



Aspects of the Axiological Discourse in al-Jāḥiẓ's Thought in Light of Ibrāhīm al-Sakran's Critique: A Presentation and Evaluation

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Abstract

This research paper examines the *manāqibī* (virtue-oriented) discourse of al-Jāḥiẓ by tracing his method of "elevation and diminution" (*al-raf' wa-l-khafḍ*) as a mechanism for shaping the moral and intellectual portraits of individuals and ideas. The study approaches this discourse in light of Ibrāhīm al-Sukrān's critique in his book, *The Modernist Interpretation of Heritage*, highlighting his key observations on al-Jāḥiẓ's methodology and his stance toward scholars and theologians. It presents a balanced analytical and evaluative reading that blends rhetorical analysis with intellectual inquiry, concluding that al-Jāḥiẓ's discourse, for all its intellectual and rhetorical richness, can involve a falsification of truth, while al-Sukrān's reading of it is not without its own generalizations and doctrinal projections.

Introduction

Al-Jāḥiẓ stands as one of the most preeminent figures of Arabic prose in the Abbasid era and a cornerstone of eloquence (*bayān*) and thought within the Arab-Islamic intellectual heritage. He was distinguished by a vibrant, dialectical style that synthesizes reason and language, wit and precision, thereby transforming prose into a vast intellectual sphere where culture, philosophy, and literature converge. Through his major works—such as *al-Bayan wa-l-Tabyin*, *al-Hayawan*, and *al-Bukhala'*—he managed to establish a sustained dialogue between thought and language, employing satire, dialectical debate, and exemplum to construct portraits of individuals and ideas, all while maintaining a delicate balance between rational argumentation and aesthetic pleasure.

The *munāqabī* discourse of Al-Jāḥiẓ, in particular, stands as one of the most significant manifestations of this equilibrium. It is predicated on what may be termed "value-based elevation and diminution" (*al-raf' wa-l-khafḍ al-qīmī*)—that is, the modality of representing individuals and intellectual tendencies along a spectrum ranging from veneration to censure, all within a comprehensive intellectual and ethical system. This discourse articulates Al-Jāḥiẓ's vision for evaluating humanity and thought, not from a rigid doctrinal perspective, but through



a critical lens that weds ethics to reason, and eloquence to intellectual stance, in an effort to construct a cultural and ethical consciousness liberated from mere tradition.

Ibrāhīm al-Sukkarān's reading of this discourse gains its significance from its critical approach to the Jāhizian text, one that merges literary analysis with intellectual evaluation. His reading does not content itself with treating Al-Jāhiz merely as a man of letters; rather, it aims to deconstruct his intellectual system and to test its ethical veracity against contemporary religious and epistemological frameworks. Consequently, this reading represents a vital entry point for a reconsideration of the Jāhizian discourse, not merely as a rhetorical legacy, but as an intellectual project contested by a rationalist vision on the one hand, and ethical questioning on the other.

Proceeding from this intersection between the rhetorical and intellectual dimensions of Al-Jāhiz's discourse, and from al-Sukkarān's evaluative reading, the *problematic* of this study is defined by an attempt to uncover the features of the *munāqabī* discourse in Al-Jāhiz's work. This will be achieved by tracing the mechanisms of elevation and diminution in his portrayal of individuals and ideas, followed by a discussion of the validity of al-Sukkarān's critique, particularly concerning its critical methodology and its axiological premises. This is framed by the following questions:

- What is the nature of the *munāqabī* discourse in Al-Jāhiz? How did Ibrāhīm al-Sukkarān read it? And what are the limits of its validity and fallibility in this critique?

This research seeks to answer these questions through a structure centered on the following points:

- The concept of *munāqabī* discourse in the Jāhizian corpus, the context of the concept's emergence, and its manifestations.
- The features and indicators of the *munāqabī* discourse in Al-Jāhiz.
- An evaluation of Ibrāhīm al-Sukkarān's critique.

