On the Linguistic and Technical Meanings of Ghayr and Their Consequences for Understanding the Divine Attributes in Classical Kalām

Gayr Kavramının Dilsel ve Istılahî Anlamları ve Klasik Kelâmın İlâhî Sıfatlar Anlayışına Etkileri

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Abstract

Some writers have suggested that the classical Sunni kalām theory of divine attributes, which states that the attributes are 'neither God' nor 'other than God,' should be interpreted to mean a denial of the law of excluded middle. Some also seek to build a new kalām without such a principle. Although the author holds such a view to be unintelligible on its own grounds, it also has no basis in the classical kalām theory. This paper shall present a detailed investigation into the meaning of *ghayr*, and demonstrate, with ample textual evidence, that the classical theory of divine attributes only means a denial of identity along with the denial of metaphysical separability from the divine essence. This paper demonstrates how the term *ghayr* applies in contexts of metaphysics, theology, and natural philosophy as well. The formula that 'something is not identical with' nor 'other than' is applied equally to any property of a subject which is necessary and inseparable from it. That is, it applies equally to created beings as well. The paper shall begin with a linguistic discussion of the term *ghayr*, in order to demonstrate that it is not a negation in the Arabic language, but actually an adjective which also functions to form an exceptive clause. This proves that the formula on the divine attributes does not imply a rejection of excluded middle even at the basic linguistic level. Then the paper will discuss the term *ghayr* in technical contexts. This discussion does not limit itself to any school, but the discussion is based on four main sources: (1) the *Maqālāt* of al-Kaʿbī of the Muʿtazilī school; (2) the *Maqālāt* of al-Ashʿarī, (3) the *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* and (4) the *Taʾwīlāt* of al-Māturīdī. Much attention is given to the latter because of claims by some that Māturīdī has a unique position on *ghayriyya* which implies the rejection of the law of excluded middle. There is no indication at all that such a formula implied a denial of the laws of logic. Claims to the contrary have failed to provide any linguistic or textual evidence for their interpretation, let alone philosophical justification for such a farfetched view.

Keywords: Kalam, Ashʿarī, Māturīdī, Kaʿbī, Divine attributes, Laws of logic.

Öz

Klasik Sünnî kelâmın sıfatların 'ne Tanrı'nın aynı ne de Tanrı'dan ayrı' olduğunu iddia eden ilâhî sıfatlar teorisi, üçüncü halin imkansızlığı yasasının inkarı anlamına gelecek şekilde yorumlanmıştır. Nitekim bu iddiada olan yazarlar, böyle bir teoriyi dışarıda bırakacak şekilde yeni bir kelâm inşa etme iddiasındadır. Yazar, böyle bir iddiayı kendinde anlamsız görmekle birlikte, klasik kelâm nazariyesinde de bir temeli olmadığını iddia etmektedir. Bu makale, 'gayr'ın anlamı hakkında ayrıntılı bir inceleme sunmakta ve birçok metinsel kanıtla, klasik ilâhî sıfatlar teorisinin yalnızca özdeşliğin ve ilâhî zâttan ayrılabilirliğin inkarı anlamına geldiğini öne sürmektedir. Bu makale, gayr teriminin metafizik, teoloji ve doğa felsefesi bağlamlarında da geçerli olduğunu göstermektedir. "Bir şey bir diğerinin ne aynı ne de ayrıdır" formülü, bir öznenin kendisinden zorunlu ve ayrılmaz olan herhangi bir özelliğine eşit şekilde uygulanır. Bir diğer ifade ile söz konusu ilke, mümkün varlıklar için de aynı şekilde geçerlidir. Araştırma "gayr" kavramının Arap dilbiliminde aslî olarak olumsuzlama anlamına gelmediğini, aslında bir sıfat olduğunu ve aynı zamanda istisnaî cümle oluşturma işlevi gördüğünü iddia eden dilbilimsel bir tartışmayla başlamaktadır. Bu da ilâhî sıfatlara ilişkin ilkenin, temel dilbilimsel düzeyde bile üçüncü halin imkânsızlığı anlamına gelmediğini kanıtlamaktadır. Akabinde "gayr" kavramı kelâmî n. Söz konusu inceleme kendisini herhangi bir ekolle sınırlı değildir, ancak inceleme dört ana kaynağa dayanmaktadır: (1) Mu'tezileden Ka'bî'nin Makâlât'ı; (2) Eş'arî'nin Makâlât'ı ve (3) Mâtürîdî'nin *Kitâbu't-Tevhîd* ve (4) *Te'vîlât*. Bazı yazarların Mâtürîdî'nin üçüncü halin imkânsızlığı yasasının inkârını îmâ eden özgün bir duruşa sahip olduğunu iddia etmeleri nedeniyle, sonuncusu üzerinde daha fazla duruldu. Böylesi bir ilkenin mantık yasalarının inkârını îmâ ettiğine dair hiçbir belirti yoktur. Aksini iddia edenler, böyle mantıksız bir görüş için felsefi gerekçelendirme bir yana, yorumları için herhangi bir dilbilimsel veya metinsel kanıt bile sunamamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kelam, Eş'arî, Mâtürîdî, Ka'bî, İlahî sıfatlar, Mantık yasaları.

Introduction

In classical Sunni kalām, the relation between the divine essence and the divine attributes is described in the following manner: 'the attributes are neither God Himself, nor other (*ghayr*) than God.'[1] Several contemporary authors have read this formula in a naïve manner to imply a denial of the law of excluded middle (LEM) or the law of non-contradiction (PNC).[2] In response to a number of dubious interpretations of the classical kalām tradition, I wrote a brief article last year demonstrating that neither the theory of the attributes nor the theory of *aḥwāl* imply a rejection of the principle of non-contradiction (PNC) or the law of excluded middle (LEM).[3] My purpose was twofold: (i) to clarify with ample textual evidence and philosophical exegesis what these authors actually intended by their theory of divine attributes and the theory of abstract properties, and (ii) to demonstrate that none of the mutakallimūn had ever come close to denying PNC or LEM. One of the sources of their confusion is their impoverished understanding of the term *ghayr*, both linguistically and technically. Another driver of this confusion is simply a modern quasi-Christian proclivity for the suprarational, such that the mystery of the divine justifies a denial of the laws of logic. It turns out, however, that *ghayr* is a rather ordinary term and such formulae are also used in natural philosophical contexts; on all classical accounts, even one's foot is 'neither him' nor 'other than him.' The reason is rather simple: one's foot is a constitutive part of the whole, while 'being other' means to be extrinsic to that whole.

Given the importance of the term for understanding classical kalām theories on metaphysics, theology, and natural philosophy, this paper aims to present a sufficiently detailed study on the meaning of *ghayr* and its consequences for understanding the key issue of the divine attributes, demonstrating unequivocally that the formulation does not imply a denial of LEM. The article is organized thus: (1) the linguistic meaning of *ghayr*; (2) the technical meaning of *ghayr*, and its

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[1] This way of translating the text is common but it does not mirror the Arabic accurately. A closer rendition is to say: 'the attributes are not God Himself, nor are they His other.' This is because the way the term *ghayr* is used in the Arabic in a genitive construction, *ghayruh*. Preserving the structure of the genitive construction in the English rendition appears less susceptible to misinterpretation.

[2] The principle of non-contradiction (PNC) states that it is impossible for a proposition and its contradictory to both be true under all the same conditions; or as some of the ulama put it, it is impossible for the very same relation or fact to both obtain and not obtain, or to exist and not exist, at the same time and under all the same conditions. The law of excluded middle (LEM) states that it is impossible for a proposition and its contradictory to both be false at the same time under all the same conditions. It is not difficult to see that these are mutually implied by one another. That is because by PNC, if a proposition is true, then its contradictory is necessarily false; and if a proposition is false, then its contradictory is necessarily true. What this means is that logical space is exhausted by a proposition and its contradictory. If one denies LEM, however, they are effectively stating that a proposition and its contradictory are not exhaustive of logical space, and that there is a third possibility between the two. But this just implies that the two propositions in question are not a contradictory pair at all, and thus, leads to a contradiction, and is thus a violation of PNC as well. More plainly, PNC implies that if a proposition is true, its contradictory is false; but if we deny LEM, and say that a proposition *and* its contradictory are false, then we are also denying PNC, because in such a case, the contradictory of the false proposition would not be true, which is evidently absurd.

[3] Hamza Yusuf, *The Creed of Imam al-Ṭaḥāwī, (Berkeley: Zaytuna Institute, 2007)*, 20; Abbas Ahsan, "The logical inconsistency in making sense of an ineffable God of Islam," in *Philotheos* 20.1 (2020), 68-116; Ramon Harvey, *Transcendent God, Rational World: a Maturidi Theology*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 150-151; AbuSulayman Center for Global Islamic Studies at George Mason University/The Maydan (ASC), "Classical Kalām and the Laws of Logic" (Access 1 July 2022).

application to theology and natural philosophy in the kalām tradition in general; (3) a detailed exposition on al-Māturīdī in particular on the notion of *ghayr*, demonstrating that it is no different from other Sunni mutakallimūn or his early followers.[4]

1. On the Linguistic Meaning of *Ghayr*

The importance of the Arabic linguistic sciences in kalām has been dully noted by recent scholarship.[5] It is thus appropriate to first examine the works of authoritative linguists on the meaning of *ghayr*. There is no disagreement among Arabic linguists that the term g*hayr* is a genitive noun (*ism iḍāfa*) that is always in a genitive construction with another noun, either explicitly or implicitly. That *ghayr* is a noun is clearly illustrated by the fact that it takes all the three cases: the nominative, the accusative, and the genitive. One says: قال غيرٌ واحد, 'Many said'; مررتُ بغيرِ واحد 'I struck many'; and مررتُ بغيرِ واحد, 'I passed by many'. Its primary function is that of an adjective.[6] To be sure, it is an indefinite noun, and among the most indefinite nouns in the Arabic language, which allows it to have a very wide scope. Furthermore, when they say it is always in a genitive construction, they mean it is always *semantically* 'ghayr-something', such that it is permissible to drop the modified noun (i.e., *muḍāf ilayh*) when it is understood from the context. According to Sībawayh, it is *always* indefinite, it does not accept the definite article, and it can never made into a plural.[7] Indeed, no usage of this kind is attested in natural Arabic. The secondary function of *ghayr* is to produce an exceptive clause.

