



A Study of the Epistemological and Methodological Foundations of Qadi Abdul Jabbar and Shaykh Mufid Regarding Religious Knowledge

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Abstract

Original Research



Considering the fundamental role of the intellectual foundations of every theologian in his opinions and theological thoughts, this article aims to examine the epistemological and methodological foundations of two influential theologians in the history of Islamic theology belonging to the two major theological schools, the Shiites (*Imamīyyah*) and the Mu'tazilites. This research has been done through the descriptive-analytical method, using library resources. By analyzing the works and ideas of two thinkers, the researchers concluded that both theologians regard the knowledge of God as the primary obligation for every intellectually mature human being. This knowledge is intellectual and even pre-religious in nature. Furthermore, practical reason demands that every individual recognize the true Creator of themselves and the world. Morally, they are also bound to express gratitude to their benefactor.. Reason is not only the foundation of all religious knowledge but one must also seek guidance from the illuminating light of reason in understanding religion, for which the Book and tradition are the most important sources. These two thinkers align in their rational and narrative approaches to understanding religion; however, they differ regarding the function of reason, the relationship between reason and transmitted knowledge (*naql*), and specific instances within tradition, all of which are examined in this article.

Keywords

epistemology, methodology, reason, Quran, Sunnah.

Received: 2024/10/26; Received in revised form: 2024/01/27; Accepted: 2025/02/30; Published online: 2025/03/19

□ Allah Bedashti, A. & Dasht Bozorgi, M. (2025). A Study of the Epistemological and Methodological Foundations of Qadi Abdul Jabbar and Shaykh Mufid Regarding Religious Knowledge. *Journal of Philosophical Theological Research*, (Special Issue on Islamic Epistemology: Challenges & Opportunities), 27(1), 79-94, <https://doi.org/10.22091/jptr.2025.11545.3162>

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Introduction

The intellectual foundations of every theologian and religion researcher are very influential in his interpretation of religious truths and concepts. The foundations of ontology, epistemology, anthropology, and semantics influence human religious understanding. In this short article, we examine the epistemological and methodological foundations of two Muslim theologians who were contemporaries in the late 4th century and early 5th century AH, that is, Shaykh Mufid and Qadi Abdul Jabbar Mu'tazili. Muhammad bin Nu'man known as Shaykh Mufid¹ (d. 413 AH/1022 AD) and Abdul Jabbar bin Ahmad Hamdani known as Qadi Abdul Jabbar Mu'tazili² (d. 415 AH/1024 AD) are two prominent scholars of Islam in the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century AH (11th century AD) who lived during the period of freedom of thought of Buyid (*Aal-Buyeh*) Shiite dynasty.

Our central question is as follows: Given the distinct theological traditions of

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1. Shaykh Mufid is one of the great theologians of the Twelver Shia School, and even his opponents in theological schools have spoken about his greatness. The historian of the Sunni tradition, Yafi'i wrote in his history about the events of the year 413 AH, that in this year, the Shiite scholar and ... great figure of the Shiites, known as Mufid and Ibn al-Mu'allim, passed away. Many works have remained from him. He was skilled in the sciences of theology, debate, disputation, and jurisprudence. Despite his greatness, he engaged in debates with holders of every belief during the Buyid dynasty. (See: Introduction of Shaykh al-Islam Zanjani on the book *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*, p. 25). Yafi'i goes on to mention over two hundred works of Shaykh Mufid. Azod al-Dawlah Deylami used to visit him. More than eighty thousand Shiites and his friends participated in his funeral, and Ibn Kathir narrates that many scholars from different sects used to attend his lectures (1951, pp. 25 & 26). Ibn Nadim considers him the leader of the Shiite theologians of his time (1951, p. 26). Allama Zanjani writes in the introduction of *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*: "Shaykh Mufid had many debates with numerous holders of different beliefs, which are compiled in the book *al-'Uyūn wa al-Maḥāsīn*. His student, Seyyed Murtadha, has summarized them in the book *al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtārah*" (1951, p. 30). The important point in our discussion is that Shaykh Mufid also had debates with Qadi Abdul Jabbar Mu'tazili. This is mentioned by Abu Hayyan Tawhidi in the book *al-Imtā' wa al-Mu'ānasah* (vol. 1, p. 141). He says: "I have mentioned some of his debates with Qadi Abdul Jabbar Ibn Ahmad and others in other places" (vol. 1, p. 31).
 2. Qadi Abdul Jabbar is one of the famous theologians among the Mu'tazilites of the second half of the 4th century and the first decade of the 5th century. His contemporaneous Mu'tazilites called him 'The Chief Judge' (*Qāḍī al-Quḍāt*). After the year 360 AH, he went to the city of Rey at the invitation of Sahib ibn Abbad, the learned Daylami minister, and was appointed to the position of the chief of justice, and where he also began teaching (Badawi, 2009, p. 420 & 421; Subhi 1985, p. 334). He was a highly influential scholar in various fields of knowledge of his time. Hakim Jashmi has counted his works as four hundred thousand pages in various sciences, including Quranic exegesis, Hadith, theology, and more. *Al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wa al-'Adl* and *Sharh Uṣūl Khamsa* are among his most important works (Badawi, 2009, pp. 423-426).