❖ First: The Concept of *Munāqabī* Discourse and Its Context of Emergence

1- The Concept of *Munāqabī* Discourse

The scholar who coined the term "munāqabī discourse" in relation to Al-Jāhiz is the thinker Ibrāhīm al-Sukkarān, who employed it to explain the contradiction present in Al-Jāhiz's writings, stating: "The truth is, this is connected to one of the components of Al-Jāhiz's style, which can be termed the style of 'munāqabī elevation and diminution,' which he practiced in his books. One level of treatment in his works is that he would take a group of people, compile their failings, and reformulate them with a degree of artistic license through his literary eloquence, casting them down to the lowest degree. He would then take another group, assemble their virtues, reformulate them, and exercise his craft upon them, exalting them to the highest degree" (Al-Sukkarān 361).

This definition highlights the dialectical and evaluative dimension in Al-Jāhiz's prose, as he does not merely describe characters but rather deploys eloquence to practice a moral and cultural evaluation. For al-Sukkarān, the *munāqabī* discourse is not simple praise or blame, but



rather an intellectual and aesthetic structure that seeks to entrench Al-Jāḥiẓ's standards for viewing humanity and society. Al-Sukkarān posits that what he calls the "munāqabī discourse" in Al-Jāḥiẓ is a stylistic component predicated on the value-based elevation and diminution of individuals and intellectual tendencies. In his view, Al-Jāḥiẓ would proceed by portraying one group of people by compiling their faults and reformulating them in his literary style to cast them into the lowest station, in contrast to another group whose merits he would gather and reshape in eloquent language that exalts them to the utmost degree. In this way, the "munāqabī discourse" becomes an artistic tool for evaluating values and ideas through rhetorical preferencing between human and social models (Al-Sukkarān 277).

2- Contextual Emergence of the Concept and Its Manifestations

The context for the emergence of the term "munāqabī discourse" in Ibrāhīm al-Sukkarān's work can be traced through his analysis of the Jāḥiẓian texts and their intellectual and stylistic underpinnings. Al-Sukkarān sees Al-Jāḥiẓ as a kind of media spokesperson for the Mu'tazilite school, distinguished by his immense rhetorical prowess, which he deployed in service of the intellectual current to which he belonged. This gave rise to the need to describe his language as a discourse with a representational function, aiming not only at narration or documentation, but at influence, persuasion, and image-making. This paved the way for the emergence of the term "munāqabī discourse" as a tool for reading this interaction between eloquence and ideological stance.

Al-Sukkarān argues that this discourse was neither innocent nor neutral; rather, it carried intellectual and justificatory imperatives that legitimized its existence in an intellectual environment contested by various schools of thought. Al-Jāḥiẓ, according to him, did not write from the position of a historian or a mere transmitter, but from the position of a defender and advocate for his faction, using rhetoric to elevate the image of the Mu'tazilites and diminish their opponents. For this reason, al-Sukkarān emphasizes that discussing the *munāqabī* discourse is not an endorsement of Al-Jāḥiẓ, but rather an examination of how literary writing was transformed into a tool for sectarian representation. In this regard, he states: "The purpose of these preceding considerations is, of course, not to endorse Al-Jāḥiẓ as a reliable source, as that is a matter for another context. Rather, the purpose is to examine the extent to which Al-Jāḥiẓ's testimony concerning his own sect can be considered a testimony of significant representative weight" (Al-Sukkarān 277).

Al-Sukkarān highlights a telling example in Al-Jāḥiẓ's narration of the ordeal of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, which he contends is imbued with touches of artifice and embellishment, aiming to present the torturer as tender and the victim as weak and submissive, contrary to the accounts transmitted by historians contemporary with the event. Al-Jāḥiẓ, portraying the contradiction in the account of the Imam's ordeal, writes:

"This man of yours used to say: 'Dissimulation (*taqiyya*) is only permissible in the Abode of Disbelief.' If what he admitted to regarding the creation of the Qur'an was done on the basis of dissimulation, then he practiced dissimulation in the Abode of Islam, and has thus contradicted himself. And if what he admitted to was correct and true, then you are not of him, nor he of you.



