



Human Freedom and Predestination in Classical Kalām: A Study of the Qadariyya–Jabariyya Debate

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the debate on the relationship between human free will and divine predestination, which constitutes one of the most fundamental discourses in classical Islamic theology. Historically, this polemic is represented by two major theological schools within kalam, namely Qadariyah and Jabariyah. Qadariyah emphasizes human freedom and moral responsibility, while Jabariyah asserts that all human actions are entirely determined by the will of God. This research aims to analyze the theological foundations, historical background, and implications of this debate within the classical kalam tradition. The study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method drawing on both classical and contemporary literature in Islamic theology. The study contributes an integrative-comparative analysis that connects classical theological debate with contemporary philosophical and theological concerns, particularly regarding moral responsibility, divine justice, and human agency. It also reinterprets the Ash'arite concept of kasb as a mediating framework between determinism and human freedom. The findings reveal that the debate between Qadariyah and Jabariyah extends beyond theological doctrine and is closely linked to socio-political dynamics and the development of rational thought in Islam. Furthermore, the concept of kasb provides a constructive middle position that accommodates both divine sovereignty and human responsibility. This study concludes that the discourse on free will and predestination remains highly relevant in contemporary Islamic theology, particularly in addressing issues of ethics, moral responsibility, and the concept of divine justice in modern human life.



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INTRODUCTION

The debate concerning human free will and divine predestination represents one of the most fundamental issues in the history of Islamic theological thought. This discourse emerged during the early development of kalām, when Muslim theologians sought to explain the relationship between human will and the absolute power of God. In this context, two major theological schools with differing perspectives arose, namely the Qadariyah and the Jabariyah. The Qadariyah emphasized human freedom in determining actions, whereas the Jabariyah maintained that all human actions are entirely determined by the will of God (Islamuddin et al., 2024).

The debate between these two schools is not merely theological in nature but also closely related to issues of ethics, moral responsibility, and the concept of divine justice. Within the Islamic intellectual tradition, this problem is significant because it directly relates to the understanding of reward, sin, and the legitimacy of human actions in social and political life (Maesaroh, 2024). Therefore, the discourse on free will and predestination has become a central theme in classical kalām studies.

The motivation for this research stems from the need to gain a deeper understanding of the theological roots of this debate and its implications for the development of Islamic theological thought. Although studies on Qadariyah and Jabariyah have been widely conducted, many remain descriptive

and have not comprehensively examined the historical, philosophical, and theological dimensions of this polemic (Walib & Santalia, 2025).

Despite the extensive body of literature on Qadariyah and Jabariyah, existing studies tend to examine these schools separately or focus primarily on their doctrinal differences in a descriptive manner. Previous research has generally emphasized historical narratives or theological classifications without providing an integrated analysis that connects the historical emergence of the debate, its philosophical foundations, and its broader theological implications for the development of Islamic thought. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to how the dialectical interaction between Qadariyah and Jabariyah contributed to shaping later discussions on divine justice, human agency, and moral responsibility within the Islamic intellectual tradition. This gap indicates the need for a more comprehensive and critical examination of the debate that goes beyond doctrinal description and explores its intellectual significance. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its integrated historical-theological analysis of the Qadariyah–Jabariyah controversy, highlighting not only the contrasting concepts of free will and predestination but also their contribution to the evolution of classical Islamic theological discourse.

Based on this background, this study aims to: (1) examine the historical roots of the emergence of the debate on free will and predestination in the classical kalām tradition; (2) analyze the concept of human freedom according to the Qadariyah and the concept of determinism according to the Jabariyah; and (3) explain the theological implications of this debate for the development of Islamic thought.

This research employs a library research method with a descriptive-critical analytical approach toward various classical and contemporary sources. The findings indicate that the debate between Qadariyah and Jabariyah not only reflects theological differences but also demonstrates intellectual dynamics in understanding the relationship between divine power and human responsibility.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method. This approach is selected because the object of study consists of theological ideas developed within classical and contemporary literature on kalām (Islamic theology). The library research design is implemented through systematic source identification, selection, evaluation, and thematic analysis in order to ensure transparency, relevance, and analytical rigor.

a. Sampling

The population of this study comprises all literature discussing classical Islamic theology, particularly debates concerning human free will and divine predestination within the kalām tradition, especially those related to the Qadariyah and Jabariyah schools of thought. This body of literature includes scholarly works that elaborate theological concepts, doctrinal arguments, and interpretations by classical scholars and contemporary academics regarding the relationship between human will and divine will in Islamic theology (Saeed, 2020).