the Twelver Shia and Mu'tazilite schools, what common ground do these two thinkers share in their epistemological and methodological foundations of religion? The authors address this question by analyzing the works of these scholars and their commentators, hoping to illuminate the path for a new generation of truth-seekers engaged in constructive intellectual dialogue.

Another point to be mentioned in this introduction is that the Mu'tazilites are known for their rationalism in the history of theology. However, this doesn't mean that they considered themselves needless of the Holy Quran, Prophetic tradition, and Islamic history. Qadi Abdul Jabbar himself is one of the narrators of *hadith*, and Qadi Dhimi and Qadi Tanukhi have narrated *hadith* from him.¹ Mu'tazilites consider knowing God as a rational matter, and for this claim, they make a rational argument on the basis of "Gratitude to the benefactor." They believe that the knowledge of God is an a priori matter in the faith of a divine religion, and comes before the recognition of the Prophet himself.

The second point is that many of the divine attributes of perfection, both the essential and active attributes of the Almighty, especially divine justice, are proven by reason, and in this regard, the Mu'tazilites initially focus on proving the rational nature of good and bad. They argue that God performs good actions because of their goodness, meaning that reason has independence in distinguishing the good and bad nature of actions, and this is exactly contrary to the view of the Ash'arites, who believe that reason has no prior judgment regarding the good and bad nature of actions; rather, whatever God commands is good, and whatever He forbids is bad. That is, the basis of good and bad in actions is based on transmission from religion, and it is only the lawmaker (*Shāri'*) who determines which actions are good and permissible to perform, and which actions are bad and not permissible for humans to perform. In this sense, it is the legislator who decides which actions deserve reward and which deserve punishment.

The third point is that the Shiites (*Imamiyyah*) are aligned with the Mu'tazilites in many principles of theoretical and practical philosophy, although there are differences in the method of proving these doctrinal principles, which are beyond the scope of discussion in this brief study. Twelver Shia theologians also consider the proof of God's existence and many of His essential and active attributes, especially His justice, to be based on reason. They also consider proving the necessity of prophethood and the Resurrection Day to be based on reason.

Furthermore, the Twelver Shia school considers its doctrines to be based on reason, as well as the guidance of the Quran, the prophetic tradition (*sunnah*),

1. Badawi, A. H. (2009). *Tarikh-i Andisheh haye kalami dar Islam (The History of Theological Ideas in Islam)*, translated into Persian by Hossein Saberi, p. 420; Othman, A. K. Introduction of *Sharh Usul Khamsa*, p. 17; Subhi, A. M. (1985). *Fī 'ilm al-kalām*, vol. 1, p. 334.

and the traditions of the infallible Shiite Imams, especially the *hadiths* of Amir al-Mu'minin, Imam Sajjad, Imam Baqir, Imam Sadiq, and Imam Reza (A.S.).¹

Research Background

In this regard, it can be said that McDermott, in *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufid*, has generally examined two epistemological systems of Shaikh Mufid and Qadi Abdul-Jabbar² (McDermott, 1993, p. 70) and additionally, Allah Bedashti has previously examined the epistemological and methodological foundations of Qadi Abdul Jabbar and Qadi Abu Bakr al-Baqillani (See: Allah Bedashti, 2016).

In this article, the epistemological and methodological foundations of Qadi Abdul Jabbar and al-Shaikh Mufid are examined. To analyze the epistemological and methodological alignment of the foundations of these two thinkers regarding religious knowledge, several issues need to be addressed: 1) The nature of knowledge; 2) The possibility and necessity of rational knowledge and the role of reason in religious knowledge; 3) The role of other sources of knowledge in the study of religion.