There are contexts in which *ghayr* is used *figuratively* to mean 'not.' However, even when *ghayr* is used to mean 'not,' it remains a noun that forms part of the genitive construction, and thereby forms a metathetic predicate, i.e., where one says 'S *is* not-P,' that is, the negation attaches to the predicate, and the overall statement remains an affirmation. This is crucial because it changes the truth conditions of the sentence in question; the sentence with a metathetic predicate remains an affirmation that requires the existence of the subject, while simple negation does not.[8] This is corroborated by the mutakallimūn as well. Ibn Fūrak records:

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[4] The additional focus on Māturīdī is due to the post-facto claim by Harvey that – after discovering that *ghayr* does not mean what he thought it did – that somehow, al-Māturīdī had a unique view of *ghayriyya* that would allow him to hold on to his interpretation which implies a denial of the law of excluded middle.

[5] For example, M. Bulgen, "The Power of Language in the Classical Period of Kalām," in *Nazariyat* 5/1 (May 2019): 37-82.

[6] Cf. Sībawayh, *al-Kitāb*, ed. Harun, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1988), 2/343; Ibn Hishām, *Mughnī al-Labib*, ed. M. Abdulhamid, (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2007) 1/179-180; al-Jawharī, *al-Siḥāḥ*, (Beirut: Dār al-ʿilm lil-malāyīn, 1979), 776-777; Ibn Mālik, *Sharḥ al-Tashīl*, (Giza: Hajar, 1990), 3/226.

[7] Sībawayh, *al-Kitāb*, 2/343; 3/479. This already indicates that the pluralization of the word came about in scientific contexts.

[8] When lexicons mention this usage of *ghayr* as meaning *lā,* they *do not* mean that *ghayr* has somehow turned into a particle that is no longer subject to cases and inflections, and functions as a simple negation. For example, they cite as their source the great grammarian al-Farrāʾ's commentary on the expression of '*ghayr al-maghḍūb*' in Sūrat al-Fātiḥa in his *Maʿānī al-Qurʾan*.[8] Al-Farrāʾ and these lexicographers are clear that *ghayr* remains an adjective, and that we only come to know that it has the meaning of 'not' because the conjunction with ولا الضالين indicates that it is. As such, the term *ghayr* is still in the genitive case and it is likewise modifying *al-maghdūbī*, and the construction retains its role as an adjective. The point here is that being a noun (*ism*) or an adjective (*naʿt* or *ṣifa*) does not imply that

[T1] [al-Ashʿarī] denied that anything other than a pair of existents or a several existents could be described with being distinct (*taghāyur*). He denied the intelligibility of the statement of one who says: 'The nonexistent is *other* than the existent.' He mentioned in his *Ziyādāt wa-l-Nawādir*, that if a speaker says 'The nonexistent is other than the existent' in the sense that [the nonexistent] is not the existent, then the meaning here is true, but it is only valid in a figurative sense and not literally true, because the usage of '*laysa*' as meaning '*ghayr*' is figurative, because the literal sense of '*laysa*' is negation and to report on nonexistence, while describing something as being 'other' (*ghayr*) is a statement that entails the existence of the subject attributed by it.[9]

In other words, *ghayr* cannot properly be said of the non-existent because for al-Ashʿarī (and al-Māturīdī), the non-existent is nothing at all, while *ghayr* implies existence. This is because it is ultimately an affirmative or existence entailing adjective.[10] Thus, when one says that the non-

such a noun does not contain or cannot *mean* not, but that this is not a literal negation. Indeed, even the negative particle *lā* can negate in different ways, and in these contexts that we are discussing, *lā* is forming part of a metathetic i.e., privative predicate or adjective, making the basic sentence a grammatical affirmation. That is, it is telling us something affirmative albeit indefinite about the object in question, and it is not a simple negation. I must note that some imprecision on *ghayr* can be found in Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān*. One example is when he cites al-Azharī's *Tahdhīb* as a source for stating *ghayr* is a semantic particle ('*min ḥurūf al-maʿānī*'), when in fact, al-Azharī does not state this. In an unpublished correspondence, Harvey stated that this lends credence to his treatment of *ghayr* as meaning simply 'not'. He also claimed that I denied *ghayr* can mean not, which is not true; what I denied is that *ghayr literally* means 'not'. Nevertheless, Ibn Manẓūr's entry on *ghayr* does not help his case either way because Harvey has not read the entry correctly, and excluded another very important statement. As for the incorrect reading, it is that *ghayr* may be used *figuratively*, i.e., non-literally, to mean 'not' (*lā*), where this *lā* is not one of simple negation, but is actually part of the adjective. Indeed, Ibn Manẓūr actually cites the *Tahdhīb* (which is citing al-Farrāʾ as above) as saying *ghayr* '*may occur as meaning lā*,' which is a case where *lā* forms part of the predicate, indicating two things: (1) it is a figurative usage, and (2) it remains in its adjectival role. More importantly, Harvey excludes the fact that Ibn Manẓūr actually states explicitly that 'the default sense (*al-aṣl*) of *ghayr* is an adjective, while *exception* is derivative.' This means that the figurative usage of *not* is neither default nor even secondary. Cf. Ibn Manẓūr (d.711), *Lisān al-ʿarab*, (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.) 5/3324-3325; and Al-Azharī (d.370), *Tahdhīb al-lugha*, (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣriyya lil-taʾlīf waʾl-tarjama, 1976), 8/188-190; Cf. Sībawayh, *al-Kitāb*, 2/343; Ibn Hishām, *Mughnī al-labīb*, 1/179-180. al-Murādī (d.749) does not include an entry for *ghayr* in his *al-Jana al-dānī fī ḥurūf al-maʿānī*, one of the most comprehensive works on particles and which contains over 100 particles *including* those which are of disputed particle status, e.g., 28-29. He does however discuss *ghayr* in his discussion of *illā* the exceptive particle, where he states explicitly that while *ghayr* can be used for exceptive clauses, the primary meaning is that of an adjective (*ṣifa*), cf. pp.517-518; likewise, al-Mālaqī (d.702), *Raṣf al-mabānī fī sharḥ ḥurūf al-maʿānī,* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 2002), another work on semantic particles, also does not include an entry for *ghayr*, and the reason is that *it is not a particle.* All of this is confirmed by Sībawayh, Ibn Hishām, and their commentators such as al-Sīrāfī and al-Damamini respectively. Al-Zabīdī adds that 'Ibn Hishām treated the issue of *ghayr* comprehensively, while al-Damamini treated what was in need of criticism', Al-Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Taj al-ʿarūs*, (Kuwait: Wizārat al-Irshād waʾl-Anbāʾ, 1965), 13/284-289; al-Jawharī, 776-777.

9   Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, ed. Gimaret, (Beirut: Dār al-Mashreq, 1987), 268.

10 As I have argued previously, the meaning of *ghayriyya* according to the Ashʿarī school is metaphysical separability. Thus, their denial of *ghayriyya* 'otherness' of the divine attributes is a denial that these attributes can exist separately from God, such that they could perish while He remains existent, or that they could subsist in another subject, or exist at some times and not at others, and so on. For more details of their views on *ghayriyya*, see the chapter on the topic in Ibn Fūrak's *Mujarrad*, pp. 265-270. al-Bāqillānī, *Inṣāf*, ed. al-Kawtharī, (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya lil-Turath, 2000), 25-26; 167-168; Bāqillānī, *al-Tamhid* ed. McCarthy, (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya, 1957), 211, 215; Abu Manṣūr al-Baghdādī, *al-Asma wa-l-ṣifāt*, ed. al-Sharafawi, (Damascus: Dār al-Taqwa, 2020), 1/277-287; al-Juwaynī, *al-Shāmil*, ed. Nashshār, (Alexandria: Manshʾat al-Maʿārif, 1969), 332-337; AbuSulayman Center for Global Islamic Studies at George Mason University/The Maydan (ASC), "Classical Kalām and the Laws of Logic" (Access 1 July 2022).

existent is 'other' than the existent, then this is only true figuratively; literally it is false. The Māturīdī master Abu'l-Muʿīn al-Nasafī offers more detail on the difference between *ghayr* and *laysa*:

> [T2] This is because *ghayr* is a genitive noun that implies the existence of two, while the word *laysa* is negation, and it only implies nonexistence. So, whoever interprets what implies existence with what implies nonexistence, is someone far removed from the principles of reason; then how is the case with one who interprets what implies the existence of *two* entities with what entails nonexistence?
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> The proof of this is that the definition and the defined are like two synonymous terms that are united in what they communicate to another, and they do not diverge or differ in that. Whoever says 'Zayd is not in the house,' (*laysa Zayd fi'l-dar*), then says: 'Other than Zayd is in the house' (*ghayru Zayd fi'l-dar*), then what is understood from one statement is not what is understood from the other. This shows that this view is false. Likewise, if it is said: 'What is not part of something is other than it' is also false, because the whole of something is not a part of it, and despite that, it is not other than it, because a thing cannot be 'other' than itself.[11]

Thus, both schools of Sunni kalām and all the grammarians agree that *ghayr* and *laysa* or *la* do not have the same meaning; indeed, the semantic range between the two is drastically different. Al-Nasafī states that the Muʿtazila, and whoever thinks that *other* can be used with the same meaning as *laysa,* cease to be a rational being.

