



Mu'tazilah: Figures and Its Thoughts

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Abstract

Mu'tazilah is one of the doctrine that arises in the muslim views in facing of many problems of politics, theology, philosophy, and social. The most caused of Mutazilah born is theology and politics factors.

The figures of Mu'tazilah are Abu al-Huzail al-'Allaf (135-226 H./752-840 M.); Al-Nazzam (185-221 H.); Al-Jahizh (159-225 H.); Al-Jubba'i (death in 303H./ 915 M); Bisyr al-Mu'tamir (death in 226 H./840 M.); Mu'ammam ibn Abbad (wafat 220 H.); Al-Khayyat (death in 300 H); Abu Musa al-Murdar (death in 226 H.); Sumamah ibn Asyasy (death in 213 H.); dan Hisyam ibn 'Amr al-Fuwati (death in 226 H.).

Mu'tazilah doctrines are in accordance with *al-Ushul al-Khamsah* (five basics principal doctrines); the basic tenets aretawheed (monotheism), *al-adl* (divine justice), *al-amrubilma'rufwannahyuanimunkar* (commanding the good and prohibiting the evil), *al-manzilahbainalmanzilatain* (the position between two extremes) , and *al wa'dwa al wa'id* (promise and threat).

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Those principles are as their efforts to maintain the pure of Islam doctrine, though there are still weaknesses in the application. The merit of Mu'tazilah should be fully respect. In line with the position of rationality in Mu'tazilah doctrine, it is the first Islamic theology which regards the Islamic rationalism. The Mu'tazilah's thoughts can be used in the basic of free thinking in Islam understanding.

Keywords: Mu'tazilah; figures; thought.

I. Introduction

Discussion on figures of Mu'tazilah is not only about Washil ibn 'Atha as the most famous figur of Mu'tazilah. Yet,reference [4] says that there are still series of other figures required to be studied in more depth from those of many Mu'tazilah figures, certainly have separate line of thoughts, so that each figure has separate branch of Islam which is more specialized[6].

Mu'tazilah is famously known as a type of Islamic theology based on reason and rational tought aIn terms of geographics. Mu'tazilah is divided into two streams, namely stream of Mu'tazilah Basrah and stream of Mu'tazilah Baghdad[13]. Reference [7] states that Basrah is the birth town of Mu'tazilah, while Baghdad is as the expansion area of this stream which finally became individual branch, and automatically these two branches have their own figures. Therefore, in this occasion, the writer presents discussion of Mu'tazilah figures from both of branches with their nuances of thought. It has been traced in several literatures, there are tenfigures can be presented in this paper, the following are figures who express their thoughts and to whom they studied.

2. Mu'tazilah Figures and Their Thoughts

2.1. Abu al-Huzail al-'Allaf (135-226 H./752-840 M)

Reference [6] His full name is Hamdan ibn Nuzail al-'Allaf as a Mu'tazilah figure in Basrah, who learnt a lot on Mu'tazilah ideologies from his teacher, Usman ibn Khalid al-Thawil. The teacher obtained direct lesson on Mu'tazilah from Washil ibn Atha'[19].

Abu Huzail was settling in Basrah and became the second leader of Basrah branch after Washil ibn Atha'. Reference [7] Al-Huzail had been associated with many Greek philosophesies, so his knowledge in the field of philosophy made his way to prepare basic doctrine of Mu'tazilah with philosophical approach. Reference [17]His knowledge on logic made him an adept debater against factions of Majuzi, Atheists, and soforth. He made Mu'tazilah experienced a rapid growth[13].

According to [19], among others of his thoughts are;

First, that Allah is as the creator, who knows with His knowledge. The knowledge is His substance. To power is His will of God. The will is His substance[2]. There is no gap separating between His nature and His substance [15]. This kind of thought is a nature of philosophy which believes that Allah's substance is the One, and it is uncountable, since if God has a separate nature, the nature is certainly *qadim*, while God is the only one may have the nature of *qadim*. This is so called by "*nafyu sifah*" (refuse and determine)[17].Reference [18] has further confirmed that the explanation of Abu al-Huzail is intended to maintain the purity of monotheism or the state of the Almighty God, therefore, it must not to be said that God has nature. God remains to know, to power, to be bountiful, etc., but those all are not natures, but essences or Reference [20] nature of a substance.