The Epistemological and Methodological Foundations of Qadi Abdul Jabbar

The Nature of Knowledge

For Abdul Jabbar, knowledge (*ilm*) and comprehension (*idrāk*) are synonymous, as he explicitly states: "Indeed, knowledge and comprehension are similar." Concerning the essence of knowledge, he further explains: "Knowledge is that which requires tranquility of the soul, cooling of the breast, and peace of the heart (Ahmad Hamdani, 1996, p. 46).

Elsewhere in the same context, while defining knowledge, he states: "Knowledge is that meaning that requires the tranquility to the scholar's soul concerning what he discovers, and by this condition, it is distinguished from all else." (Ahmad Hamdani, n.d., vol. 12, p. 13). In another work, he describes knowledge as a belief through which the soul attains peace in accordance with what it believes. This definition largely follows what Abdul Jabbar reported

1. See: Muhammad Abduh, 1993, Sermon 1, 108, 109, 110, etc.; Salavati, 2009, supplication 1, 2, 3, etc.; Kulayni, n.d., Vol. 1, Bāb al-'Aql wa al-Jahl and Bāb Al-Hujjah, etc.

2. McDermott, M. J. (1993). *The theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufid*. (A. Aram, Trans.). University of Tehran Press.

from Abu Ali and Abu Hashim al-Jubaie in *al-Mughnī*.

In summary, the essential point is that for Abdul Jabbar, knowledge and comprehension are identical. As he explicitly states: “This meaning, which entails inner peace, is called knowledge” (Ahmad Hamdani, n.d., vol. 12, p. 16). A notable point in the above definitions is that Abdul Jabbar emphasizes the tranquility of the soul in the meanings of knowledge and comprehension. This is because doubt, conjecture, and ignorance do not lead to the peace of the soul. Therefore, the correct belief that is derived from sound premises is knowledge and comprehension; otherwise, it is not considered knowledge. It should be noted that this definition which excludes doubt, conjecture, and ignorance from the definition of knowledge is, from one perspective, psychological. This is because in knowledge and certainty, there is psychological and even logical assurance, whereas such a state does not exist in ignorance and doubt. Particularly, a doubting person lacks certainty, and their heart finds no peace in any direction. For this reason, Abdul Jabbar defines knowledge as the tranquility of the soul. However, one point is worth considering here: Does this definition also exclude compound ignorance from the definition of knowledge? Because in compounded ignorance, the ignorant person confidently believes themselves to be knowledgeable. On the other hand, Abdul Jabbar’s definition is a teleological one, as he writes that thinking is a human action, and every action is worthy of being performed when it has a wise purpose. Therefore, thinking must produce knowledge or a dominant opinion but if it results in a state of confusion, doubt, or ignorance, it is not correct because it has not arrived at a wise goal (Ahmad Hamdani, n.d., vol. 12, p. 11).

The Possibility and Necessity of Rational Knowledge and the Role of Reason in Religious Knowledge

Abdul Jabbar considers rational knowledge possible and views it as the foundation of the knowledge of God. He considers systematic thinking as the way to acquire knowledge. In this context, he considers thinking or reflection to acquire knowledge of God to be the first thing that God has made obligatory upon human beings (Ahmad Hamdani, 1996, p. 39; n.d., vol. 12, p. 478). According to him, religious knowledge is the result of rational thought, meaning that anyone who has reached intellectual maturity, is not a child or mentally deficient, and does not have a cognitive problem, is required to reflect on the origin of creation and the necessity of the existence of a divine messenger. Reflection is the introduction to rational knowledge. Therefore, reflection is essential, and knowledge is the product of reflection.

Several points can be understood from this statement: 1) Knowledge is

possible and is the fruit of systematic thinking. 2) Reflection to acquire the knowledge of God is obligatory upon every person. That is, anyone who has the ability to think must reflect on God; otherwise, they are worthy of intellectual reproach. 3) Abdul Jabbar's view on the issue of reflection is a theological and internal religious perspective, not a philosophical or external one. 4) Abdul Jabbar considers reflection to be the first obligation, and from this, it is difficult to understand that reflection for the knowledge of God is immediately obligatory for anyone who has reached intellectual maturity.