Before moving on, let us illustrate the meaning of *ghayr* with an example. Recall the well-known hadith in al-Bukhārī: كان الله ولم يكن شيء غيره.[12] Leaving the technical meaning of *ghayr* aside, does the linguistic import of this statement i.e., that 'God was, and there was nothing other than Him,' mean that God was without His attributes? That is, does the term *ghayruhu* include God's attributes from the mere linguistic expression, such that the negation of '*ghayruhu*' would imply that God's essence existed without any attributes? It is obvious that this is not the case.[13] Indeed, even the Muʿtazila who deny real properties and hold that God's attributes are abstract states (*aḥwāl*) would not include those states as being *ghayr*. Indeed, to affirm *aghyār* —that is, metaphysically distinct beings in eternity— would be a violation of divine unity and imply unbelief.[14]

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11   Al-Nasafī, *Tabṣira*, ed. Salameh, (Damascus: Institut Francais de Damas, 1990), 1/244.
12   Bukhārī, 3191.
13   Consider another example: 'Nothing other (*laysa ghayru*) than Harvey is in the room.' Now, the meaning is clear: Harvey is in the room, and no other *person* is in the room (note the restriction of the negation). The question we ask now is: are Harvey's parts and properties also in the room? That is, does the negation of 'others' in the statement above, include Harvey's parts and properties? Does it even negate furniture for example or other inanimate or non-rational objects? That is, can we take such statements to mean that Harvey is in the room, but his arms and legs are not? Or that Harvey is in the room, but his knowledge, power, and life, are not? Clearly the answer is no. No one who understands the meaning of the statement could think this; not in Arabic or English. So, *ghayr* in the Arabic language, like *other* in the English language, has a scope which is not absolute and needs to be understood in the context. Harvey's knowledge is not Harvey, nor is it other than Harvey. The same applies to his foot. There are no mysteries here or logic bending involved.
14   In his book, Harvey does not even entertain a linguistic analysis of the statement he bases his claims on, nor does he indicate even the slightest awareness of the technical meaning of the term and the wide discussions on the topic.

2. On the Technical Meaning of *Ghayr* and its Ubiquity in Classical Kalām Discourse

The term *ghayr* is ubiquitous in kalām works. While it is sometimes used in an ordinary sense (which is closely tied to the technical sense), most of the time – especially when there is a declared disagreement over whether something is *ghayr* or not – it is being used in a technical sense. In the following texts, we shall see that not only does *ghayr* have this linguistic and technical aspect, the original formula used by early mutakallimūn actually included *three* disjuncts, and not simply two: 'not identical to God, not other than God, and not a part of God.' It should be obvious that the second disjunct cannot be considered a contradictory of the first disjunct, since there is a third option. This three-disjunct formula – rather then the later shortened formula which comprises only two – roughly corresponds to the three categories of (1) subject (*huwa*), (2) property (*ghayruh*), and (3) part (*baʿḍuh*), all of which assume a different role in the mereology of classical kalām. In many contexts, the mutakallimūn are explicit that affirming a *ghayr* is to affirm a *contingent* property. But since God has no contingent properties, His attributes cannot be described as such. In the following sections, we take a detailed look at these early kalām discussions.

2.1 Al-Kaʿbī (d.319 AH)

al-Māturīdī spends more time refuting al-Kaʿbī than anyone else by name in *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*. He is an important member of the Baghdad school of Muʿtazilism. In his *Kitab al-Maqālāt*, he collects a great deal of opinions on various questions in kalām, similar in nature to al-Ashʿarī's *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* (which uses Kaʿbī as a source) but slightly narrower in scope and different in organization, and with fewer details. Since his is one of the earliest complete works, and it is one

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He simply stated that this was a formula stated, and it was taken from Hishām b. al-Ḥakam and Ibn Kullāb, and that was all there was to it. Cf. Harvey, *Transcendent God, Rational World*, 150-152. In an unpublished correspondence, he concedes that he misquoted the formulation in his book, but despite this, insists on keeping the word *ghayr* in the accusative case, which makes even his modified sentence incorrect. That is, Harvey repeats a number of times that it is '*ghayrahu*' in the accusative (e.g., p.1, 3), which makes no sense in that context (as opposed to the one case where the Arabic uses the verb *laysa*), for it is in a conjunction with *la huwa* and thus should take the same case, but *huwa* is nominative while *ghayrahu* is accusative; or that *ghayrahu* should be in the accusative because it is understood as being a form of concurrence i.e., *maʿiyya*, applying to verbs, which also makes no sense in the context of the attributes); or that the second clause is in fact a new sentence separate from the first, in which case we have a fragment and not a complete sentence; or we assume *lā* in the new sentence is *laysa* and we assume an elliptical subject where *ghayrahu* is the predicate, but in this case, it is separated from the previous sentence and no longer does the work that Harvey thinks that it is doing; and so on. Harvey certainly does not tell us why he thinks the statement should be inflected that way, and what this would mean for his interpretation of the formula. Perhaps the most glaring error – apart from the compounded error of thinking *ghayr* is a particle that means 'not' and then *pluralizing* it by translating the term *aghyār* as "negations," as though one can pluralize a particle – in Harvey's response is his failure to actually offer an interpretation of *ghayr* where it is relevant. He seems to think that simply translating the word as 'other' is sufficient to explain its meaning, and elsewhere – even more absurdly – as 'negations'. Despite wanting his readers to accept such an outlandish claim such as denying the Law of Excluded Middle, he has not even tried to explain in a clear manner, in his book or elsewhere, how his understanding of the formula actually translates into a denial of LEM (that is, if we take *ghayr* in that context to just mean '*not*', it will not just imply a denial of LEM, but it will also be a straightforward contradiction, because literally the formula becomes a conjunction of two contradictories, and not the denial of a contradictory pair, thus denying PNC, which Harvey thinks he wants to keep). So, it will be true that 'x is not God' and also true that 'not: x is not God,' and one is a contradictory of the other, and so, their conjunction is a straightforward contradiction.

which both al-Al-Ashʿarī and al-Māturīdī engaged with, it is a good place for us to begin. Al-Kaʿbī writes:

[T1] The Muʿtazila, the Khawārij, the Murjiʾa, and some Zaydis said: God is eternally Powerful by Himself, and it is not possible for Him to be Knowing by Knowledge that is *Him*, nor *other* than Him, nor *part* of Him. They argued for this by saying: If God were knowing by knowledge, then it must be the case that that His knowledge is Him, or other than Him, or part of Him. But all of these are false; because if knowledge were Him, then it would be possible for [knowledge] to be worshipped and beseeched for forgiveness; and one's statement, 'He has knowledge' is the affirmation of a *thing,* which implies *two things*, while his statement '[the knowledge is] Him', is a negation of what was affirmed, and a return to a single thing. And if Knowledge were *other* than Him, then it must be the case that it is either eternal, or originated. So, if there were eternally another with [God], then it is necessary that an 'other' of God has been eternally with God; and if it were originated, and [God] only knows by means of knowledge, then it is necessary that before the origination of that knowledge, He was not knowing.[15]

al-Kaʿbī's argument seeks to prove that God is knowing by Himself, and not through a property of knowledge. The argument is premised on the exhaustive and exclusive scope of the disjunction that if God had knowledge, then that knowledge would either be (1) God himself, or (2) other than God, or (3) a part of God. Immediately we can see that the disjunction between 'other' and 'God Himself,' is not one of contradictory opposition, and therefore, a denial of both could not imply a denial of LEM. Now, if the term *ghayr* was meant to capture an absolute 'other,' in some general sense, then the division would collapse, because it assumes an exclusive-or between 'other' and 'part,' even though some others are parts, making the third category redundant. The sensible way to understand this disjunction is that for al-Kaʿbī and all the schools he mentions, they correspond to subjects, properties, and parts respectively. Thus, even at face value, to state that something is neither it nor other than it, does not imply a denial of a contradictory pair.

Now, knowledge cannot be God, because then the attribute of knowledge would be worshipped, which cannot be right; furthermore, al-Kaʿbī claims, if one holds God has knowledge, then the implication is that he is affirming two things, while saying that 'it is God' is to say that it is one thing, and so the statement fails to be coherent.

Knowledge also cannot be other than God, because it would either be eternal or originated. This immediately implies that for Kaʿbī, to be other means to be an existent, because only the existent divides into the eternal and the originated. Thus, if there are 'two existents', then you have 'two others.' The terms existent and other thus have the same scope and extension.[16] Crucially, the term *ghayr* is being used here in a very specific affirmative manner, and it is certainly not being used as a negation. If it is eternal, then you have another with God in eternity – which the Muʿtazila (and many other schools) reject as a violation of divine unity, because the only eternal being is God, and anything else is tantamount to some kind of polytheism. Nor can the knowledge

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[16]   Ashʿarī and Māturīdī authors will take him to task for this on the basis that *other* is a genitive or relative noun i.e., *ism iḍāfa*, and it clearly has a distinct meaning from 'thing' or 'existent,' for a single being is a thing, while a single being cannot be an 'other.'

be originated – which would avoid the pitfall of multiple eternals – because it would imply that God was not knowing in eternity, which is equally unacceptable.

The upshot is this: the division contains three disjuncts: being Him (or identity), being other (i.e., being a property), or being a part (constitutive element). As seen already, being other does not simply mean: not-identical, because the denial of identity includes two distinct categories: being other and being a part. Thus, being Him or Other are not logically exhaustive, even if they are *in fact* exhaustive in some cases, because al-Kaʿbī holds that God has no parts (but others may disagree). Ashʿarī and Māturīdī authors responded to the claim that this division was exhaustive by denying all three. Once we understand what these terms mean, it is quite easy to see that this does not involve the denial of LEM.

Harvey has failed to appreciate the general context of these early kalām discussions, and appears to suggest that the formula regarding the divine attributes – and the implied denial of LEM – was originated spontaneously in the work of Hishām b. al-Ḥakam. Even if the Ashʿarīs did not deny LEM, perhaps Hishām did, and therefore, Harvey may assert without any evidence that al-Māturīdī also followed him in this. Al-Kaʿbī reports on Hishām's views thus:

> **[T2]** Hishām b. al-Ḥakam said: It is impossible for God to be eternally knowing by Himself, but rather, He must come to know things after He did not know them, and He must know them by knowledge, and that knowledge is His attribute: it is not Him, nor Other than Him, nor a part of Him. Also, it is not permissible to describe knowledge as being originated or eternal, *because it is an attribute, and attributes according to [Hishām] are not described.*[17]

Aside from Hishām's heretical view that God acquires knowledge, two things stand out: (1) as we saw before the disjunction is of *three* categories, indicating that Hishām held that other was more limited in scope than simply 'not-Him', undermining the entire interpretation that they denied LEM; (2) the main motivation behind Hishām's denial of saying the attributes are other or part, *is because attributes are not predicate-apt.* That is, in Hishām's scheme, only subjects – which for him are bodies – can be described as being one way or another. Attributes (ṣifāt), however, are not described. Therefore, the knowledge is not Other, nor Eternal nor Originated, and so on. The reasons for this are likely grammatical and philosophical in nature. Grammatically, an attribute (ṣifa) itself cannot take an adjective, unless it is actually being used as a subject in a sentence; but in such a case, it would not be an attribute. Metaphysically, most of the mutakallimūn held the view that it was impossible for a property to subsist in another property, and that to possess a property was for a property to exist in that subject; thus, if Hishām held that 'being other' entails the existence of a property of *otherness*, as we shall see some scholars did, then it would be impossible for an attribute to be *other*, because it would imply the subsistence of *otherness* in it. Either way, there are plausible reasons to think that attributes cannot themselves have attributes. This highlights a more general point as well, namely, that the logic of classical kalām was informed by Arabic grammar. Furthermore, the example of attributes illustrates that the scope of possibility within Arabic grammar is even narrower than the scope of Aristotelian logic. So, not only does

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17   Al-Kaʿbī, *Maqālāt*, 251.

