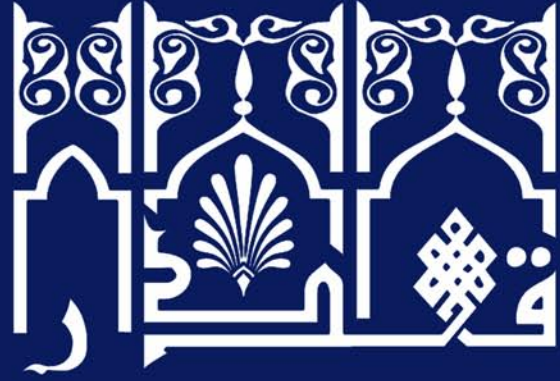


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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear readers,

One crucial value that establishes life and makes it livable is mentioned in the Qur'an as balance (*mizān*). God states that He established an order of balance after He created the Earth, and warns people not to interrupt this balance and not to fall into the whirlpool of imbalance (55:7-8). The term the Qur'an uses is *'iwaj* (18:1) to express fascination with imbalance, compromising on principles in the face of difficulties, and deterioration of values. *'iwaj* is a term for a cluster of enslaving feelings: grief, pain, grudge, disgust, fear, anxiety, confusion, uncertainty, despair, pity, anger, jealousy, humiliation, shame, depression, furiousness, revenge, cruelty, greed, and hatred. Despite all the knowledge and experience of humanity, today, we are experiencing this imbalance and deterioration of values in its most intense form. Thus, we are witnessing misery, poverty, wars, child abuse, and femicides; in short, the right/innocent being taken over by the strong while witnessing the descent of the man who was raised to the highest (17:1) to the lowest (96:5-6). How can Kalam intervene in all this, with all its extensive background and experience throughout history? How can theologians go beyond the results they have been exposed by history while becoming active agents of history who may influence the causes?

A recommendation comes from our master, Prof. Hüseyin Atay. Atay often talks about the Qur'anic theology. The intent is to examine and analyze each term of the Qur'an in a way that helps us understand our individual and social reality; to turn the Qur'an into a key to understanding the human being with whom everyone is familiar but no one comprehends; to reconstruct the original understanding and interpretations, which later turned the history of Muslims into a tragedy with the death of the Prophet, on the ground of rationality along with the Qur'an and the mind and conscience nourished by It.

I strongly believe that every issue of KADER serves as a brick in this reconstruction process. Unquestionably, KADER is not only an academic platform but also a translator of a worldview. At this point, the efforts of our authors are beyond all appreciation. We are grateful to them for broadening our horizons of thought. I finally would like to express my gratitude to my editorial friends, who meticulously and devotedly managed every stage of this issue.

**Prof. Dr. Şaban Ali DÜZGÜN**  
Editor



## Worship as Cognition, Intentionality and Freedom

İbadet: Bilgi, Niyet ve Özgürlük

Şaban Ali DÜZGÜN

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## Abstract

Worship/ibādah is commonly defined as the innermost capability of cognizing of all rational beings of the existence of God and the sense of gratitude towards Him. The oft-quoted verse from the Qur'ān, Chapter al-Dhāriyāt, verse 56, is interpreted to this cause: "And tell them that I have not created the invisible beings and men to any end other than that they may (know and) worship me." The intuitive knowledge requires them with conscious willingness to know His reality and conform their own existence to that of God. Analyzing worshipping act is to analyze the worshipper and his nature; so, it is necessary to engage in such a detailed probe of the composition of the human being as it is vital to our goal of showing how the personality of a human being is satisfied with the worshipping act. Therefore, analysis of human being as a worshipper brings us face-to-face such terms as **intentionality (niyah)**, **cognition (ma'rifah)** and **freedom (hurriyah)**. Through his intentionality, human beings transcend the natural causal nexuses they are part of. We know that as part of nature and causal nexuses human beings have always been called to ponder about the created beings (how the sky is exalted, how celestial bodies are manifested as ornament, etc.), all of which are intended to affect his 'will' and orient it to this cause. Cognition, intentionality/willingness and freedom give the deepest meaning to what the Qur'ān describes as worship/ibādah, which is designed as an instrument for the inner development of the worshipper, who by the act of conscious/intentional self-surrender to the all-pervading Creative Will of God encounters with numinous One. Symbols in the worshipping act and the meaning every single act conveys during worship always remove the tension of this encounter, a phenomenological tide. Through this encounter, a worshipper transforms himself/herself into an ethical agent. The conditions that are necessary before, during and after prayer are intended to meet this essential end. The Qur'ānic verse, "Surely Prayer forbids indecency and evil"<sup>1</sup> as post-condition of prayer is a call to create an ethical subject. And perseverance in prayer will turn this ethical subject into a subjected ethical subject which means ethical codes and norms willy-nilly arises from him. Al-amr bi'l ma'rūf and al-nahy 'an al-munkar/enjoining the doing of what is right and avoiding doing of what is wrong is not but the manifestation of this exposed subject (determined or oriented subject), which means ethical behaviors necessarily become an indispensable part of him. Worship is a demand for recognition. It is a transpersonal act, aiming to satisfy the desire of finite being to transcend its finiteness. But at the end of worshipping act not unification, on the contrary a total clarification of the limits and borders between the two becomes much more evident.

**Keywords:** Kalām, Worship ('ibādah), Intentionality (niyah), Cognition (ma'rifah), Freewill.

## Öz

İbâdet, bütün akıl sahibi varlıkların Allah'ın varlığını idrak edebilme ve O'na karşı şükretme duygusu olarak tanımlanır. İbadet eylemini incelemek, ibadet edenin doğasını tahlil etmeyi gerektirir. Bu tahlil bizi ibadet eylemine eşlik eden bilgi/kavrayış, niyet/yönelimsellik ve sürecin sonunda ortaya çıkan özgürlükle buluşturur. Bilgi/kavrayış, Kur'an'ın ibâdet olarak işaret ettiği ilişki formuna en derin mânâyı verir. İbadet, Tanrı'nın mutlak yaratıcı iradesini keşfetme ve ona insanî seviyede eşlik etme arzusudur. Allah'ın varlığını ve birliğini bilmeye yapılan çağrı,<sup>2</sup> ibadetin bilgi ve niyet unsuruna en üst seviyede yapılan daveti içerir. Bu davete icabet sırasında devreye giren semboller ve her bir eyleme ibadet sırasında yüklenen anlam, insan yaşamında yeni olgulara hayat verir. Niyet yahut yönelimsellik ise, insanların parçası oldukları doğal nedensel bağları aşma arzusunu içinde barındırır. İnsanın verili olan bu düzeni ve illiyet bağını aşarak kendine yeni bir ufuk arama çabası ibadetin niyetle ilgili kısmında içerilir. İbadet bir tanımına talebidir. Sonlu varlığın sonluluğunu ve sınırlılığını aşma arzusunu tatmin etmeyi amaçlayan bir 'ilişki' eylemidir. Sonlu ile Sonsuz arasındaki bu ilişkinin bilgi zemininde inşa edilmesi, Allah ile insan arasındaki sınırın bulanıklaşmasını değil tam tersine daha belirgin hale gelmesini sağlar. İbadetteki bilme, bilen öznenin her zaman bu sınırların farkında olması demektir. Niyet, sonlu varlığın Sonsuz olanla iletişime geçerek sonluluğun getirdiği değer yitimini dindirme arzusudur. Özgürlük ise sonlu varlığın Sonsuz Olan'la iletişimi yoluyla, kendisini çepeçevre kuşatan bütün kısıtlama ve dayatmalardan azade olma isteğidir. Allah'tan başkasına tapanların bir düşü, parçalanma ve kayboluş trajedisi yaşamalarının sebebi<sup>3</sup> her zaman bir kısıtın ve dayatmanın nesnesine dönüşmüş olmasındandır. Onun için Allah ısrarla ibadetin sadece kendine yapılmasını talep ederek bu trajediyi bloke etmek istemektedir. İbadetin kabulü için nasıl ibadetten önce yerine getirilmesi gereken şartlar, ibadet sırasında

<sup>1</sup> al-'Ankabüt 29/45.

<sup>2</sup> Muhammed 47/19.

<sup>3</sup> al-Ĥajj 22/31.

takep edilmesi gereken rükünler varsa, aynı şekilde ibadetten sonra yerine getirilmesi gereken şartlar vardır. Bunlar yapılan ibadetin gerçekten ibadet niteliğine sahip olup olmadığını denetleyen ibadet sonrası kriterlerdir; bu ibadetin fenomenolojisidir: İbadet bireyi kendi iç dünyasında bir itmi'nana kavuşturmalı,<sup>4</sup> kamusal alanda ise ahlakî bir özne olarak inşa etmelidir.<sup>5</sup>

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kalam, İbâdet, Niyet (yönelimsellik), Bilgi, Özgürlük.

## 1. Introductory Remarks

Conceptions of human in Muslim scholarship depend on two main axes: Metaphysics and ethics. Even the scholars who studied human only from biological perspective did their analysis considering these two. Muslim philosophers and theologians developed their philosophy of human nature via spirit (*rūh*) and soul (*nafs*). They thought all motives (*devā'i*) and blockades (*savārif*) of thought and actions within *rūh* and *nafs* as essential orienting powers (*hady*) entrusted by God. All these orienting power (*hady/hidāyah*), together with senses, emotions and thought enabled man to separate (*tamyiz*) true from false (epistemic distinction), good from evil (ethical distinction) and beautiful from ugly (esthetical distinction). To prevent human from misusing his power, He brought human with essential parameters (*hudūdAllah*) and called every single object of this power as trust (*amānah*) and declared man responsible for his initiatives towards them and connected the sense of responsibility (*taqwā*) to the correct usage of this initiative. Equipped with these qualifications, autonomous, wise and free man finally was asked to undertake new initiatives, all of which are designated as 'worship' meaning 'ibādah in the Qur'ān. To put another statement, completing all these qualifications one further step was needed for a more comprehensive 'relationship' between God and human, which was worship.

## 2. Etymological Analysis of the term Worship ('*ibādah*)

Such terms as *nusuk* (act of worship);<sup>6</sup> *du'a* (invocation);<sup>7</sup> *khuḍū'* (bow down in humility);<sup>8</sup> *khuṣū'* (awe of God);<sup>9</sup> *rukū'* (bow down);<sup>10</sup> *sajda* (prostration);<sup>11</sup> *qunūt* (standing before God in devout obedience);<sup>12</sup> *tasbīh* (extolling and praising God)<sup>13</sup> and *shukr* (to be grateful)<sup>14</sup> are used in the Qur'ān as different forms or close meanings of worship.<sup>15</sup>

Three terms from the root '*a-b-d*' have extensive usage: '*ibādah* (some exact forms of rituals like prayer, fasting, etc.), '*ubūdiyyah* and '*ubūdah* (one's perpetual respect and sensitivity towards God).

<sup>4</sup> al-Ra'd 13/28.

<sup>5</sup> al-Ankabūt 29/45.

<sup>6</sup> al-Baqarah 2/196.

<sup>7</sup> Fātir 35/14.

<sup>8</sup> al-Shu'arā 26/4.

<sup>9</sup> Tā-Hā 20/3.

<sup>10</sup> Āl 'Imrān 3/43.

<sup>11</sup> Āl 'Imrān 3/43.

<sup>12</sup> al-Baqarah 2/238.

<sup>13</sup> al-Ra'd 13/13.

<sup>14</sup> al-Naml 27/40.

<sup>15</sup> I bn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, (Beirut: 1994), article *d-'a-v*.