The unit of analysis in this research consists of theological concepts, intellectual arguments, and academic interpretations related to the issue of predestination and human freedom within Islamic thought. The analysis focuses on how classical theologians conceptualized the relationship between divine power and human action, as well as how contemporary scholars reinterpret this debate in the context of modern intellectual discourse (Griffel, 2021).

The sampling technique employed in this study is purposive sampling, which involves deliberately selecting data sources based on their relevance and alignment with the research focus (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through this technique, the researcher selects literature that directly addresses the concepts of predestination (qadar), human agency (ikhtiyār), and the theological debates between Qadariyah and Jabariyah within the history of kalām. The inclusion criteria are as follows: first, the source must explicitly discuss kalām, Islamic theology, Qadariyah, Jabariyah, predestination, divine decree, human agency, or free will; second, the source must be an academic publication such as a peer-reviewed journal article, scholarly book, book chapter, conference proceeding, or recognized classical

theological text; third, the source must provide conceptual, historical, or analytical relevance to the research problem; and fourth, contemporary sources are prioritized when published within the last ten years, while classical sources are included when they represent foundational theological arguments.

The exclusion criteria are also clearly defined. Sources are excluded if they only mention Qadariyah, Jabariyah, qadar, or free will incidentally without substantive discussion; if they are non-academic materials such as blogs, popular essays, opinion pieces, or unsourced online content; if they do not directly contribute to the analysis of theological arguments; or if they duplicate arguments already represented by more authoritative sources. This purposive selection ensures that the analyzed literature possesses both theoretical relevance and academic contribution to the discussion of the research topic.

The sources utilized in this study include scholarly journal articles, academic books, and research publications addressing Islamic theology and kalām. To ensure the novelty and relevance of the study, most sources are drawn from publications within the last ten years. However, classical theological works are not limited by publication year because their value lies in their foundational contribution to the formation of kalām discourse. This approach enables the integration of classical perspectives with contemporary interpretations, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the development of the discourse on free will and predestination in Islamic theology (Schmidtke, 2016).

b. Data Collection

Data collection in this study is conducted through documentary research, involving a systematic review of various scholarly sources relevant to the research topic. The data sources include academic journal articles, books, conference proceedings, and other scientific publications that discuss the concepts of predestination (qadar) and human free will within the Islamic theological tradition. This documentary approach allows the researcher to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the development of theological discourse surrounding the debate between Qadariyah and Jabariyah within the kalām tradition (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Taqwim & Santalia, 2024).

The data collection process is carried out in several stages. First, the researcher identifies relevant literature through academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and national journal portals. Second, the identified literature is classified based on thematic categories, such as the concept of human freedom, doctrines of predestination, and the historical development of Qadariyah and Jabariyah within Islamic theology. Third, the researcher selects literature that demonstrates strong theoretical and methodological relevance to the research focus, ensuring that the analyzed data directly address the theological debate concerning the relationship between human agency and divine decree (Flick, 2018).

Through this documentation process, the study aims to integrate diverse scholarly perspectives from both classical and contemporary literature, thereby providing a more comprehensive account of the dynamics of Islamic theological thought in understanding the concepts of human freedom and divine predestination (Saeed, 2020).

c. Data Measurement and Analysis

Data analysis in this study is conducted using a descriptive-critical analytical method. This method is employed to explain and critically evaluate various theological concepts related to the relationship between human free will and divine predestination within the kalām tradition. At the initial stage, the researcher identifies the main concepts proposed by the Qadariyah and Jabariyah schools, particularly their views on human agency, divine power, and moral responsibility within Islamic theology (Schmidtke, 2016).

