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The Createdness of the Quran: A Theological Framework in Dirar's Doctrine

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the theological conception of the Quran's createdness in the thought of Dirar b. `Amr (d. ca. 193/809). As one of the earliest Muslim theologians, Dirar held that the Quran is created and classified it not as a body (jism), but as an accident (`arad)—a non-substantial entity—formed by God upon the Preserved Tablet (al-Lawh al-Mahfuz). He formulated a distinctive doctrine of acquisition (iktisab), asserting that individuals acquire the Quran through reading, writing, and memorization, by means of an ability to act (al-istita`a). According to Dirar, God continuously recreates the Quran within the temporal world, distinguishing between a primordial Quran inscribed on the Lawh al-Mahfuz and a created Quran manifested in human activity. In his view, only `Uthman's recension reflects the primordial Quran. This study investigates a neglected dimension of Dirar's theology by analyzing his classification of the Quran as a created `arad and his conception of its temporal actualization through two agents: God as Creator (Khaliq) and the human as acquirer (muktasib).

Keywords:

`Arad, al-lawh al-mahfuz, createdness of the Quran, dirar, iktisab, jism, `Uthman's recension.

Introduction

The question of whether the Quran is created (*makhlūq*) or uncreated (*ghayr makhlūq*) emerged as one of the most contentious theological debates in early Islam, profoundly shaping the development of *kalam* and dividing scholars, rulers, and communities. Among the earliest *mutakallimun* to articulate a sophisticated position on this issue was Dirar b. `Amr al-Ghatafani al-Kufi (d. ca. 193/809). His distinctive view is rooted in his theory of accidents (*`arad*), his doctrine of acquisition (*iktisab*), and his concept of ability (*al-istita`a*). Together, these elements form a unique framework for understanding divine speech and its manifestation in the world—one that envisions two agents contributing to the actualization of the Quran, as it moves from a primordial realm into temporal existence.

Given the limited direct information about Dirar and his position on the createdness of the Quran, this paper begins by situating him within the intellectually vibrant context in which the first major theological debates over the nature of the Quran emerged. Born in Kufa and later

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active in Basra and Baghdad, Dirar was among the earliest *mutakallimun* to engage with foundational questions concerning divine attributes, human responsibility, and the ontological status of the Quran. His distinctive positions—such as classifying the Quran as an accident (*`arad*) rather than a body (*jism*) and articulating a nuanced doctrine of human agency—mark him as a *mutakallim* whose contributions both anticipate and diverge from later theological developments. Although his legacy is often overlooked by major heresiographers, *al-Maqalat* by Abu al-Hasan al-Ash`ari (d. 324/935) remains the principal source for understanding his theological views, particularly regarding the createdness of the Quran.

Although Dirar's work *Kitab al-Tahrish* has only recently been discovered, it does not articulate his doctrinal views. Nevertheless, it offers valuable insights into early disputes concerning the transmission and authority of the Quranic text, particularly in relation to the codices of the Prophet's companions and the `Uthmanic recension. Within its content, Dirar expresses a clear preference for the `Uthmanic recension, presenting it as the authentic and original word of God (Dirar 2014: 107–108), -inscribed in the *Preserved Tablet (al-Lawh al-Mahfuz)*.

As for scholarly literature, I have found no one other than Josef van Ess who engages substantively with Dirar's theology and explicitly refers to his doctrine on the createdness of the Quran (van Ess 1967, 1968, 2018a). Van Ess also authored four articles on *al-Tahrish* (van Ess, 2011, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d). However, he does not address the issue of the Quran's createdness in these studies; rather, he focuses primarily on reviewing *al-Tahrish* and providing translations and paraphrases of its content. Daniel Gimaret (1980) examines Dirar's doctrine concerning the createdness of human acts; however, he does not engage with Dirar's views on the createdness of the Quran.

Several other scholars have engaged with Dirar's extant work *al-Tahrish*, including Anthony (2017), Sarmini (2017), al-Sayyid (2010), Hilli (2019), al-Ansari (2018), al-Salimi (2021), and al-Shish (2022). However, their studies are primarily concerned with reviewing *Kitab al-Tahrish* and do not engage with the theological issue of the Quran's createdness.

More recently, al-Salimi (2025) has authored a study on Dirar's *al-Tahrish* alongside the work *al-Rudud* by `Abd Allah b. Yazid al-Fazari (d. 178/795), due to the thematic similarities between the two texts. Yet, like the others, his work does not address Dirar's doctrine on the createdness of the Quran, as this issue lies outside the scope of the study. Other scholars—such as Wolfson (1976), Watt (1950a, 1950b), and Madelung (1985)—are referenced in this essay not for their engagement with Dirar's doctrine on the createdness of the Quran, but for their contributions to the broader historical and doctrinal development of the issue. Their work provides essential context for the emergence of *kalam* and helps to situate Dirar within the wider intellectual history, thereby allowing a clearer understanding of his views in light of their conceptual foundations.