Fakhr ad-Dīn al-Rāzī defines ‘*ibādah*’ as ‘the most advanced form of respect’ in his *Mafātih al-Gayb*.<sup>16</sup> According to Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah the term ‘*ibādah*’ signifies both *love* and *obedience* and if any ritual does not have these two prerequisites it can’t be deemed as ‘*ibādah*’.<sup>17</sup> Rāgīb al-Isfahānī describes ‘*ibādah*’ as the most advanced form of humility and ‘*ubūdiyyah*’ as the manifestation or expression of this humility,<sup>18</sup> and naturally considers ‘*ibādah*’ much more important than ‘*ubūdiyyah*’. Furthermore, Isfahānī mentions two kinds of ‘*ibādah*’: One is compulsory, the other one is voluntary/volitional. The fact that all beings function and work in harmonious manner with the natural law of the universe (as the necessary result of the will of God) is the kind of compulsory ‘*ibādah*’ and called *sajda* in the Qur’ān.<sup>19</sup> The second one is volitional ‘*ibādah*’ and in the end the worshipper deserves reward. This Qur’ānic verse has much reference to this cause:

“Are you not aware that before God prostrate themselves all things and beings that are in the heavens and all that are on earth –the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the mountains, and the trees, and the beasts”.<sup>20</sup>

When Ibn al-‘Arabī comments the term ‘*sajda*/prostration’ in this verse as their need and worship to God. This kind of ‘*ibādah*’ is called by Ibn ‘Arabī as dispositional/natural (*fitri*) and essential/ontic (*zātī*) worship which is different from volitional one.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. Why worship?

We naturally gravitate towards what we value, and we ascribe worth to those things, whether it is God or something else. This natural dispositional inclination needs an outer and upper criterion to be judged and evaluated by whether it is a correct inclination or not. This ultimate criterion is postulated as *aql* (intellect) and called *hujjiyya al-aql* (intellect as the ultimate criterion) by some Muslim scholars, the example of whom is Imām Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī stating: “... So God determined not natural inclinations but reasons as the ultimate criteria.”<sup>22</sup>

Worship is one’s response to the rhythm of God’s revelation. This revelation is not propositional revelation alone, the whole created realm as the manifestation of His creating act (God’s attributes/names) is also revelation in the literal meaning of the term ‘*reveal*’ and ‘*revelation*’. We worship because God has made us worshippers. (*Wa mā ḥalaqtu’l-jinna wa’l-insa illa li-ya’budūnī*<sup>23</sup>). He has given us the ability to respond in worship to that revelation. We do not worship because we are forced to do it, rather we are asked to do it willingly. Otherwise, it wouldn’t be ‘volitional’, but mechanical, which goes totally against the fact that humans are volitional beings and through this characteristic they make use of their potentiality to the full. To be humankind is to have this

<sup>16</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātih ḥ al-Ghayb*, (Qairo: 1938), 14/159.

<sup>17</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Madārīj al-Sālikīn*, (Qairo: 1403/1983), I/58.

<sup>18</sup> Rāgīb al-Isfahānī, *Mufradātu alfāz al-Qur’ān*, ed. Safvān Adnān Dāvūdī, (Damascus: 1992), article ‘a-b-d.

<sup>19</sup> See al-Ra’d 13/15; al-Hajj 22/18; al-Rahmān 55/5.

<sup>20</sup> al-Hajj 22/18.

<sup>21</sup> Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥat al-Makkiyya*, ed. Osmān Yahyā, (Qairo: 1972), II/328; IV/118.

<sup>22</sup> Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, ed. Bekir Topaloğlu (Istanbul: İsam Publications, 2002), p. 284.

<sup>23</sup> al-Dhāriyāt 52/56.

potentiality of 'being' and 'grown-up'. To be born human does not guarantee every single person to persevere as human. To keep it, to improve it or to lose it among alternatives. And 'human dignity' is something deserved at the end of this struggle. 'Human dignity' is something one feels in void when it is lost.

#### 4. Worship as Cognition

Worship/ibādah is commonly defined by Muslim scholars as the innermost capability of cognizing/knowing of all rational beings of the existence of God. The opt-quoted verse from the Qur'ān, Chapter *al-Dhāriyāt*, verse 56, is interpreted to this cause: "And tell them that I have not created the invisible beings and men to any end other than that they may (**know** and) **worship** me." To worship is a verb and the characteristic of any verb is that it needs 'will'. So 'faith' and its indispensable consequence 'worship' are considered also 'verbs' as the necessary components of this 'will'.

The intuitive knowledge requires them with conscious willingness to know His reality and to conform their own existence to that of God. The inner world of human beings (*anfus*) and the outer world/nature (*afāq*) have such a design that whoever ponders about them will necessarily be conscious of whatever hidden to the senses. The following verses imply it: "Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the succession of night and day, there are indeed messages for all who are endowed with insight." and "O our Sustainer! You have not created this without meaning and purpose. ...".<sup>24</sup>

#### 5. Worship and Human Personality

When we analyze human being as a worshipper and his worshipping act such terms as **intentionality** (*niyah*), **cognition** (*ma'rifah*) and **freedom** (*hurriyah*) in the worshipping act seem essentials to focus on, which means analyzing worshipping act is to analyze the worshipper and his nature. We need to engage in such a detailed probe of the composition of the human being as it is vital to our goal of showing how the personality of human being satisfied with the worshipping act through his intentionality. With this intentionality human beings transcend the natural causal nexuses they are part of. As part of nature and causal nexuses human beings have always been called to ponder about the created beings (how the sky is exalted, how celestial bodies are manifested as ornament, etc.), all are intended to effect his 'will' and orient it to a certain cause. So humans' volitions and actions are oriented not determined so that they could feel themselves as natural part of this processes.

Cognition, intentionality/willingness and freedom give the deepest meaning to what the Qur'ān describes as worship/ibādah, which is designed as an instrument for the inner development of the worshipper, who acquires this quality by the act of conscious/intentional self-surrender to the all-pervading Creative Will of God.

Worship is like an encounter. And this phenomenological tide, symbols in the worshipping act, the meaning every single act conveys during worship always remove the tension of the encounter. Worship is a demand of recognition. It is a transpersonal act, aiming to satisfy the desire of finite

<sup>24</sup> Āl 'Imrān 3/191-193.

being to transcend its finiteness. But in the end of worshipping act not a unification on the contrary a **total clarification of the limits and borders** between the two beings becomes much more evident.

## 6. Intention in Worship or Awareness of the Numinous

Actions are considered but lifeless forms, and their life is the intention or secret of sincerity within them. Intention or intentionality is the essence and foundation of any action, be it as religious service/prayer or a legal action. For instance, the correct intention in Hanafī legal system (*fiqh*) entails to specify what you are doing, in your heart – this is a condition for validity in actions where intention is a condition, such as prayer, fasting, or zakat.

Muslim scholars say that it is recommended to actively sustain one's intention till the end of one's worship, both the minimal intention and the intention of doing it for the sake of God.<sup>25</sup> This is also part of spiritual excellence given by the Prophet Muhammad when he was asked by Jibrīl "It is to worship Allah as though you see Him, and to know that if you see Him not that He sees you." This sincere intention or purity in intention is the first obligatory act in prayer. That purity avoids hypocrisy. This sincerity reads in the verse:

"And they were not ordered only to worship Allah believing purely in Him, devoted solely to Him and establish prayer and to give alms. That is the correct religion".<sup>26</sup>

"All actions are judged by motives, and each person will be rewarded according to their intention ...". This hadith sets one of the most crucial principles specifically in regards to the acceptance of one's deeds by God.

One expression used to this cause in the Qur'ān is 'in the way of God' / *fi sabīl Allah*, thus making people to ensure that their intentions and actions be for the sake of God, which is the exact form of total altruism.

## 7. Worship and Free Will

Human inclines and directs his mind towards anything which he thinks may benefit him/her, restrains himself from what he/she thinks will harm him/her, chooses one of the alternative courses of action by the exercise of his/her own reason, and thinks himself/herself responsible for the merits or demerits of his/her actions. Now, while he/she thinks desires and inclines, chooses, and acts, he/she always considers himself/herself quite free, and never thinks or feels that any outside agency compels him/her to do any of his/her actions. This consciousness of freedom, al-Māturīdī asserts, is a reality, the denial of which will lead to the denial of all human knowledge and sciences. Quoting passages from the Qur'ān<sup>27</sup> he also shows that the actions enjoined or prohibited by God are ascribed to men, and that they will be accountable for their 'own' actions. All this clearly proves that God has granted men freedom of choice and necessary

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<sup>25</sup> Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn Humām, *Fath al-Qadīr Sharkh al-Hidāya*, ed. Mustafa al-Bābī al-Halabī, 1970, I/35.

<sup>26</sup> al-Bayyinah 98/5.

<sup>27</sup> al-Baqarah 2/77; 177.

power to perform an action.<sup>28</sup> When ‘faith’ and its necessary outcome ‘worship’ are considered acts of men then they are freely and consciously chosen and performed, which means consciousness preceded all these processes.

## 8. Ethical Consequences of Worship: Post-conditionality

A worshipping one transforms himself into an ethical one. The conditions that are necessary before, during and after prayer are intended to meet this vital aim. The Qur’ānic verse, ‘Surely prayer avoids indecency and evil’<sup>29</sup> as a post-condition is a call to create an ethical subject. And perseverance in prayer will turn this ethical subject into a subjected ethical subject which means ethical codes and norms willy-nilly arises from these deeds. *Al-amr bi’l ma’rūf and al-nahy ‘an al-munkar* is not but the manifestation of this subjected subject. Ethical behaviors necessarily become indispensable part of this ethical subject.

Worship is a way of transcending personal ego and one’s desire to reconstruct himself/herself. Through the spiritual connection with God and with the energy accumulates during this relationship human core develops self-awareness and it manifests itself in ethical relations. There is no surprise that the performative language of the Holy Books is intending to create this ethical realm through the symbolic rhetoric.

In Muslim theology faith and worship as its necessary outcome are considered ‘deeds’ or ‘actions’, and the primeval character of it is free will and freedom.

Ibn al-Nafis in his masterpiece *al-Risāla al-Kāmiliyya* defines worship as the necessary outcome of observing God’s signs in the physical world. His solitary Kāmil/perfect man living an isolated island discovers God and His attributes and this discovery obliges him to surrender his will to God’s and worship Him. As we remember in Ibn Tofail’s *Hayy b. Yaqzan* the only thing Hayy discovers was the reality of God not His attributes. The point is here that first cognition functions and successively ‘will’ plays its role and starts worshipping as the sign of gratitude.

## 9. Worshipping other than God: Self-annihilation

To worship other than God is signified in the Qur’ān as self-annihilation and lost: “... And he who associates with Allah – it is as though he had fallen from the sky and was snatched by the birds, or the wind carried him down into a remote place.”<sup>30</sup>

Without cognition no one knows whom he worships and why. So the question comes: Is the worship, which lacks cognition worth being called worship? Sufis answer is famous: cognition must precede worship. In this case, aim replaces definition and cognition transforms itself into worship itself.

<sup>28</sup> al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, 115. Also see Ayyub Ali “Māturīdism” in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M.M. Sharif, (Wiesbaden: 1963), 267.

<sup>29</sup> al-‘Ankabūt 29/45.

<sup>30</sup> al-Hajj 22/31.

Those who worship God aimlessly or without a preceding knowledge are criticized in the Qur'ān: "And of the people is he who worships God on an edge..." (*Va min an-nās man ya'bud Allaha 'alā harfin...*). On edge, (*'alā harfin*) means without cognition, with uncertainty, doubt and unconvinced way.