Moreover, he never saw a drawn sword, nor was he struck many times, but only with thirty lashes, the tips cut and the ends frayed, until he professed the admission repeatedly. He was not in a confined setting, nor was his state one of despair, nor was he weighed down by iron, nor was his heart broken by the severity of the threat. Indeed, he would be addressed with the gentlest of speech, yet he would reply with the harshest of answers; they would be forbearing and he would be rash, they would be patient and he would be reckless" (Jāḥiẓ 3:295-96).

He also said: "As for the instance where he faced the Caliph with lies, the assembly with brazenness, and a show of profound indifference and stern resolve, it was when Ahmad ibn Abi Du'ad said to him: 'Do you claim that God is the Lord of the Qur'an?' He replied: 'Were I to hear someone say that, I would say it.' Ibn Abi Du'ad asked: 'Have you never heard that from an ally, a petitioner, a storyteller, in poetry, or in a tradition?' He replied: 'At this, the Caliph recognized his lie in his answer, just as he had recognized his obstinacy when presented with proof'" (Jāḥiẓ 3:294). Thus, at one point he portrays him as fearful and panicked, admitting to the question of the createdness of the Qur'an without withstanding the mildest of torments, while in the latter part of his speech, he presents the complete opposite description, indicating his steadfastness and confrontation with the Caliph without this changing his position in the slightest. Which of these two images, then, is more worthy of belief?

From these two texts, it is clear that the Jāḥiẓian discourse in its portrayal of the ordeal of Imam Ahmad contains several manifestations of contradiction and internal dissonance, both at the level of vision and of discursive construction. The most prominent of these can be summarized as follows:

1. The Contradiction in Depicting the Stance on *Taqiyya* Al-Jāḥiẓ portrays Imam Ahmad as having contradicted his own words in deed; he used to say that *taqiyya* was not permissible in the Abode of Islam, yet he then admitted— in Al-Jāḥiẓ's view—to the createdness of the Qur'an as an act of dissimulation. However, this characterization is based on a fallacious assumption, because Al-Jāḥiẓ simultaneously downplays the torture and threats to which the Imam was subjected, whereas the concept of *taqiyya* applies precisely in situations of fear and necessity. This makes his logic contradictory, between negating coercion and affirming *taqiyya* at the same time.
2. Contradictory Representations of Perpetrator and Victim Al-Jāḥiẓ presents the narrative in a way that softens the image of the tormentors (the Caliph and his aides), describing them as patient and gentle, in contrast to his portrayal of Imam Ahmad as reckless and harsh in his answers. This value-based inversion contradicts the accounts of contemporary historians, who emphasized the Imam's steadfastness and the severity of the torture he endured. This reflects a rhetorical distortion of reality to serve a sectarian vision.
3. Conflicting Moral Assessments of Imam Ahmad In the first text, Al-Jāḥiẓ describes him as weak in argument, submissive, and contradictory in his statement. In the second text, however, he brands him as a liar, brazen, and sternly resolved. This means Al-Jāḥiẓ oscillates between the accusation of weakness and submission, and the accusation of



audacity and obstinacy—a clear contradiction in the characterization of a single individual in the same situation.

4. Conflicting Aspects of Internal Argumentation Al-Jāḥiẓ claims that the Caliph recognized the Imam's lie during the questioning, but at the same time, he admits that the Imam answered with the harshest reply and insisted on his stance, which indicates a conflict in constructing the dialectical image between the accusation of lying and the acknowledgment of courage in confrontation.

These manifestations reveal that Al-Jāḥiẓ was not aiming for an accurate historical narrative, but for formulating an ideologized *munāqabī* discourse that employs rhetoric to diminish the image of Imam Ahmad and exalt the status of the Mu'tazilites. This led him to fall into contradiction between the demands of eloquence and the demands of objectivity. Consequently, the *munāqabī* discourse in Al-Jāḥiẓ is manifested in the reshaping of events to serve the sectarian image and to highlight the moral or intellectual superiority of one party over another.