Subsequently, a comparative analysis is conducted to identify similarities, differences, and theological implications arising from each perspective. This comparative approach aims to examine how each school constructs its theological arguments in explaining the relationship between human actions and divine will. Comparative analysis is commonly employed in Islamic intellectual studies to

trace the development of theological ideas within the broader context of Islamic intellectual history (Griffel, 2021).

In addition, this study considers the historical and intellectual contexts underlying the emergence of these theological schools. Historical analysis is conducted to understand how social, political, and intellectual conditions during the early period of Islam influenced the formation of theological debates on predestination and human freedom. This approach is essential, as the development of *kalām* cannot be separated from the dynamics of intellectual history and the interaction between theology, philosophy, and social realities within Muslim societies (Nasr & Leaman, 2017).

Through this analytical framework, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the theological roots of the debate between Qadariyah and Jabariyah, as well as its relevance in contemporary Islamic theological discourse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study consist of an analysis of the theoretical foundations from both classical and contemporary perspectives.

1. Historical Roots of the Debate on Free Will and Predestination in Islamic Theology

The debate concerning the relationship between human freedom (free will) and divine predestination is one of the earliest theological discourses in the history of Islamic thought. This discourse began to develop during the early formation of *kalām* (Islamic theology) in the 7th and 8th centuries CE, when Muslim theologians sought to explain the relationship between God's absolute power and human moral responsibility (Fakhry, 2017; Griffel, 2021; Nasr, 2018a).

Historically, this debate gave rise to two major theological tendencies often positioned as opposing extremes in classical Islamic thought: the Qadariyah and the Jabariyah. These two schools adopted different approaches in understanding the concepts of destiny and human freedom (Hodgson, 2017; Leaman, 2016; Watt, 2017).

The Qadariyah emerged as a reaction to deterministic views prevalent in early Muslim society. Early Qadariyah thinkers emphasized that humans possess the freedom to determine their own actions. The theological strength of this position is that it provides a coherent basis for reward, punishment, repentance, and moral obligation. If human beings are not genuine agents, then religious commands and prohibitions risk losing their ethical meaning. (Rahman, 2017; Rodiya et al., 2021; Sidik, 2018).

In contrast, the Jabariyah emphasized that everything in the universe, including human actions, is entirely subject to God's will and decree. In this perspective, humans do not possess independent capacity to determine their actions, as all actions are predetermined by divine will. Humans are seen as beings who merely carry out a destiny established by God (Latif, 2023; Nasr, 2018a; Watt, 2017).

The debate between these two schools reflects a serious intellectual effort within Islamic tradition to understand the relationship between God's absolute power and human responsibility as moral agents. This discourse later became a foundational element in the development of *kalām* and Islamic philosophy (Griffel, 2021; Leaman, 2016; Rizvi, 2020).

2. The Concept of Human Freedom in the Qadariyah Perspective

In Qadariyah thought, human freedom is considered a fundamental element of moral and religious life. Qadariyah theologians argue that humans have the ability to choose and determine their own actions. This ability is known as *ikhtiyār*, referring to the human capacity to choose between good and evil (Fakhry, 2017; Leaman, 2016; Rodiya et al., 2021).

This view is based on the theological argument that God is Just. If humans lacked freedom in determining their actions, then the system of reward and punishment would be unjust. Therefore, Qadariyah asserts that humans must be regarded as the primary agents of their actions (Griffel, 2021;

Rahman, 2017; Sidik, 2018).

Furthermore, Qadariyah emphasizes that humans possess rational capacity to distinguish between good and evil. This rationality is seen as a divine gift that enables humans to be responsible for their actions. Thus, human freedom in the Qadariyah perspective is not only freedom of choice but also moral responsibility to use that freedom wisely (Fakhry, 2017; Rizvi, 2020; Zahroh & Sukron, 2026).

3. Theological Determinism in the Jabariyah Perspective

In contrast, the Jabariyah developed a theological approach emphasizing divine determinism. In this view, all events in the universe, including human actions, are entirely governed by God's will (Hodgson, 2017; Nasr, 2018a; Watt, 2017).

