

*Mohammed Ghaly*  
**Evil and Suffering in Islam**



Mohammed Ghaly (b. 1976) reviews three approaches to theodicy within Islamic thought. As a theistic religion, Islam faces the same fundamental problem of evil—that is, of reconciling evil and suffering with the supreme power, goodness, knowledge, and justice of God. Ghaly organizes responses by Islamic theologians and scholars into three categories: anti-theodicy, pro-theodicy, and the median approach. Theistic concepts are employed to develop each position in combination with different emphases from various schools of Islam.

**M**uslim theologians, like almost all theologians of theistic religions, realized that the existence of evil and suffering in this world can seriously challenge the logical correctness of the belief in a spotless and perfect character of God, which is one of the basic tenets in Islam. Therefore, they had to address the pertinent question: How can the presence of evil and suffering in the world be compatible with the belief in a perfectly good God who is compassionate, merciful, just and omnipotent?

Responses given by Muslim theologians to this question produced a highly sophisticated corpus of literature. Despite the diversity of opinions expressed by Muslim theologians on this issue, they shared an agreement that any possible explanation for the existence of evil should never be at the cost of the perfect and flawless character of God. For

instance, saying that God is not aware of (some of the) evils occurring to creatures or that He is not able to ward them off will be seen as a heretic argument in Islamic theology. Against this backdrop, the overarching concern of Muslim theologians was always *how* to demonstrate that suffering and evil should not call into question the omnipotence and all-embracing will of God, or His justice, mercy and solicitude for the welfare of humankind. The main contours of the Muslim theologians' contribution to this "how" question cannot be properly understood or systematized independent from their discussions on the key concept of *ta'wil*, whose most used English equivalent is "theodicy".<sup>1</sup> In this regard, three distinct approaches can be identified in Islamic theology, namely, anti-theodicy, pro-theodicy, and the median approach.

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## (1) THE ANTI-THEODICY APPROACH

A group of Muslim theologians, mainly from the Ash'arī and Zāhiri schools, stressed that the perfect character of God, within the context of evil and suffering, can be seen first and foremost in God's omnipotence and self-sufficiency. In their view, things happen in life contrary to people's wishes and desires, which they eventually perceive as evil because humans have no control on what is going on in life. It is only God who decides and He does what He wishes. Furthermore, judging God's acts on the basis of the same criteria used for judging human acts diminishes the unlimited power of God and thus tarnishes His perfect character and dissimilarity to His creation. That is why no intellectual attempts should be made to search for wise purposes behind God's acts including those that humans perceive as evil.

In his book *al-Ibāna* (Illumination), Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 935–6), touched upon this issue and wrote:

We assert that God has prowess (*quwwa*), as He says 'Did they not consider that God who had created them was mightier than them?' (Qur'ān 41:15) . . . and that there is neither good nor evil on earth, save what God wills and that things exist by God's will and that not a single person has the capacity to do anything until God causes him to act and we are not independent of God nor can we pass beyond the range of God's knowledge; and that there is no creator save God and the works of human beings are things created and decreed by God. He has said 'God has created you and that which you do' (Qur'ān 37:96). Human beings have not the power to create anything but are themselves created. . . . Human beings do not control for themselves what is hurtful or what is helpful, except what God wills and that we ought to commit our affairs to God and assert our complete need and dependence upon Him.<sup>2</sup>

In the same vein, the prominent Ash'arī theologian Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) affirmed that God can inflict pain on man without hope of reward and for no reason. In this sense, all sorts of evil are to be traced to God who created them and willed them such that man has no role in this regard. The questions that arise from adopting this position include: Why does God create and will evils? What is the wise purpose behind all this? Where is the justice of God in this case?

In fact, Ash'arī theologians condemned posing questions to God because He is the Almighty who runs His own kingship as He pleases and thus is not to be questioned. According to these theologians, searching for the wise purposes of God's actions is not only meaningless, but also grave disobedience to Him. They considered this contrary to the perfect and flawless character of God. In defense of this approach, these theologians advanced three main arguments:

*First*, if God's act is precipitated by a cause then this cause is originated and thus requires another cause, and so on *ad infinitum*. If God acted on account of a cause or wise purpose, this would entail an endless chain or infinite regress of causes, which the Ash'arīs see as something impossible.