Realism in Knowledge

Abdul Jabbar is a realist regarding knowledge. While rejecting the views of the deniers of knowledge (i.e., the Sophists), he also criticizes idealist views. In this regard, he has spoken in detail about reflection (See: Ahmad Hamdani, n.d., vol. 12). By enumerating the different meanings of speculation (*nazar*), he chooses the meaning of heart or inner thought, which means thinking, reflecting, and contemplating (Ahmad Hamdani, n.d., vol. 12, p.4; 1996, p. 45). In this regard, he refers to this verse of the Quran: "*Do they not observe the camel, [to see] how it has been created?*" (Quran, 88:17).¹

Abdul Jabbar refers to contemplation in theology as the "Intellect of the Hereafter" and divides it into two aspects. One is contemplation on the proofs of a matter (e.g., the proofs for the existence of God), and the second is thinking to resolve doubts (Ahmad Hamdani, 1996, p. 45) because the work of the theologian is both to impart knowledge and refute religious doubts, especially in matters of faith.

Purposeful Thought

Abdul Jabbar emphasizes purposeful thinking and writes that correct thinking should have a wise purpose. Thinking about a matter should be aimed at reaching knowledge or a dominant opinion; otherwise, reflection is not useful (Ahmad Hamdani, n.d., vol. 12, p.9). This means that thinking which generates doubt or ignorance is not correct, because its purpose is not wise.

Knowledge and Free Will

Thinking is within human capability because it is an action that has a cause, and

1. Qarai translation. Retrieved from: www.tanzil.net. All verses in the article are retrieved from the same translator and source unless otherwise specified.

it must be initiated by the agent of that action. Based on this, if generating knowledge is the action of a human being, then the thinking that produces that knowledge must also be his action. He further writes that thinking arises from human motives, and according to his power and will (Ahmad Hamdani, n.d, vol. 12, p. 9). From this statement, where he says that thinking is within human capability, it is understood that thinking is a free action of human beings, which they perform based on various motivations. Therefore, the knowledge that is produced through thinking is also considered a free action of human beings. According to the narrations of Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him): “The greatest form of worship is continuous contemplation about God and His power” (Kulayni, n.d., vol. 2, p. 55). Therefore, based on this, it can be said that contemplation is a free act of human beings because greatness belongs to the free and optional action. Another point that arises from the optionality of thinking is that since every free action is either good or bad, then a thought is considered good if it has a wise purpose. Therefore, a thought that is directed toward knowing God and reforming matters of resurrection and sustenance, and that leads to a good will is considered good and acceptable. Otherwise, a thought that aims to destroy one’s own or another person’s life, property, or personality is considered bad and evil.

The Obligation of Thinking in Order to Know God and Religious Teachings

One of the issues that theologians discuss is the obligation of knowing God and the knowledge of religion. In this regard, there several questions are raised:

Is knowledge of God necessary, and if so, is its necessity rational (*aqlī*) or religious (*shar‘ī*)?

Is the knowledge of religion obligatory, or non-obligatory? And if it is obligatory, is its obligation rational (*aqlī*) or religious (*shar‘ī*)?

Should the knowledge of religion be based on investigation, or is imitation (*taqlīd*) also permissible?

Abdul Jabbar proves the obligation of reflecting upon God and religious truths in two ways: 1) Through the concept of the prevention of potential harm, and 2) the obligation of thanking the benefactor. Just as reason considers it obligatory to protect oneself from worldly harm, it also deems it necessary to prevent the potential harm that results from disobeying God (Ahmad Hamdani, n.d. vol. 12, p. 320).

Abdul Jabbar’s second reason is based on practical wisdom and ethics. He writes that a wise person, when receiving a blessing, should strive to recognize

the giver and express gratitude toward them. If a wise person reflects on the creation of the heavens and the earth, the blessing of life, and all that is essential for the preservation of life that has been entrusted to him in nature, he will realize that the Wise Creator has granted him existence and made all these blessings available for the continuation of his life (Ahmad Hamdani, n.d., vol. 12, p. 352).

He does not consider imitation in this matter permissible and writes that a belief that is not based on knowledge and investigation is like a person acting on every piece of news they hear without verifying the credibility of the person delivering the news. Thus, the truth is that belief should be based on thinking through the reasons or initial reminders, so as to be free from ignorance (Ahmad Hamdani, n.d, vol. 12, p. 525- 527).

