical structure means that when multiple proofs belong to the same argumentative category and have an



internally ordered relationship, they are said to belong to the same **argumentative scale**.<sup>32</sup>

## Illustration

### Issue:

God says:

﴿ أَمْ حَسِبْتَ أَنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْكَهْفِ وَالرَّقِيمِ كَانُوا مِنْ آيَاتِنَا عَجَبًا ﴾ (al-Kahf, 18:9).

How can God begin in this manner when the Prophet had no prior knowledge of their story?

### Our Answer:

Such expressions may be used in Arabic as an **introductory reinforcement** before presenting a narrative. The same applies to God's statement:

﴿ أَمْ تَحْسَبُ أَنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ أَوْ يَعْقِلُونَ ۚ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا كَالْأَنْعَامِ ﴾ (al-Furqān, 25:44).

The second proof (the answer) may be represented on the argumentative scale:

- **They hear**
- **They understand**
- **They are like cattle**
- **But God knows what they do not know**

Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār adds:

"It is said that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked about this, and thus it is valid that God informed him through this manner of revelation."<sup>33</sup>

The second example shows that God knows what they do not know – a rebuttal to skeptics and objectors.

Thus, those who **refuse to understand** the truth brought by the Prophet are described as not truly hearing – i.e., they fail to perceive the meaning of what they hear. Only

someone like one who "did not hear it at all" would reject such manifest evidence.

Mentioning "hearing" and "understanding" does not negate the faculties themselves but negates their **proper function** in most of them – not all of them. This describes the masses and imitators, though among them are individuals of intellect who understand but are driven by pride and refuse to follow the Prophet out of arrogance toward joining the ranks of weaker believers such as ‘Ammār and Bilāl.

The phrase "**like cattle**" denotes the state of their condition – indeed worse, as they fail to comprehend anything the Prophet says.

#### Findings

- The study shows that Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s argumentation is grounded in the unity of **reason and eloquence**; he does not separate rational persuasion from rhetorical impact, but makes them complementary tools for defending the Qur’ānic text.
- Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār demonstrated that the Qur’ān addresses human reason, and that any apparent contradiction or ambiguity is, in reality, purposeful rhetorical diversity serving the aims of guidance and persuasion.
- He adopted a systematic dialectical method: posing the issue, presenting the objection, then responding with rational and linguistic evidence – a method that reinforces the pedagogical and demonstrative character of Mu‘tazilite discourse.
- The research revealed deep linguistic awareness in his work, evident in his use of metaphor, figurative speech, and analogy as argumentative tools that



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highlight the Qur'ān's eloquence and semantic precision.

- He relied on logical structures in organizing proofs, ascending step by step from premises to conclusions in a coherent sequence that affirms correctness and refutes opposing views.
- His commitment to Mu'tazilite principles—especially divine justice and human freedom—shaped his interpretations and helped him uphold God's transcendence above all imperfection.
- The study underscores the interrelation of rhetoric and kalām in Mu'tazilite thought: defending doctrine cannot be separated from linguistic precision and rhetorical beauty.
- It concludes that Tanzih al-Qur'ān 'an al-Maṭā'in is a model of integrated rational Islamic argumentation that combines reason and eloquence, embodying the union of philosophical insight and Qur'ānic rhetoric in the service of creed.

## Recommendations and Suggestions

- 1) Re-examining Mu'tazilite heritage through modern analytical approaches that highlight its argumentative and rational value, free from preconceived judgments, using contemporary rhetorical and argumentative theories.
- 2) Encouraging comparative studies between Mu'tazilite argumentation and that of other theological schools (Ash'arites, Hanbalites, etc.), to identify convergences and divergences in Qur'ānic interpretation and methods of reasoning.

- 3) Incorporating Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s works—especially *Tanzih al-Qur’ān ‘an al-Maṭā’in*—into university curricula in Qur’ānic studies, rhetoric, and kalām due to their richness and originality.
- 4) Conducting specialized linguistic-argumentative studies analyzing the logical and linguistic connectors used by the Qāḍī, such as negation, exception, and argumentative conjunctions.
- 5) Proposing an extensive research project on **Mu‘tazilite theological rhetoric**, integrating kalām and rhetoric as interactive disciplines serving creed and eloquence.
- 6) Applying Qur’ānic argumentative strategies in contemporary Islamic discourse, given their persuasive power in culturally and intellectually diverse contexts.
- 7) Linking Mu‘tazilite argumentation with **modern argumentative rhetoric** (e.g., Perelman, Ducrot) to open new avenues for scientific analysis of Islamic discourse

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## Footnotes

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<sup>18</sup> -'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī. *Dalā'il al-I'jāz*, previously cited, p. 67.

<sup>19</sup> -Būfath 'Abd al-'Alīm. *The Arts of Arabic Rhetoric*, p. 253.

<sup>20</sup> -Al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār. *Purifying the Qur'an from Accusations*, previously cited, p. 401.

<sup>21</sup> -Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>22</sup> -Al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār. *Purifying the Qur'an from Accusations*, previously cited, p. 278.

<sup>23</sup> -Ibid., p. 418.

<sup>24</sup> -Al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār. *Purifying the Qur'an from Accusations*, previously cited, p. 27.

<sup>25</sup> -Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>26</sup> -Al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār. *Purifying the Qur'an from Accusations*, previously cited, p. 36.

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<sup>31</sup> -Abū Bakr al-‘Azzāwī. *Language and Argumentation*, previously cited, p. 26.

<sup>32</sup> -*The Arts of Arabic Rhetoric*, pp. 170–172.

<sup>33</sup> -Al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār. *Purifying the Qur’an from Accusations*, previously cited, p. 313.