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

The *third* argument was directed specifically against the Mu'tazilī school which maintained that God acts for a cause that is disjoined from His essence. As a counterargument, the Ash'arīs stated that this cause must have some impact on God; otherwise it would not be a cause. If then it is disjoined from God, His acting for its sake implies that the cause, which is something outside Himself, perfects Him. Conversely, if the cause is 'subsisting in Him', the Ash'arīs argued, then it necessarily follows that He is a substrate for originated events.

It is noteworthy to state here that by denying the wise purposiveness of God's acts, the Ash'arīs did not deny the name of God, *al-Ḥakīm* (All-Wise). In their view, God was undoubtedly All-Wise but they had their own specific understanding of this name. Al-Ghazālī explained it by saying, '*Al-Ḥakīm* is the one who has wisdom. Wisdom is equivalent to the understanding of superior things through the highest modes

of knowledge. . . . He is the truly wise because He knows the most sublime things by the most sublime modes of knowing.' Thus God's wisdom was, to the Ash'aris, simply knowledge and does not necessarily entail purposiveness in His acts. The same holds true for the divine name *al-Adl* (All-Just). They did not deny the name but they interpreted it as an expression of God's will. The prominent Ash'ari scholar 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 1071) defined justice as 'what the doer can do' whereas injustice is 'dispose of someone else's property without his consent'. In this sense, it is inconceivable to classify any of God's acts as injustice because He runs His own kingship as He pleases and He is in no need of others' permission to act.

Another important point in this regard, on which the Asharis disagreed with the Mu'tazilis, was that God's acts are not subject to the human intellect and thus cannot be measured thereby. For instance, the value of justice, injustice and so forth are to be specified solely by the Lawgiver, i.e. God. Accordingly, God does not command an act *because* that act is just and good; it is His command which makes it just and good.

Within this theological framework, the Ash'aris did not have much trouble to explain the existence of evils in the world. For instance, speaking about infants in this life suffering the torture of leprosy, which makes their hands and feet drop off, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'ari held that such act is just and wise because God is simply running His own Kingship.

## (2) THE PRO-THEODICY APPROACH

Contrary to the previous group which stressed God's omnipotence, another group of theologians, mainly from the Mu'tazili and Shī'i schools, stressed instead God's justice, wisdom and solicitude for the welfare of His creatures. According to them, emphasis on the divine attributes which spotlight God's justice, mercy and wisdom is the best way to show that evil in the world does not tarnish the perfect character of God. The Mu'tazili theologians also unanimously declared that God does nothing without wisdom, and, in all that He does, He intends benefit. However, they also tried to uphold God's complete lack of need by

clarifying that the sole beneficiaries in purposive divine acts are His creatures.

The other side of God's character, mainly revealed in His omnipotence, occupied a subsidiary role in the thought of this group of theologians. Attributes indicating God's omnipotence were seen as something implied in the fact that God exists and that they do not represent a separate category of attributes to the extent that some Mu'tazili theologians even denied that God has the capacity to do injustice. In the Mu'tazili view, divine omnipotence cannot supersede or deviate from justice and wisdom. God's omnipotence is allowed to work only within the realm of His justice and wisdom. For instance, divine wisdom as an essential attribute of God precludes His committing any bad act, a premise which leads to the conclusion that it is impossible for a wise God to commit such acts. On the other hand, things that are rationally impossible are entirely outside the sphere of God's power. This group of Muslim theologians also held that God's justice and wisdom are to be measured by the same scale as the one applied to human actions. This is based on the analogy to be drawn between the Present world and the Absent (Divine) world because of which the justice, wisdom and goodness of God's acts can be recognized by the human intellect.

The theodicy promoted by the advocates of this approach is a typically free-will theodicy. They held that God, out of justice, granted freedom to human beings so that those who do good can be rewarded and those who do evil can be punished. Because of this freedom, man could be the agent of a large part of the evil and suffering in this world, namely, moral evil. Such evils are not to be ascribed to God but to their agent, namely, man, who is capable of doing both justice and injustice. As for natural evil, they did not deny that it happens beyond human choice. Thus, God alone is responsible for this type of evil, but the evil is always just and wise because it has been created by God for specific wise purposes.