Therefore, it is not appropriate for a person to form a belief about God and other aspects (such as religious knowledge, for example, regarding His oneness and justice, etc.) unless they have reflected on the reasons behind it (Ahmad Hamdani, n.d. vol. 12, p. 527). He goes on to write that it is not appropriate for anyone to speak about the Almighty God based on suspicion, guesswork, coincidence, imitation, illusion, or imagined thoughts, nor should anyone form a belief about matters related to the knowledge of God, such as monotheism and justice, based on these things. Rather, it is obligatory for every responsible person to acquire their beliefs based on rational evidence, so that they may be free from ignorance and fulfill their human duty. Thus, one of the key principles of Abdul Jabbar regarding religious knowledge, especially in understanding God, is the emphasis on reflection and rational reasoning, and the avoidance of imitation. In fact, according to some interpreters of his ideas, Abdul Jabbar believes that reason, without the aid of revelation, is capable of leading a person to certainty (McDermott, 1993, p. 75). The result is that, according to Abdul Jabbar, reason is the guiding light for human beings in the recognition of God and the foundations of religion.

Factors of Error in Thought and Knowledge

From Abdul Jabbar's perspective, various factors may prevent one from reaching true knowledge, such as insisting on false beliefs, unwarranted generalization,¹ and mistaking doubt for evidence. He says that a thinker must be guided by reasoning in their thinking. Someone who has a false belief firmly entrenched in their mind will try to invalidate anything that contradicts their

1. One of the types of fallacies is the fallacy of unjustified generalization. It means that a conclusion of a universal affirmation is drawn from proving a particular affirmation.

belief. Such a person will not attain true knowledge (Ahmad Hamdani, n.d, vol. 12, p.120). Abdul Jabbar considers matters such as imitation, the pursuit of power, seeking personal gain, and so on, as causes of false beliefs.

Abdul Jabbar does not deem imitation (*taqlīd*) acceptable in acquiring religious knowledge and writes: “Imitation is accepting someone else’s words without evidence.” Someone who follows such a path in knowledge cannot be said to be using a method of acquiring true knowledge. He does not even believe in imitation from ascetics (*zuhhād*) and writes: “Being an ascetic is not proof of their truth; many Christian monks are ascetics, but they are not on the right path” (Ahmad Hamdani, n.d, vol. 12, p.61).

He also does not consider the imitation of the majority acceptable in religious knowledge and states: “Neither is the majority a sign of truth nor the minority a sign of falsehood” (Ahmad Hamdani, p. 62). He deems only the imitation of the Prophet and the scholar permissible, stating, “Following the Prophet is not imitation, because imitation is accepting someone else’s words without seeking evidence and proof, whereas we accept the words of the Prophet due to the manifestation of his miraculous knowledge” (Ahmad Hamdani, 1996, p. 63).

In Abdul Jabbar’s view, the imitation of the common people of a religious scholar is permissible because it follows knowledge. This is in accordance with the command of Allah, as He says: “*Ask the People of the Reminder if you do not know*” (Quran, 16:43). This applies to the branches of religion or positive laws (*furū’-i Dīn*) and practical rulings that require specialization and independent reasoning (*ijtihād*), not to doctrinal matters where a person must reach certainty.

One of the other barriers to true knowledge is a faulty generalization in reasoning, as according to Abdul Jabbar, sometimes individuals apply a judgment that pertains to the realm of physical objects to the non-physical realm, and this leads to a fallacy.

The Position of the Quran and the Prophetic Tradition (*Sunnah*) in the Epistemological System of Abdul Jabbar

The rationalism of the judge does not mean that he considers humanity independent of the existence of the divine messenger. Rather, he accepts both as sources of knowledge. This is evident from the fact that he wrote volumes titled *Tathbūt Dala’il al-Nubūwwah* (The Confirmation of the Proofs of Prophethood). Abdul Karim Othman, the editor and researcher of the book, addresses and refutes the Brahmanical doubt about the sufficiency of and reliance on reason. At the beginning of this book, Abdul Jabbar praises God for the great blessing of sending messengers and the Seal of prophets, Muhammad

(P.B.U.H.), to His servants. He considers the messengers a source of guidance and bringers of the true religion. He writes, “This book, *Tathbūt Dala’il al-Nubūwwah* is about our Prophet Muhammad, the Apostle of God.”