Arabic grammar assume the laws of logic, it has even more restrictions on what is possible which classical logic would permit.[18]

Al-Kaʿbī then cites the view of Sulaymān b. Jarīr, again, using the early three-disjunct formula, where Sulaymān denies that knowledge is God, nor other, nor part.[19] Again the same point about the division applies, except that Sulaymān denies all three, either because of the same reason that Hishām does – or as we shall see later – because for him, properties do not fall under the 'other' category if they are necessary for the subject, just like Al-Ashʿarī and al-Māturīdī authors later on. al-Kaʿbī then cites the view of Jahm b. Ṣafwān, another notorious figure from the early period:

> [T3] Jahm said: God's knowledge is originated (*muḥdath*), and He – the Exalted – created it and came to know through it, and [the knowledge] is other than God (*wa innahu ghayr Allah*).[20]

Recall that the previous thinkers we looked at said: the knowledge is *not* ghayr, while Jahm here is saying *it is ghayr*. Can this be interpreted in a way consistent with '*ghayr*' simply meaning 'not' or 'other' without further explanation? If true, why not simply say 'knowledge is not God?' Why produce a contrived sentence with an assertive particle at the start? The passage makes it clear: being *other* means not just that the knowledge is 'not God' – because there are other logical possibilities such as being a part, and so on – but that it means to be a separable ontological entity such that God can exist without it. This is explicitly Jahm's view: God did not have knowledge, then He created knowledge for Himself, then He came to know things through that knowledge. His knowledge is thus a separable, perishable, and contingent property.

2.2 *Ghayr* in al-Ashʿarī's *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*

al-Ashʿarī's monumental *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, the most precise and detailed compendium of classical kalām views that we currently possess, is replete with discussions of *ghayr* and *ghayriyya*. al-Al-Ashʿarī cites Hishām b. al- Ḥakam's views on the attributes:

> [T7] The followers of Hishām b. al-Ḥakam believe that it is impossible for God to be eternally knowledgeable of all things by Himself, and that rather, He must know things after not knowing them; and that He must know them with a knowledge that is His attribute: it is not Him, nor Other than Him, nor a part of Him. Thus, it is not possible to say that knowledge is originated or eternal, because it is an attribute, and attributes are not described.[21]

This is the same statement we saw above in al-Kaʿbī. The takeaways are the same: the opposition between 'Him' and 'other than Him' is not one of logical contradiction, as is clearly indicated by the third option negating parthood. Furthermore, the main reason why Hishām employs such denials regarding properties is because according to him, properties cannot be described, as we

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[18]   Despite this, Harvey and others nonchalantly assume that classical kalām permits such logical absurdities. Indeed, even when they discuss the notion of the 'impossible,' mutakallimūn take grammar as their starting point, and define the impossible in grammatical terms. Thus, following great linguists such as Sībawayh, Ashʿarī states that the impossible (*al-muḥāl*) is whatever is semantically unintelligible, which no doubt includes the logically impossible, since it is grammatically invalid for a sentence to be a negation and an affirmation; or neither an affirmation nor a negation.

[19]   Al-Kaʿbī, *Maqālāt*, 253.

[20]   Al-Kaʿbī, *Maqālāt*, 253-254.

[21]   al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, ed. Ritter, third edition, (Wiesbaden: Franz Schteiner, 1980) 37-38; 222.

explained above. Since properties are not predicate-apt, one must deny them. Let us move on to al-Ashʿarī's description of Ibn Kullāb, described by some mired in the orientalist mindset as a 'proto-Sunni' precursor to al-Al-Ashʿarī and al-Māturīdī's view. al-Al-Ashʿarī writes:

> **[T8]** [Ibn Kullāb] used to say: The names of God and His attributes are not God and not Other than Him, and they subsist in God, and it is not possible for attributes to subsist in attributes. [...]. He used to believe that the attributes of God were not separable (لا تتغاير), and that knowledge is not power, nor other than it; and likewise, every attribute of the essential attributes: they are not the other attribute, nor other than it.[22]

The term *ghayr* for Ibn Kullāb is being used in a very precise way. The attributes subsist in God and they are not other than Him. Notice that the first part of this statement is uncontroversial among attribute-realists: attributes subsist or exist in the subjects attributed by them. It will become clear later that the second qualification, namely, that they are not other, means that these are necessary for the being which possesses them. Furthermore, attributes themselves cannot subsist in attributes. Ibn Kullāb also held that for some entity to be attributed by something (*mawṣūf*) is for an attribute to subsist in that entity; as such, attributes cannot be *mawṣūf* in the strict sense according to Ibn Kullāb, although they can be *described*; i.e., they can have a description (*waṣf*) but they cannot have an attribute (*ṣifa*).[23] Notice that Ibn Kullāb not only denies that God is other to His attributes, but also that the attributes are not other to one another either. This follows from the fact that all of them are eternal and are necessarily implied by one another, thus forming the relevant unity entailing the impossibility of separability.[24]

The mutakallimūn also disagreed on how to use *ghayr* with respect to the divine names; classical Sunni authors held that the names and the attributes were the same; while the Muʿtazila held that the names and the attributes all reduce to statements. As such, they treated the otherness of the names differently. al-Al-Ashʿarī describes the spectrum of views on *ghayr* in the following passage:

> **[T10]** They differed on the name of God, is it God or other than Him? Into four views: (1) Some said: His names are Him, and this position is held by most Hadith scholars. (2) Others among the companions of Ibn Kullāb said: The names of God are not Him nor Other than Him, (3) while some of [Ibn Kullāb's] companions said: The names of God are not said to be God, nor are they said to be Other than Him, but they abstained from stating 'They are not God nor Other than Him.' (4) Others

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22   al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 169.12-170.3

23   Cf. Baghdādī, *al-Asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt,* 1/148-152.

24   It is interesting to note that those who shared the general view that the attributes of God are not God nor other than God, disagreed on the extent of the application of being 'other,' which is another major indication that this is a technical discussion relating to fine points of metaphysics. This may be due to their views whether attributes are predicate-apt or not; or more likely, it is due to the fact that while each attribute is necessary for the essence that possesses that attribute, no attribute possesses another attribute in that way. As such, the essence itself implies the existence of each attribute in a strong metaphysical sense, the sense that earns the negation of otherness; while the concomitance that holds between each attribute is indirect, i.e., it holds by virtue of the Essence itself. Again, the dispute comes down to how they understand the finer details of their application of the term *ghayr*, while all parties here agree on the general premise that the attributes are real, eternal, and necessary for the Essence. al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 170.12-171.3.

said: The names of God are Other than Him, just like His attributes, and this is the view of the Muʿtazila, the Khawārij, many of the Murjiʾa, and many of the Zaydis.[25]

I think it should be clear at this point that the term *ghayr* as applied in these contexts is a technical one that is dependent on two different considerations: (1) on the specific definition and scope of application for the term *ghayr*, and (2) on the respective understandings of the divine names and attributes. What this discussion is *not* about, is logic. Notice too how fine-grained the disagreement is. Group (2) above is the standard Kullābian view, while group (3) does not permit combining the two negations in a single statement. Al-Ashʿarī does not explain the reasoning behind it here, but this is in fact his own view.[26]

As for Ibn Kullāb, we have already seen some hints that he does not believe that attributes are predicate-apt. More details are found on the following passage:

> **[T12]** [God] is eternally knowing, powerful, living....with knowledge, power, and life...and the attributes of God the Exalted are His Names; and *it is not possible to describe the attributes by an attribute*, nor can [the attributes] subsist in themselves, and that they subsist in God; and he held that [God] is existent not with [the property of] existence, and that He is a thing not by means of a property (e.g., of thingness); and His attributes are not Him nor Other than Him; and the same applies to His attributes for they are not other with respect to each other, just as they are not Other than Him; and that the knowledge is not the power, nor other than it; and likewise all of the other attributes.[27]

Alas, Ibn Kullāb – like Hishām b. al-Ḥakam and others – does not permit attributes to have attributes themselves. As we saw earlier – and in the text here - this is because for Ibn Kullāb, to possess an attribute is for an attribute to subsist in the attributed subject. As such, one cannot say that the attributes are identical to God because it would imply their denial; and one cannot say they are *other,* because *being other* is an attribute, and affirmations cannot be made of attributes. We did see that they could have descriptions (*waṣf*), however, and if *ghayr* is a *waṣf* and not a *ṣifa*, this does not harm the interpretation. But this does not mean Ibn Kullāb is in a substantive dispute with al-al-Al-Ashʿarī on this question, because both are in agreement that (a) the attributes are real, and (b) they are metaphysically inseparable, i.e., eternally necessary for God. Beyond that there is a dispute about what can be said or not based on their definitions. al-Ashʿarī, however, holds that an attribute is whatever belongs to the subject of attribution,[28] which means that he does not stipulate that those attributes subsist at all, let alone in the subject of attribution.[29] It is why he states, for example, that God has the attribute of 'being worshipped,' by virtue of an activity undertaken by creation. In this conciliatory note for all parties to the dispute, al-Juwaynī cites the Chief Justice al-Bāqillānī as stating the following:

> **[T13]** Discussions over two-others (*al-ghayrayn*) is among the mildest of questions discussed by the mutakallimūn, for the upshot does not resolve to a disagreement over a rational matter, but rather,

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[25]   al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 172.4-11.