### 10. The Abstract and Concrete form of Worship: *Vita Contemplativa* and *Vita Activa*

Thinking/contemplation, *vita contemplativa*, is defined as worship in a prophetic saying of Prophet Muhammad, which means the term worship has more than the prescribed worshipping forms like prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, etc. Of course, this contemplation by definition requires carrying out and activating the object of this contemplation, *vita activa*. This bilateral structure is the key anthropological principle in thought and action. To think is to think about something. To do is to have enough motivation and love to carry it out. As a result, to think is to do, *vita contemplativa* is *vita activa*. In this case contemplation and action in any form are the practical and meaningful dimension of abstract religion, thus for man transforming ordinary time to real and effective time, which is called worship in which consciousness, intentionality, activity and creativity are all embraced. To summon man to worship in this sense is a call to become involved in flux of time and be its real actor.<sup>31</sup> It is a call to transform the *Kronos* into *Kairos*.

Thinking and doing are the qualifications of a free man in the Qur'ān; otherwise, he is depicted as a slave:

"God propounds to you the parable of (two men): a man enslaved, unable to do anything of his own accord, and a (free) man upon whom we have bestowed godly sustenance from ourselves, so that he can spend thereof voluntarily, both secretly and openly. Can these two be deemed equal?"<sup>32</sup>

This free man is not only wise and righteous but also has the strength and authority to enjoin a righteous way of living upon others. Thus, while in the first parable the main issue is the contrast between freedom and bondage - between dependence and independence, in the second parable we are given the antithesis of dumbness and incompetence, on the one hand, and wisdom, justice and competence, on the other; and in both parables the implication is the same. God's call to worship is the seeking a man to do business. In this sense, theology means man's search of God, while anthropology is God's search of the man.<sup>33</sup>

Before concluding, the following questions must be raised and responded: Has the worshipper have an enterprising, frenzied and stimulated personality to challenge the besieging powers around him or on the contrary has a diffident, anonym and timid personality who is always passing the buck to others? What kind of function and effect does the worshipping act have upon the worshipper? Could submission to omnipotent God transform one into neurotic and complex one?

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<sup>31</sup> Two distinct form of the verb *sh-h-d* is used to denote this difference. *Shāhid* and *Shahid*. While the former is passive agent of any event, the latter is active and effective agent on the event.

<sup>32</sup> al-Nahl 16/75.

<sup>33</sup> Here is the exact place to remember the masterpiece work of Abraham J. Heschel's *God in Search of Man*, (New York: 1955).

Metaphorically speaking, the Holy Qur'ān defines God in this relation as light (*nour*)<sup>34</sup> and it seems that worship provides the transmission line between the two. God's invitation to worship is always an invitation to keep this line open and think and work with it.

### 11. Worship as Religious Experience: The Ground for and Meaning of Religious Experience

In general, 'religious experience' is defined as an awareness of Being or of 'being itself', as distinct from experiences of things whose reality depends upon and expresses that Being. Gabriel Marcel writes of God as that 'Absolute Being' which is 'rebellious to descriptions' but can be given 'as Absolute Presence in worship'.<sup>35</sup>

The term 'numinous' is used to describe a kind of experience. This experience of God may or may not involve sensations, but it refers principally to a kind of sensing, perceiving or apprehending of God. The subject has a sense of being in the **presence of that being** and he has **certain responses to this sense of being** in the presence of him.

In this numinous experience, *a person seems to apprehend a divine reality independent of himself*. Subsequent experiences of the desire to worship, venerate, delight in or fear the object of experience follow from this prior experience of what is assumed to be the reality of the divine.

### 12. Worship as the Necessary Outcome of Awareness of the Numinous

With regard to worship two concepts are to be kept in mind: awareness and aim/*telos*. To create awareness with an aim/*telos*, all cognitive and prescriptive faculties such as senses, reasoning, imagination, contemplation, understanding, judging and deciding must be activated. Although this procedure has many cognitive parts such as the experiential, intellectual, rational, etc., it is essentially a unified whole, and only this *holistic structure* can have a meaning. In order to make these cognitive elements religiously meaningful and operative, we have to put them in a web of cognitive relations supporting one another. As a result of these relations, our paradigm/worldview gains a religious color and affects our perception of things, and the power of this perception increases or decreases one's faith or makes him/her more or less enlightened.

### 13. Cognitive Dimension of Worship/Religious Experience

An important point in worship/religious experience is its *cognitive* or *communicative* side, the lack of which will in the last analysis lead to sheer *agnosticism* and *scepticism*. As God has revealed himself to and through His creatures, which constitutes the basis of this communication, any kind of agnosticism is theologically impossible. When tackling the cognitive or communicative side of worship, we use 'cognition' to mean the experience of knowing which includes perception, recognition and reasoning as distinguished from the experience of feeling. By adding that God discloses himself in the outside world and that the world of nature is the best, clearest and most universal evidence for the knowledge of Him, Muslim thinkers try to escape from agnosticism and scepticism as in the case of al-Ghazālī. As Fazlur Rahman puts it:

<sup>34</sup> al-Nour 24/35.

<sup>35</sup> G. Marcel, *Being and Having*, (London: Collins), 1965, 184.

“Fundamentally, al-Ghazālī affirmed an agnosticism about the ultimate and absolute nature of God and maintained that He was knowable only in so far as He was related to and revealed Himself to man. This revealed and relational nature of God is constituted by the Divine Names and Attributes.”<sup>36</sup>

The same line can be traced in Ibn ‘Arabī:

“In whatever situation you are, either on earth or air, know it or not, think it or not, you are under the Divine Names. It is these names that determine your movement and standing still, your contingency and existence. And this name says ‘I am God’, and it tells the truth. Considering that, you are supposed to say *Allāh Akbar*/God is greater... Know for sure that the Divine Being does not show himself to you as He is, but under one of these Divine Names. As this is the case, you will never know what the name God means.”<sup>37</sup>

#### 14. Experience as a Ground for the Reality of God

It seems that to enable communication and to confirm our knowledge, we take for granted that there is a preceding reality from which our cognitive faculties deduce some knowledge, which develops an ontological basis for the individual and his knowledge of both himself and God and around which many *sui generis* forms of life are developed.

In this sense, one finds a strong suggestion that this ground is direct and immediate. It is as if an awareness is born in consciousness. In this sense, religious experience is defined as the consciousness of ‘Absolute Being’. This Absolute Being resists all definitions but shows himself in prayer with His Absolute presence.<sup>38</sup> As John Baillie writes:

“The witness of all true religion is that there is no reality which more directly confronts us than the reality of God. No other reality is nearer to us than he. The realities of sense are more obvious, but his is the more intimate, touching us as it does so much nearer to the core of our being.”<sup>39</sup>

The ‘cognitive elements’, according to Tillich, are to be understood as coming to exist in the consciousness of a living person. Deep personal inadequacy and dependence seems the basic motive in this preference.

#### 15. Conclusion

The full-blooded sense of the term worship has a complex content far beyond the meaning of its face value. It has a cognitive (*ma‘rifa*) dimension. A person should have knowledge of what, why and for what purpose he worships. This cognition necessarily requires an orientation and intentionality. With these orientation and intentionality human being transcends the natural causal nexuses it is part of. This awareness of what one worships and why is a prerequisite for creating the desired moral results. Thus knowledge and worship come together to create ‘a purposeful moral action’. It means that morality first transforms the person from whom it emerges, creates a personality in

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<sup>36</sup> F. Rahman, *Islam*, (London: Anchor Books), 1966, 95.

<sup>37</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-tanazzulāt al-mawsiliyya*, edited by ‘Abd al-Rahmān Mahmūd, (Cairo: Maktabat ‘Ālam al-Fikr 1986), 90-91.

<sup>38</sup> G. Marcel, *Being and Having* (London: Collins, 1965), 184.

<sup>39</sup> J. Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1939), 155.

him, and then, by his example, turns to others and reaches a level of competence to show itself in the social arena. The moral power of worship is tied to the individual it originates from, the Creator to which this individual is attached, and ultimately the benefit it will provide to the society in which moral virtues will manifest themselves. The term worship also involves affective and emotional attitudes such as awe and reverence – a form of modesty and veneration. It is not easy to say which of these properties might be essential to the notion of worship and which merely accidental. This is the reason why we establish cognition, intentionality and freedom prior to all other forms.

The doctrinal basis of worshipping God alone has a serious moral manifestation in believer's life. No believer can bow before another person or creature in a way that would harm his human dignity; nor does he activate the feelings of love, respect and reverence that worshipping God creates in him. Because the *reasonableness* and *necessity* of worship is established only for God. This approach to worshipfulness appeals to God's excellent intrinsic nature rather than His relation to us. No interest or benefit at all can be considered in worshipping. Therefore, one cannot treat others with worship-like reverence no matter what benefit got from them. This is specifically vital for the communities with saint-cults. Especially in theistic religions the emphasis in scriptures which reads "Only You do we worship..." is quite essential in this regard. Thus, an appropriate response to the holy is fulfilled on the one hand, and a dignified life among human beings is guaranteed on the other.

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## Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Account of Metaphysical Certainty in terms of Ta'wīl

Fahreddīn el-Rāzī'nin Te'vīl Teorisi Açısından Metafizik Yakîn Anlayışı

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## Abstract

This paper examines Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's understanding of metaphysical certainty in terms of his theory of *ta'wīl* (interpretation) while showing his optimism in attaining metaphysical certainty. Rāzī, also known as the leader of the skeptics (*shaykh al-mushakkikīn*) in the Shi'i sources, while thoroughly criticizing the philosophical and kalam traditions before him, remains a controversial figure among scholars. His critical thinking confounded subsequent thinkers, and thus, various ways of reading about Rāzī have emerged. Some have evaluated Rāzī as a metaphysical agnostic who believed that the intellect cannot attain certainty in theological knowledge. This study positions Rāzī's account of metaphysical certainty in relation to his theory of *ta'wīl*. The first part of the article focuses on the history of the relationship between metaphysical certainty and *ta'wīl* —the debates over the relationship between intellect and transmission in theological knowledge — and offers the historical context in which Rāzī developed his idiosyncratic approach. The second part identifies Rāzī's principles of reason in metaphysical knowledge through the interpretation of the concept of *istiwā'*. This article does not aim to fully investigate Rāzī's understanding of *ta'wīl*. However, it analyzes how intellectual truths, one of the main components of the theory of *ta'wīl*, become metaphysical certainties. The Mu'tazilī *mutakallimūn* made metaphysical certainties, which are transformed from intellectual truths, a yardstick of understanding and interpreting religion. On the other hand, what some might call their obsession with reliance upon metaphysical certainties became an intolerant attitude towards different interpretations of religion, grew into an oppressive ideology with political power, and ultimately fueled a critical resistance by non-Mu'tazilī scholars against rationality (or even rationalism itself). As a natural consequence, the rational development of other doctrines was slowed down by the reaction against Mu'tazilī influence. The first part of the article, while discussing Kalam schools, especially the Ash'arī school of theology, in terms of metaphysical certainty and the interpretation of revelation, charts the crystallization of the Ash'arī account of the relationship between interpretation (*ta'wīl*) and intellectual truths, a historical process inversely correlated with the presence of the Mu'tazilī. However, the crystallization process, which was somewhat ambivalent until Rāzī, reaches its ultimate form with Rāzī. The first of the main principles of Rāzī's theory of *ta'wīl* is that the intellect is the foundation of revelation (*al-'aql aṣl al-naql*). The intellect becomes the decisive factor not only in terms of authentication and understanding of revelation but also in terms of its interpretation (*ta'wīl*). Focusing on his *Tafsīr*, one of his last treatises and which was left incomplete, this article argues against the claim that toward the end of his life, he was inclined to metaphysical agnosticism, falling into an epistemic pessimism with respect to attaining metaphysical certainty. Rāzī takes a firm stance on the probability of transmission in works written throughout his life. Rāzī's firm stance on the probability of transmitted sources necessarily leads to the principle that reason is the foundation of transmission. Especially with his account of *ta'wīl*, he offers a rational theology in which he maintains his optimism on metaphysical certainty.