Scholars such as Az (2020), Ediwibowo (2015), and Peters (1976) have written on the createdness of the Quran, yet none of them engage with Dirar's doctrine or historical setting. Their studies focus instead on how the issue evolved roughly a century later.

This study seeks to reconstruct Dirar's conception of the Quran as an accident (*`arad*), as he claimed, inscribed upon the *Lawh al-Mahfuz*, and to examine the implications of this metaphysical understanding for how the Quran is manifested in the physical domain. Since Josef van Ess remains the only scholar to have addressed this issue in connection with Dirar, I begin by critically engaging with his treatment of the topic before turning to the primary sources to investigate Dirar's doctrine of the Quran's createdness. Van Ess discusses Dirar's position in both *Theology and Society* (2018a) and his earlier article *Dirar b. `Amr und die Cahmiya* (1967).

In both texts, van Ess cites the same passage from al-Ash`ari that presents Dirar's view on the createdness of the Quran. According to this view, the transmission of the Quran from the unseen, metaphysical realm to the physical world occurs through the agency of two parties: God and human beings. Van Ess emphasizes that, for Dirar, the Quran is created, and human beings participate in it through their recitation—just as they participate in divine creation through other actions. Citing *al-Maqalat*, van Ess (1967: 274) quotes: "The Quran originates from God as creation, and from me as recitation and action, for I recite the Quran, and what is then heard is

the Quran, and God rewards me for it. Thus, I act, and God creates". Van Ess further cites a passage from al-Ash`ari's *Maqalat*:

The Quran is an accident (*`arad*) on the Well-Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawh al-Mahfuz*); it subsists on the Tablet and cannot be removed from it. However, whenever someone recites, writes, or memorizes it, God creates it anew. Thus, it is first created on the Tablet—though it cannot be anyone's *acquisition* (*iktisab*). When someone recites it, God creates this act of recitation at that moment (*hal*) as the reciter's acquisition. Hence, the Quran is created a second time; it is both God's creation and the reciter's acquisition. Similarly, it is found in the script of the scribe and the memory of the memorizer as God's creation and their respective acquisitions. What is God's creation is at the same time their acquisition—and what is both God's creation and their acquisition is the Quran, which was already created on the Tablet before they themselves were created. (van Ess 1967: 275; al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 265–266).

Van Ess notes that, according to Dirar's view of the Quran, an individual may recite the Quran and thereby produce a *recitation* (*Quran*), yet the Quran itself is not created by that individual, as it preexists independently of them. The ambiguity of the term *Quran*—which denotes both the act of recitation and the Quranic text—plays a crucial role in shaping this conception. The theory is particularly compelling in its deliberate distinction between the primordial Quran, inscribed on the *Lawh al-Mahfuz*, and its temporal manifestation through recitation since the time of the Prophet. Both manifestations of the Quran—the text itself and its recitation—are, however, regarded as created. Significantly, Dirar does not appear to associate the Quran with God's eternal knowledge, a link that would later become foundational to Sunni orthodoxy. Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 241/855), for instance, grounded his defense during the *mihna* precisely on affirming that connection (van Ess, 1967).

In *Theology and Society* (pp. 50–51), van Ess reiterates the same passage from *al-Maqalat* that he had previously cited in *Dirar b. `Amr und die Cahmiya* (pp. 275–276). He writes that one may recite the Quran, write it down, or memorize it—each of these being human actions that merit divine reward (*iktisab*). However, the audible recitation or the visible script are not acts produced independently by the human agent. Despite this, each of these manifestations is still referred to as “the Quran” (al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 265).

What makes this case unique is that the Quran has existed since the beginning of time on the Well-Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawh al-Mahfuz*). This is a physical object, and the Quran, according to Dirar's ontology, is an inseparable accident (*`arad*) of it; that is how it was created. When it is recited, God creates it again. Van Ess notes that in his earlier study, he attempted to derive Dirar's synergism in its entirety from this example. However, as Daniel Gimaret (1980: 62–72) rightly observed, it is probably a special case: this “double creation” seems unique to the Quran. Dirar may have taken advantage of the ambiguity of the word *Quran*, which also—and originally—meant “reading” or “recitation.” The later distinction between *qira'a* (recitation) and *maqrū'* (recited object) may not have existed in his time. Still, the theory stands on its own without relying on a play on words. It contrasts with Ibn Kullab's view, which distinguishes between the act of recitation (*qira'a*) and the recited text (*maqrū'*), as well as between remembrance (*dhikr*) and the object of remembrance (*madhkur*) (al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 257–258).