Accordingly, the term *munāqabī* discourse—in light of al-Sukkarān's reading—emerged as a critical tool for exposing the collusion of literary eloquence with doctrinal stance, whereby the text transforms from a mere record of events into a means for glorifying the collective self and adorning its positions through rhetoric and literary representation. This makes Al-Jāḥiẓ a central model for this phenomenon in the Arab heritage. For this reason, al-Sukkarān said of him: "Al-Jāḥiẓ's art and ocean of knowledge is Arabic eloquence, which scarcely anyone in his time could rival him in his domain. The essence of the literary beauty of Al-Jāḥiẓ's texts is his ability to combine majesty and eloquence with familiar, non-pedantic words, as Ibn Hazm [in *al-Taqrīb li-ḥadd al-Mantiq*] and Ibn Hajar [in *Lisān al-Mīzān*] have noted. As for expertise in scrutinizing transmitted reports, however, this is an art foreign to him, and he is not among the knights of this field" (Al-Sukkarān 369).

❖ Second: Al-Jāḥiẓ's *Munāqabī* Discourse: Features and Markers

The markers of the *munāqabī* discourse in Al-Jāḥiẓ are manifest in a series of stylistic and thematic characteristics that vary between praise and censure, preference and boasting, as is evident in his various works. In his books *Ifākhār al-Shitā' wa-l-Ṣayf* (*The Boasting of Winter and Summer*) and *Fakhr al-Qaḥṭāniyya wa-l-'Adnāniyya* (*The Pride of the Qaḥṭān and the 'Adnān*), Al-Jāḥiẓ employs the style of boasting and preference (*mufākharah* and *tafḍīl*) between opposing parties, presenting arguments and boasts in a dialectical style that reflects his skill in constructing value-based oppositions. As for his books *Al-Barṣān wa-l-'Irjān* (*The Leprous and the Lame*) and *Al-Ṣurḥā' wa-l-Hijnā'* (*The Bleached and the Mixed-Blood*), Al-Jāḥiẓ practices social elevation and diminution through the portrayal of marginalized or distinguished groups, aided by a satirical humanistic spirit that reveals his evaluative perspective on human natures. In his two epistles "In Praise of Scribes" and "In Censure of Scribes," as in his epistle in praise of wine and his epistle in its censure, the duality of elevation and diminution appears in its clearest form, as Al-Jāḥiẓ presents an idea and its opposite in a



parallel rhetorical style that reveals his ability to represent divergent viewpoints with argumentative and eloquent skill. In his books *Akhlaq al-Mulūk* (*The Morals of Kings*) and *Al-Ḥāsīd wa-l-Maḥsūd* (*The Envious and the Envied*), the ethical dimension of the *munāqabī* discourse emerges, as Al-Jāḥiẓ practices an evaluation of human conduct through praise and censure. In his book *Manāqib Jund al-Khilāfa wa-Faḍā'il al-Atrāk* (*The Virtues of the Caliph's Soldiers and the Merits of the Turks*), *Faḍl al-Furs 'alā al-Humlāj* (*The Merit of Persians over Horses*), and *al-Sūdān wa-l-Bayḍān* (*The Blacks and the Whites*), we glimpse another facet of the *munāqabī* discourse, manifested in the glorification of peoples or their critique according to the qualities or defects he perceives in them, employing rhetorical eloquence to elevate one group and diminish another. Thus, it becomes evident that Al-Jāḥiẓ made this style an intellectual and aesthetic tool for depicting value-based and human distinctions within society.

It is perhaps this style that made him the subject of objection and censure regarding his reliability among the scholars. In this context, we recall the testimony of his student Ibn Qutaybah, who later recanted and said of him: "We then turn to Al-Jāḥiẓ, the last of the theologians and the criticizer of his predecessors, most skilled at provoking an argument and most adept at magnifying the small until it becomes great and diminishing the great until it becomes small. His ability reaches the point of arguing for a thing and its opposite; he argues for the merit of the Sudanese over the Whites, and you will find him once arguing for the Uthmanis against the Rafidis, and another time for the Zaydis against the Uthmanis and the People of the Sunnah, and once he praises Ali, may God be pleased with him, and another time he demotes him.... And despite this, he is one of the most untruthful of the nation, the most lax in his narration of hadith, and the greatest supporter of falsehood. And whoever knows—may God have mercy on you—that his speech is part of his work, will find it scarce, except in what benefits him. And whoever is certain that he will be held accountable for what he authors and what he writes, would not do a thing and its opposite, nor would he exhaust his effort in establishing falsehood at his expense. Al-Riyāshī recited to me... 'Do not write with your pen anything... that you would be pleased to see on the Day of Resurrection'" (Ibn Qutaybah 59).