From his first thought, it is apparently that al-Huzail was very careful in explaining about God, so that human do not fall into error in the interpretation on God.

Second, Abu al-Huzail admitted regarding God's will. This opinion seems followed by many of his followers or students.

Third,Allah's word on "*kun*" (be!),basically contains the meaning as order, prohibition, news, or news dissemination.This creation matter for God is not an order that contains the meaning of demand[3].

Fourth, human basically have power (*qadar*). Humans are able to create deed in the world, but actually this ability will end later in the afterlife (*jabari*), it is when the human's power ends.

From this *fourth* ideology, it appears that Mu'tazilah fully admits the human's power but it is limited only when human are alive in the world, while after life (in the after life realm) human will only be subject to God's provision, in accordance with the deeds done when the power was applicable in the world.

Fifth, that behavior of the heavenly host will end into tranquility (silent), likewise are the dwellers of fire. At the end of this tranquility, all pleasures and torments will be gathered[3].

Sixth, that human nature is not his physical appearance, welfare, or health, but human nature is his heart[3].

Seventh, by using human's mind, they will be able and should recognize their God. Consequently, if human neglects to know God, he/she will get torment, as by using his mind, human is able to know good and bad, therefore human must be obliged to do good, to be fair, to say as well as to behave right, and must be obliged to avoid despotic acts, falsehood and all other bad deeds.

Eighth, regarding death and fortune. Death will certainly come to human and all of the creatures. If it is

not murdered, perhaps because of death or by other causes. Human are not able to add or to reduce the death provision. While concerning fortune, al-Huzail considered: *first*, everything useful for human is a gift granted by God for human. Second, fortune designated for human is attached with the law that has been stipulated by God, if it is halal, human may eat it, if it is illicit, then it must not be eaten.

If we pay attention to this eighth opinion, it is not only a typical thought held by al-Huzail. This thought does not contain any controversial matter, as we accept that it is a kind of thought, without any dispute comment.

Ninth, that in creating this universe, God did not intend to take benefit on the creation, as the creation advantage is for the creature himself [1,8].

Tenth, Abu al-Huzail considered that a *mutawatir* (simultaneous) news or must be proof as a news brought by twenty people [3], one of the carrier must be a “prospective of heavenly host”. According to [14] a prospective of heavenly host meant by Huzail is from the “Mu’tazilah class”.

Thereafter, Abu Huzail as has been said before – he was a Mu’tazilah figure who underlies his opinion on philosophy, particularly concerning God and universe. His opinion on this philosophy, has effect to Islam world. In addition, it has been followed by many theologians after him. His philosophy view was quite wide, even sometimes there is difference from the other theologians. First, he questioned what so called as *’jism’* (substance). According to [20] *’jism’* (substance) is a thing that at least has six parts, namely: right and left, real and hidden, up and down [6], which was latter said [14] that *jisim* (substance) is a thing that has length, width, and height. Different from Aristotle, he defined *jisim* (substance) as thing that has “hule” (matter) and “form”. The next problem, what is composition of this nature? Ab al-Huzail answers that this nature was composed from any inseparable parts. That is what so called as *jauhar fard* (atom) [20]. This atom has no dimension, namely length, width and height, and there is also no nature of preparation and separation inside, or in other words, it is absolutely single [14].

The theory on atom was first time accepted and developed by Mu’tazilah theologians during half of the third Century, particularly by Abu al-Huzail, Mu’ammār ibn Abbad al-Salamy and Abbad ibn Sulaiman [9,11].