In the view of this group of theologians, although inflicting pain and suffering is in principle evil, the existence of evil in the world does not tarnish the perfect character of God, especially His justice and wisdom. The prominent Mu'tazili theologian 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 1025) explained this point by arguing

that doing harm is injustice and thus evil unless this harm:

- involves a benefit greater than the harm;
- averts a harm greater than the inflicted harm;
- is deserved;
- is inflicted on the assumption that one of the above three conditions applies;
- if inflicted on someone else, is intended to bring a benefit; and
- is done to an adult of sound mind who has consented to be harmed for the sake of profit.
- In the case of living beings who are not in full possession of their mental faculties and are in someone's care, it is deemed good if one harms them while assuming that this will lead to a profit for them in the future or that it will avert an expected harm.

In the light of these premises and conditions, moral evil committed by people with legal liability in Islam—i.e., those who are adult and of sound mind—must be compensated by the human agents of this evil. Bearing in mind that God is All-Just, He will be obliged to administer justice between the wrongdoer and the wronged, firstly because He enabled the wrongdoer to wrong another person and, secondly, because He is omniscient and therefore knows exactly how much compensation must be given for each instance of suffering. In the case of natural evil that hits people with legal liability, the Mu'tazilī theologians had to address the problem of the missing consent: How could harm inflicted by God be deemed good when these people had not given Him their consent to the harm? In response, the Mu'tazilīs provided three answers:

The *first* answer was that the relation between God and humans is like the relation between a care-giver and children in his custody. The care-giver is entitled to inflict pain on them without their consent as long as this leads to greater benefit than the pain or averts harm greater than the pain, because they have been put into his care and he knows what is best for them. Thus, God does not have to ask for humans' consent when He inflicts pain on them. That is because it is God who created them and gave them life and He is therefore in the best position to know what is good for them.

The *second* answer was based on imagining a situation in which it is good to harm an adult person of sound mind even if he has not given consent beforehand. Such a situation would be one in which the compensation for the harm is so great that all adults of sound mind, different as they are, would certainly choose to bear the harm in order to obtain the compensation awarded for it. Those who do not make this choice must be considered as not being of sound mind.

The *third* answer was based on the supposition that those who are adult and of sound mind might have already given God some kind of silent permission to make them suffer. If these people know God, they also know that God will certainly compensate them for the suffering He caused and that He will make the compensation so great that each of them will choose to bear suffering. They argued that this situation is tantamount to giving permission to God to inflict pain.

Besides the problem of consent, the Mu'tazilī theologians also reflected upon the possible wise purposes which make the harm inflicted by God a good act. They focused on three main purposes, namely, deserved punishment, divine assistance and compensation. Inflicting pain as a deserved punishment was a point of disagreement among the Mu'tazilī theologians. Some of them accepted this as a possible wise purpose which will put the harm inflicted by God outside the realm of evil. Other Mu'tazilīs held that suffering in general cannot be intended as punishment because it is wrong to punish someone who does not know what he is being punished for. Such a person may think that an injustice is being done to him and this may prompt him to do bad acts. Furthermore, it is an established fact that prophets and pious people did suffer, although they cannot have deserved punishment from God. As for divine assistance, the Mu'tazilī theologians explained that God imposes obligations on all adults of sound mind with the purpose of giving them the opportunity to earn a reward. If this is God's purpose, then He must impose on them something difficult, but not so difficult as to be impossible. Thus, God is obliged to do certain things and acts in order to enable people to fulfill that which He has imposed on them. These acts are performed with the purpose of (a) informing people

about which obligations are imposed on them; or (b) motivating them to fulfill these obligations. These acts of God make part of the so-called divine assistance. For instance, God's sending prophets to people in order to inform them of the obligations imposed on them is one form of this divine assistance. Also suffering in this life warns people that there will be endless suffering and punishment in Hell if they fail to fulfill the obligations imposed by God. As far as compensation is concerned, the Mu'tazili theologians held that pain inflicted by God or by His command or permission is compensated by Him in order to ensure that His infliction of pain is not a bad act.