According to Jabariyah thought, humans have no independent power over their actions. All human actions are part of a predetermined divine plan. Therefore, humans cannot be considered the creators of their own actions (Fakhry, 2017; Latif, 2023). However, the theological cost of this view is substantial. If human beings merely enact a destiny already fixed by God, then the basis of moral accountability becomes conceptually fragile. This creates a tension between divine decree and divine justice.

Therefore, Jabariyah is theologically strong in defending God's sovereignty, but weaker in explaining why humans remain accountable for actions that are fully determined by divine will.

This perspective is based on the concept of God's absolute power (*al-qudrah al-mutlaqah*), which encompasses all aspects of reality (Griffel, 2021; Nasr, 2018a).

4. Classical Islamic Theology on Free Will and Predestination

In classical Islamic theology, the debate over free will and predestination developed intensively during the early formation of *kalām*, particularly between the 7th and 9th centuries CE (Fakhry, 2017). Qadariyah argued that humans possess freedom in determining their actions, making them responsible for their deeds (Sidik, 2018). This view is supported by several Qur'anic verses, such as:

لَهُ مُعَقِّبَاتٌ مِّنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُونَهُ مِمَّنْ أَمَرَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ ۚ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ وَمَا لَهُم مِّنْ دُونِهِ مِنِّ وَّالٍ ﴿١١﴾

11. For him (every human being) there are angels in succession before and behind him who guard him by the command of Allah. Indeed, Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves. And when Allah intends harm for a people, none can repel it, and there is no protector for them besides Him.

This verse indicates that changes in human life are closely related to the efforts and choices made by individuals themselves. Therefore, it is often understood as evidence that humans have an active role in determining the direction of their lives (Ministry of Religious Affairs). Another verse that affirms human freedom is:

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ ۚ فَمَن شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَن شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ ۚ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا أَحَاطَ بِهَا بِهِنَّ سُرَادِقُهَا ۚ وَإِنْ يَسْتَغِيثُوا يُغَاثُوا بِمَاءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجُوهَ ۚ بِئْسَ الشَّرَابُ ۚ وَسَاءَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا ﴿٢٩﴾

29. Say (O Prophet Muhammad), "The truth is from your Lord. So whoever wills—let him believe; and whoever wills—let him disbelieve." Indeed, We have prepared for the wrongdoers a Fire whose walls will surround them. If they seek relief, they will be given water like molten metal that scalds their faces. What a dreadful drink and an evil resting place.

The verse indicates that humans have the freedom to determine their attitudes and life choices. In the context of the philosophy of religion, it is often understood as a theological foundation for the concept

of human moral responsibility (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). Furthermore, the Qur'an also affirms that human beings are accountable for their actions:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ رَهِيْنَةٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

38. Every person is responsible for what they have done.

This verse reinforces the view that humans not only possess the freedom to act but also bear moral responsibility for their actions (Kementerian Agama Republik, 2019).

In contrast, the Jabariyah school emphasizes that all human actions are entirely subject to God's will and power. In this view, humans do not possess independent freedom, as all their actions are part of divine predestination established by Allah. Humans are regarded as agents who merely carry out a preordained divine will (Latif, 2023). On the other hand, the Qur'an also affirms that all events in the universe occur within the framework of God's will and knowledge. These verses are often used as the basis for perspectives that emphasize divine determinism, as reflected in Jabariyah thought. One of the verses that affirms the concept of predestination is:

إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ ﴿٤٩﴾

49. Indeed, We have created everything according to a precise measure.

This verse indicates that everything in the universe exists within the decree and measure established by Allah (Kementerian Agama Republik, 2019). Another verse that is often used as a reference is:

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَأَهَا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

22. No disaster strikes upon the earth or within yourselves except that it is recorded in a Book (Lauh Mahfuz) before We bring it into existence. Indeed, that is easy for Allah.

This verse affirms that all events that occur in the world are within God's knowledge and decree (Kementerian Agama Republik, 2019). Furthermore, the Qur'an also states that human will exists within the framework of God's will.

وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

29. You cannot will unless Allah, the Lord of the worlds, wills.

In This verse indicates that human freedom is not absolute but remains within the scope of God's will (Kementerian Agama Republik, 2019).