[26]   al-Anṣārī, *Sharḥ al-Irshād*, ed. ʿAdwānī, (Kuwait: Dār al-Ḍiyā, 2022), 1/618.

[27]   al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 546.

[28]   That is, not *mā qāma bi-l-mawṣūf*, but *mā kāna lil-mawṣūf*.

[29]   Cf. Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, 39; al-Baghdādī, *al-Asmā wa-l-ṣifāt*, ed. al-Sharafawi, 148-150.

a dispute over the implications of language and the question of the application of a term. The extent of what the Mu'tazila aimed at in insisting on otherness in the divine attributes is that they sought to affirm that the attribute is not an existent in addition to the essence. Thus, if their opponent clarifies explicitly that knowledge and essence are two existents, and he denies their nonexistence by virtue of their eternality, then afterwards, the dispute resolves into whether one applies the expression, while negating any dispute on meaning.[30]

Thus, according to the al-Bāqillānī, the disagreement is mild; there are no indications of a radical view which asserts something between affirmation and negation. What Al-Bāqillānī suggests is that one can eliminate much of the discussion by focusing on the underlying question at dispute: does God have attributes or not? And if He has attributes, are they necessary for Him or not? Once one demonstrates from the Sunni side that they are eternal and necessary, then no room is left for any substantive objection from the Muʿtazilī side.

As for the views of al-Al-Ashʿarī and his school, they are unequivocal that it is about metaphysical separability.[31] al-Al-Ashʿarī writes in *al-Luma'*:

> [T14] The meaning of otherness (*ghayriyya*) is the possibility of separation between two things, one from the other, in one way or another. Thus, when evidence has demonstrated the eternality of God and His knowledge, it is impossible that they be described as being other to one another.[32]

al-Al-Ashʿarī does not deny that attributes can be described, but nevertheless, his view does not substantially differ from Ibn Kullāb's, namely, that (1) God and His attributes are eternal; (2) That the eternal exists necessarily and cannot perish; (3) therefore, it is metaphysically impossible for the attributes to ever be separable from the essence in any way, be it in existence/nonexistence, time, place, subject, or otherwise. Of course, this applies only to God's real attributes, those which subsist in Him. As for the attributes which resolve to the activities of creation, then they are correctly described as *other*, i.e., it is possible for them to perish and are therefore ontologically distinct from God. Similarly, since the properties of created entities are also perishable while their subjects remain in existence, and vice versa, the properties of created beings are also said to be 'other'.

2.3 *Ghayr* in Kalām Natural Philosophy

The term *ghayr* is also operative in kalām natural philosophy in the same way that it operates in theology. This severely undermines the view by some that it is the unknowable nature of God which permits a reading that denies LEM; it turns out that *ghayr* is quite ordinary. One example they discuss is the body part of a human being, which is 'not the human' nor 'other than the human.'[33] There is nothing mysterious about this; it simply means that the parts of a human being

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30   Juwaynī, *al-Shāmil*, 337.

31   For a summary of their views, AbuSulayman Center for Global Islamic Studies at George Mason University/The Maydan (ASC), "Classical Kalām and the Laws of Logic" (Access 1 July 2022).

32   al-Ashʿarī, *al-Luma'*, 90.

33   Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, 268; cf. Nasafī, *Tabṣira*, 1/240-248; Baghdādī, *al-Asma wa-l-ṣifāt*, 1/282-283; cf. also, Abu'l-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, *Tabṣira*, 1/ 241. Baghdādī cites seven opinions on the meaning of *ghayrayn* in Muʿtazilī kalām, but I can only go on for so long in this paper; cf. also al-Nasafī, who discusses at length many definitions of *ghayrayn* as well, 240-248. According to Harvey, the only clueless person to these disputes was al-Māturīdī, who, against the mutakallimūn and the grammarians, insisted on a figurative usage of the term *ghayr* as a simple negation, and did

are constitutive of the human being, even though each part taken individually is not the human being. Another example is in mathematics, where they state that '1 of 10 is not 10, nor is it other than 10', for the same basic reason that you cannot have 10 without having 1's.[34] Here are more examples of this perfectly ordinary application of *ghayr* to contingent entities:

> [T15] People differed over the properties (*al-maʿānī*) subsisting in bodies, such as motions, rest, and the like: are they accidents (*aʿrād*) or attributes (*ṣifāt*)? Some said: 'They are attributes but we do not say they are accidents,' and we say that 'They are properties but we do not say they are the bodies, nor are they other than them, because otherness only obtains between bodies'; and this is the view of Hishām b. al-Ḥakam.[35]

> [T16] Some said: The abstaining (*tark*) of man from an action is a property that is neither man, nor other than him. ʿAbbād b. Sulaymān said: The abstaining is other than man, but I do not say that abstaining is other than the abstainer, because when I say 'Man abstains,' then I have reported on him and an abstaining.'[36]

> [T17] People differed over [human] cognitions and knowledges (*al-maʿārif wa-l-ʿulum*), are they the knower, or other than him? Some said: our knowledges are other than us, while others negated knowledges and said: there is nothing but the knower. Yet others said: the properties of the knower among us are neither him, nor other than him.[37]

All three of these passages discuss cases on whether certain properties or acts of created entities are *other* than the subjects they describe. In **T15**, Ashʿarī describes Hishām b. al-Ḥakam's views on the metaphysics of bodies and their properties. Hishām has a certain view on what constitutes an 'attribute' and what constitutes an 'accident.' He wants to admit that bodies have real properties, i.e., some existent entity that subsists in a subject, which are not the bodies themselves – because this would imply their denial – nor are they *other* than the bodies, because being other only holds between bodies. It is plausible to believe, therefore, that for Hishām, being other meant spatial separation. Properties, being necessarily subsistent in bodies, could not really be separate from one another in the primary sense. This is consistent with the view we saw him express regarding the divine attributes with the exact same logic: God's attributes are not Him – for that would entail their denial – nor are they Other, because for him, properties are not described with being one way or another. That is, being other is a positive attribute which can only be said of bodies, and this applies equally to created bodies and eternal ones (Hishām notoriously believed that God was a body). Such texts refute the anti-LEM interpretation of these formulae, along with all of the ideologically driven narratives that support them.

In **T16**, we see the view that one's inaction or abstaining from a particular act is neither the human agent, nor other than the human agent. This is an ordinary case of human action – not an apophatic or mystical investigation into the divine. Against this view, ʿAbbād says that the

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not even have the mind to tell anyone, until it was miraculously discovered by Harvey through a careful and thorough analysis of all of al-Māturīdī's texts.

34 Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, 269-269. Of course, one can have 1 without having 10, i.e., and this does not undermine the definition of *ghayriyya*, for it allows for asymmetry between the two items in question.

35 al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 369. A parallel discussion will be found in al-Māturīdī below.

36 al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 379.

37 al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 471-472.

abstaining *is* other than the man, however, it is not other than *the abstainer*. This is because the meaning of 'abstaining' is not contained in 'man', while the meaning of 'abstaining' *is* contained in the 'abstainer'. Thus, it is impossible to affirm 'abstainer' without affirming *two* entities: the agent, and their abstaining from a particular action. This view is consistent with Abu Hāshim's view of *ghayriyya*, along with other among the Muʿtazila, as we shall see below. The moral here is that this is a technical term whose logic of application is perfectly understandable without resorting to a desperate claim about the denial of excluded middle.

In **T17**, we see a similar discussion over human knowledge. Is one's knowledge other than the knower, or not? Three views: (1) knowledge is other than the knower (and this would be al-Ashʿarī and al-Māturīdī's view). This view implies two things: (a) that knowledge is a real property that exists in the knower, and (b) the knowledge is perishable or metaphysically separable from the knower, such that it can perish while the subject persists, or that this knowledge could have been created in another subject, or that it could exist for the subject at one time and not at another, and so on. (2) The second view is that knowledge is *not* other than the knower; it is the knower himself. This is a view held by some Muʿtazila, consistent with their general denial that properties are ontologically additional to the subject. (3) The third view is that knowledge is neither the knower nor other than the knower, and although al-Ashʿarī does not mention who holds this view, it would be consistent with Hishām and Ibn Kullāb's views, given that they do not permit properties to be predicated with anything. Thus, they deny the identity because for them knowledge is a real property distinct from the knower, but they will also deny them being 'other', because to be 'other' one must be a subject, whether corporeal or not, since properties cannot be predicated with anything. No paradoxes, just good old metaphysics.

2.4 al-Māturīdī on *Ghayr*

Thus far we have looked at the linguistic meaning of the term *ghayr*, and the technical meaning of the term *ghayr* along with its application to theological and natural contexts. We have seen clearly that, although the formula of being 'not identical nor other' is common, thinkers applied it in different ways. None of them, however, meant it in a way that denied LEM. Al-Māturīdī is no different in this regard. In the *Taʾwīlāt Ahl al-Sunna*, al-Māturīdī writes:

> **M1** Two factions have strayed from the path in understanding this verse[38]: the Ḥashwiyya and the Muʿtazila. As for the Ḥashwiyya, they say: the Qurʾan and the Speech is an attribute of God by which He has been eternally attributed, and that it is inseparable (*lā yuzāyiluhu*) from Him. Then they said: The Qurʾan *itself* is in the written copies, and it is in the Earth and in the hearts; their statement is self-contradictory, because since His attribute is not Him, nor Other than Him, it is not possible for [the Qurʾan] *itself* to be in the written copies, or in the Earth, or in the hearts.[39]

The verse alluded to in M1 is one in which one could understand that the Qurʾan is perishable, i.e., God the Exalted says He could annihilate the revelation which He has given to mankind. al-Māturīdī uses this as an opportunity to criticize two groups who hold positions that are inconsistent. The first are the Ḥashwiyya, who hold, along with Ahl al-Sunna, that the Qurʾan is the Speech of God, and it is His attribute which He has eternally possessed, and that it cannot be

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[38]   al-Isrāʾ 17/86-87.