Al-Sukkarān says of Al-Jāḥiẓ's reliability that anyone who peruses his works realizes that their fundamental axis is the artistry of eloquence and literary style, more than a concern for precision and rigor in transmission and narration. This meaning becomes clearer when we consider what some of his texts reveal of a tendency toward irony, hyperbole, and the narration of anecdotes and comedies, and even bold words, to which he ascribes literary or intellectual justifications. Nevertheless, even his peers among the Mu'tazilites themselves acknowledged his manipulation of transmissions, either for artistic purposes related to rhetorical embellishment, or for intellectual goals related to defamation and criticism (Al-Sukkarān 365-66).

He substantiates this with testimonies from Mu'tazilite scholars from within his own school of thought and from non-Mu'tazilites, among whom we mention:

First is Ibn Abi Du'ad, who said of him: "I have only known you as one who greatly embellishes speech" (Ibn al-Murtadā 70).



Second is Ibn al-Nadim, a Mu'tazilite with Shi'a inclinations, who impugned Al-Jāhiz's credibility in some of his transmissions, arguing that he tampered with quoted expressions for personal purposes. This includes his commentary on a statement by Al-Jāhiz showing Caliph al-Ma'mun's admiration for his books on the Imamate, which he read after presenting them to al-Yazidi for examination, and was utterly astonished by them. Al-Ma'mun said that the praise he had heard of them did not compare to the quality of craftsmanship and abundance of benefit he saw in them; indeed, direct perusal surpassed description, and deep contemplation surpassed the vision itself. He concluded that these books were sufficient for their author, and for explanation and interpretation, due to their complete meanings, majestic words, and easy style that combines the eloquence of kings and the simplicity of the common people, in a harmony that embodies Al-Jāhiz's brilliance and depth of thought. To this, Muhammad ibn Ishaq [Ibn al-Nadim] commented: "I suspect that Al-Jāhiz polished this phrasing to glorify himself and aggrandize his composition. How could al-Ma'mun say such things, praising a work or commending an author? He wrote a book to the king of the Bulgars containing more than a hundred pages, in which he sought help from no one, and in which he included no verse from the Book of God—exalted be His name—nor a word from a sage to cite. Instead, Al-Jāhiz obeyed his tongue and spoke" (Ibn al-Nadim 209).

Third is the censure of the philologists regarding his credibility. Al-Azhari says: "Among those who spoke on the languages of the Arabs with what came to his tongue and narrated from the Imams of Arabic speech what was not from their speech: 'Amr ibn Bahr al-Ma'rūf bi-l-Jāhiz. He was granted a breadth in his tongue, a sweet eloquence in his address, and a vast scope in his arts. However, the experts in the languages of the Arabs criticized him and pushed him away from truthfulness. Abu 'Umar al-Zāhid reported that he was mentioned in the assembly of Ahmad ibn Yahya, and he said: 'Refrain from mentioning Al-Jāhiz, for he is neither reliable nor trustworthy'".

...Abu 'Umar al-Zāhid reported that he was mentioned in the assembly of Ahmad ibn Yahya, and he said: 'Refrain from mentioning Al-Jāhiz, for he is neither reliable nor trustworthy'" (Al-Azhari 1:27).