Thus, Abdul Jabbar accepts the transmitted (*naqlī*) method as a valid approach to religious knowledge. However, his engagement with the Quran and the Prophetic tradition (*sunnah*) is such that when he encounters verses and narrations whose apparent meaning does not align with reason, especially the verses related to the attributes of God, he interprets them using the hermeneutic method. For instance, the verse: “—the All-beneficent, settled on the Throne” (Quran, 20:5). Here, contrary to anthropomorphists, who considered this verse as evidence for God occupying space, he writes that in the Arabic language, “*istiwā*” means strength because occupying space implies having a body, and based on rational reasons, it is impossible for God to have a body (Ahmad Hamdani, 1996, p. 236). He mentions another verse: “And that you might be reared under My [watchful] eyes” (Quran, 20:39) and writes that this noble verse is about the childhood of Prophet Moses (P.B.U.H.), in which God says, “When we revealed to your mother... “Put him in the casket... and that you might be reared under My [watchful] eyes” (Quran, 20:38-39).

The anthropomorphists believe that in this verse, the eye is the proof that God has a body. In his critique of the exoteric ideas of this group, Abdul Jabbar writes: “The eye sometimes refers to knowledge” (Ahmad Hamdani, 1996, p. 237). Abdul Jabbar states that based on rational principles, it is impossible for God to be a physical being, and this is a certain fact. He references another verse: “Everything is to perish except His Face” (Quran, 28:88). Based on this verse, the anthropomorphists and those who assert God’s immanence believe that God has a face similar to that of a human being. Abdul Jabbar criticizes them and states that “face” refers to essence. Thus, the meaning of the verse would be: Except for the essence of the Almighty God, everything is subject to perishing (Ahmad Hamdani, 1996, p. 237).

He only considers those attributes suitable for God that are rationally acceptable, not those that are rationally unacceptable. Therefore, he interprets the attributes that suggest corporeality or spatiality of God through rational interpretation and the hermeneutic method.

The Epistemological and Methodological Foundations of Shaykh Mufid

Shaykh Mufid is one of the rationalist theologians of the Shiite tradition in religious knowledge.

In this section, we will raise the same questions mentioned in the introduction about the possibility of knowledge, its nature and necessity, the role of reason in religious knowledge, and other methods and sources of knowledge, within the school of Shaykh Mufid by examining his works and the interpretations of his commentators. He also considers knowledge itself as something possible and views the recognition of God as a theoretical matter that must be understood with reason.

He does not allow imitation in beliefs and believes that, in order to understand religion, one must rely on the source of reason, the verses of the divine book, and the traditions of the Infallibles.

The Place of Reason in Mufid's Epistemological System

Like Qadi Abdul Jabbar, he considers reason to be the primary source of religious knowledge and regards rational contemplation as the first method of acquiring knowledge, and he writes: "Knowledge of the Almighty God is an acquired matter. Similarly, the knowledge of the prophets and anything beyond the reach of the senses (such as knowledge of Resurrection, angels, etc.) is understood through reason" (Numan, 1951, p. 50 & 66).

It is worth mentioning that, according to Mufid, the acquisition of knowledge is something that is obtained through thought and reasoning, not through knowledge of something that is self-evident. In negating the self-evidence of religious knowledge, Mufid continues his statement by writing: "It is not correct for anyone to say that the recognition of even one of the matters we mentioned (such as the knowledge of God or the Prophet, etc.) is self-evident" (Numan, 1951, p. 66). Elsewhere, he elaborates on this point further and writes that knowledge of God, His prophets (peace be upon them), and the truth of the religion that pleases God, as well as anything whose reality cannot be perceived through the senses, cannot be acquired without thinking and contemplation. (Numan, 1951, p. 103). This statement is made in opposition to Jahiz and his followers, who considered the knowledge of God and divine truths to be self-evident (Numan, 1951, p. 103).

In explaining Mufid's words, Fadlullah Zanjani writes that the methods of knowing things are sometimes self-evident, such as when we say two is 1+1, or that a body cannot be in two places at the same time, and the understanding of this is through the five senses [It is clear that this method is only useful in perceiving tangible things]. The second type of knowledge is that which we acquire through transmission and the reports of others, such as our knowledge of cities we have neither seen nor visited. The third is knowledge that results from thinking and correct reasoning, by organizing premises that lead us to the

understanding of unknown matters. (Numan, 1951, p. 66 & 67).