**Keywords:** Kalām, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Metaphysical certainty, Ta'wīl, Ash'ariyya, al-'Aql aṣl al-naql, Istiwā'.

## Öz

Bu makale Fahreddin el-Rāzī'nin metafizik yakīn anlayışını *te'vīl* teorisi açısından incelerken, onun metafizik yakīne ulaşma hususundaki optimistik tutumunu da ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Kuşkucuların lideri (*şeyhü'l-müşekkikīn*) olarak da bilinen Rāzī'nin, kendisinden önceki felsefe ve kalam geleneklerini etraflıca kritik ederken yeni ve özgün bir anlayış ortaya koyup koymadığı tartışılmış, eleştirel düşüncesi kendisinden sonraki düşünürlerce tenkit edilmiş ve bu vesile ile Rāzī hakkında çeşitli okuma biçimleri ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu okuma biçimleri arasında Rāzī'yi, aklın kelâmî bilgide yakīne ulaşamayacağı şeklinde bir metafizik bilinmezci olarak değerlendirenler de olmuştur. Bu çalışma, Rāzī'nin metafizik yakīn anlayışını *te'vīl* teorisi ile birlikte serimlemeye çalışmaktadır. Makalenin ilk ana bölümü metafizik yakīn ve *te'vīl* ilişkisi ekseninde -başka bir deyişle kelâmî bilgide akıl-nakil tartışmaları açısından- Rāzī öncesi düşünceye dair -ipuçları niteliğinde- tarihsel bağlam vermektedir. İkinci ana kısım ise Rāzī'nin metafizik bilgide akıl anlayışındaki ilkelerini *istivā'* kavramının *te'vīl* üzerinden belirginleştirmektedir. Bu makale, Rāzī'nin *te'vīl* anlayışını bütünüyle ortaya koymayı amaçlamamaktadır. Ancak, *te'vīl* teorisinin temel bileşenlerinden birisi olan akliyyâtın nasıl metafizik yakīniyyâta dönüştüğünü analiz etmektedir. Mu'tezile, akliyyât üzerinden dönüştürdüğü metafizik yakīniyyâtı, dini anlama ve yorumlamada kıstas haline getirmiştir. Öte yandan metafizik yakīniyyât anlayışlarındaki iddiaları, farklı din yorumlarına karşı müsamahasız bir tavra dönüşmüş, siyasi erkle birlikte baskıcı hale gelmiş ve Mu'tezile dışı kelâm düşüncelerini akılcılık -daha radikal bir ifade ile rasyonelizm- karşısında eleştirel-tepkisel olmaya sevk etmiştir. Doğal bir sonuç olarak diğer doktrinlerin rasyonel gelişimi Mu'tezilî etki yüzünden yavaşlamıştır. Makalenin birinci kısmı, Rāzī öncesi Eş'arî düşünceyi, metafizik yakīniyyât ve nass yorumu açısından değerlendirirken, yorum ve akliyyât ilişkisine dair

anlayışlarındaki dakikleşmeyi Mu'tezile'nin tarihsel varlığına ters orantılı olarak ele almaktadır. Ancak Râzî'ye kadar kararsız bir şekilde gerçekleşen dakikleşme süreci, Râzî ile birlikte nihayi formuna ulaşmaktadır. Râzî'nin *te'vîl* teorisinin temel prensiplerinden ilki, aklın nakle esas (*el-'akl aşlu'l-nakl*) teşkil etmesidir. Akıl, naklin yalnız ispatı ve anlaşılması bakımından değil, aynı zamanda yorumlanması (*te'vîl*) açısından da temel belirleyici bir unsura dönüşmektedir. Bu makale, Râzî'nin ilmi hayatının sonlarına doğru, metafizik yakîniyyâta ulaşma noktasında pesimizme düşerek, metafizik bilinmezliğe doğru yöneldiği şeklindeki anlama biçimlerine karşı, en son eserleri arasında olan ve tamamlanmamış *Tefsîr'i* üzerinden cevaplar aramaktadır. Râzî, değişik zamanlarda ele aldığı eserlerinde, “naklin zanniliği” hususundaki ısrarlı duruşunu vurgulamaktadır. Bu makale Râzî'nin naklin zanniliği noktasındaki ısrarlı duruşunun, “aklın asıllığı” ilkesindeki kararlılığı ile zorunlu bir paralellik gösterdiğininin altını çizerken, metafizik yakîniyyât açısından da hala optimistik olduğunu savunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kalam, Fahreddin el-Râzî, Metafizik yakîn, Te'vîl, Eş'ariye, el-'Akl aşlu'l-nakl, istivâ'.

## Introduction\*

The role of reason (*'aql*) in religious matters is one of the oldest issues in the intellectual history of Islam. The varying emphases on the use of reason in religion have played a significant role in the formation of schools of thought. For all of these schools of thought, the challenge was to discover the correct role of reason in relation to the transmitted sources—the Qur'an and the Sunnah—which remained a touchstone of the faith for all. If we were to formulate the problem in broad terms, we would say that the main concern of those schools of thought is an inquiry into the sources of knowledge in religion. Generally speaking, some schools of thought were conventionally labeled traditionalists, or the people of *ḥadīth*, for rejecting *Kalām*. They first emerged towards the end of the first century of Islam and relied (so they claimed) simply on the transmitted sources as the only dependable source of knowledge in religious matters. Other schools of thought, like the Mu'tazila at the beginning of the second century of Islam, treated reason as the primary source of knowledge in religion. Of course, the reliance on reason varied widely between those extremes. These middle approaches became evident in the fourth century of Islam, and their versions of *Kalām* were generally categorized as *Sunnī* theology.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, these moderate approaches create challenges for scholars who attempt to understand their methodologies. The Ash'arī school of theology is a prime example. Is Ash'arī *Kalam* a rationalist or literalist? Indeed, it is not a literalist. However, especially with Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, the Ash'arī school was seen as more rationalist, as Ibn Taymiyya argues.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, notably with al-Juwaynī and reaching its peak with Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, the school was said to have leaned towards a moderate skepticism in which no certainty in metaphysical knowledge

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<sup>1</sup> Ghazzālī (450-505 AH/1058-1111 CE) is one of the most prominent Ash'arī theologians who are engaged in the problem of the correct relationship between reason and revelation, especially in his *Iqtisād*, where he points to two extreme approaches to religion: i) practicing religion by taking a stance against reason or ii) understanding religion through reason alone. He does not approve of any of these alone, paving the way for moderate understanding. Ghazzālī, *Itikadda Orta Yol: al-Iqtisād fi al-i'tiqād*, a Turkish-Arabic parallel text, trans. Osman Demir (Istanbul: Klasik Yayinlari, 2012), 14-6. See also its English translation, *Moderation in Belief: al-Iqtisād fi al-i'tiqād*, trans. Aladdin M. Yaqub (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 1-4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar' ta'arūḍ al-'aql wa al-naql aw-muwāfaqat ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl li-ṣarīḥ al-ma'qūl*, ed. M. Rashād Sālim (Beirut: Dār al-Kunūz al-Adabiyya, n.d. [1980]), 1/4-5.

is possible. Rāzī was already labeled as the leader of skeptics (*shaykh al-mushakkikīn* or *imam al-mushakkikīn*), particularly in the Shī'ī sources.<sup>3</sup> In recent scholarship, Ayman Shihadeh revisits this aspect of the Ash'arī Kalam, focusing primarily on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.<sup>4</sup> Is Rāzī a moderate skeptic or a metaphysical agnostic in a way that no metaphysical certainty can be attained?

Sunnī theology reached its finest form at the end of the sixth century of Islam in the works of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (543-606 AH/1149-1210 CE). In this paper, I will examine Rāzī's rational theology, examining his account of metaphysical certainty in connection with his theory of *ta'wīl*, while probing the problem of knowledge with metaphysical certainty. Elsewhere, I have argued that Rāzī remains optimistic about metaphysically certain knowledge, investigating the sources of knowledge in his theology.<sup>5</sup> This paper is a continuation of that project and examines his account of metaphysical knowledge/certainty in connection with *ta'wīl* (interpretation) while highlighting one of the essential elements of Rāzī's theory of *ta'wīl*, which is called '*aqliyyāt* (intellectual truths).

Slightly differing from his predecessors, Rāzī shows a firm rational attitude in the interpretation of ambiguous Qur'anic phrases, such as *istiwā'*. In his firm stance, he considers '*aqliyyāt* (intellectual truths) metaphysical certainties while he argues for the probability of transmission. Thus, he establishes the necessity of interpreting (*ta'wīl*) those phrases. Here, Rāzī is determined by his account of metaphysical certainties; therefore, he cannot be considered an epistemic pessimist in terms of metaphysical knowledge. On the other hand, he may appear to be an epistemic pessimist in metaphysical knowledge, especially in his *Maṭālib*, where '*aqliyyāt* do not seem functional anymore. This paper focuses on Rāzī's optimism about metaphysical certainties, which are more evident in his theory of interpretation. Even though the question of how one should understand his so-called epistemic pessimism in the *Maṭālib* is not one of the questions in this paper, which deserves another study, I can state that his pessimism regarding '*aqliyyāt* is concerned with a cataphatic theology, not an apophatic theology. Therefore, regarding apophatic theology, Rāzī relies on reason, especially in interpreting ambiguous Qur'anic phrases. Accordingly, as this paper emphasizes, '*aqliyyāt* have a decisive role in his negative theology. Nonetheless, as we will see in the first part, the Ash'arī scholarship before Rāzī does not present such a crystallized relationship between '*aqliyyāt* and transmission, especially in the practice of *ta'wīl*.

The paper is divided into two parts. In the first part, I will offer some historical analysis to show how genuinely and deeply rooted the debate about the role of reason in religious matters is in the intellectual history of Islam. Here we will encounter Mu'tazilī rationalism and its political manifestation as an apparatus that impeded both the development of a rational Sunni theology and the consistency of the resulting doctrine. Since the Mu'tazilī model of rationalism and its

<sup>3</sup> Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm, *Majmū'a raṣā'il al-falsafiyya li-Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad Shīrāzī* (Beirut: Dār al-Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2001), 393; Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, *Al-Ḥikma al-muta'āliya fi al-asfār al-'aqliyya al-arba'a* (Beirut: Dār al-Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1981), 1/106; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn, *Nihāya al-ḥikma* (Qum: Mu'assasah-i Āmūzishī va Pizhūhishī-i Imām Khumaynī, 1386 [2007]), 2/428.

<sup>4</sup> See Ayman Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston: Brill, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Recep Erkmen, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: the Problem of Knowledge and Metaphysical Skepticism* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 2022).

political engagement with some of the ‘Abbāsī caliphs right before and during the emergence of the two Sunnī schools of theology, Ash‘ariyya and Māturīdiyya deserve another study, I rather focus on some prominent Ash‘arī scholars up to Rāzī and their approaches to the sources of knowledge in religion. The main concern of this part is to show how their understanding of metaphysical certainty (i.e., their theological concept of God) formed their interpretation (*ta‘wīl*) of religion, especially with regard to the main textual sources (the Qur‘an and the Sunnah).

In the second part, I will focus on Rāzī’s approach to the problem, namely the relationship between reason and transmitted knowledge, which is closely related to the problem of metaphysical certainty. Since he has written extensively and the topic is quite broad, I felt the need to focus on a particular theme by examining Rāzī’s understanding of *istiwā‘*, a Qur‘anic term notorious for its ambiguity. The second part of the paper aims to understand the phrase *istiwā‘* and, through this analysis, discover Rāzī’s stance on the relationship between reason—which is said to be the foundation of metaphysical certainties—and the transmitted sources. As I analyze the text regarding Rāzī’s explanation of the term, I examine his rationality, focusing on how intellectual truths become metaphysical certainties given his concept of God.