The debate between these two schools subsequently gave rise to various other theological formulations within the tradition of *kalām*. One of the most influential syntheses emerged in Ash'arite theology through the concept of *kasb* (acquisition), which holds that humans have a role in "acquiring" actions, while the creation of those actions ultimately originates from God (Nasr, 2018a). This concept aims to maintain a balance between God's absolute power and human moral responsibility.

Furthermore, the debate on predestination is also linked to the socio-political context of early Islam. Some rulers employed the doctrine of determinism to legitimize their political authority, while others used the concept of human freedom to emphasize the moral responsibility of rulers for their actions (Watt, 2017).

As a response to the debate between Qadariyah and Jabariyah, various efforts emerged to

develop more moderate theological approaches. One of the most influential formulations is the concept of *kasb* in Ash'arite theology. This concept asserts that human actions are essentially created by God, but humans have a role in "acquiring" those actions through their will and choices. In other words, God is the creator of actions, while humans remain responsible for the actions they choose (Griffel, 2021).

This approach seeks to maintain a balance between two central theological principles in Islam: God's absolute power and human moral responsibility. Within this framework, humans retain freedom in choosing actions, but that freedom is not absolute, as it operates within the limits of divine will (Abou El Fadl, 2019; Kamali, 2019; Rahman, 2017).

Ash'arite theology later became one of the dominant streams in Sunni theological thought and has had a significant influence on the development of theological discourse in the Islamic world (Nasr, 2018b). This verse indicates that human freedom is not absolute but remains within the scope of God's will (Kementerian Agama Republik, 2019).

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5. Contemporary Islamic Theological Perspectives on Free Will and Predestination

In contemporary Islamic thought, the discourse on human freedom and predestination is no longer understood dichotomously as in the classical debate between Qadariyah and Jabariyah. Modern thinkers tend to develop more integrative approaches by combining theological, philosophical, and ethical dimensions in understanding the relationship between human will and divine decree (Griffel, 2021; Kamali, 2019). Some contemporary Muslim scholars interpret predestination within a more dynamic framework. In this view, predestination is not understood as absolute determinism, but as a divine framework that allows space for human action within certain limits established by God (Kamali, 2019).

In addition, modern Islamic thinkers emphasize the importance of moral responsibility and social ethics in understanding human freedom. Freedom is not merely viewed as the ability to choose actions, but also as a responsibility to realize moral values and justice in society (Abou El Fadl, 2019). In this context, the classical debate on free will and predestination is redirected toward broader discussions concerning the relationship between religion, ethics, and human freedom in modern life.

Some thinkers even attempt to connect the concept of predestination with modern philosophical theories of freedom and determinism (Griffel, 2021).

In contemporary Islamic thought, the discourse on free will and predestination has undergone significant development. Modern scholars no longer view the debate between Qadariyah and Jabariyah as a literal opposition that must be maintained, but rather as part of the intellectual history of Islam (Abou El Fadl, 2019). Many contemporary thinkers attempt to develop more integrative approaches in understanding predestination. In this perspective, predestination is not seen as absolute determinism, but as a cosmological framework that provides space for human freedom (Kamali, 2019).

Moreover, modern scholars emphasize the ethical and social dimensions of human freedom. Freedom is understood not only as individual choice but also as responsibility for realizing justice and humanity within society (Abou El Fadl, 2019). In this perspective, predestination is understood dynamically as part of a theological system that allows humans to actively participate in shaping social and moral realities. Thus, contemporary Islamic thought tends to view predestination as part of a complex theological system in which human freedom and divine will are not positioned as contradictory, but rather as complementary within the framework of Islamic cosmology.

6. Comparison of Classical and Contemporary Islamic Perspectives

Based on the literature analysis, several fundamental differences can be identified between classical and contemporary Islamic theological approaches in understanding free will and predestination. First, in the classical tradition, debates on predestination tend to be polemical and theological, focusing on defending particular doctrinal positions. Qadariyah emphasizes human freedom, while Jabariyah emphasizes divine determinism. These perspectives are often positioned as opposing extremes. In contrast, contemporary thought approaches predestination in a more dialogical and integrative manner. Modern scholars seek common ground between human freedom and divine will through broader philosophical and ethical approaches.