But how is it possible that natural evil that afflicts innocent children, when considered part of God's actions, can also be a good thing? One of the striking answers given to this question was developed by the Mu'tazilis who believed in metempsychosis. They said that all types of suffering in this life are the result of one's sins committed in a previous life. They held that God created men healthy, sound in body and mind, in an adult state, and in a world other than the one in which they now live. He created in them the full knowledge of Himself and showered on them His blessings. God then placed them under an obligation to show gratitude to Him. Some of them obeyed him and some disobeyed in all that he had commanded while a third group obeyed in some things and disobeyed in others. God allowed those who obeyed in all things to remain in Heaven. Those who were disobedient in all things God cast out of Heaven and put in a place of punishment, namely, Hell. Those who were partly obedient and partly disobedient God sent to this world and clothed them in gross human bodies. He also subjected them to adversity, suffering, hardship and comfort, pain and pleasure. In this life, too, He gave them different forms, some having the form of human beings and some of animals according to the measure of their sins. Those who had sinned less and obeyed more were given a more beautiful body and their sufferings were less. Those whose sins were greater were given a less beautiful body and suffered more. Henceforward, those who are animals will not cease to be animals in one life after another, as long as their acts of obedience and disobedience continue. In order to stick to the

premise that God never causes undeserved suffering, another group of Mu'tazilis claimed that children feel only pain inflicted on them by humans and not what is inflicted by God. This viewpoint was criticized by other Mu'tazili theologians who pointed out that every adult should have experienced pain during childhood just as they do during adulthood. The majority view within the Mu'tazili school held that natural evil that hit children is good because it is purposeful. They made reference to the aforementioned two purposes: divine assistance and compensation. After having reached maturity, the sufferings during childhood, as part of the divine assistance, will be a good motivation for the children to fulfill the obligations imposed upon them by God. They conceded that divine assistance will not work as wise purpose for those children who die before reaching maturity because they cannot deserve a reward, as they were never charged with religious obligations. The benefit that these children can get is a compensation given to them by God. The majority of the Mutazili theologians stated that it is inevitable that God will revive those children who have not received all their compensation in this world on the Day of Resurrection so that they can receive their compensation in the Hereafter.

### (3) THE MEDIAN APPROACH

A significant number of Muslim scholars were not satisfied with the clashing arguments presented by the advocates of the first two approaches. They held that truth lies in a balance between these two extreme positions. Among this group which tried to develop an intermediate position, we find a great number of Muslim theologians, jurists, Qur'an exegetes, Sufis, and also a number of the late Ash'aris who diverged from their school in this specific respect.

According to this group, integrating divine names and attributes expressing God's omnipotence with those indicating His justice and wisdom is a Qur'anic phenomenon. For instance, the name indicating divine omnipotence, *Al-'Aziz* (the Powerful), occurs eleven times in the Qur'an in combination with the name indicating God's mercy, *Al-Rahim* (the Merciful).<sup>3</sup> This combination occurs, for instance,



in the context of afflicting previous nations and peoples with severe punishments for disobeying God's Messengers (Qur'an 26:09, 86, 104, 122, 140, 159, 175, 191). As for the perfect and flawless character of God, the advocates of this approach argued that the aforementioned two groups ultimately portrayed an inadequate view of God. The retributive justice advocated by the Mu'tazila and the voluntaristic justice promoted by the Ash'aris were both criticized. The Ash'aris' denial of the wise purposiveness of God's acts and the Mu'tazili promotion of wise purposiveness that should always be measured by human standards were both rejected. The advocates of this approach tried to find middle ground by saying that behind every divine act there must be one or many wise purposes but these are not necessarily always detectable by the human intellect. At the end, the finite cognitive faculties of humans cannot comprehend the infinite wisdom of God. That is why many of the advocates of this approach were sometimes very timid in their search for the wise purposes behind evils that hit innocent creatures such as children and animals. Some of them held that human mental capacities fall short of realizing such purposes. One of the main characteristics of the theodicy advocated by this group of Muslim scholars is the primacy of revelation over reason. According to them, the wise purposes propounded by revelation cannot be contradicted by rational thought because revelation is infallible whereas reason is prone to error.