The main argument of this paper is that Rāzī is never a pessimist in attaining metaphysical certainty. His account of ‘*aqliyyāt*’ becomes metaphysical certainties, especially in the interpretation of ambiguous Qur‘anic phrases. Thus, in his *Tafsīr*, Rāzī confidently practices *ta‘wīl* based on ‘*aqliyyāt*. On the other hand, mention should be made again that one may rightly argue that in his *Maṭālib al-‘āliya*, Rāzī appears to be skeptical and somewhat pessimist in attaining metaphysical certainty, even though Rāzī wrote the *Maṭālib* at the same time with his *Tafsīr*. As explained in more detail later, Rāzī seems to divide theology into two camps: apophatic theology (negative theology) and cataphatic theology (positive theology). Rāzī confidently offers an apophatic theology through ‘*aqliyyāt*’ and maintains his optimism about metaphysical certainty, as he does in his *Tafsīr*. He, however, becomes exceptionally critical of cataphatic theology, especially in the *Maṭālib*. However, his critical approach to a cataphatic theology should not be considered a metaphysical agnosticism. Therefore, this paper argues that Rāzī always remains optimistic about metaphysical certainty attained through ‘*aqliyyāt*. Moreover, ‘*aqliyyāt*’ remain always at the heart of his account of religion in general and kalam in particular. ‘*Aqliyyāt*’ were crucial for the Ash‘arī scholarship before Rāzī. However, they do not seem to show a crystallized account of ‘*aqliyyāt*’ in the practice of *ta‘wīl*. Now, we shall see a brief explanation of the Ash‘arī scholarship before Rāzī with regard to their view on the relationship between ‘*aqliyyāt*’ and *ta‘wīl*.

## 1. The Relationship between Reason and Transmitted Knowledge in Theology before Rāzī

I think the following question needs to be asked: What is the main characteristic of a Muslim theologian/*mutakallim* which distinguishes him from other Muslim scholars? Many characteristics can be found. In the present context, the evidence suggests that a theologian needs to be decisive with respect to the intellectual truths by which metaphysical certainties can be attained because the rest of the religious sciences ultimately rely on the legitimacy of kalam, as

Rāzī and other theologians argue.<sup>6</sup> And this legitimacy cannot be established until a coherent concept of God has been reached. Therefore, Muslim theologians argue for the necessity of *nazar* in religion, only through which *ma'rifat Allah* (knowing God) can be attained.<sup>7</sup> As Rāzī argues, a tautology, or more specifically, a vicious circularity, would ensue if a concept of God were to be established through revelation. Put it differently, the authenticity of revelation can be reached only when it is established by something else, namely the intellect. On this score, the question of *ma'rifat Allah* seems to be the first place for which the intellect becomes the foundation of transmission.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, the Ash'arī theologians show a reluctance to interpret transmitted sources until Rāzī. This part will discuss their reluctance and ambivalence about making *'aqliyyāt* the yardstick of interpreting religion, even though they argue for the importance of reason in religion.

As we shall see in the second part of this study, Ibn Taymiyya argues that Rāzī considers the intellect as the foundation of transmission. Frank Griffel critically examines this assertion of Ibn Taymiyya. However, Rāzī explicitly states that the intellect is the foundation of transmission (*al-'aql aṣl al-naql*). In his book, *Rāzī: Master of Qur'ānic Interpretation and Theological Reasoning*, Tariq Jaffer underscores that not only the authenticity of *naql* is dependent on reason, but also intellectual truths cannot be dismissed in understanding and interpreting it. Referring to Nicolas Heer's paper, "The Priority of Reason in the Interpretation of Scripture: Ibn Taymiyyah and the *Mutakallimūn*," he further argues that Rāzī's theory of *ta'wīl* profoundly influences the later Ash'arī scholarship.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, one may argue that Rāzī's theory of *ta'wīl* is similar to the Mu'tazilī *ta'wīl* methodology, in which the intellect is the yardstick of understanding and interpreting religion. Mention should be made again that this paper does not intend to reconstruct Rāzī's account of *ta'wīl*. Instead, it looks into how intellectual truths, from which metaphysical *certain* conclusions are attained, are becoming one of the main tools of the Ash'arī school of theology in understanding and interpreting religion. This part of the paper argues that the Ash'arī school had shown reluctance in making reason as the foundation of *naql* until Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. This part briefly points to possible reasons behind the Ash'arī reluctance and even ambiguity in practicing *ta'wīl*.

<sup>6</sup> 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Abd Allāh Al-Juwaynī, *al-Burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, edited and introduced by 'Abd al-'Azīm al-Dayb (Al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Anṣār, 1979 [1399AH]), 1/84-5; 'Abd al-Jabbār ibn Aḥmad al-Asadābādī, *Ṣerhu'l-Usūli'l-Hamse: Mu'tezile'nin Beş İlkesi*, (a Parallel Text Turkish-Arabic), tr. İlyas Çelebi (Istanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2013), 1/125; Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-'uqūl fī dirāsa al-uṣūl*, ed. Sa'īd 'Abd al-Laṭīf Fūda (Beirut, Dār al-Dhakhāin, 2015), 1/97-9; Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-'āliya min 'ilm al-ilāhi*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1987), 1/37-40.

<sup>7</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Ṣerhu'l-Usūli'l-Hamse*, 1/65; Al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-irshād: ilā qawāti' al-adillah fī uṣūl al-i'tiqād*, edited, annotated, and introduced by Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsā and Ali 'Abd al-Mun'im 'Abd al-Hamid (Egypt: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1950), 3; Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-'Uqūl fī Dirāya al-Uṣūl*, 1/195.

<sup>8</sup> Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-'uqūl fī dirāya al-uṣūl*, 1/142.

<sup>9</sup> Tariq Jaffer, *Rāzī: Master of Qur'ānic Interpretation and Theological Reasoning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 117. Also see Nicholas Heer, "The Priority of Reason in the Interpretation of Scripture: Ibn Taymiyyah and the *Mutakallimūn*," in *Literary Heritage of Classical Islam, Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of James A. Bellamy*, ed. Mustansir Mir (Princeton, N.J.: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1993), 181-195.

In the formation of 'ilm al-Kalām, the problem of the *'aql-naql* (reason-transmission) relation played a significant role. Mu'tazilī theologians consider reason as a reliable source of knowledge. To them, if there were no revelation, people would still know the existence of God by means of their intellect, as well as the natures of things, and the existence of good and evil. They applied their rationalist approach to the interpretation of the Qur'an. They took offense at instances of *mujassimah* and *mushabbihah* (anthropomorphism) in the Qur'an and so endorsed *ta'wīl* that would absolve revelation of these seemingly crude depictions of God. On the other hand, giving weight to transmitted sources, the people of ḥadīth criticized the Mu'tazilī scholars for their rationalist interpretation of the Qur'an, particularly their approach to ambiguous verses (*mutashābih*) such as *yad Allah* (God's hand), giving rise to a rationalist concept of God that is abstract, divested entirely of attributes (*ta'ṭīl*) and personal qualifications while putting prophetic knowledge on the back burner. The tension between the Mu'tazila and the people of ḥadīth moved to the political sphere. As the Mu'tazila became more engaged in political interests, they weaponized rational methodology as a means to attack proponents of Sunni theology as irrational and unsound while politically domineering them.<sup>10</sup> As a result, the traditionalist groups became more reactionary against Mu'tazilī rationalism. As a result of the traditionalist backlash, the politicized Mu'tazila turned into a real obstacle against a rational Sunnī theology in its formative period. The political ambitions of the Mu'tazila increased the rigidity of the ahl al-ḥadīth against the Mu'tazila.

Despite the conflict between Mu'tazilī rationalism and the transmission-based attitude of the people of ḥadīth, there were scholars among the mainstream, such as Abd Allah b. Kullāb (d. 854), Ḥārith al-Muhāsibī (d. 857), Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 944), and especially Abū al-Hasan al-Ash'arī (d. 936), Mu'tazilī convert, who attempted to reconcile reason and tradition (*naql*) in religious matters. In the Ash'arī school of theology, the concepts of *nazar* and *istidlāl* (reasoning) stand at the heart of their theological system. Al-Ash'arī wrote a treatise in defense of Kalām and hence on the significance and correct use of reason in religion. He argues that there is no irreconcilable conflict between transmitted knowledge and the foundational assumptions of Kalām. In his work, *Istiḥsān al-Khawḍ fi 'ilm al-Kalām*, he seems to be arguing against the people of ḥadīth, who challenge the role of reason in religion. In *Istiḥsān*, he mentions the argument of the people of ḥadīth: for them, such issues as motion (*ḥaraka*), rest (*sukūn*), body (*jism*), accidents (*'araḍ*) would be addressed, if necessary, by the Prophet; however, "the Prophet, peace be upon him, did not die until he addressed all the necessary religious matters."<sup>11</sup> Dealing with such problems is considered *bid'ah* (deviation). Al-Ash'arī, on the other hand, proposes three rhetorical counterarguments against them. First, the Prophet himself did not say whether addressing these problems is *bid'ah*. He further states that the traditionalists commit *bid'ah* because they discussed

<sup>10</sup> For the Mu'tazilī engagement in politics, see John Abdallah Nawas, *Al-Ma'mūn, the Inquisition, and the Quest for Caliphal Authority* (Atlanta, Georgia: Lockwood Press, 2015); Muharrem Akoğlu, "Ahmed b. Ebi Du'ād'in Abbasi-Mu'tezilī Politikaları Üzerindeki Etkisi [The Impact of Aḥmad b. Abī Du'ād on the 'Abbāsī-Mu'tazilī policy]." *Bilimname: Düşünce Platformu* 3, no: 7 (2005).

<sup>11</sup> Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, *Risāla istiḥsān al-khawḍ fi 'ilm al-kalām*, annotated and introduced by Muhammad al-Walī al-Ash'arī al-Qādirī al-Rifā'ī (Beirut: Dar al-Mashārī' li-al-ṭibā'a wa-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 1995/1415), 38. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī criticizes the traditionalists in his *Istiḥsān*, which was most likely written before his conversion. In his post-conversion works, his language is more tolerant, although he still insists on the significance of reason in religion.



something the Prophet did not discuss.<sup>12</sup> *Khalq al-Qur'an*, for example, was one of the problems that the Prophet did not discuss. The people of ḥadīth, however, took a position and argued against the Mu'tazilī claim that the Qur'an was created. Second, indeed, the Prophet did not talk specifically about such issues as motion (*ḥaraka*), rest (*sukūn*), body (*jism*), and accidents (*'araḍ*), but he was not, al-Ash'arī argues, ignorant of those issues. It is also true that the basic principles of those issues exist in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.<sup>13</sup> Third, some problems in inheritance, *ḥadd*-punishments, divorce, and so on, were not discussed by the Prophet because they did not occur in his time, although their principles are present in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Based on the principles and issues already addressed, Muslim scholars practiced analogy (*qiyās*) and *ijtihād* (legal reasoning). If the later problems were to have occurred in the time of the Prophet, he would definitely have addressed them and not have left them unanswered.<sup>14</sup>

Although al-Ash'arī argues that there can be no conflict between no irreconcilable conflict between transmitted knowledge and the foundational assumptions of Kalām, by which he means metaphysical certainties of kalam, he shows an unsure attitude toward the interpretation of ambiguous phrases of the Qur'an. Similarly, Abu Bakr al-Bāqillānī (338-403 AH/950-1013 CE) avoids making any suggestions or practicing *ta'wīl* on ambiguous verses, like *yad Allah*. As Anjum discusses, by employing the *bi-lā-kayf* argument, al-Bāqillānī intentionally divorces himself from the Mu'tazilī view of *ta'wīl* and “shows his commitment to the legacy of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.”<sup>15</sup> In the example of *yad Allah*, he does not assert that God has hands as we do; however, he argues that the meaning of hands in the context of God should not be interpreted as simply His power because its true meaning cannot be known.<sup>16</sup> He discusses other possible figurative meanings of *yad* in the Arabic language. For example, *yad* can also be interpreted as a blessing. Taking into consideration other possible meanings of *yad*, he discusses possible misinterpretations and risks in the *ta'wīl* of the ambiguous phrases.<sup>17</sup>

Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (419-478 AH/1028-1085 CE) is another Ash'arī theologian who is unsure of applying *'aqliyyāt* in the interpretation of ambiguous phrases, God's attributes, and particularly the concept itself of God through *'aqliyyāt*. Based on Anjum's reading, he makes a conciliatory move toward the Mu'tazila by commending the consistency of their theological system.<sup>18</sup> In his *Irshād*, he argues for the importance of speculative reasoning (*nazar*) in religion. Speculative reasoning regarding God's existence, unity, attributes, and wisdom is —religiously— obligatory (*wājib*). The transmitted sources decreed the commitment to *nazar*.<sup>19</sup> For him, practicing *nazar* concerning the existence of God is obligatory for every believer. When it comes

<sup>12</sup> Ash'arī, *Risāla istiḥsān al-khawḍ fi 'ilm al-kalām*, 39

<sup>13</sup> Ash'arī, *Risāla istiḥsān al-khawḍ fi 'ilm al-kalām*, 39-46.