To conclude, in *Theology and Society*, van Ess (2018) offers a more interpretive and self-reflective engagement with Dirar's thought than in his earlier writings. When discussing Dirar's theory of the Quran as a created accident inscribed on the *Lawh al-Mahfuz*, van Ess revises his earlier interpretation. He acknowledges that, although he once attempted to derive Dirar's entire synergistic theology from this example, Daniel Gimaret was likely correct in arguing that the notion of “double creation”—once on the Tablet and once in recitation—applies uniquely to the Quran and not to human action in general. Van Ess further notes the ambiguity of the term *Quran*, which can mean both “recitation” and “the Quranic text,” but insists that Dirar's theory stands independently of any lexical play. This moment of scholarly self-correction reveals van Ess's interpretive caution and reinforces his broader methodological commitment to reconstructing early theology without overextending fragmentary evidence.

This is the extent of what can be gathered from van Ess's effort to trace Dirar's view on the createdness of the Quran. His interpretation and focus on this issue are undoubtedly valuable. However, his treatment remains rather concise for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of Dirar's doctrine. Therefore, the present study proceeds further by relying on the primary sources—particularly al-Ash`ari's *Maqalat*—in order to explore the issue in greater depth. Before turning to the primary sources, I first seek to situate Dirar's view within a broader historical context by drawing on the work of selected modern scholars—namely Wolfson, Watt, and Madelung—as noted above, in order to gain a clearer understanding of his doctrine.

Thus, this study employs a theological-philosophical method grounded in systematic analysis, with particular attention to Dirar's theory of accident (*`araḍ*) as the conceptual basis for his doctrine of the createdness of the Quran. Rather than relying on philological or hermeneutical methods, the study seeks to reconstruct Dirar's position by analyzing how his metaphysical principles—especially the idea that all created entities consist of accidents generated by God's will—inform his understanding of the Quran as a temporal, created phenomenon. This approach highlights the internal coherence of Dirar's theology, focusing on how central concepts such as *tawhid*, *irada* and *amr ilahi*, *iktisab*, and *istita`a* are interwoven within his broader doctrinal framework. Primary sources—particularly *al-Tahrish* and reports preserved by al-Ash`ari—are treated not merely as historical remnants but as integral parts of a systematic theological vision that presents the Quran as both a divine creation and a human acquisition.

Theological Context of the Quran's Createdness Debate

Wolfson offers a broad framework for understanding the development of Islamic theology, while Watt and Madelung focus more specifically on the historical and doctrinal evolution of the concept of the Quran's createdness. Wolfson identifies three distinct phases in the evolution of Islamic theological thought: pre-Mu`tazilite *kalam*, non-philosophical *kalam*, and philosophical *kalam*. According to this periodization, the latter half of the first/seventh century—referred to by Wolfson as the pre-Mu`azilite *kalam* period—marks the initial phase of Islamic theological development. During this time, Muslim theologians grappled with fundamental issues such as anthropomorphism, free will, the status of grave sinners, and the legitimacy of the opposing factions of `Ali and Mu`awiya (Wolfson 1976: 29). These discussions laid the groundwork for subsequent theological discourse in Islam and demonstrate the extent to which political circumstances contributed to the emergence of theological concerns (Dirar 2014: 107–108; al-Salimi 2025).

The second phase, non-philosophical *kalam*, spans the early second/eighth century up to the translation movement in the early third/ninth century. In this period, Muslim theologians began to develop *ilm al-kalam* more systematically, marking a significant step in the rational articulation of Islamic doctrine (Wolfson 1976: 30). The final phase, philosophical *kalam*, begins in the early third/ninth century with the translation of Greek philosophical texts into Arabic. According to Wolfson, this phase represents a decisive shift away from earlier *kalam*, which had relied primarily on scriptural and juridical reasoning. In this new phase, theologians increasingly employed philosophical methods and categories, even as the earlier approach—grounded in the Quran and *hadith*—continued to make use of analogical reasoning based on religious sources (Wolfson 1976: 30).

If one seeks to contextualize Dirar's theology within Wolfson's periodization, it is evident that Dirar belongs to the second phase—non-philosophical *kalam*. He was born around 128/745 and died around 193/808, a period during which *kalam* had become more systematically developed. In his theological method, Dirar relied not only on scriptural evidence but also on rational argumentation to construct and defend his views—an approach that becomes evident in his position on the createdness of the Quran, as discussed below. Furthermore, he engaged with all the major themes that were central to the first phase—such as anthropomorphism, free will, and the status of grave sinners—which continued to shape theological discourse well into his time.