2.2 Al-Nazzam (185-221 H)

His full name was Ibrahim ibn Sayyar ibn Hani ibn Ishaq al-Nazzam, a Mu’tazilah figure of a branch in Basrah. Beside as a theologian, he was also a quite brilliant poet, a linguist, a dialectician [20], and a philosopher, whose presence has a lot effect on development of Islam thought. He has much learnt about

theology, as a student of Abu al-Huzail al-Allaf, who later established his own ideology [3,12].

Literature concerning al-Azzam provided description on him as a person who has a higher intelligence than his teacher, al-Huzail[10]. He was so active in breaking the philosophy stream of the naturalists and Manichaeism[20]. His deep knowledge on philosophy is balance with his knowledge on the field of Islam law. He strongly held on the Qur'an text and very critical to al-Hadits, he event refused hujjah of ijma' and qiyas in the matter of law[3,12].

The thoughts raised by al-Nazzam were among others[10];

- God has power to act despotic [21]. If al-Huzail considers that God has power to act despotic, it is just that he is impossible do it, al-Azzam has a further opinion. He is not only impossible to do despotic, even He (God) has no power to do it [2,3])more clearer, al-Huzail said that God has no power to include prospective of heavenly host to hell, even He has no power to add or to reduce the prospective of heavenly host's pleasure; He has no power to include any prospective of residents of hell into heaven, even has no power to reduce torment of the prospective of residents of hell. God only has power to act fair and to do the best[10].

This al-Azzam's first opinion was an opinion based on the concept of "God's Fairness", namely that God will not breach His fairness, because if the fairness is breached, the logical consequent, according to him, means that God is being despotic to Himself, while despotic deed is impossible for God. The opinion of God's fairness is similar to Abu al-Huzail's opinion when he discussed on human "*jabbari*" nature as the continuance of human ability. God will be fair, who is able to distribute the ability to know or to worship of God, he/she reserves the right to obtain pleasure in the eternity life; and otherwise who misuses that ability to do immoral action, he will get torment in return. Between providing of torment and providing of pleasure, it is a "God's Fairness".

- Concerning the Qur'an miracle, Al Nazzam considered that the Quran style and language is not a miracle, the miracle is the content. It is because human can make a language style that is even better than Qur'an. The excellence of Qur'an is in the content which is not possible to be matched by anyone [17].If we analyze that kind of opinion, it is basically a consequent of an ideology of human ability [14]. Mu'tazilah considered that human can use mind to know God, to know good and bad, and at the same time able to know the beautiful and the ugly one.
- The ideology concerning "*kummun*" (hidden) and "*zhuhur*" (appear), or concerning potential and actuality. According to Al Nazzaam, God has created the universe and its content at the same time. Adam and his descendants were also created at the same time, it was only the different time of appearance in this world.

- About human nature. According to him, human nature is a “spirit”, while the body is a tool of spirit.

This opinion is relevant to Abu Huzail’s opinion. The difference is if al-Huzail called it “*qalb*” (heart), while al-Nazzam called it as spirit.

The ideology on atom. He refused the atom theory which was conveyed by al-Huzail by conveying the “*tafrah*” theory (leap). Whereas a thing can move from a first place, second place, and so forth with “*tafrah*” (jumping) movement, [14].

- His ideology is on God’s promise and threaten. He considered that who cheats by stealing 199 dirham has not become ungodly yet, as the amount has not reached mandatory calculation to give donation (zakat)[19].
- Lastly, his opinion to approve “new Qur’an”[4]. Al Nazzam explained that word is a voice that is composed of letters being listened to, and the voice is new in nature.

2.3 Al-Jahizh (159-225 H)

His full name is Umar ibn Bahar Abu Usman al-Jahizh. He was a figure who was concurrently writing a lot on Mu’tazilah[19]. He was born and stayed in Basrah, and in this town he was writing many books in connection with philosophy, literature, religion and about other science. Reference [7] says that if only we inherited a complete creations of al-Jahizh, we undoubtedly have encyclopedias on scientific processing has been going on in his era[8,10], nevertheless, unfortunately his books were not inventoried.