<sup>14</sup> Ash'arī, *Risāla istiḥsān al-khawḍ fi 'ilm al-kalām*, 47-51.

<sup>15</sup> Ovamir Anjum, *Politics, Law and Community in Islamic Thought: the Taymiyyan Moment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 142.

<sup>16</sup> Anjum, *Politics, Law and Community in Islamic Thought*, 142. See also Abī Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib ibn al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*, ed. Ritshard Yūsuf Makārthī (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-Sharqiyah, 1957), 259.

<sup>17</sup> Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*, 258-260.

<sup>18</sup> Anjum, *Politics, Law and Community in Islamic Thought*, 154.

<sup>19</sup> Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-irshād : ilā qawāṭi' al-adillah fi uṣūl al-i'tiqād*, edited, annotated, and explained by Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsā and 'Alī 'Abd al-Mun'im 'Abd al-'Hamīd (Egypt: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1950), 8.

to the concept of God based on the attributes stated in the transmitted sources, he slightly departs from al-Bāqillānī's view of *ta'wīl* and reinterprets some attributes of God metaphorically. His interpretation of God's hands, eyes, and face is as follows:

“Certain of our masters maintained that the two hands, the two eyes, and the face are proper attributes of the Lord God and that this is proven by tradition rather than rational proof. But what is correct, in our view, is that the hands should be construed as power, the eyes as vision and the face as existence.”<sup>20</sup>

He criticizes the traditionalists. For them, he states, interpreting the hands as power causes the text to lose its specific implication in this case. He argues that this is not true because the intellect “attests that creation cannot occur except by means of the power or by the All-powerful having power. Thus, there is no reason to think that the creation of Adam, peace be upon him, took place other than by means of the power.”<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, he argues that the vision of God (*ru'yat Allah*) is possible and presents a perplexing explanation of it, which is somewhat similar to the *bi-lā-kayf* argument.<sup>22</sup>

As Ömer Türker argues, Juwaynī's criticism of *nazarī* methods in theological knowledge marks a major turn in the Ash'arī school of theology.<sup>23</sup> However, the question of how one should understand Juwaynī's criticism of *nazar* naturally arises. I suggest that the distinction between positive and negative theology helps us understand both Juwaynī and the later Ash'arī scholarship. Even though there seems to be a consensus on the possibility of attaining metaphysical certainty in negative theology, Juwaynī is the first Ash'arī theologian who systematically shows his most critical approach to *nazar* in positing a cataphatic theology where *'aqliyyāt* become inconclusive in reaching metaphysical knowledge.<sup>24</sup> In *al-Burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, according to Juwaynī, the best theological knowledge the intellect can attain is the unsubtle (or general, Arabic *mujmal*) aspects of theological issues.<sup>25</sup> Juwaynī's distinction between apophatic and cataphatic theology becomes more obvious in his method of theological reasoning (*nazar*). He divides *nazar* into two camps: *al-burhān al-mustadd* (demonstration by formal reasoning) and *al-burhān al-khulf* (demonstration by contradiction; *reductio ad absurdum*). He shows an extreme reluctance to *al-burhān al-mustadd*, as he majorly relies on *al-burhān al-khulf* in theological issues.<sup>26</sup> We shall see a similar attitude in Rāzī's account of metaphysical knowledge with regard to his theory of *ta'wīl*.

Aiming for a moderate understanding of religion, Ghazzālī's writings appear to be a reaction to these two extreme accounts of theology: literalist and rationalist. As he refutes both rationalist

<sup>20</sup> Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-irshād*, 86. All translations from Juwaynī are mine unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>21</sup> Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-irshād*, 86-87.

<sup>22</sup> Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-irshād*, 93-102.

<sup>23</sup> See Ömer Türker, “Es'arī Kelâmının Kırılma Noktası: Cüveynî'nin Yöntem Eleştirileri,” *İslâm Araştırmaları Dergisi*, No: 19, 2008, pp.1-24.

<sup>24</sup> Juwaynī, *al-Burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, edited and introduced by 'Abd al-'Azīm al-Dayb (Al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Anṣār, 1979 [1399AH]), 1/127-136.

<sup>25</sup> According to Juwaynī, the intellect is temporal and limited because it is originated in time. Therefore, it cannot comprehend the reality of what is infinite. Juwaynī, *al-Burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, 1/142.

<sup>26</sup> Juwaynī, *al-Burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, 1/157.

theology in Islam and strict literalism, he also stands against the idea that revelation and reason would contradict one another. If there seems to be a conflict, according to him, it is the theologians' duty to offer a reconciliation between the two.<sup>27</sup> Ghazzālī offers some aspects of the method of *ta'wīl* (interpretation) in *Iljām al-'awām 'an 'ilm al-kalām* and *al-Qānūn al-kullī fī al-ta'wīl*. However, these two epistles do not introduce a comprehensive view of *ta'wīl*. In the first treatise, he strongly discourages the masses from delving into kalam, while in the second epistle, he dissuades them from any sort of interpretation. Concerning the rules of *ta'wīl*, the *Qānūn*, in particular, appears to be more of a rudimentary, partial, and incomplete text when compared to *Iljām al-'Awāmm* and *Fayṣal al-Tafriqa*, which are more comprehensive and sophisticated. Even if there seems to be a conflict between reason and a transmitted source, they were inclined to leave its true meaning to God without discussing possible meanings. In relation to understanding ambiguous Qur'anic phrases, such as *istiwā'*, the traditionalist attitude developed the *bi-lā-kayf* ("knowing without how," or "no questioning") argument and forbade speculative reasoning. Ghazzālī attempts to provide a more consistent theology and looks for a more coherent epistemology in which he intends to offer an alternative explanation to the *bi-lā-kayf*. Ghazzālī criticizes the methods of theologians, philosophers, and, to some extent, traditionalists. In this regard, he suggests that the personal/mystical experience of religion is the highest understanding of metaphysical issues. The experience is largely intuition (*mukāshafa*). By intuition, one can taste and know about things that cannot be known only by reason. When it comes to negative theology, Ghazzālī was the first scholar in the Sunnī tradition who attempted to formulate the rules of *ta'wīl* in connection with intellectual truths, which are considered metaphysical certainties.<sup>28</sup> He argues that "rational demonstration [*burhān al-'aql*] in essence cannot be wrong, for reason can never lead to falsehood. If it is deemed possible for reason to lead to falsehood, its establishment of [the truthfulness of] revelation is called into question."<sup>29</sup>

In *Qānūn al-Ta'wīl*, Ghazzālī again reviews the scholarly attitudes toward the relationship between reason and transmitted knowledge in three main categories: the pure literalist attitude, a mere rationalist account, and a synthesis of both accounts. He goes further and divides the third group into three: the first group endorses transmitted knowledge over reason without being attentive to rational proofs, the second group gives the intellect supremacy over the transmitted sources without deeply examining them, and the third group takes reason and transmitted knowledge as the two main sources of religion and makes an effort to reconcile them. For him, the last group is right. In this connection, he basically defends al-Ash'arī's position that there is no incompatible conflict between the transmitted knowledge and definitive rational proofs. For him, whoever rejects the epistemological significance of the intellect denies the religion because the message of

<sup>27</sup> Gazzālī, *Itikadda Orta Yol: al-Iqtisād fī al-i'tiqād*, a Turkish-Arabic parallel text, trans. Osman Demir (Istanbul: Klasik Yayinlari, 2012), 14-6. See also its English translation, *Moderation in Belief: al-Iqtisād fī al-i'tiqād*, trans. Aladdin M. Yaqub (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 1-4. See also Frank Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī at His Most Rationalist: The Universal Rule for Allegorically Interpreting Revelation (al-Qānūn al-kullī fī t-ta'wīl)," in *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of al-Ghazālī. Papers Collected on His 900th Anniversary*, ed. Georges Tamer (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015), 1/89-120.

<sup>28</sup> Anjum, *Politics, Law and Community in Islamic Thought*, 147.

<sup>29</sup> Anjum, *Politics, Law and Community in Islamic Thought*. 147.

the religion and the Prophet can be authenticated only by the intellect.<sup>30</sup> For him, *ta'wīl* is a method to resolve what seems to be a conflict between reason and transmission. In his defense of the last group, he does not escape ambivalence and makes a confusing case for *ta'wīl*, and thus for the relationship between reason and transmission as well. For him, although *ta'wīl* is an option, there are many possible meanings of a concept in the language of Arabs and making judgments based on possibilities and suppositions (*zann*) with regard to God's speech and the Prophet's intention is dangerous. In the end, he suggests a very similar method to that of Anas b. Malik, and advises that the safest route is to display an uncommitted attitude and leave their correct meanings to Allah by confessing that "I believe in them [because] they all are from my Lord" (3:7).<sup>31</sup> He even uses al-Mālik's argument to defend his prudent but ambivalent approach to *ta'wīl*, as will be mentioned.

The fourth and fifth centuries of the Muslim era, then saw a concerted effort to determine and argue for the correct relation between reason and revelation and the correct way to approach challenging hermeneutical issues arising from the Qu'ranic text. The main concern was the reconciliation between intellectual truths and revealed theological (ambiguous) phrases. Agreeing with the Mu'tazila, the mainstream theologians argued that ambiguous phrases should not be understood literally. Why? The outward meaning of transmission must not conflict with intellectual truths. On the other hand, unlike the Mu'tazila, the mainstream scholars developed a somewhat ambivalent stance on how to interpret those phrases. Even though Ghazzālī was the first theologian who formulated the rules of *ta'wīl*, his application is not completely free from ambivalence.

## 2. Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī's Account of *Ta'wīl* and Metaphysical Certainty

Rāzī is known for giving one of the moderate accounts of the relationship between reason and transmitted knowledge. He has his own peculiar methodology for understanding religion, which is, to some extent, analogous to the contextualist theory of epistemology. In this section, I will examine Rāzī's approach to the problem of the relationship between reason (*'aql*) and the transmitted sources (*naql*), while identifying the limits of his (rational) theological standpoint of *ta'wīl*, which is similar to the Mu'tazila in terms of interpreting ambiguous phrases but distinctively tolerant from them.