❖ Third: A Critical Assessment by Ibrahim Al-Sakran

After presenting the concept of *munāqabī* discourse, its manifestations, features, and the context of its emergence within the critique of the thinker Ibrahim al-Sukkarān—which is fundamentally based on undermining the foundation from which Orientalists adopted the idea of the *mihna* (ordeal), and their reliance on the narration of Al-Jāhiz, whom he attempted to diminish in terms of his scholarly status and credibility, despite acknowledging his rhetorical and eloquent standing—al-Sukkarān substantiated this by pointing to the contradictions in his narration, both internal and external, by citing testimonies from scholars who impugned the value of his transmissions.

For the sake of scholarly fairness, al-Sukkarān did include a text from Ibn Hazm in which he seeks an excuse for Al-Jāhiz, stating: "And mention was made of 'Amr ibn Bahr al-



Jāḥiẓ, who is one of the libertines, one whom levity prevailed over, and one of the misguided and misguiding. For we have not seen in his books any deliberate lie that he records affirming it, even if he was frequent in transmitting the lies of others" (Ibn Hazm 4:139). However, this text remains a solitary one, contrasted with the texts and proofs that establish that Al-Jāḥiẓ practiced the art of falsifying truths by playing on the chord of language and its connotative meanings, in both its functional and aesthetic dimensions simultaneously.

Nevertheless, this judgment cannot be generalized to everything that Al-Jāḥiẓ narrates in his books. Justice demands that we adopt a moderate perspective. If his pen was excessive in matters of supporting doctrines and sects, he also has reports, transmissions, and stances that prove the man's keenness on verification in transmission and the application of reason to what is transmitted, which we will present based on what we have found in his book *Kitab al-Hayawan*.

01. Ensuring Accuracy in Reporting Rare Accounts

Al-Jāḥiẓ says: "These people and their like corrupt knowledge and cast suspicion upon books, and they are deceived by the large number of their followers, whom you find heedless in hearing strange things, and infatuated with curiosities and novelties. And if, with this heedlessness, they were given a share of verification and a portion of caution, the books would be saved from much corruption" (Jāḥiẓ 1:118).

In this text, Al-Jāḥiẓ expresses a deep critical vision towards the phenomenon of laxity in receiving and circulating knowledge, warning of its devastating effect on scholarship and books. He directs the arrows of his criticism at a group that pretends to knowledge and corrupts it from within, as they are tempted by curiosities and novelties, and are more fascinated by the large number of followers than by the sincerity of understanding and the precision of insight. Al-Jāḥiẓ emphasizes that the danger lies not in manifest ignorance, but in ignorance disguised in the garb of knowledge, when verbal display and the search for the strange are prioritized over the spirit of verification and methodology. Hence, his intellectual value is manifested in his call for investigation and caution as the two main pillars for protecting knowledge from falsehood and disorder, and as an affirmation of his rational principle based on criticism and examination before submission. From this stance, it is clear that Al-Jāḥiẓ does not view science as an accumulation of information, but as a mental and ethical practice that preserves the authenticity and truthfulness of culture.

02. Distinction Between Reported and Observed Events

We find Al-Jāḥiẓ in *Kitab al-Hayawan* distinguishing between the report he narrates and the report he has witnessed, so as not to place them at the same level. This was evident to us at the end of his discussion related to "A refutation of what they alleged about the dog's ailments," where he said: "This is what I witnessed, and as for what was conveyed to me by these trustworthy people, it is what I have written for you" (Jāḥiẓ 2:8). Here, he rules in favor of experience and direct observation to reject what he had narrated from trustworthy sources, whose apparent meaning contradicted the truth. The justification for citing these reports from trustworthy sources, as he says elsewhere in his book, commenting on an anomalous narration,



is: "And I did not criticize the narration, but rather I criticized the belief in it and the affirmation of its meanings. How many are there who narrate this type of thing out of astonishment at it, and to make the narration a reason to show people the truth of that from its falsehood. Abu Zayd and his like are trustworthy in the eyes of the people; however, anyone who is not a skilled theologian and is a role model and imam for the scholars, how likely is his corruption of them to be like the corruption of one who intentionally corrupts them!" (Jāhiz 2:8).