[39]   al-Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt Ahl al-Sunna*, ed. Topaloğlu, (Istanbul: Mizan Yayınevi, 2005), 8/351.

separated from Him (*la yuzāyiluhu*). Then, at the same time, the Ḥashwiyya claim that the very same Qur'an which is the eternal attribute of God is present *itself* (*bi-ʿaynihi*) in the created, written copies of the Qur'an, in the Earth, and in the hearts of men. So, al-Māturīdī tells us, they fall into a contradiction, because if God's Speech is not Him, nor Other than Him, it is not possible for it to be in the created copies of the Qur'an, or in the Earth, or in the hearts of men.

It is clear then, that the statement 'the attribute of speech is not Him nor Other than Him' *contradicts*, that is, is *inconsistent* with 'the attribute of speech is in the hearts of men.' This is because if the Qur'an was literally in the created, written copies of the Qur'an, it would be *other* than God, because in such a case, the attribute of God would have been transferred from one subject to another, i.e., a form of metaphysical separation. We have a clear instance where the very same entity, God's speech, would exist in a different subject than that in which it must be eternally subsisting. If that were true, then the attribute of God would be contingent and originated, not eternal; it would be subject to change, implying that God too would be subject to change.

Elsewhere, al-Māturīdī writes:

> **M2** [God's] Statement 'The Living, the Sustainer,' it is said: He is the Living essentially, not by a life which is *other* than Him, as is the case with creation, for they are living with a life which is other than them, that comes to inhere in them, and for whom death is inevitable; while God transcends the possibility that death inhere in Him, for He is living essentially, while all creation are not living essentially; greatly exalted is God above the calumny of all disbelievers.[40]

> **M3** 'The Living, the Sustainer,' He is the Living by Himself, while every living being other than Him is living by virtue of a life which is *other* than them. Then, since He is Living by Himself, he is not described with change (or separability) and perishing. And since every living being other than Him is living by virtue of another, they are subject to change (or separability) and perishing.[41]

M2 and **M3** express the same basic point as **M1**. God possesses the attribute of life essentially, and therefore, it cannot perish and death is impossible. This is because God's life is not *ghayr*, not 'other,' i.e., not metaphysically separable, meaning that one or other can remain existent while the other perishes; or that one or the other comes to exist in another subject, time, or place. Again, notice the implication from both texts: being other means perishability and contingency, while the denial of it implies eternality and necessity. This is further clarified by the contrast with the attribute of life in a created being, which Māturīdī states *is ghayr*. In the non-technical, linguistic sense, the life of a human being would *not* be *ghayr*, but in the technical sense, it is. From the two passages it is clear that being *ghayr* here means that their life is perishable, or otherwise separable from the subject which it currently describes. al-Māturīdī expresses this in yet clearer terms in his commentary on Qur'an 87:1:

> **M4** One's assertion of the transcendence of [God's] attributive names is for one to declare their transcendence above anything by which creation is necessarily described, such as your statement 'Knower, Wise, Merciful, Majestic'. Whomever is described by knowledge among creation, is

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[40]   al-Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, 2/152.

[41]   al-Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, 2/238.

necessarily described by *others* that inhere in them, and being described with wisdom requires being praised by virtue of possessing *others*, while God the Exalted is rightfully described by [these attributes] by Himself and not by virtue of *others*, and thus, the assertion of transcendence is directed at the *others*, for God's attributes are not others (*aghyār*) to His Essence, for they are not separable from the essence (*lā tufāriq al-dhāt*); thus, the praise that obtains for the attributes is the praise for the essence described by them; *and success is from God alone*.[42]

al-Māturīdī is explaining the various meanings implied by the command to glorify or hallow the name of God. Ultimately, it amounts to asserting the transcendence of God above all the properties which apply to creation insofar as they are created – for if God possessed such a property, then He too would be created, which is impossible. What is the essential property that distinguishes creation which we must negate of God? A man can possess knowledge and be a knower, but the relevant metaphysical difference here is that man is subject to *others* that obtain for him after not obtaining, i.e., 'whoever is described by knowledge among creation, this requires them being described by *others* that inhere in them.' Why are they referred to as *others*? Because those knowledges are not essential to man; they are accidental to him. They obtain for man then perish, while man continues to exist. Those same knowledges could have been created in another subject, or they could have existed at some times and not at others. This is why they are *other*: they are metaphysically contingent and separable to the subject in which they exist. The term separable here does not have any spatial connotations, it simply means a type of ontological separability of the relevant kind mentioned above. So, in the linguistic sense, our attributes are not *others*, but in the technical sense that matters here, they are *others*, meaning they are contingent and in need of a cause, while the attributes of God are eternal and independent of any cause.

Like other mutakallimūn such as al-Ashʿarī, al-Māturīdī explains to us what that means: it means the attributes "*lā tufāriq al-dhāt*" i.e., they are inseparable from the Essence. This is just another way of saying they are metaphysically necessary for God. He is eternal with all His attributes. Everything eternal is necessary. Thus, it is impossible for one or the other to perish while the one or the other continues to exist. In contrast, when al-Māturīdī states that human beings are praised with a wisdom that is *other*, it means that these human beings *acquire* wisdom after not being wise, i.e., they are being praised insofar as they possess something that is not essential for them, something contingent and thus something perishable. As for God's eternal wisdom, this is not the case. He possesses Wisdom essentially, and so, praising God for His wisdom is to praise God Himself. Whereas our praise of some wise human being is not an essential praise, but a praise which applies to them only insofar as they have acquired this new property of wisdom, and that property could perish even more easily than it came to be.

Continuing with the same theme above, let us look at the following texts from al-Māturīdī in *K. Tawhid*:

> **M5** Then, since God the exalted is described by knowledge, power, dominion, and life, *essentially*, due to the impossibility that He bear separable properties (*li-iḥālati iḥtimālihi al-aghyār*), and though

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42   al-Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt*, 17/166; After the preparation of this article for publication, it has come to my attention that Harvey attributes a bundle theory in theology to al-Māturīdī; that is God is a 'bundle of attributes' without an essence. Aside from the heinous nature of such a statement, it clearly is not based in the works of Māturīdī. Harvey has transgressed his very limited boundaries.

no other wise agent is like that, it is not necessary to assume that in His actions [God] is like the wise agents in our observable reality.[43]

Again, God's attributes are possessed essentially. This means that they are metaphysically necessary for God, and conversely, that it is impossible for them to perish or separate from Him in any way whatsoever. Conversely, it is impossible for God to possess attributes which are *other*, i.e., perishable, separable entities. Indeed, if God were subject to perishable, separable properties, then God would be subject to change; and as per the proofs for God's existence in al-Māturīdī's system, this would imply that God Himself would be created, and in need of another for His existence, which is absurd. al-Māturīdī ends this passage by saying that God's attributes are essential for Him, and that it is impossible for Him to be subject to *aghyār* (separable properties), despite the fact that all wise agents in our observable domain *are* subject to *aghyār*. Just like the case of life above in **M2** and **M3**, human power, wisdom, knowledge, and so on, are all *aghyār* for the subjects they qualify. That is to say, human attributes are perishable or separable for the subjects they describe. Elsewhere, Māturīdī reiterates the same theme:

> **M6** There are two questions on power against the *Qadariyya* that entail God is not powerful by Himself. One of them is that they said 'God has power over the motions and rests of human beings, but, when He gave them power over those very motions and rests, His own power over [those motions and rests] ceases to be.' Which entails that He is in fact powerful by an *other*, for in Himself, He remains as He was. For if that power belonged to [God] essentially, then it would not have perished from Him when something other than Him came to have power over it.[44]

This is an objection made against the *Qadariyya*. The point al-Māturīdī is making here is that, if it is impossible for God to create the voluntary motions and rests and other actions of human agents once He has given them the power to create those actions themselves, then God's power over those actions is perishable and contingent upon the absence of human power. But this would mean that God changes from a state of possessing the power to create those motions and rests, to a state where that power perishes; and this is precisely what it means to be *ghayr*, that is, for one being to be separable in existence from the other, such that one of the two can remain in existent while the other perishes. Thus, the '*Qadarī*' position implies that God's power is not essential to Him, but is rather contingent and perishable. Māturīdī goes on to explain:

> **M7** What clarifies this is that since He has knowledge of all things essentially, then His knowledge would not perish when another acquires knowledge; then the same applies to power. Furthermore, the evidence for the *otherness* of accidents to bodies is *the existence of bodies without them*, and likewise, the sign of the otherness of power and knowledge in observable reality is that they are both separable from the being who possesses them, and so the same would apply to God on their view.[45]

The first argument here elaborates what we just saw in the commentary above. If God's knowledge of some object were to somehow perish when some created agent acquires knowledge of that same object, then it would be quite clear that in such a case, God's knowledge would not have been

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43   al-Māturīdī, *Kitab al-Tawḥīd*, ed. Topaloğlu, (Beirut: Dar Sader, 2010), 300.

44   al-Māturīdī, *Tawḥīd*, 365-366.

45   al-Māturīdī, *Tawḥīd*, 366.

necessary or essential for Him; rather, it would be *other* than Him, i.e., separable and perishable in existence. The same applies for power – because power, like knowledge, is always directed at an object or set of objects – so if God's power to bring about the motion *x* in some agent perishes when those agents are given their own power to create the same motion *x*, then this implies that that power was in not in fact essential to God, but is rather *other*, that is, contingent and separable from God. Indeed, its separability means its contingency, and its contingency implies its origination, and non-eternality.

The second crucial point is the assertion of the otherness (*ghayriyya*) that holds between bodies and their properties or accidents. Al-Māturīdī notes that the evidence and proof that such separable and contingent properties exist in bodies, such as motion, rest, knowledge, and power, is that bodies can exist without those particular concrete instances of those properties. This is another very straightforward statement of metaphysical separability that we saw in figures like Al-Ashʿarī and others above. By the very same token, if God's power to bring about motion *x* is perishable, such that God may exist without the existence of that power to bring about motion *x*, then that power is other than God, for the exact same reason that the motion in some body is other than the body in which it inheres.