Reference [19] As for this thoughts, among the others were;

- Human deeds are basically based on nature (tabi’at). He further said that each human or material thing basically has its own nature. Human deeds naturally appear as the natural will, so that human is not free, unless in determining willingness or desire. This ideology is an ideology exists in determinism doctrine[18].
- About eternity of hell’s torment. According to Al Jahizh, hell’s torment is not eternal. As for the meaning of the eternity of hell’s torment is the change of human nature to be hell’s nature. A person enters into hell not to be included by God, but the hell has pulled him.
- By human’s mind, human is able to know God. They must be embed a belief that God has no substance, has no form, and is unable to be seen with eyes. God is The Infinite Justice, he does not do despotic, and immoral action. Any person who has this kind of confidence is said that he is an essential moslem, but the person who said the contradiction, then, he is a polytheist infidel.

2.4 *Al-Jubba'i (wafat 303H./ 915 M)*

His full name is Abu 'Ali Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab al-Jubba'i. His son was named Abu Hasyim Abd al-Salam. Both were Mu'tazilah figures in Basrah[19]. In the book, *Manahij fi al-Bahsi 'Inda Mufakkiri al-Islamy* Reference [5], it is stated that al-Jubba'I was evidently studied and given "Mantiq Aristoteles" arguments, with Abu Hasyim Abd al-Salam and Abu al-Jabbar. During the era of al-Jubba'I, it hint the end of the heyday of Mu'tazilah stream [13].

His opinions that can be presented among the others are [19];

- God's Words (al-Qur'an) is new, not qadim, as the Words are basically sentences containing of a barrage of sound and letters, which later can be read by human.
- God is unable to be seen in the day of reckoning, the gathering place of good and evil, obedience and disobedience, which were feely done in the world.
- According to him, faith is a very noble and commendable matter. If a person did a major sin, he is called as fasiq, not a believer and not an unbeliever. If he has no time to repent before he dies, he will get an eternal vengeance.
- Concerning the "*nafyusifat*" (the absence God attribute) absence of God. He considered that God has power and knows His essential.

The figures have been discussed above are the Mu'tazilah figures of Basrah. As has been acknowledged that Mu'tazilah has growth to become two branches, namely Basrah branch and Baghdad branch. Therefore the next discussion will be directed to discussion of Mu'tazilah figures in Baghdad.

2.5 *Bisyral-Mu'tamir (wafat 226 H./840 M)*

His full name is Bisyral-Mu'tamir[18]. He was a founder of Mu'tazilah of Baghdad branch. A figure who was famous as pious, obedient and wara', and an orator as well as a Balaghah science inventor[19].

Among his ideologies, it may be abstracted as follows (Reference [19]);

- Factually various colors, food tastes, movements, and all that can be seen, heard and felt are the result of human action. The movement is caused by action. This is the natural law of cause and effect. The effect is caused by a reason, this is what so called as the theory of "*tawallud*", (reproduction).
- Ability to act free, without dependence. He is also able to maintain his body health, and able to

treat disease. The human did the action is called as form or the first aspect (the cause), and his action is called as aspect (second form).

- God has power to torture a child, even the action is a despotism. God is impossible to do the thing.
- God has will to His actions. God always has desire on His actions. Allah is Wise, the Knowing of actions he desires to do.
- Allah is Merciful (tender), God will give love to human in the form of rewards to those who worship to Him.
- Anyone who repents of his major sin, then acting well (praiseworthy deed), the repent is accepted, provided that he is not doing again any major sins.