Watt traces the development of the doctrine of the createdness of the Quran. The first, or initial stage, began with the emergence of the Jahmiyya—the followers of Jahm b. Safwan al-Rasibi (d. 128 AH/745)—as well as the early Mu`azilites, particularly Abu al-Hudhayl al-`Allaf (d. ca. 226/841). They maintained that the Quran was not eternal but rather came into being (*lam yakun thumma kan*) (Watt 1950a). The second stage begins with the caliphate of al-Ma'mun and the initiation of the *mihna* (inquisition), during which the principle of God's unity (*tawhid*) became the central theological concern for both the Jahmiyya and the Mu`azilites. These first two stages, in which the doctrine of the Quran's createdness (*makhluq*) was central, were followed by a third stage marked by the emergence of the opposing view—namely, the Quran's uncreatedness (*ghayr makhluq*). This position was championed by Ahmad b. Hanbal in response to the Jahmiyya's radical emphasis on God's absolute unity (Watt 1950a). In the wake of these polarized debates over *makhluq* and *ghayr makhluq*, mediating positions began to emerge. These sought to reconcile the belief that the Quran is the Word of God with the recognition that it became manifest at a particular moment in time. This approach avoided classifying the Quran explicitly as either created or uncreated, thus attempting to sidestep the dichotomy altogether (Watt 1950a).

The fifth stage involves a metaphysical rather than strictly theological problem. Watt poses a critical question: "How is it possible for humans to recite the Word of God?" This inquiry parallels the classical philosophical dilemma of "the One and the Many." Throughout the Muslim world in thousands of different places, the Quran is being recited, written, and remembered. There is thus a great multiplicity. Yet it is also in some sense a unity; it is the one Quran which is recited, written and remembered (Watt 1950a). In conclusion, Watt identifies the final stage with the teachings of al-Ash`ari and his followers: God is eternally a speaker (*mutakallim*), who has communicated with His prophets throughout history.

It is unclear why Watt does not explicitly mention Dirar in his discussion of the first stage, which he associates with Jahm b. Safwan and Abu al-Hudhayl al-`Allaf. Notably, Dirar was a contemporary of both: Jahm preceded him, while Abu al-Hudhayl outlived him. It also remains uncertain whether Watt regarded Dirar as a Jahmite or a Mu`azilite—possibly the reason for his omission—despite the fact that Dirar clearly affirmed the createdness of the Quran, maintaining that it did not exist eternally but came into being at a specific point in time. A closer reading of the historical context reveals that Dirar belonged to the formative period in which debates over the nature of the Quran first emerged, and that he actively contributed to the evolving discourse on its ontological status.

As for Madelung, the entire development of the doctrine of the Quran's createdness can be divided into two main periods: the pre-*mihna* and post-*mihna* phases. He argues that the controversy over the Quran's createdness diminished in intensity after the *mihna*, reflecting a shift in theological priorities. According to Madelung, by the post-*mihna* period, the discourse had matured to the extent that earlier formulations of the doctrine no longer held the central position they once did (Madelung 1985). During the pre-*mihna* period, Muslim theologians generally agreed on the foundational principle that all things, by definition, are created (Madelung 1985). This consensus began to shift in the post-*mihna* period, as the createdness of the Quran became a central point of contention—particularly with the rise of the Mu`azilites and their explicit rejection of the doctrine of an uncreated Quran, as defended by Ahmad b. Hanbal. The debates over the nature of the Quran grew increasingly philosophical, with both camps grounding their arguments in competing interpretations of *tawhid* (divine unity).

Supporting this broader view, van Ess (2006, pp. 82–84) notes that early figures such as Ja'd b. Dirham (d. 125/743), Jahm b. Safwan (d. 128/746), and Dirar b. `Amr were shaped by emerging theological influences—a trend that was further developed by later theologians such as Mu`ammar b. `Abbad (d. 215/830), Abu al-Hudhayl al-`Allaf (d. 235/853), and Ibn Kullab (d. 241/855). This observation underscores both the continuity and transformation of theological discourse from the early speculative period to more systematized doctrinal formulations.

Having examined modern frameworks for understanding the broader theological landscape, we now turn to Dirar's views on the createdness of the Quran, situating them within

the broader discourse among theologians who debated its nature, as preserved in al-Ash`ari's *Maqalat* (1990).

History of the Createdness of the Quran in al-Ash`ari's *Maqalat*

In contrast to Watt's chronological framework, which places the beginning of the first stage with Jahm b. Safwan, al-Ash`ari reports that five of the earliest sects—the Kharijites, the majority of Zaydites, the Murji'ites, the majority of Rafidites, and the Mu'tazilites—affirmed that the Quran was created by God, meaning that it did not exist eternally but came into being (*lam yakun thumma kan*). This suggests that the first stage of the doctrine's development must have begun earlier than what Watt has identified (al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 256).

Al-Ash`ari further classifies theological views on the nature of the Quran into three main categories: those who considered it a body (*jism*) inscribed upon the Preserved Tablet, those who viewed it as an accident (*`arad*) inscribed upon the Tablet, and those who maintained that it is neither a *jism* nor an *`arad* (al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 260). Despite these differing ontological interpretations, all agreed that the Quran was created and came into being by God's will (*qa'im billah*) (al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 4–7).