He said elsewhere in his epistles: "This epistle we have written is attributed, among the narrators, to those we named at its beginning. If it is authentic, then we have fulfilled the duty of narration, and those who wrote it are more deserving of the proof they have undertaken. If it is fabricated, then it is from the pretenders, since they had established the proof in abandoning modesty, and for the sake of the restrained, to facilitate for the constrained what the committers have done" (Jāhiz, *Rasa'il al-Adabiyya* 2:181).

From the foregoing, Al-Jāhiz's firm stance on the issue of documentation and the scholar's responsibility in circulating knowledge becomes clear to us. He balances between the freedom of transmission and the necessity of criticism, and between fulfilling scholarly trust and being wary of fabrication. Through this stance, his methodological rationality is manifested, which emphasizes that knowledge is not built on absolute trust, but on verification and analysis, and that the true scholar is one who is aware of the limits of transmission and the limits of interpretation, thus combining boldness in vision with honesty in performance.

But Why Does Al-Jāhiz Adopt Satire and Irony as a Method?

Al-Jāhiz answers this for us at the beginning of his book *Kitab al-Hayawan*, saying: "This is a book of exhortation, instruction, understanding, and alertness. It seems to me that you have criticized it before you have grasped its limits, reflected on its chapters, considered its end in light of its beginning, and its sources in light of its resources. You have been misled by some of what you saw in its course of jest whose meaning you do not know, and of leisureliness whose depths you have not fathomed; and you have not known why it was invoked, nor for what reason it was undertaken, what thing I intended by it, for what seriousness it endured that jest, and for what training it undertook that leisureliness; and you did not know that jest is seriousness when it is invoked to be a cause for seriousness, and that leisureliness is dignity and sobriety when it is undertaken for that well-being. And when Khalil ibn Ahmad said: 'No one reaches what he needs of the science of grammar until he learns what he does not need,' Abu Shamr said: 'If what is needed cannot be reached except by what is not needed, then what is not needed has become needed.' And this is like our book; for if we were to compel all who undertake the reading of this book to the bitterness of truth, the difficulty of seriousness, the heaviness of the burden, and the adornment of solemnity, none would have patience for it, with its length, except one who dedicates himself to knowledge and understands its meaning" (Jāhiz 1:57).

❖ Conclusion



The *munāqabī* discourse in Al-Jāḥiẓ represents a complex intellectual and rhetorical structure, based on the mechanism of value-based elevation and diminution in the portrayal of individuals and ideas, whereby eloquence becomes a means to evaluate reality and to establish a specific mental and ethical vision. Ibrahim al-Sukkarān, in his critical reading of this discourse, relied on considering Al-Jāḥiẓ as the voice of the Mu'tazilite school and an expression of its dialectical vision, highlighting his contradictions in narrating the ordeal of Imam Ahmad and his sectarian bias in presenting events. He saw in this a model of an "ideologized *munāqabī* discourse" that employs eloquence to serve an intellectual stance rather than to present objective truth.

However, this study has sought to balance this characterization with a more nuanced perspective, suggesting that Al-Jāḥiẓ, despite his evident sectarian bias, was conscious of the responsibility of transmission and verification, distinguishing between narration as a performance of a report and belief in it as an epistemic stance, as his texts in *al-Bayan wa-l-Tabyin* and *Kitab al-Hayawan* attest, which call for verification and methodological criticism. Therefore, generalizing the accusation of deviation or fabrication against him does not account for the nature of his intellectual project, which combined rational argumentation and rhetorical portrayal, and between a concern for truth and an artistic tendency in its presentation.

The study concludes that the *munāqabī* discourse in Al-Jāḥiẓ is not merely sectarian propaganda, but a form of critical consciousness of reason and eloquence, and that al-Sukkarān's reading, despite its ethical depth, still needs to be balanced to do justice to the aesthetic and methodological aspects of the Jāḥiẓian experience. Al-Jāḥiẓ, in the essence of his discourse, was not an opponent of truth, but a creator of a rational, satirical style that makes eloquence a tool for thought and evaluation, and rhetorical paradox a path to discovery and criticism.