Distinguishing theology into two camps, the apophatic and the cataphatic, we see that the Kalam schools almost uniformly agreed that metaphysical certainty is only possible in apophatic theology, not cataphatic theology. Especially in the Ash'arī school of theology, Juwaynī appears to be the most critical scholar who systematically criticizes the existing Kalam methods in terms of cataphatic theology. In *al-Burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, Juwaynī criticizes previous Kalam methods through which a cataphatic theology was attempted.<sup>32</sup> He also offers a critique of the intellect in theological knowledge. According to him, the intellect cannot fully capture the full being of the divine or its attributes. The best theological knowledge the intellect can attain, for Juwaynī, is the

<sup>30</sup> Nicholas Heer, "Al-Ghazali's *The Canons of Ta'wīl*," in *Windows in the House of Islam: Muslim Sources on Spirituality and Religious Life*, ed. John Renard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 51.

<sup>31</sup> See Heer, "Al-Ghazali's *The Canons of Ta'wīl*," 54.

<sup>32</sup> Juwaynī, *al-Burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, 1/127-136.

unsubtle (or general, Arabic *mujmal*) aspects of theological issues.<sup>33</sup> He talks about two sorts of *naẓar* (reasoning): *al-burhān al-mustadd* (demonstration by formal reasoning) and *al-burhān al-khulf* (demonstration by contradiction; *reductio ad absurdum*). He states that all the theological issues which can be resolved are based on *al-burhān al-khulf*.<sup>34</sup> Favoring an Ash'arī apophatic theology, Rāzī remains loyal to Juwaynī's methodology in theological knowledge and implements his account of *ta'wīl* in such a way that intellectual truths become metaphysical certainties through *al-burhān al-khulf*. Mention should be made that there seem to be instances where no *ta'wīl* is possible. In those cases, as we will see in Rāzī's account of the rules of interpretation, scholars appeal to *tawaqquf* (leaving the true meaning to God). On the other hand, there are instances in which *ta'wīl* is considered necessary based on *al-burhān al-khulf* because there seems to be a conflict between the outward sense of a given transmission and reason (metaphysical certainties). Here, it is safe to state that Rāzī's rationality in theological knowledge, especially in the interpretation of ambiguous phrases such as *istiwā'*, reaches its finest form through *reductio ad absurdum*.

In *al-Arba'īn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, Rāzī asks whether transmitted knowledge (*naql*) is certain (*yaqīn*).<sup>35</sup> He mentions two groups: those defending its certainty (*yaqīn*) and those advocating for its probability (*ẓann*). It should be noted that Rāzī points to the possibility of a semantic shift and loss of the full sense in transmitted knowledge between the time of utterance and his time. Rāzī offers ten reasons for the epistemic probability of transmission. First, any transmitted source is not independent of language. However, the way of transmission of language is probable. Second, grammar is another element in understanding transmitted knowledge. Grammar consists of i) main theories (*uṣūl*) passing down from generation to generation and ii) subsidiary standards (*furū'*) being established by a set of rules. Neither of them is free from probability because the former includes single reports (*riwāyāt al-āḥad*), which signify probability. Also, the two prominent schools of grammar, al-Baṣriyyūn and al-Kūfiyyūn, disagree with each other regarding the main theories. As for the subsidiary standards, he argues that they are questionable. Third, homonymic words (*al-ishtirāk fī al-alfāz*) are another challenge in determining the true meaning of a transmission. Fourth is the question of determining the true (*ḥaqīqa*) or the figurative (*majāz*) meaning of a transmission. In the case of figurative meaning, there are many options, and choosing one of the figurative meanings might not be more proper than choosing another. Fifth, identifying pronouns (*iḍmār*) and determining deleted meanings (*ḥadhf*) also give rise to probability. Sixth, preposition (*taqdīm*) or postposition (*ta'khīr*) in a sentence are abundantly used in the Qur'an. However, Rāzī argues that this can result in probability. Seventh, Rāzī argues that it is almost impossible to reach a general statement (*'umūm*) without any exception or specificity

<sup>33</sup> According to Juwaynī, the intellect is temporal and limited because it is originated in time. Therefore, it cannot comprehend the reality of what is infinite. Juwaynī, *al-Burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, 1/142.

<sup>34</sup> Juwaynī, *al-Burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, 1/157.

<sup>35</sup> Recently, Rāzī's account of language and its epistemic value has been studied in the Turkish academy. For further readings, see Mehdi Cengiz, *Dilde Kesinlik Sorunu: Anlatabilmenin İmkânı* (Istanbul: Ketebe Yayınevi, 2021); Mehdi Cengiz and Şükran Fazlıoğlu, "Fahreddin er-Râzî'nin 'Dilde Kesinlik' Sorununa Yaklaşımı: Tespit ve Tercih," *Kutadgu Bilig* 42 (2020): 37-62; Selma Çakmak, "Fahreddin er-Râzî'de Lafzî Delillerin Kesinlik Sınırı ve Bilgi Değeri," *Pamukkale Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 7 (2020): 417-439; Selma Çakmak, "Dilin Kesinliği Müdafaasında İbn Teymiyye," *Pamukkale Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 9 (2022): 430-449.

(*ḥuṣūṣ*) and therefore raises doubts about its epistemic certainty. This discussion may seem to be peculiar to *Fiqh*. However, if we are talking about the Ash‘arī theology, their account of occasionalism significantly engages with this debate. In short, based on the philosophical account, every fire-cotton instance leads to the same conclusion. However, Rāzī would argue against the certainty of this conclusion because we cannot be certain that every instance of a fire-cotton relation has the same conclusion. In other words, the assumption that every fire-cotton relationship necessarily leads to the same conclusion could be proven only if all the instances of the cotton-fire relationship in the past, present, and future are known by us. However, it is impossible. Therefore, the Ash‘arī theologians developed their account of habit (*āda*) vs. necessity (*ḍarūra*). Eight, one of the vehemently debated issues is the problem of abrogation (*naskh*). The difference of opinion between schools necessarily gives rise to probability. Ninth, one piece of transmitted knowledge should not conflict with another piece of transmitted knowledge. If a conflict exists, one must choose one over the other. In this case, the choice would not be free from probability. Rāzī goes further and argues that we cannot be *certain* whether there exists another piece of transmitted knowledge conflicting with the transmitted knowledge known to us. Tenth and last, transmitted knowledge should not conflict with *certain* rational knowledge. He adds that if there is a conflict between the two, then transmitted knowledge should be reinterpreted (*ta’wīl*).<sup>36</sup> He concludes: “It has been established that transmitted proofs are contingent upon these ten premises, all of which are probable. That which is based on probability is most likely probable. Therefore, transmitted proofs are probable.”<sup>37</sup>

In *Ma‘ālim Uṣūl al-Dīn*, Rāzī argues that “it becomes evident that transmitted proofs are probable, whereas rational proofs are *certain*. Thus, probable cannot conflict with *certain*.”<sup>38</sup> In doing so, Rāzī successfully paves the way for *ta’wīl*. On the other hand, as noted before, Malik b. Anas makes a normative statement and forbids questioning the nature of ambiguous Qur’anic phrases. This attitude became the general attitude of the people of ḥadīth towards ambiguous verses in the Qur’an, such as *yad Allah* (God’s hand), *wajh Allah* (God’s face) and so on. As we discussed before, Ash‘arī scholars presented their ambivalence towards such issues. Although Ghazzālī attempted to formulate the rules of *ta’wīl*, he was not willing to practice it, as Rāzī states.<sup>39</sup> Mention should be again made that the Ash‘arī’s cautious attitude arises from the problem of assigning a specific equivalent to the ambiguous phrase in question. However, they are certain that the literal meaning of the ambiguous phrase should not be taken because it conflicts with an intellectual

<sup>36</sup> Rāzī, *al-Arba‘in fi uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā (Cairo: Maktaba al-Kullīya al-‘Azharīyya, 1986), 2/251-3; Rāzī, *al-Maḥsūl fi ‘ilm uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. Ṭāhā Jābir Fayyāḍ al-‘Alwānī (Beirut: Mu’assasa al-Risāla, n.d.), 1/390-407; Rāzī, *al-Muḥaṣṣal: Ana Meseleleriyle Kelâm ve Felsefe* (a Parallel Text of Turkish-Arabic) tr. Eşref Altaş (Istanbul: Klasik, 2019), 44; In the *Maṭālib*, Rāzī talks about ten criteria but slightly modifies them. See Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-‘āliyyā min ‘ilm al-ilāhi*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1987), 9/113-8. In the *Ma‘ālim*, Rāzī does not talk about all of the ten criteria. He mentions just five of them in a short passage. See Rāzī, *Uṣūl al-dīn li al-Rāzī wa huwa al-kitāb al-musammā ma‘ālim uṣūl al-dīn*, annotated and introduced by Ṭāhā ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf Sa’d (Cairo: Maktaba al-Kulliyāt al-Azharīya, 2004), 24.

<sup>37</sup> Rāzī, *al-Arba‘in fi Uṣūl al-Dīn*, 2/253; Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-‘āliyyā*, 9/113-4. All translations from Rāzī are mine unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>38</sup> Rāzī, *Ma‘ālim uṣūl al-dīn*, 24.

<sup>39</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī: al-mashūr bi-al-alfāz al-kabīr wa mafātiḥ al-ghayb* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 22/6.

truth. On the other hand, Rāzī appears to be more confident in practicing *ta'wīl* on ambiguous verses. Because of this willingness, Ibn Taymiyya identifies Rāzī as an extreme rationalist who denies prophetic knowledge.

As Ibn Taymiyya harshly criticizes Rāzī's account of *ta'wīl*, he considers Rāzī (and even Ghazzālī) part of the philosophical tradition.<sup>40</sup> Thus, one may rightly trace back to Ibn Taymiyya the argument that Rāzī's writings are philosophical theology. Frank Griffel disagrees with Ibn Taymiyya's reading of Rāzī on the basis of two claims: (i) "reason contradicts [information that comes from the prophets]" (*al-ʿaql yuʿarīḍu [mā jāʿat bihi l-anbiyāʾ]*) and (ii) "reason is the foundation of revelation (*al-ʿaql aṣl an-naql*)."<sup>41</sup> Although the latter could be deduced from Rāzī's account of transmitted knowledge, shown as probable in this study, the former, as Griffel rightly argues, corresponds with neither Rāzī's account of revelation nor with al-Ghazzālī's.

The major theological works of the Ashʿarī theologians, especially Juwaynī, Ghazzālī, and Rāzī, begin with the main concerns of their authors. In this regard, Ghazzālī's *Moderation in Belief* (*al-Iqtisād fī al-Iʿtiqād*) begins with the problem of the relationship between reason and transmission. Concerning his formulas, one of Ghazzālī's major arguments is based on the Ashʿarī assumption that there can be no conflict between reason and transmission. If there seems to be a conflict "at first glance and after a superficial examination,"<sup>42</sup> it is the theologian's duty to reconcile them.<sup>43</sup> An alleged conflict could result for many reasons. The most common reason is the semantic difference between literal and figurative meanings. If these Ashʿarī theologians were to delve into *ta'wīl* without making a distinction between the literal and the figurative, Ibn Taymiyya would be right in his accusation that Rāzī and his followers denied the prophetic knowledge about the concept of God.<sup>44</sup> As we shall see, Rāzī endorses this distinction and undertakes the responsibility of reinterpreting the literal meanings of Qurʾanic ambiguous phrases in light of intellectual certainties/truths. And these intellectual certainties function as metaphysical certainties.

A note should be added that especially since al-Ghazzālī, the view that reason is the foundation of revelation had seemed to be an unwritten rule in the Ashʿarī school of theology. The very first obligation in religion is *nazar* (speculative reasoning) about God's existence. When this is established, the problem of prophecy and the authenticity of prophetic knowledge becomes the second major question. As Griffel rightly points out, in Ashʿarī Kalam until Ghazzālī, "only miracles could confirm prophecy and thus verify revelation."<sup>45</sup> Although Ghazzālī does not reject this *de facto* attitude, he does not find it satisfactory. Griffel mentions two more ways of verifying revelation in Ghazzālī's view: reason and *sūfī* experience (*tajriba*).<sup>46</sup> Why is there such a tendency? The question of whether the miracles took place remains probable.