Dirar belongs to the group that regarded the Quran as an *`arad* (accident) inscribed upon the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawh al-Mahfuz*), having come into being by God's will (*qa'im billah*) (al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 260). As cited by van Ess, al-Ash`ari states in his *Maqalat* that, according to this view, the Quran is an accident (*`arad*) created by God on the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawh al-Mahfuz*), where it subsists as an inseparable attribute of the Tablet's existence. Whenever someone recites, writes, or memorizes the Quran, God recreates it in that very moment. As a result, the Quran undergoes two acts of creation: first, upon the Tablet, and second, in the human act of recitation, inscription, or memorization. In this formulation, the Quran is both a created phenomenon and an acquired one (*muktasab*). God brought it into existence on the Tablet prior to the creation of humankind, while human beings subsequently acquire the Quran in its worldly form through their interaction with it (al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 265–66).

Al-Ash`ari reports that Dirar and those who regarded the Quran as an accident (*`arad*) did not consider it to be God's speech in the same sense as His other attributes. They rejected the affirmation of positive attributes for God, maintaining instead a theology of negation—that is, they defined God not by what He is, but by what He is not. For example, they would say that God is *qadir* (powerful) not as a positive attribute, but in the sense that He is not *`ajiz* (powerless). This reflects their rejection of any attribution of essence-based qualities to God. Dirar's view stands in direct opposition to that of Jahm b. Safwan (d. 128/746), who held that the Quran is a body (*jism*) (Al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 265). In contrast, Dirar denied the existence of bodies altogether, arguing instead that only accidents (*a`rad*) exist, and that what appears to be a body is merely the aggregation of these accidents.

Accident and Creation in Dirar's Theology: The Ontological Status of the Quran

Having discussed the general idea of the Quran's createdness in the previous section, this section turns to examine the relationship between accident (*`arad*) and creation in Dirar's theology, with particular attention to how these concepts inform his understanding of the Quran. It begins by outlining Dirar's ontological framework, wherein all created entities—both physical and non-physical—consist of accidents directly brought into being by God. Within this framework, creation is conceived as the immediate result of God's will (*irada*) and command (*amr*), manifested through the continual generation of accidents. The discussion then turns to the Quran, exploring how Dirar applies this metaphysical model to conceptualize the Quran as a created entity: initially as a primordial inscription on the Preserved Tablet, and subsequently as a succession of temporally instantiated accidents whenever it is recited, written, or memorized. In this way, Dirar offers a distinctive account of the Quran's ontological status—one grounded not in substance or permanence, but in the continuous creative activity of God. He rejects the notion that nature operates according to fixed laws or possesses any kind of independent *jawhar*

(substance). For Dirar, all that exists consists of accidents (*a`rad*), which, through their aggregation, form bodies—entirely by God’s command.

According to Dirar’s ontological framework, God brings the physical world into existence through the continuous generation of accidents. However, Dirar’s theory is not confined to the physical realm; it also encompasses the metaphysical, including entities such as the Preserved Tablet and the Quran inscribed upon it. His system holds that a body is nothing more than the aggregation of multiple accidents, and that the Quran—conceived as a structured arrangement of such accidents—undergoes a transition from the metaphysical to the material realm. In this view, the Quran encountered by human beings is a temporal manifestation that reflects, but is not identical to, its primordial inscription on the Tablet—having undergone a transition from the metaphysical to the physical realm.

As suggested in al-Ash`ari’s *Maqalat*, an accident (*`arad*) in Dirar’s theology is understood as a quality or attribute which, when combined with others, gives rise to the formation of a body (*jism*). Within this framework, the body is not an independent substance but a composite of multiple accidents existing simultaneously. Al-Ash`ari reports that Dirar maintained that the body consists of a combination of accidents (*al-jism a`rad*) that are composed and assembled (*ullifat wa-jumi`at*), thereby coming into being and persisting in physical reality (*fa-qamat wa-thabatat*). This aggregation, he states, results in the constitution of the body itself (*fa-sarat jisman*) (al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 7).

Al-Ash`ari also records Dirar’s view on the mutable nature of the world, noting that no body is ever devoid (*la yakhlū jismun*) of either accidents or their opposites (*Didduhu*). For instance, if a body changes from warm to cold, moist to dry, or red to yellow, it no longer retains its original state. A body, therefore, cannot exist without certain fundamental accidents such as color, taste, weight, lightness, roughness, smoothness, heat, cold, dryness, moisture, hardness, or softness. These are considered inseparable (*la yanfakku*) from the body and intrinsic to its continued existence. By contrast, other accidents—such as power (*qudra*), pain (*alam*), knowledge (*ilm*), and ignorance (*jahl*)—are classified as separable (*yanfakku*), as they are not essential to the body’s subsistence and can be removed without affecting its persistence (al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 7).