Second, in classical theology, debates on predestination were often linked to issues of political legitimacy and religious authority. In contemporary thought, these discussions are directed more toward issues such as social responsibility, justice, and human freedom in modern society.

Third, classical approaches primarily discuss predestination within a doctrinal theological framework, whereas contemporary approaches also examine it through philosophical, ethical, and even social science perspectives.

7. Analytical Conclusion

Based on this comparison, it can be concluded that the development of thought on free will and predestination in Islam reflects significant intellectual dynamics. The debate between Qadariyah and Jabariyah in the classical period can be understood as an early phase in Muslim theologians' efforts to explain the relationship between divine power and human responsibility. However, contemporary Islamic thought shows that the dichotomy between determinism and human freedom is no longer understood rigidly. Modern scholars tend to view these concepts as complementary elements within a broader theological system.

This analysis demonstrates that the concept of predestination in Islam possesses interpretive flexibility, allowing it to be continuously examined in various intellectual and social contexts. Therefore, the classical debate between Qadariyah and Jabariyah is not only historically significant but also provides a conceptual foundation for the development of Islamic theological thought in addressing modern challenges.

Thus, the study of free will and predestination remains highly relevant in Islamic theology, as it is directly related to fundamental issues concerning human freedom, moral responsibility, and divine justice in human life.

Table 1. Comparison of Theological Perspectives on Free Will and Predestination in Classical and Contemporary Islamic Thought.

Aspect of Analysis	Qadariyah (Classical Islam))	Jabariyah (Classical Islam)	Ash'ariyah (Classical Islam)	Contemporary Islamic Thought	References
Basic concept of the relationship between God and humans	Emphasizes human freedom as the primary agent of actions	Emphasizes that all human actions are subject to God's will	Integrates divine power with human agency through the concept of kasb	Views the God–human relationship as dynamic and integrative	Nasr (2018); Watt (2017); Kamali (2019)
View on human freedom	Humans have full freedom to choose their actions	Humans have no independent freedom as all actions are predetermined by God	Humans have the will to choose, but God creates the actions	Human freedom is acknowledged within the framework of divine predestination	Sidik (2018); Latif (2023); Kamali (2019)
Role of God in human actions	God provides capacity and moral law but does not determine human actions	God determines all human actions	God creates actions, while humans acquire (kasb) them	God establishes cosmic laws, while humans act within limited freedom	Nasr (2018); Watt (2017); Abou El Fadl (2019)
Concept of moral responsibility	Moral responsibility fully belongs to humans	Human responsibility is limited due to divine determinism	Humans remain responsible because they possess choice	Moral responsibility is understood within social and ethical contexts	Rodiya et al. (2021); Abou El Fadl (2019)
Theological approach	Rational and emphasizes divine justice	Textual and deterministic	Moderate with a theological compromise approach	Interdisciplinary (theology, philosophy, ethics, and social sciences)	Nasr (2018); Griffel (2021)
Main theological objective	To uphold divine justice through human freedom	To affirm God's absolute power	To maintain balance between divine power and human responsibility	To relate predestination to ethics and human freedom in modern society	Kamali (2019); Abou El Fadl (2019)
Historical context of thought	Emerged in early Islamic theological debates	Developed as a response to Qadariyah rationalism	Became the mainstream of Sunni classical theology	Developed within modernity and dialogue between religion and philosophy	Watt (2017); Griffel (2021)
Philosophical implications	Approaches the concept of libertarian free will	Approaches the concept of hard determinism	Approaches the concept of compatibilism	Contextual and dialogical ethical-theological approach	Griffel (2021); Kamali (2019)

Based on the table above, it can be seen that debates within classical Islamic thought tend to be dialectical and polemical in nature. Qadariyah and Jabariyah represent two extreme poles in understanding the relationship between human will and divine power. Qadariyah emphasizes human freedom as the foundation of moral responsibility, whereas Jabariyah stresses divine determinism, placing all human actions under the will of God.