2.6 *Mu'ammār ibn Abbad (passed away 220 H)*

Mu'ammār ibn Abbad lived in the same era as Abu Huzail and Al-Nazzam, his ideologies among the others were[19];

- Mu'ammār ibn Abbad refused the destiny ideology (*qadar*) on good and bad. In another word he refused the *qadar* according to Jabariyah ideology.
- Concerning the relation between material thing and accident (*'aradh*). He considered that any material is created by God, either as nature such as burning by fire and heating by sun, or as a choice between to move and to silent, or to separate and to gather by animals[10].
- Spirit is the essential of human nature. Spirit is an independent, non-material embryo. The spirit knows, has power, has choices, wise, not driven, not silent, but nurtured, not carried by place and time. The spirit regulates the body [19]
- The universe destruction does not mean that it is completely disappeared. According to Mu'ammār, the destruction of a thing (*fana'*) is located on another thing. If Allah desires to destroy the universe, He makes other thing as the destruction place of universe.

2.7 *Al-Khayyat (passed away 300)*

His full name is Abu al-Husain al-Khayyat, a figure that considered that the energy to act for human exists in the human's body itself, namely a good and health body, is not flawed. He also considered that through his mind, human has obligation to know God and to know good and bad deed before the revelation.

He also discussed on nature, said that to desire is not a nature that attached to God's substance and also that God having desire not through his Substance. It is said that God has will, means that he knows, has power and not being forced to do His action. And if it said that God has desire His actions, it means that He creates the action in accordance with His knowledge. And if God desires His servant's action, it means

that God orders that the action to be done. While the meaning of God to listen to or to see, it means that God knows what He has listened to and what He has seen. This is the interpretation of al-Hayyat on “*the nature of nafyu*” [10].

2.8 Abu Musa al-Murdar (passed away 226 H)

He was strongly maintained his opinion that the Word (Qur'an) is not Qadim, but it was created by God. He even considered infidel of the ideology that says that God is able to be seen or to be listened to with eyes or ears. He further considered infidel of a theologian who is willing to accompany the authority ruling in the local government [17]. He was also has opinion that human action was not created by God, but it was realized by the human himself [10].

2.9 Sumamah ibn Asyrasy (passed away 213 H)

He was an advisor of al-Makmun caliph and encouraged the caliph to condemn Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sofyan. Sumamah and a Mu'tazilah figure named Ahmad ibn Abi Daud, has succeeded to make Mu'tazilah as the country ideology [19], and encouraged that the caliph did '*mihnah*'(inquisition)[10].

2.10 Hisyam ibn 'Amr al-Fuwati (passed away 226 H)

He was a leader and another figure of Baghdad branch. He said that heaven and hell in this era of life, is not yet realized, because it is no use if heaven or hell is currently existed [19].

Therefore, above all are the discussions on the figures of Mu'tazilah stream and their ideologies, from Basrah branch or Baghdad branch.

3. Conclusion

Mu'tazilah stream was born in the middle of Islam people who encountered many problems of politics, theology, philosophy, and social. The most prominent cause that encouraged the birth of Mu'tazilah was the theology issue, even it was unable to avoid the impact of political factor.

The very complex of the problem have being encountered, brought Mu'tazilah to provide answers concerning many problems. In providing those answers, there was very visible the tendency of Mu'tazilah to prioritize mind position. Mind is given the first place, revelationis on the second place. Therefore, this stream is still considered as a stream that was deviated from Islam and likewise it was not preferred by major part of Islam people, particularly in Indonesia.

Mu'tazilah doctrines on *al-Ushul al-Khamsah*, has meritorious in their effort to maintain the purity of Islam doctrines, even there are many weaknesses in the application. The contribution of Mu'tazilah in this field is worth to be appreciated as appropriately.

In line with the mind position in Mu'tazilah doctrine, this stream was the first stream that called Rationalism in Islam.

In the opinion of the author, there were so many of Mu'tazilah doctrines that were useful for development of Islam thinking realm lately, moreover at this recent times, where many people consider that the Mu'tazilah thinking realm is quite relevant to be developed in the era of development we are currently doing nosed on the thinking freedom in understanding the Islam religion. For that purpose, doctrines of the Mu'tazilah stream are highly required to be read and re-studied in depth to expand our thinking horizon, the majority Islam people in this country.

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