Al-Ash`ari further reports that, in Dirar’s theology, ability to act (*al-istita`a*), movement (*al-haraka*), stillness (*al-sukun*), and all bodily actions (*af`al*), including combination (*al-ijtima`*) of accidents, are themselves classified as accidents (*a`rad*) (al-Ashari 1990: 37). This suggests that, for Dirar, all aspects of existence—substances, qualities, and even actions—are ultimately reducible to accidents.

Al-Ash`ari attributes to Dirar the view that, although the Quran is created by God and initially exists as an accident (*`arad*) on the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawh al-Mahfuz*), it is acquired by individuals through acts such as recitation, writing, and memorization. Dirar characterizes this human engagement as *iktisab* (acquisition). Within this framework, the Quran transitions from its primordial, divine inscription to the physical realm through human actions, while remaining ontologically distinct from these temporal manifestations (al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 265). From this perspective, the Quran experiences a second, temporal creation (al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 265–66). This raises two central questions: How does God create the Quran? And what does creation signify when it is attributed to God?

Following these questions, we find only a single passage from Dirar—transmitted by al-Ash`ari—that directly addresses God’s will and His mode of creation. According to this report, Dirar distinguishes between two types of divine will: *irada hiya al-murad* (will as intention) and *irada hiya al-amr bi-l-fi`l* (will as command to act). The former denotes a will that signifies a desired outcome, while the latter refers to a will that issues a command for action. Dirar asserts that God’s will to perform the act of creation (*iradatuhu li-fi`l al-khalq*) is identical to the act of creation itself (*fi`l al-khalq*), and that His will to create human actions (*iradatuhu li-fi`l al-`ibad*) is the very creation of those actions (*khalq fi`l al-`ibad*). Moreover, he maintains that the creation of human acts is identical to the acts themselves (*fi`l al-`ibad*), because, in his view, the creation of a thing (*khalq al-shay`*) is, in essence, the thing itself (*huwa al-shay`*) (al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 199).

This passage presents significant interpretive challenges. It may have been excerpted from its original context and could reflect al-Ash`ari's framing of Dirar's doctrine rather than a verbatim account. Such mediation raises questions about the accuracy of the attribution and the extent to which it faithfully represents Dirar's actual position, making it difficult to assess his precise views on the createdness of the Quran with certainty. Nevertheless, assuming that the passage reflects Dirar's view—or at least approximates it—I undertake an interpretive analysis to shed light on his conception of divine creation, including the Quran, and to explore the underlying logic of his theological reasoning.

In Dirar's theology, the act of creation takes place through the direct interplay of God's will (*irada*) and His command (*amr*), both of which are uncreated and intrinsic to the divine essence. This view implies that when God wills to create something, His will and command bring it into existence without temporal delay or external mediation. In this framework, Dirar asserts that God's will to perform an act is identical to the act itself (*iradatuhu li-fi'l al-khalq huwa fi'l al-khalq*); creation is immediate and direct. This understanding resonates with the Quranic formulation of divine creation: "Be! And it is" (*kun fa-yakun*)—a phrase that encapsulates the immediacy and efficacy of God's creative will (al-Quran, al-Baqarah, 2:117; Ali `Imran 3:47; Ali `Imran 3:59; Al-An`am 6:73; Al-Nahl 16:40; Maryam 19:35; Ya Sin 36:82).

If we apply this conception to the Quran, it follows that when God wills the Quran, it comes into existence as a specific configuration. According to Dirar, God first willed the Quran to be inscribed upon the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawh al-Mahfuz*)—first through His intentional aim (that the Quran must appear), and then through His command that brought it into actual existence. Thus, the Quran existed on the Tablet before humankind was created. However, a question remains: Where was this accident—the Quran—prior to its inscription on the Preserved Tablet? According to Dirar's view, God possesses both will as intention and will as command. The divine intention must first reside in God's mind. God then commands this intention into existence—first on the Tablet, and subsequently in the world. In this framework, the Quran appears in three distinct forms: first, as divine intention in God's mind; second, as inscription on the Tablet; and third, as its manifestation in the temporal world. It is perhaps this conceptual structure that later inspired Ibn Kullab to introduce the doctrine of "speech of the self" (*kalam nafsi*) (al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 257–58; van Ess, *EI*²).

Ibn Kullab challenged the Mu`tazili doctrine of the createdness of the Quran (*khalq al-Quran*) by drawing a distinction between God's speech (*kalam Allah*) and its actual expression. According to his view, God is eternally a speaker (*mutakallim*), but He only becomes one who addresses (*mukallim*) when there is an existent being to whom He speaks. In this framework, speech is understood as a constant and unchanging attribute (*sifa* or *ma`na*) that resides within God. However, when this speech is directed to an audience through revelation, it assumes a temporal form and becomes subject to change (al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 257–58; van Ess, *E*).