> **M8** What adds further clarity is that if [God] willed to move [a body] with an involuntary motion, and then set it at rest in the same way, while [the human agent] has that power, then [God] would not have power over it until He deprives [that agent] of that power. Thus, it is established that [God] is powerful by virtue of [the agent's power], and [His power] is what perishes then returns to Him; and this is the characteristic of bodies and the reality of an accident.[46]

al-Māturīdī here further clarifies the Qadarī view on human action. They admit that, in order for God to bring about some involuntary motions and rests in an agent, He must first annihilate the agent's power over those actions. What this means is that, in order for God to *acquire* the power over those motions and rests, He must first annihilate that agent's power, implying that God's power is other than Him, that is: separable, perishable, contingent, and non-eternal. Given the state of affairs, that power can come and go. This is what it means to be *ghayr*. As al-Māturīdī ends his statement, this is what essentially characterises bodies and accidents, which are necessarily originated and in need of a cause. But God is eternal and necessary, and thus, not in need of any cause, and thus, cannot be qualified by *others*, that is, contingent, metaphysically separable properties.

Let us now turn to al-Māturīdī's critique of al-Kaʿbī on the divine attributes.

> **M9** Then [al-Kaʿbī] said: By the attributes we mean that there exists no Other, but we do not mean that they are Him, but rather, every attribute of an eternal being or an originated being must be other than it, i.e., and it is an utterance or a written description. And the attributes of God are our statements which describe Him, or His statements or writings; and they are both temporally originated.
>
> Abu Manṣūr [al-al-Māturīdī] – God be pleased with him – said: I have quoted the entirety of his statement by which he concluded his inquiry, so that you may know the extent of his knowledge of God and the attributes. At once he says: 'There is no other,' and yet he does not intend that they

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46   al-Māturīdī, *Tawḥīd*, 366.

are Him; therefore, [Kaʿbī] does not intend that the attributes are God, nor other than God. Does he not know that this is the position of the *Ahl al-Ithbāt*? Then he says: 'And [the attributes] are our statements.' Thus, our statement: '[the attributes] are not other [than God]' amounts to our saying: 'There is no other.' Then [Kaʿbī] said what he said about the attributes of God, and he said: 'These are the essential attributes.' Therefore, what he mentioned are the essential attributes, and [God] has been eternally attributed by them, and they are others with respect to Him – Exalted is God beyond the statements of the ignorant.[47]

Kaʿbī here can be read as saying the following: In eternity, there were no others at all, i.e., it was God alone without any attributes. This is because for Kaʿbī, all attributes are spoken or written statements, and as such, they are necessarily *other* to whatever they describe.[48] What does this otherness imply? As we said before, ontological separability and contingency i.e., the possibility of one or the other existing without the existence of the other, absolutely, or in time, place, or subject. This is because a written or spoken statement describing something are all necessary originated – as Kaʿbī points out – and therefore, they come into existence after what it is they are describing. That is, there is a priority of the entity being described over the description. As such, it is evident that the description is other – separable – from the entity described.

al-Māturīdī then begins his critique. The first criticism he offers is that the first part of Kaʿbī's statement is equivalent to the position of *Ahl al-Ithbāt*, i.e., all the thinkers who affirmed the reality of God's attributes. The reason why this is so is because Kaʿbī's statement implies two things: (1) the attributes are not identical to God; and (2) there are no *ghayr*s in eternity with God. But this is precisely the position of the *Ahl al-Ithbāt* – meaning that al-Māturīdī does not recognize that his position on the attributes is unique. The only difference, according to al-Māturīdī, is that while Kaʿbī says 'there is no *ghayr*,' al-Māturīdī says 'the attributes are not others to God.' Now, the fact that this is the case for al-Kaʿbī, undermines his argument that the three-disjuncts are exhaustive of all logical possibilities, namely, that something is either identical, other, or a part, because here he concedes that something can neither of these three possibilities.

One might object to the argument by saying that Kaʿbī does not intend the same meaning as *Ahl al-Ithbāt*, because all he means is that God has no attributes in eternity, and later acquires them, because attributes amount to nothing but utterances about objects. The problem is that Kaʿbī calls these originated utterances that come about post-eternally 'essential attributes,' which commits him to the fact that these attributes belong to God *essentially*; and this would mean that there *are* others with God in eternity, since (i) essential attributes hold of the essence necessarily, and (ii) the essential attributes are originated others. This is why al-Māturīdī ends his statement by 'exalting God above such calumny'. That is because his concern here is a theological matter, the necessity to assert that God has real attributes, and that all of God's attributes are eternal and unchanging. It would be blasphemous to assert God's attributes are *other* than Him, because if they are other, they would be separable and perishable.

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[47]   al-Māturīdī, *Tawḥīd*, 118-119.

[48]   Barring the success of self-referential statements.

Let us turn to al-Māturīdī's analysis of the divine names, which he states resolves ultimately to the question of the attributes. He writes:

> **M10** The inquiry into the names of God according to us proceeds in accordance with linguistic categories. One division resolves to our acts of naming Him by them, and these are Others (*aghyār*), because our statement 'knower' is other than our statement 'powerful'; and this is what is meant in the narration: 'God has such and such number of names' [...].
>
> The second resolves in meaning to [God's] Essence, which creation is incapable of coming upon the reality of His essence except by Him, even though He transcends the letters by which He is understood. This likewise differs with different languages but all intend the reality of His essence, such as 'the One,' 'Allah,' 'the Rahman,' 'the Existent,' 'the Eternal,' 'the Divine,' and so on.
>
> The third category resolves to what is derived from the attributes, such as 'knower' and 'powerful,' which would be subject to replacement if they were in fact other than God. And if it were permissible to name Him without verifying the true meaning, then it would be permissible to name Him by every name which others are named with, since the verified meaning is not intended from the name.[49]

The 'divine names' divide into three categories. The first category comprises our *acts of naming* God, by referring to him with created, linguistic utterances. Names of this kind – i.e., our utterances, statements, writings, and so forth – are all *others* (*aghyār*). Recall that this is exactly the same view we saw in al-Al-Ashʿarī above, who divides God's attributes into ones which are other, and ones which are not. Those which are other are those which resolve to our statements and actions about God. The otherness of these acts of naming means that they are metaphysically distinct and separable from God; God exists while they may perish.

The second category of names does not refer to our acts of naming (i.e., *tasmiya*), but to the named itself (this is because in Arabic, the term *ism* is ambiguous between *the lebel, the naming* and *the object named*). One type of name is one which resolves to the Essence of God Himself. al-Māturīdī gives us examples of this, such as 'The One' or the name 'Allah.' All of these terms ultimately refer to God Himself, not God insofar as He is qualified by a real attribute. These attributes *are* the Essence. Here we should notice something very important, and that is that al-Māturīdī states that the reality of God's essence is beyond our grasp; God transcends the terms and concepts we use to refer to His essence. Yet, this inability to grasp God's reality through these names, does not require us to deny the law of excluded middle. Indeed, the fact that God's essence is beyond our grasp does not imply anything at all about God Himself; it is strictly a statement about our epistemic state. The same can be said for cases of knowledge of contingent things that are beyond our grasp for one reason or another.

The third category, are the names which derive from God's being qualified by the attributes of knowledge, power, and so on, such as 'knower' and 'powerful.' Notice that al-Māturīdī here says that if these names were *other* than God, then they would be *subject to replacement*, which means perishability and separability. As has become clear, this is because that is just what it means to be

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49   al-Māturīdī, *Tawḥīd*, 128-129; This is another clear affirmation of the Attributes in addition to the Essence itself. There is no indication that Māturīdī held a bundle theory.

ghayr. It means that these attributes would be originated, non-eternal, and in need of a cause. It would mean God Himself would be in need of a cause. al-Māturīdī elaborates further:

> **M11** Among what is objected against those who hold that the names are created, and further, do not assert that God has Knowledge in eternity [is the following]: How was [God's] affair before creation, did He know Himself and what He would create, or not? And likewise, did He know Himself to be a thing or did He not know? If He did not know, then He would be ignorant until such time that He creates the World, by means of which He becomes a knower. And if He knew it, then did He know Himself to be a knower, or not? If he knew [himself] as a knower, then it is necessary to assert this name in eternity; while in asserting the *otherness* of the name is the destruction of the true belief in divine unity.[50]

al-Māturīdī offers some criticisms of the contrary view, i.e., those who believed that the names *are ghayr*, i.e., created. We know this is a refutation of *ghayriyya* or otherness by now, because of what he says in the text, and because what we now clearly understand what *ghayriyya* is and implies: contingency, existence after non-existence, being perishable, and so on. So, if God's name of being knowing is originated, then He would have been ignorant in eternity, which is false and heretical. But if He is eternally knowing, then one must assert the name – and the attribute – in eternity, and drop the contention that 'naming' is a contingent act of speaking agents. al-Māturīdī then concludes that asserting the *ghayriyya* of the names contradicts the true belief in divine unity. This is very important: we cannot make any sense of how asserting *otherness* entails the destruction of the true belief in divine unity, except if we understand *ghayr* as indicating the existence perishable, contingent, separable entities in God.[51] al-Māturīdī continues:

> **M12** Then it is said to [the denier of eternal names/attributes] in the section where I mentioned that [God] knows Himself before creation: If God had no knowledge in reality, how could He know Himself? If He knows [Himself] to be a knower, then [the opponent's] view that the names are originated is refuted. And if He said: 'He is not knowing, nor has power,' then he is committed to all that I had mentioned, along with the impossibility of God being described with knowledge [of Himself] in eternity, and with the absurdity entailed regarding origination.
>
> Then if he says: by means of an *other*, then he holds that [God] is among what is subject to accidents by means of which the World is generated, and in that he agrees with the *dahriyya* on the primal clay, and the believers in prime matter, and the dualists, in that the World has always existed through the occurrence of accidents in its source-matter...
>
> This inquiry in reality is the same as the inquiry into the attributes, and we have clarified that already.[52]

The first part of this excerpt is a continuation of the previous line of reasoning. If the opponent admits that God knows Himself in eternity, then he must also admit that this knowledge is real, and not merely a statement, and thus, his view that God's attributes are originated is refuted. If

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[50]   al-Māturīdī, *Tawhid,* 129-130.