He continues by writing that knowledge of Almighty God and other fundamental teachings, such as knowledge of the necessity of a guide and divine emissaries to teach human beings of their duties towards God, and understanding the general principles of what is obligatory and required for a human being, is not part of the three methods (self-evident, sensory, or imitative). Therefore, it must be achieved through thinking and reasoning. Thus, it is for this reason that the learned theologians have said that the first thing that is obligatory for a wise and mature human being is to think about the necessities of religion, such as contemplating the origin of existence and the Creator of the world to know Him and thereafter, to recognize His messengers and the teachings brought by them (Numan, 1951, pages 66 & 67). In analyzing the ideas of Mufid on the importance of reason in the knowledge of the Almighty God, McDermott writes that anyone who is wise is morally obligated to use their intellect to prove the existence of God. Whoever is able to use their intellect in this regard and does not do so, will always be in the fire because they will not be true believers (McDermott, 1993, p. 73).

Jabraili writes in his report on the thoughts of Mufid that in his theological method, rational argument holds a special place. He considers reasoning and argumentation to be necessary (Jabraili, 2010, p. 183). He further writes that Mufid sees reason as having a fundamental role, first in understanding the meaning of religious propositions, second in deriving religious propositions from texts and revealed scriptures, and third in proving and defending religious propositions (Jabraili, 2010, p.186). From the words of Mufid and his commentators, it is understood that the foundation of religious beliefs, which are based on the knowledge of God and His Prophet, is acquired through reason.

Mufid and Abdul Jabbar consider the knowledge of God and other forms of knowledge, which are beyond sensory perception, to be acquired and theoretical. A person must come to believe in them through intellectual reflection (See Numan, 1951, p. 103 & Ahmad Hamdani, n.d, vol. 12, p. 11 & 132). Mufid also considers the first obligation of a human being to be the knowledge of God. In explaining a *hadith* attributed to Imam Sadiq (A.S.), he writes that knowledge consists of four things: Knowing your Lord, knowing what He has done for you, knowing what He wants from you; and knowing how to fulfill your duties. He says that this division pertains to the knowledge and understanding that must be attained (McDermott, 1993, p. 81).

Mufid does not limit the method of acquiring knowledge to reason alone; rather, he believes that every type of knowledge should be understood through its own appropriate method. We should recognize sensory matters through the senses and rational matters through reason. He writes that it is certainly incorrect

to seek knowledge that should be acquired through the senses by using syllogism (Numan, 1951, p. 103).

The Position of Tradition (*Sunnah*) in the View of Shaykh Mufid

Another method of religious knowledge, according to Mufid, is transmitted knowledge or the understanding of religious truths and duties through the Quran and tradition (*sunnah*). According to him, tradition consists of the sayings, actions, and approvals of the Infallibles.¹ However, when it comes to understanding the content of religion, he does not view reason as independent; rather, he sees it as needing guidance from the religious law (*Sharī'a*). He writes that “reason, in its awareness of religious duties and their consequences, requires the Quran and tradition, and these two are inseparable” (Numan, 1951, pp. 50-51). From this, it can be understood that Mufid does not believe in reason being independent of revelation. Rather, he considers the mission of the prophets to be necessary. However, he holds that in the fundamental understanding of God and the belief in the prophethood of a particular individual, reason must, through acquiring knowledge and reflecting upon the evidence, arrive at these truths.

In this matter, he differs from the Mu'tazilites, as he writes: “The Mu'tazilites, contrary to our view, say and believe that reason operates independently of transmission or revelation” (Numan, 1951, pp. 50-51). Mufid does not consider *al-khabar al-wāḥid*² as providing reliable knowledge in transmitted knowledge, nor does he deem it permissible to act based on a single narration. He writes, “It is not necessary for us to acquire knowledge through a single narration or to act upon a *Khabar al-Wāḥid* in fulfilling religious duties. It is not permissible for anyone to attain certainty in religious matters through a *Khabar al-Wāḥid*” (Numan, 1951, p. 129). However, he makes one exception at the end: When there are indications or signs that support the truthfulness of the narrators' statement (Numan, 1951, p. 129). For example, a narration that has reached us from the Infallibles (the prophets and imams) is certain if it is in accordance with reason and aligns with the Quran. In addition, a *Khabar al-Wāḥid* whose content is confirmed by numerous *Mutawātir*³ narrations and

1. The Infallibles in the theology of Twelvers Shia include the Holy Prophet, Imam Ali, Lady Zahra, and the eleven Imams from their lineage (A.S.).