So, according to Dirar, the Quran undergoes a second creation, manifesting in the physical world through the interaction of two agents: God and the human being. He maintains that the Quran is continuously created whenever it is recited, memorized, or written. In this process, God is the Creator (*khaliq*), while the human is the acquirer (*muktasib*). God creates these acts, which are themselves accidents (*a`rad*), and humans perform them through acquisition (*iktisab*), made possible by the ability to act (*al-istita`a*) that God grants them.

Building on Dirar's ontology, one may infer a distinction in his thought concerning the nature of the Quran—namely, between primary and secondary accidents. In Dirar's framework, all created entities, whether physical or metaphysical, are composed entirely of accidents (*a`rad*)—there is no underlying substance or substrate. These accidents fall into two categories: primary accidents, which are essential and inseparable from the entity's existence, and secondary accidents, which are non-essential, separable, and perishable.

Applying this distinction to the Quran, its inscription on the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawh al-Mahfuz*) may be understood as consisting of primary accidents—its primordial, stable form, created directly by God. In contrast, the Quran as encountered through human acts of recitation, writing, or memorization is composed of secondary accidents—transient and temporal

manifestations that do not alter its ontological essence. Even in the absence of these human expressions, the Quran remains fully itself in its original metaphysical form.

This distinction reflects Dirar's broader theological principle that creation—whether in the physical world or the unseen realm—occurs through the direct and continual generation of accidents by God. Consequently, the true Quran, created on the Tablet, remains unaffected by its temporal expressions and exists independently of human engagement.

The theological distinctions outlined above are succinctly reinforced by a statement attributed to Dirar and clarified by al-Ash`ari. In one report, Dirar says: "The Quran is created by God, and I am the reader and actor; I recite the Quran; the Quran is the audible thing, I am the actor and God is the Creator" (al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 265) This encapsulates Dirar's doctrine: a clear distinction between the human act of recitation (*fi'l*) and the divine act of creation (*khalq*). Yet in his ontology, even human acts—recitation, writing, memorization, and tongue movement—are accidents (*a`rad*) created by God. Thus, both the articulated Quran and the actions through which it appears are generated directly by divine will and command. This aligns with the concept of *iktisab* (acquisition), wherein human beings perform actions that are ultimately created by God. Al-Ash`ari summarizes the view: "They held that the Quran was created by God (*billahi kan*), that recitation is tongue movement (*al-qira'a harakat al-lisan*), that the Quran consists of discrete sounds (*al-sawt al-muqatta'a*), and that it is entirely God's creation (*khalq Allah wahduhu*), though the act of recitation is also ours (*fi'luna*)" (al-Ash`ari 1990, 2: 265).

Dirar's Conception of the Quran: Created Word and Canonical Form

This transition, according to Dirar, occurs through human acts of recitation, writing, and memorization, which are themselves created by God. Human beings do not create the Quran through these actions but rather acquire it (*iktisab*) as part of their divinely enabled agency. In this way, *iktisab* serves as a key theological mechanism for explaining how the Quran moves from the metaphysical realm to the temporal world without compromising God's sole creative power. According to Dirar, because human beings acquire the Quran through their actions, they are rewarded by God—since they actualize the Quran in the world through these very acts (al-Ash`ari, 1990, vol. 2, p. 265).

At this juncture, a crucial question arises: Where can one encounter this Quran in order to engage with it—so that it may appear in the world as a manifestation or *likeness* (*mithl*) of the original, divine Word, enabling human beings to be rewarded through their interaction with it? More specifically, which form of the Quran, according to Dirar, most accurately represents the Word of God as inscribed on the Preserved Tablet? Given the disputes over various recensions of the Quran during Dirar's time, this question becomes all the more pressing: how can one determine which version most faithfully corresponds to the primordial, created inscription willed by God?

For Dirar, the Quran that is read, written, or heard is not identical to the entity inscribed on the Preserved Tablet (*laysa huwa huwa*), but rather a created manifestation that reflects it. Human interaction with the Quran involves a dual process—both epistemological and ontological. Epistemologically, the Quran is acquired (*iktisab*) through acts of recitation, writing, and memorization, which are credited to human effort. Ontologically, however, these very acts are themselves created by God, who brings them into existence at each moment. Thus, while the human being participates in the transmission and reception of the Quran, it is ultimately God who continuously creates both the human acts and, through them, the manifestation of the Quran in the world.