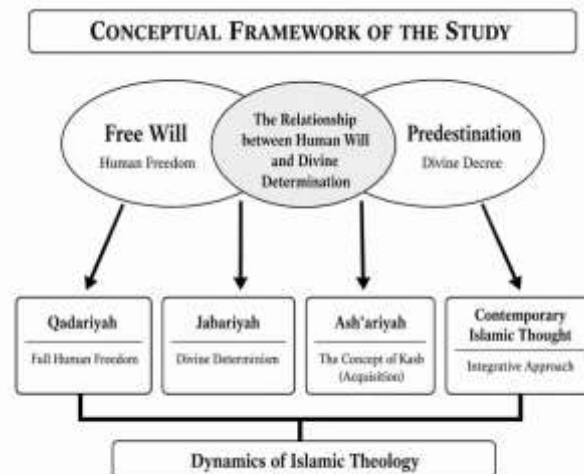
In this context, Ash'ari theology emerges as a synthetic effort that seeks to integrate these

two perspectives through the concept of kasb (acquisition). This concept functions as a theological mechanism to explain how humans can still possess moral responsibility even though God is the creator of all actions.

Meanwhile, contemporary Islamic thought no longer views this debate in a strictly dichotomous manner. Modern scholars tend to see the relationship between predestination and human freedom as complementary and contextual. This approach attempts to situate the concept of destiny within a broader framework, including dimensions of social ethics, human responsibility toward society, and the relevance of Islamic teachings in addressing the challenges of modernity.

Thus, the development of thought on free will and predestination in Islam reflects a transformation from a polemical theological approach toward a more integrative and reflective approach in contemporary thought.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of The Study



This The primary objective of this study is to examine the theological roots of the debate on free will and predestination within the classical kalam tradition, particularly between the Qadariyah and Jabariyah schools. The findings indicate that this debate represents one of the most fundamental discourses in the history of Islamic theological thought.

1. Free Will and Predestination as a Problem in Philosophy of Religion

In the study of philosophy of religion, the debate over human freedom and divine predestination is one of the most fundamental metaphysical issues. This problem relates to how one understands the relationship between human will as a rational being and the will of God as the absolute reality governing the universe. In the context of Islamic theology, this discourse appears in the form of polemics between Qadariyah and Jabariyah, each representing distinct philosophical approaches to understanding the relationship between God and human beings (Leaman, 2016; Nasr, 2018b; Rizvi, 2020).

From the perspective of philosophy of religion, this issue is often framed in the question: are humans truly free in determining their actions, or are all human actions predetermined by a higher power? This question arises not only in Islamic tradition but also in Christian theology and Western philosophy. Therefore, the debate between Qadariyah and Jabariyah can be understood as part of a universal discourse on the relationship between determinism and human freedom (Hallaq, 2018; March, 2019; Rahman, 2017).

Within this framework, Qadariyah represents the view that emphasizes human freedom as a prerequisite for moral responsibility. In contrast, Jabariyah aligns more closely with a deterministic approach that places all reality under divine determination. These two perspectives reflect philosophical tendencies also found in Western philosophical discussions on determinism and free will (Griffel, 2021).

2. The Metaphysical Dimension of the Concept of Predestination

In philosophy of religion, predestination is not only understood as a theological doctrine but also as a metaphysical issue related to the structure of reality and the relationship between God and the universe (Griffel, 2021; Leaman, 2016). In deterministic views such as those proposed by Jabariyah, all events in the universe are part of a cosmic plan determined by God. This perspective asserts that divine power is absolute and encompasses all aspects of reality (Fakhry, 2017; Rizvi, 2020; Watt, 2017).

However, this deterministic approach raises serious philosophical problems, particularly concerning human moral responsibility. If all human actions are predetermined by God, then the question arises: how can humans be held accountable for actions they did not freely choose? In philosophy of religion, this issue is known as the problem of moral responsibility within determinism (Fakhry, 2017; March, 2019).

Conversely, approaches that emphasize human freedom, such as that of Qadariyah, seek to preserve the concept of moral responsibility by granting greater space for human freedom. In this view, humans are regarded as moral agents capable of choosing among various possible actions. Thus, the system of reward and punishment in religious teachings can be understood more rationally (Watt, 2017).