2. *Al-Khabar al-Wāḥid* is, according to hadith sciences, a narration of hadiths that is not regarded *al-mutawātir* hadith which means the number of narrators in all generations of transmission is not enough to ascertain the authenticity of the narration (https://en.wikishia.net/view/Al-Khabar_al-Wahid).

3. *Mutawātir* hadith is a hadith which is reported numerously by different narrators and through

aligns with the Quran can be considered certain and reliable for reference.

Accordingly, it can be understood Shaykh Mufid considers sensory, rational, and transmitted methods of knowledge, meaning information supported by the Quran and tradition, to be valid and acceptable. In his view, the reports attributed to the Prophet and the Infallibles are only acceptable when they are concurrent and widely transmitted (*mutawātir*).

One of the fundamental points of disagreement between Mufid and Abdul Jabbar in religious knowledge is that Mufid believes that every individual must believe in the presence of an infallible Imam, who is free from error (McDermott, 1993, p. 700). From this, it can be understood that the central axis of religious knowledge is the infallible human being, and reason must align its religious findings with the thoughts of the infallible Imam.

However, Abdul Jabbar does not hold the belief in an infallible Imam in this sense, although he also considers the Quran and the Prophetic tradition as sources of religious knowledge. In contrast, Mufid, in addition to recognizing the Quran and the Prophetic tradition as sources of religious knowledge, sees the infallible Imam as a third source for evaluating intellectual findings about religious truths.

In conclusion, Mufid considers reason, the Quran, the Prophetic tradition, and the tradition of the infallible Imams as sources of religious knowledge. However, Abdul Jabbar only agrees with him regarding reason, the Quran, and the Prophetic tradition as sources, but he does not accept the traditions of the infallible Imams as a separate source for religious knowledge. Mufid, like Abdul Jabbar, does not consider imitation (*taqlīd*) in fundamental beliefs (*usul al-'aqā'id*) to be sufficient in religious knowledge (Ahmad Hamdani, 1996, p. 16). Rather, he believes that every wise and responsible person must, through intellectual reasoning, arrive at the knowledge of God, which is the most fundamental topic of religious knowledge. As Imam Ali (peace be upon him) says: "The foremost matter in religion is the acknowledgement of Him (God), the perfection of acknowledging Him is to testify to Him, and the perfection of testifying to Him is to believe in His oneness..." (Abduh, 1993, p. 70).

Mufid, like Abdul Jabbar, interprets Quranic verses and hadiths that are in conflict with the fundamental rational principles, taking into account his ontological and semantic frameworks. For example, in the interpretation of the verse: "And remember Our servant, David, [the man] of *al-ayd*" (Quran, 38:17) Mufid, interprets "*al-ayd*" not literally as a physical hand, but metaphorically as

various chains of transmission in a way that substantiates its authenticity (https://en.wikishia.net/view/Mutawatur_Hadith).

referring to power or grace (Numan, 1952, p. 176)

There is a subtle difference of opinion between Abdul Jabbar and Mufid regarding the transmitted method (*naqlī*) of acquiring religious knowledge. Mufid emphasizes the role of revelation in acquiring knowledge of many religious matters. In contrast, Abdul Jabbar writes that reason, even without the assistance of revelation, has the capacity to lead a person to certainty and the understanding of religious truths (McDermott, 1993, p. 75).

Conclusion

By examining the ideas of Shaykh Mufid and Qadi Abdul Jabbar, we conclude that:

- Both theologians consider knowledge to be possible, and knowledge of God to be a rational necessity.
- Reason is the first source for the knowledge of the fundamental principles of religious truths.
- Reason plays a fundamental role both in proving the principles of religion and in understanding true religious truths.
- Both theologians reject imitative knowledge in religious beliefs.
- Both theologians accept the Quran and Tradition (*Sunnah*) as two sources of religious knowledge; however, they disagree on the definition of *Sunnah*. Abdul Jabbar considers *Sunnah* to be limited to the Prophetic Sunnah, while Mufid believes that the *Sunnah* is that of the fourteen Infallibles, that is, the traditions of the Prophet, Imam Ali, Lady Fatimah, and the eleven infallible Imams after them (A.S.).
- Both theologians consider rational interpretation in ambiguous verses essential, unlike anthropomorphists who only accept the apparent aspects of the texts.

▣ Conflict of Interests

- ▣ The authors declare no competing interests.

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