The urgency of this question becomes especially clear in light of the textual plurality actively debated during Dirar's time. Alongside the `Uthmanic codex, alternative manuscript traditions—attributed to figures such as `Abd Allah b. Mas`ud (d. ca. 32–33/652–54), Ubayy b. Ka`b (d. 19/640 or 22/643), and `Ali b. Abi Talib (d. 40/661)—continued to circulate, raising complex questions about which version of the Quran most faithfully preserved the divine word as originally revealed and inscribed. Within this context, Dirar's implicit affirmation of the `Uthmanic recension, as reflected in *al-Tahrish*, suggests his alignment with the view that upheld

the textual integrity and divine authority of the codex officially adopted under Caliph `Uthman. Although he does not engage in explicit theological argumentation on this issue, his narrative treatment of intra-communal disputes implies a clear preference for the `Uthmanic version as the canonical representation of the revealed text.

In *al-Tahrish*, Dirar recounts a scene from the caliphate of `Uthman in which the Prophet's companions disagreed over variant readings of the Quran (Anthony, 2019). These debates centered on whether `Uthman's recension or alternative versions more accurately represented the Word of God. While Dirar acknowledges this moment of conflict, he ultimately endorses the `Uthmanic codex as the authoritative version that faithfully conveys divine revelation. (Dirar, 2014, pp. 107–8). Dirar also denounces those who questioned `Uthmanic recension's integrity or claimed that portions of the Quran were lost. In *al-Tahrish*, speaking through the voice of the Prophet, Dirar condemns assertions that the Quran is incomplete or contains interpolations of non-divine origin. (Dirar, 2014, p. 36). He writes:

Those who claimed that the Quran was evidence of God—the abrogator and the abrogated, the commander and the prohibitor—yet also claimed that some of it was lost, and that it is not known what was lost. Then, [Dirar asks], with what arguments will they confront the heresies concerning the truth of the Quran? (Dirar 2014: 108).

Dirar reaffirms a foundational principle of scriptural integrity by stating, “Whoever denies one verse of the Quran has denied the entire Quran.” (Dirar 2014; 51–52). He appeals to the consensus of the early Muslim community (Dirar 2014, p. 46), writing: “All the Immigrants (*al-Muhajirun*), the Supporters (*al-Ansar*), and the entire ummah testified that God's Book is complete and inscribed on the Preserved Tablet.” (Dirar 2014: 110).

Conclusion

This study has examined Dirar b. `Amr's theological conception of the Quran—not as an eternal essence or divine attribute, but as a created *arad* (accident), first brought into being on the Preserved Tablet in the metaphysical realm and later manifested in the physical world through acts of recitation, writing, and memorization. The ontological status of the Quran prior to its inscription on the Tablet remains unknowable; one may only speculate, based on Dirar's broader thought, that it resided in God's mind as an intention.

Within Dirar's ontology, this process constitutes a kind of "double creation," in which human engagement with the Quran—though classified as *iktisab* (acquisition)—is made possible through actions that are themselves created by God. Human beings thus play the role of actualizing God's Word in the temporal world, a role for which they are divinely rewarded.

This study also addressed the question of textual authority in light of the Quran's early manuscript plurality, concluding that Dirar implicitly upheld the `Uthmanic codex as the faithful representation of the primordial inscription.

What emerges from Dirar's theology is a profound and nuanced vision of the Quran—one that affirms it as both created and sacred, temporally enacted and divinely originated. The Quran, while brought forth in time through acts of human recitation, writing, and memorization, remains eternally inscribed on the Preserved Tablet as a primordial divine utterance. In Dirar's framework, the Quran functions as a dynamic bridge between the metaphysical and the material, between the unseen and the visible. This connection is not established through a permanent underlying substance, but rather through *accidents*—transient, purposeful qualities that God brings into existence by His will and command. In this framework, the Quran is not a fixed or static entity; it is a dynamic process that involves both divine creation and human participation.

This understanding reflects Dirar's broader metaphysical view of the universe as something continuously shaped by the interaction between God's active will and the temporary conditions of created beings—through the ability to act (*istita`a*) and acquisition (*iktisab*), both of which are granted by God Himself. Thus, human agency is limited to one's intention and

directional will toward an act—an orientation that renders the person accountable (*mas'ul*) for the performance of their deeds and rewarding for their engaging with the canonical Quran.

While this study has focused on reconstructing Dirar's doctrine of the createdness of the Quran through his metaphysical and theological principles, it also invites reflection on its potential relevance for contemporary theological debates—particularly those concerning divine speech, scriptural temporality, and human agency in the reception of revelation. Future research could explore how Dirar's thought might contribute to current discussions in Islamic hermeneutics, including the evolving understanding of revelation in relation to history, language, and interpretation.

Methodologically, this study is limited by the fragmentary and indirect nature of the sources, requiring a speculative yet systematic reconstruction of Dirar's ideas. Further work could build upon this foundation by engaging in comparative analysis with other early theological models or by incorporating philological and historical-critical approaches to assess the coherence and broader reception of Dirar's theological vision.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Ethics Statement

This research is based on textual and historical analysis and did not involve human participants or animals. The study complied with institutional and international ethical guidelines; therefore, no formal ethical approval was required.

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