3. The Theory of *Kasb* as a Theological Compatibilist Approach

One of the significant contributions in Islamic theological tradition is the concept of *kasb* developed in Ash'ari theology. This concept can be understood as an attempt to reconcile two seemingly opposing theological principles: divine omnipotence and human freedom.

From the perspective of philosophy of religion, *kasb* is similar to the concept of compatibilism, which holds that determinism and human freedom are not necessarily contradictory. Compatibilism explains that humans can still be considered free even if their actions occur within certain laws or determinations.

Through the concept of *kasb*, Ash'ari theology explains that God is the creator of human actions, while humans still play a role in choosing those actions. In other words, humans do not independently create their actions, but they retain freedom in determining their choices.

This approach demonstrates that classical Islamic theology had already developed a sophisticated philosophical model for understanding the relationship between human freedom and divine determination (Nasr, 2018b).

4. The Relevance of Free Will Discourse in Contemporary Islamic Thought

In contemporary Islamic thought, the discourse on free will and predestination has undergone a more contextual reinterpretation. Modern thinkers tend to view predestination as part of a cosmological system that allows humans to act actively within social life (Leaman, 2016; Watt, 2017).

This approach emphasizes that human freedom is not only about individual choice but also about ethical responsibility in society. Thus, predestination is not seen as eliminating human freedom, but as a metaphysical framework that provides moral direction for human actions (Kamali, 2019).

In contemporary philosophy of religion, human freedom is often understood in relation to social responsibility and ethical values. Modern Muslim thinkers emphasize that humans, as *khalifah* (vicegerents) on earth, have the responsibility to use their freedom to realize justice, public welfare, and societal well-being (Abou El Fadl, 2019).

This perspective shows that the discourse on predestination and human freedom in Islam has moved beyond classical theological debates and continues to evolve within broader modern intellectual contexts.

5. Philosophical Synthesis between Human Freedom and Divine Predestination

Based on the philosophical analysis of various theological perspectives, it can be concluded that the relationship between human freedom and divine predestination should not be understood as contradictory. Rather, these two concepts can be seen as complementary dimensions within the Islamic theological system (Griffel, 2021).

Human freedom provides the basis for moral responsibility and ethics, while predestination affirms that all reality exists within the framework of God's absolute will and knowledge. Therefore, their relationship can be understood as the interplay between human freedom in action and the cosmic order established by God (Fakhry, 2017).

In Islamic philosophical thought, cosmic reality is viewed as a system with a rational and meaningful divine order, in which humans still play an active role in making moral choices (Rahman, 2017; Watt, 2017).

Within the framework of philosophy of religion, this approach enables a synthesis between theological and ethical dimensions in understanding human existence. Humans are neither entirely bound by determinism nor completely independent of divine will (March, 2019; Rizvi, 2020).

Thus, the discourse on free will and predestination in Islamic tradition can be understood as part of a broader intellectual effort to explain the relationship between God, humanity, and cosmic reality within both theological and philosophical frameworks (Ahmed, 2016; Hallaq, 2018).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the debate between Qadariyah and Jabariyah reflects a fundamental theological effort within Islamic kalam to explain the relationship between divine sovereignty and human moral responsibility (Latif, 2023). Qadariyah emphasizes human freedom as the basis of accountability, while Jabariyah stresses the absolute authority of God's will over all human actions (Kamali, 2019). Rather than treating these positions as merely opposing doctrines, this study shows that they represent two enduring theological orientations in Islamic thought: the affirmation of human agency and the recognition of divine omnipotence.

The significance of this study lies in demonstrating that later theological developments, particularly the Ash'ari concept of *kasb*, sought to mediate this tension by preserving both God's creative power and human responsibility (Nasr, 2018b). In contemporary Islamic thought, this debate is no longer understood as a rigid dichotomy, but as a dynamic discourse that remains relevant for addressing ethical responsibility, social justice, and human agency in modern contexts (Abou El Fadl, 2019).

Therefore, the discourse on free will and predestination in Islam should be understood not only as a classical theological debate, but also as an interpretive framework that continues to shape contemporary reflections on morality, responsibility, and the relationship between human action and divine power.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

"The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest."

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