Basing their opinions mainly on scriptural texts from the Qur'an and Sunna, on the one hand, and making use of rational arguments, on the other, the advocates of this approach mentioned a number of possible wise purposes for the existence of evil and suffering in life:

One of the possible purposes that has been intensively discussed by the advocates of this approach was that suffering can function as a disciplinary action or punishment introduced by God for sins committed by people with legal liability in Islam, i.e., adult people of sound mind. In principle, the possibility of a cause-effect link between committing sins on the one hand and suffering, pain or harm on the other hand was not ruled out. A number of Qur'anic verse were quoted in support of this possible cause-effect

link (e.g. 4:79, 04:123, 8:53, 30:41, 42:30). Take for instance, the Qur'anic verse, 'Whatever misfortune happens to you, is because of the things your hands have wrought, but for many [of them] He grants forgiveness' (42:30). Some commentators interpreted 'misfortune' as illness, harm, or any form of suffering and 'the things your hands have wrought' as one's sins and misdeeds. Upon the revelation of this verse, the Prophet of Islam is reported to have said, 'No scratch of a stick, shudder of a vein or stumble of a foot befalls a man but because of a sin, but what Allah forgives is more.' Additionally, Muslim scholars argued that evil *may be* but need *not necessarily be* the result of committing sins. In their view, disobedient people usually receive more than one warning before being punished. Misfortunes in life as punishment befall those who insist on paying no attention to such warnings, make no effort to return to the straight path, declare no repentance to God and continue their disobedience. But even as a form of punishment, they held that suffering must have a beneficent function. In their view, suffering may have a cathartic function by purging the sinner of his sins and bringing him relief from greater torment in the Hereafter. A great number of prophetic traditions stressed the expiatory role of suffering and its purging effect on the life of the faithful such as 'No calamity befalls a Muslim but God expiates some of his sins even if it were being pricked with a thorn.' Understanding evil as punishment in this context was interpreted as an indication of God's mercy and benevolence rather than anger and wrath. The advocates of this approach also stressed that people cannot be punished by facing evils in their life because of sins committed by others. This thesis is advanced by the Qur'an which repeatedly states that everyone is responsible for his/her own acts and cannot be burdened by the consequences of others' sins (e.g. 6:164, 17:15, 35:18, 39:07, 53:38). Commentaries on these Qur'anic verses show that this is a point of agreement among Muslim scholars in general.

Besides the possibility of expiating sins, two other closely interrelated purposes for the existence of suffering in life were mentioned—that is, gaining reward in the Hereafter and enabling the suffering person to attain a lofty rank in Paradise. As for gaining reward,

a number of prophetic traditions were interpreted as indicating that afflictions can be a source of bountiful reward from God, such as “The magnitude of reward is contingent upon the magnitude of the affliction.” Suffering was also seen as a possible means of attaining a lofty rank in Paradise that otherwise would have been unattainable by good deeds only. A large number of prophetic traditions were also said to carry this meaning and some scholars collected these traditions in a discrete chapter entitled “Chapter on Attaining the [Honorable] Ranks by Affliction” or “Mentioning that Allah Elevates the Status of the Believers by the Afflictions that Befall Them”

It is also possible that one of the wise purposes behind evil in the world is Allah’s decision to test faith. This is the most obvious answer provided by early and late Muslim scholars. Testing people to find out whose faith is true and strong is one of the central themes in the Qur’an (2:214, 3:141, 154, 9:126, 21:35, 29:02, 49:03, 76:02, 89:15–16). The Prophet of Islam is reported to have said: “Truly God may test you with an affliction, the same as you may test your gold with fire. As a result, some people will come out of it [i.e. affliction] as pure gold. These are the persons whom God has guarded against doubts. [Others] will come out [with a result] less than this. These are the ones who had doubts. The last will come out like black gold. These are the ones who failed the test.”

One of the peculiarly Maturidian arguments to justify evils in the world is that evil and abnormalities in life prove that God exists and that He alone has created this life and all creatures therein. In his book *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* (Book of Oneness), Abū Maṣū‘ al-Māturīdī (d. c. 944) elaborated on this argument in a chapter entitled “The Evidence that the Cosmos Has One Who Gave it Temporal Existence”. We quote here what is of particular interest to the theme of evil:

And the second proof that the world has one who gave it temporal existence is that, if the world existed by its own essence, no instant in it would be truer than any other, no state more appropriate than any other, no characteristic more seemly than any other. But, since it exists with instants, states and characteristics which differ from one another, it is proven that it does not exist by its own essence. Furthermore, if it did, it would be possible that each thing would create for itself such

states and characteristics as are the best and most beautiful, and so, by doing this, it would be false to say that moral and physical evils exist. But the fact of their existence shows that the existence of the world came about by something other than itself.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, what proves to al-Māturīdī that the cosmos is not self-existent is the presence of ‘more’ and ‘less’ degrees therein. The presence of forms of imperfection shows that the universe is not self-existent. It is not eternal but rather exists temporally. If it were self-existent, everything would simply be perfect in regard to points of time, states of being and qualities of being. But, in the world as it is, al-Māturīdī noted, this is not the case. No being which had complete control of its own existence would want for itself anything other than the best in all respects. Now, if it were true that each thing were in control of its own existence, it would follow that no one would permit sufferings or evil in general to take place in one’s life. Since these evils do exist in our lives, it must mean that beings are not in control of their own existence. Thus, the existence of evil, moral and natural, is made the explicit basis for coming to know that there is a God and that He is a Creator. As for the oneness of God, al-Māturīdī found evidence for this in the fact that there is no single substance whose existence can be related to one quality only, such as harmfulness or benefit, evil or good, or blessing or trial. Rather, each thing is characterized by evil which then can be judged as good from another perspective. Created beings are neither beneficent nor harmful in every state. This, al-Māturīdī added, is proof that whoever directs it all must be one because he can combine aspects of the harmful and the beneficial in the created beings:

You also see that all substances fall under the category of material and are an assemblage of mutually opposed natural elements whose real nature should lead to mutual aversion and estrangement because mutual hostility exists among them. Were it conceivable that their nature abandon their being together, that would cause the destruction of the whole. Thus, it is proven that the one who directs the union among them must be one, joining them together because of his benevolence toward the world and keeping the potential harm of each one from the other by an act of remarkable wisdom which human imagination cannot comprehend.<sup>5</sup>

In another place, he added,

Thus, in that creation of things which combine the beneficial and the harmful, there is the wondrous manifestation of His wisdom, that He combines the harmful and the beneficial in one being, as well as good and evil, in spite of the mutually contradictory natures of both, as the indication for His oneness and the testimony that His Lordship is one.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, realizing God's threats and promises in the world to come has also been mentioned as one of the possible wise purposes for the existence of evil in this

life. One of the general beliefs in Islam is that God created three abodes: one is composed of pure goodness and pleasure, and this is Paradise; the second is composed of pure evil and pain, and this is Hell; the third, however, that of worldly life, is composed of contraries and opposites, such as good and evil, pain and pleasure, illness and health and so forth. The advocates of this approach stated that one of the aims of creating this worldly life is to give people an idea of the pain prepared for the disobedient and infidels in Hell and the pleasures awaiting the obedient in Paradise.

## NOTES

1. Theodicy, as understood in modern Western philosophy of religion, indicates the attempt to explain why a perfectly good God created a less than perfect world. I explained elsewhere that the term *ta'lil*, as used by Muslim theologians, is actually broader than the scope of theodicy. However, this difference has hardly any significant consequence for the analysis presented in this chapter because the main focus here is the problem of evil and suffering. See Ghaly, *Mohammed* (2010), 5–6.
2. Ash'ari, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ismā'il al-. *Al-Ibāna 'an Uṣūl al-Dīyāna: The Elucidation of Islam's Foundation*, trans. Walter C. Klein, New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 1940, pp. 50–51.
3. Qur'ān 26:9, 68, 104, 122, 140, 159, 175, 191; 30:5; 32:6; 44:42.
4. Māturīdī, Abū Maṣ'ūr al- (n.d.), *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, ed. Faṭḥalla Khulayf, Alexandria: Dār al-Jāmi'at al-Miṣriyya, xxxv; Pessagno, J. Meric. "The Uses of Evil in the Maturidian Thought," in *Studia Islamica* 60 (1984): 72–73.
5. Māturīdī, Abū Maṣ'ūr al- (n.d.), p. 22; Pessagno, J. Meric (1984), 74–75.
6. Māturīdī, Abū Maṣ'ūr al- (n.d.), p. 109; Pessagno, J. Meric (1984), 75.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Explore ways in which a conception emphasizing the infinity and absoluteness of God in contrast to the finitude and limitation of creatures grounds the anti-theodicy approach discussed by Ghaly.
2. Explore how the pro-theodicy approach discussed by Ghaly is grounded in concepts that see less dichotomy and more continuity between God's wisdom and goodness, on the one hand, and human wisdom and goodness, on the other.
3. Can you state in your own words the key themes that shape the median approach discussed by Ghaly? What are some of the more specific suggestions falling under this approach?

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