[51]   Among the many problems afflicting accounts like that of Harvey, aside from a complete lack of engagement with the texts, is that he never offers an explanation as to why asserting otherness is so problematic for Māturīdī. His view that *ghayr* is simply a stand in for a negative particle like 'not' fails to achieve any explanatory power for the texts we have looked at.

[52]   al-Māturīdī, *Tawḥīd*, 130.

the opponent concedes that God is not knowing in eternity, then those previous commitments apply to them. But if the opponent says that God knows by means of a *ghayr,* then al-Māturīdī commits them to the belief that God is subject to accidents, i.e., changing, perishable properties, the very same kinds of properties by which the World is generated and sustained. This interlocutor would therefore be committed to the same beliefs as the atheists and the hylomorphists, who assert the eternity of the world's matter, and claim that they have been eternally subject to one perishing property after another. Thus, a *ghayr* for al-Māturīdī is a property which is subject to nonexistence, while the subject possessing that property continues to exist. This is exactly what it means to be 'metaphysically separable,' and it is the exact same definition used by later Māturīdis and contemporaneous Al-Ashʿarī figures.

2.5 al-Māturīdī's Usage of *ghayr* in Natural Philosophy

A fundamental element of the classical origination argument for the existence of God is proving the existence of accidents, that is, contingent properties. That is, one must prove first that the observable bodies in the world are subject to properties that are separable from the existence of the bodies themselves. Then, they go on to prove that these properties must have an origin in time. As such, many arguments raised by these mutakallimūn in proving the existence of accidents that are *other*, i.e., *separable*, *contingent*, *distinct*, from the subjects they describe, is essential to their natural philosophy and to their proofs for God's existence. The following series of texts from al-Māturīdī shall further clarify this matter. He writes:

> **M13** It is known that the occurrence of motion and rest, combination and separation, are *other* than the body, for something may be a body in separation then combine; or be in motion then be at rest. Thus, if it were so by *itself*, then it would not be subject to differing states while the body persists as it is. [...] it is thus established that they are inhering, separable properties [from body] (*ghayrān yaḥullān*).[53]

This is an argument for the existence and otherness of accidents in bodies. Notice that al-Māturīdī must argue that these properties are *other*, and the proof that they are *other* is that sometimes they exist in a subject, and sometimes they do not, which obviously implies that they *exist*, and are metaphysically distinct and separable from the bodies in which they inhere. If, however, these properties were *not ghayr*, such that a body was in motion *by itself*, it could never cease to be in motion so long as it exists; this is because it would be in motion *essentially.* But we certainly observe bodies possessing such properties then ceasing to possess them, and thus, the properties that explain those changes must be distinct from the bodies in which they inhere. This is an essential step in proving the origination of the world; once one proves that bodies are necessarily subject to these originated, perishing series of *others*, one can prove that the bodies themselves are originated, and therefore, that the entire world is originated and in need of a cause.[54]

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[53]   al-Māturīdī, *Tawḥīd*, 82; compare with text M7 above.

[54]   al-Māturīdī then applies the same argument to persistence and annihilation. We know that persistence and annihilation are distinct from the bodies they describe, because it is metaphysically possible for a body to be neither persistent nor annihilated, for example, in the moment of its incipience. That is, during the first moment of its existence, it is obviously not being annihilated, and it is also not persistent, because persistence requires at least one previous moment of existence in order to be said to persist. Thus, since it is possible for the body to exist without

M14 [al-Kaʿbī] argued that the rest of a body is a real property other than the body by what is oft said: 'He is in such and such location.' [...] Abu Manṣūr [al-Māturīdī] said: This is an evident matter that no one would ask, for its rest perishes the moment it moves, without the perishing of its being a body, thus, it is demonstrated to be *other*.[55]

In this passage, al-Māturīdī objects to an argument for the otherness of rest as being needlessly complicated. al-Māturīdī states that, it is sufficient to observe that since a body is at rest sometimes, then is at motion, then its rest perishes while the body remains. This means that the accident of rest and the body are ontologically distinct, ontologically 'other', 'metaphysically separable,' or whatever other description you so wish to use. As al-Māturīdī points out, "This is an evident matter that no [rational] person would ask about."

M15 Furthermore, if something can only come about through an *other* that is prior to it – and that is the condition for all o*thers* – then this negates the being of all of them; but such is not the case for persistence (in the future). Do you not see that when one says to another: Do not eat anything until you eat another – and likewise for every other with that condition – then he shall remain forever without eating?[56]

Here al-Māturīdī states that all 'others' are necessarily *preceded* by an *other*, whether that prior other is temporal (for every entity in the created world is preceded by a temporal other, except for the very first) or Eternal (for every entity in the created world is preceded by the Eternal). This implies two things: a) that being other implies being existent for al-Māturīdī, as it does for all other Sunni mutakallimūn, against some Muʿtazila who may accept non-existent others; and b) that being-other implies being preceded by another in existence, which means, that the existence of every *other* is separable from what precedes it, i.e., the prior entity may exist without the posterior, *ghayr* entity. The rest of the passage here is in the context of arguing against an objection from someone who asserts the eternity of the world by trying to draw an equivalence between the series of future events and the series of past events.

M16 Thus, separable properties (*al-taghāyur*) have been established, but the scholars of kalām differed on what they are called. Some have named them accidents, while others have called them attributes.[57] The truth of this matter is to follow whatever the technical terminology is in naming,

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either of these properties, then we know that they are *other*, i.e., metaphysically separable, either with respect to existence and nonexistence, or time, subject, and so on.

55   al-Māturīdī, *Tawḥīd*, 207.

56   al-Māturīdī, *Tawḥīd*, 80.

57   It is of crucial importance here to note that al-Māturīdī here has argued for the existence of contingent, separable properties that are ontologically distinct from the entities in which they inhere. Now, if a body was simply a bundle of accidents, then body would *not* be *ghayr* with respect to the accidents which inhere in it, because the body would then be necessarily constituted by its accidents. Therefore, the essence of body is distinct from the accidents which inhere in it, and its existence is independent and separable from accidents. Positions of this kind make it impossible to be a 'bundle theorist,' at least not without a serious attempt at explaining why he would hold such a theory. Indeed, proving the existence of others, namely, accidents, that exist in bodies, indicates that for Māturīdī, the existence of accidents is not self-evident. They require proof to show that their existence is over and above the existence of the bodies in which they inhere. If he really was a 'bundle theorist,' as claimed by some, then this would have been the perfect occasion for him to explain it to us. Furthermore, the fact that Māturīdī also asserts unequivocally that bodies persist through the property of persistence (or through other accidents), accidents themselves cannot persist. But if bodies were bundles of accidents as some claim, then the bodies could not persist

defining, and communicating one's intent. Whatever does the job is sufficient; for names are not known by reason and analogy. On this basis we judge the error of Kaʿbī's statement: 'Once established that it is not a body, then it must be an accident (ʿaraḍ).'[58]

al-Māturīdī concludes the section on proving the existence of properties that are metaphysically separable from the bodies in which they inhere with a discussion on what these separable entities should be called. This is what he means by saying *taghāyur* has been proven, by virtue of the fact that he says right after: the scholars differed on what to call them. Some call them attributes (*ṣifāt*) while others called them accidents (*aʿrāḍ*). al-Māturīdī says this does not matter, so long as one is sure to stick to the language that effectively communicates the meaning correctly to the other side. Indeed, correct language use is not something one derives rationally; it is known from the conventions of the relevant language users. Thus, al-Kaʿbī's attempt to *infer* or *argue* rationally for what it should be called, is rejected.[59] For our purposes here, the main takeaway is that being *ghayr* means to be a separable, perishable existent.

Conclusion

The notion of *ghayr* was one of great importance among classical mutakallimūn, and several debates occurred in theology and natural philosophy over which entities were *ghayr* and which entities were not. The Ashʿarī and Māturīdī schools held that otherness was a relation that holds between two entities, such that one may exist without the other; in other words, it is for the relation between the two entities to be contingent. Muʿtazilī authors on the other hand, held that being other was identical to being existent, such that every logically or numerically distinct entity was considered a *ghayr*. No school at all held that *ghayr* ('being other') was the logical contradictory of *ʿayn* (being identical); rather, the classical formulation regarding ontological categories was threefold: being identical, or being other, or being part. The third disjunct was often disregarded in discussions of the divine attributes, since it was obviously not a part. On all accounts, therefore, the denial of both 'identity' and 'otherness' does not entail a denial of the law of excluded middle. Indeed, to interpret such a thing in light of all the evidence of the contrary greatly misunderstands the intentions of these authors. In all these discussions, both in natural philosophy and theology, the affirmation or denial of *ghayriyya* had to do with metaphysical separability. Some exceptions were Hishām b. al-Ḥakam and Ibn Kullāb, who held that, in addition to metaphysical separability, one could not make any affirmative predications of attributes because attributes were intrinsically not predicate-apt. Thus, no one among the vast diversity of figures in the kalām tradition ever held a position that entailed a denial of the law of excluded

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either, which would demolish personal identity, and one could not even come up with an explanation of change, let alone various versions of secondary causation. Thus, in support of Bulgen's argument in 'al-Māturīdī and Atomism,' interpreting Māturīdī as a bundle theorist is very implausible. Bulgen, 'al-Māturīdī and Atomism,' *Ulum*, 2/2 (December 2019), 223-264, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3601654.

58   al-Māturīdī, *Tawhid*, 83; comparable section on 84-85; compare also with T15 above regarding Hishām b. al-Ḥakam.

59   This is an important methodological point for interpreting kalām texts: Māturīdī here is indicating that in general, there is a tendency towards conformity within the discipline in order to ensure the reduction or elimination of miscommunication. This is yet another reason why it would be truly incredible if the interpretation offered by Harvey were correct: it would mean that not only was Māturīdī offering his readers something that was intrinsically unintelligible, but that he was using standard terminology in a manner that is radically different from the others, without even indicating to those readers in any way that he was using it differently. This view is untenable.

middle. Attempts by scholars to prove this have simply been a glaring mistake rooted in an unwillingness to read the texts and jump at the opportunity to find some echo of their own modern biases in past figures.

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