<sup>40</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾ taʿarūḍ al-ʿaql wa al-naql*, 1/4.

<sup>41</sup> Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī at His Most Rationalist," 90.

<sup>42</sup> Heer, "Al-Ghazālī's *The Canons of Ta'wīl*," 48; Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī at His Most Rationalist," 118.

<sup>43</sup> Ghazālī, *Moderation in Belief: al-Iqtisād fī al-iʿtiqād*, 1-4.

<sup>44</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾ taʿarūḍ al-ʿaql wa al-naql*, 1/4-5. See also Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī at His Most Rationalist," 90.

<sup>45</sup> Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī at His Most Rationalist," 113.

<sup>46</sup> Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī at His Most Rationalist," 113-5.

In addition, even if they took place, they happened in the time of the Prophet. So, our knowledge of the miracles is based on transmitted sources. As explained above, Rāzī argues for the probability of transmitted knowledge because a probable source could only prove another probable source. To avoid this vicious circularity, the Ash‘arī school leans toward the necessity of reason in religion. According to Rāzī, “the most advanced way to verify revelation is to compare it with what is known from reason.”<sup>47</sup> In this regard, the Qur’an is seen as the strongest miracle<sup>48</sup> because its message can be verified by reason. In other words, what is known as probable can be verified by what is known as certain. Moreover, reason becomes the yardstick for verifying the authenticity of revelation and interpreting it. Rāzī takes this tendency to its finest form, as we shall see in his *ta’wīl of istiwā’*.

It should be mentioned that Rāzī is not well organized in his interpretation of *istiwā’*. He begins directly with an explanation of the term. But when he finishes his explanation, he makes a reference to one of his other treatises, *Asās al-taqdīs fi ‘ilm al-kalām*, regarding his *qānūn al-ta’wīl* (the rules of interpretation). In this work, he reformulates the rules of *ta’wīl*. His *qānūn al-ta’wīl* is as follows:

“What is it to be done if a rational demonstrative proof contradicts the outward meaning of transmitted evidence? Know that there must be one of the four options if the proof of a thing is based on sound rational evidence and if we find a transmitted indication whose literal meaning makes us feel a conflict with [the rational evidence]. [First,] we are to accept the demands of both reason and transmission, which necessitates the acceptance of two contradictions at the same time. It is absurd. [Second,] we are to reject both, which necessitates the denial of two contradictories. It is also absurd. [Third,] we are to deny the literal meanings of the transmission and accept the rational significances. [Fourth,] we are to accept the literal meanings of the transmission while rejecting the rational significances. This is baseless (*bāṭil*) because we cannot know the authenticity of the literal meanings of the transmission unless we know [it] by rational proofs: the existence of the Creator, His attributes, the modality of the proofs of miracles for the truthfulness of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and the occurrence of the miracles at (the hand of) Muhammad, peace be upon him. If we are to condemn decisive rational proofs, which make the intellect suspicious, this is not an acceptable view. If it were so, [suspecting the intellect] would not, yet, be an acceptable view based on these principles. On the other hand, if these principles were not established, the transmitted proofs would not be useful, either. Thus, it has been established that tarnishing the intellect to accept the transmission only would discredit both the intellect and the transmission together. This is absurd. If we invalidate the four possibilities, no choice remains except [one option]: based on decisive rational proofs, [we conclude that] the transmitted sources are either incorrect or correct with the exception that their correct meanings are different from their literal meanings. If we are allowed to practice *ta’wīl*, we engage in practicing *ta’wīl* in detail as long as permitted. If we are not allowed to practice *ta’wīl*, we pass the [true] knowledge of it to Allah, the exalted. This is the general law to follow in all ambiguous verses [or issues].”<sup>49</sup>

The question of how to approach the ambiguous verses in the Qur’an is a sure indicator of a Muslim scholar’s particular understanding of the relationship between intellect and transmitted

<sup>47</sup> Griffel, “Al-Ghazalī at His Most Rationalist,” 117.

<sup>48</sup> Rāzī, *Ma‘ālim uṣūl al-dīn*, 91-2.

<sup>49</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Asās al-taqdīs fi ‘ilm al-kalām*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā (al-Qāhirah: Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azhariyah, 1986), 220-21. See also Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 22/6.



knowledge. As mentioned, the issue of understanding ambiguous phrases in the Qur'an seems to be one of the earliest problems. As early as the second Muslim century, as discussed above, Malik b. Anas was asked to explain *istiwā'* and answered angrily with the formula, "*Istiwā'* is known, [its] quiddity is unknown, the belief in it is obligatory, and the question of how is deviation (*bid'a*). I am afraid you are a misguided one (*dāll*)."<sup>50</sup>

According to this report, Anas believes even the inquiry into *istiwā'* and other ambiguous languages in the Qu'ran is misguided; the very question of how to understand such terms should not be raised. Despite such warnings, Rāzī argues that *istiwā'* cannot mean that God is firmly settled on the Throne because, according to him, the outward meaning conflicts with metaphysical certainties. He discusses *istiwā'* from different perspectives and practices *ta'wīl* because, for him, it is impossible for God to sit on the Throne in a literal sense based on both rational and transmitted knowledge.<sup>51</sup> He proposes sixteen rational arguments and eight transmitted sources (which can be judged to be "rational") to prove that *istiwā'* is one of the ambiguous phrases that must be interpreted metaphorically. In what follows, as I summarize his arguments for the necessity of *ta'wīl*, I will highlight how intellectual truths become metaphysical certainties in Rāzī's theology.

### 2.1. Rational Arguments

As a response to an anthropomorphic description of God, Muslim theologians developed the *tanzīhī* theology, which is apophatic or negative theology. Using this methodology, Muslim theologians offer a concept of God who is free from all corporeal accidents. The philosophers' concept of God—simple, eternal, and good—clearly influenced Muslim theologians who employ *tanzīh*. In the interpretation of *istiwā'*, Rāzī bases his rational arguments on God's simplicity on the grounds that anything composite is subject to (i) generation and corruption, (ii) growth, (iii) alteration, and (iv) locomotion. Since God is perfect (again, known rationally), these attributes would violate God's perfection, simplicity, and eternity.

In his first rational argument, Rāzī argues that if God were to settle on the Throne as understood literally, "He would have to be finite on the side that is close to the Throne; or else, it would be necessary for the Throne to be part of His essence (*dhāt*)."<sup>52</sup> For him, both are logically impossible because the intellect decrees that all finite beings increase or decrease in quantity. This premise, according to Rāzī, is necessary knowledge based on his use of *ḍarūrī*, which is a term in logic and philosophy referring to self-evident truths, such as "the whole is bigger than any one of its parts." If God were finite in some respects, His essence would accept increase and decrease in quantity. In this regard, God would be originated and thus in need of an originator based on the fact that all beings that accept increase and decrease are originated and need an originator. If *istiwā'* was

<sup>50</sup> Abū Ḥayyān Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf, *Tafsīr al-baḥr al-muḥīṭ*, edited and annotated by 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1993), 4/310-311.

<sup>51</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī: al-mashūr bi-al-al-tafsīr al-kabīr wa mafāṭīḥ al-ghayb* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 14/106. Although I also benefitted from the Turkish translation (1989), I shall cite the Arabic copy.

<sup>52</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/106.

understood literally, it would suggest that God would be originated from the side next to the Throne. This is absurd.<sup>53</sup>

In the second rational argument, Rāzī argues that if God were located in a place and direction, He would be either infinite in all directions, finite in all directions, or finite in some directions, to the exception of others. All of these options are invalid.<sup>54</sup> Rāzī argues for the impossibility of these options one by one. For instance, if God were in a place, according to Rāzī, God's essence would merge with all servile (*sufli*) and heavenly (*'ulwī*) objects. This is absurd for several reasons. First, He would be composed, the sum of all parts and wholes (a violation of the rational principle of simplicity). Second, everything between the skies and the earth would be at the same place at the same time and in different places. Since God would be located in a place, He could be located in a garbage dump. This cannot be possible. Rāzī further argues that assigning a location to God would limit His essence to a certain quantity and to a place. This would lead us again to a concept of God which is originated. Since God is free from anything imperfect, all these possibilities are absurd.<sup>55</sup>

In the third argument, Rāzī argues that the literal meaning of *istiwā'* would assign a place and direction to God. If God were in a place, He would be as big and wide as that of the place itself. This also necessities Him to have a magnitude, which is impossible. If God were in a location, the location would be eternal with Him, which is also absurd based on the consensus of the majority of scholars.<sup>56</sup> In the fourth argument, Rāzī examines the Qur'anic term *istiwā'* in respect to God as the Necessary Being. He argues that if we were to understand *istiwā'* literally, we would say that God is a possible being by being specified with space and direction because His essence would be in need of something other than Himself in order to be actualized and exist. Any being that requires something else to be actualized is possible in its essence. Rāzī makes his case from a philosophical standpoint and argues that if God were in need of a location, He would not be the Necessary Being. He, however, is always the Necessary Being in His essence, not being dependent on another.<sup>57</sup>

In the fifth proof, Rāzī focuses on the temporality of place and direction, which means absolute void and complete vacuum. The gist of this proof is based on the view that place *qua* place is temporal. If place, be it place *qua* place or this or that place, is temporal, that which is located in a place must be temporal. On the other hand, if God were to be located in a place, He would be temporal in a way that He would need a placer and, therefore, He would logically be originated in time. It is impossible.<sup>58</sup>

In the sixth proof, if God were located in a place and given a direction, He would be limited to the scope of the senses. In this case, such beings are either divisible or not.<sup>59</sup> Divisible beings are composed beings in a way that they are possible beings needing another being to come into

<sup>53</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/106-107.

<sup>54</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/107.

<sup>55</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/107-108.

<sup>56</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/108.

<sup>57</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/109.

<sup>58</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/110.

<sup>59</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/110.

existence, which is absurd for the Necessary Being. If God were indivisible but discernable through the senses, He would be an indivisible particle (*al-juz' lā yatajazzā* or *jawhar fard la yanqasim*). According to Rāzī, God, conceived of in this way, would be composed of trivial particles, which is impossible for God's essence, according to the people of intellect. Building on the sixth proof, in the seventh proof, he states that every self-subsistent being (*qā'im bi-al-nafs*) that is perceived through the senses is still divisible and, therefore, a possible being. Accordingly, since God is the Necessary Being, He cannot be perceived through the senses.<sup>60</sup>

In the eighth proof, according to Rāzī, if it were true that God was located in space, this space would be either (i) bigger than the Throne or (ii) equal to it, or (iii) smaller than it. In the first two cases, since the Throne is divisible, so it would be true for the space as well. This would again make God divisible next to the divisible space, which is absurd. If the third alternative were true, then it would be necessary for the Throne to be bigger than God. This is also absurd based on the consensus of scholars, including the opponents.<sup>61</sup> In the ninth argument, Rāzī argues that God being in a space would give rise to two problems: *i*) He would be finite in all directions or *ii*) would not. In the first case, God would create universes that are above/beyond Him. It is absurd. If God were to create things around Him, He would be located in the middle of those things. He would either touch them or be separate from them. These are absurd, too. God cannot be infinite in all directions because all the directions would be infinite with Him. It is impossible.<sup>62</sup> In the tenth argument, if God is in a space, Rāzī discusses the possibility of another being with God in that space. He raises three options: identicalness/equality (*masāwā*), dissimilarity (*mukhālafā*), and incarnation (*ḥulūl*). None of these is possible for God because they all violate His unity and simplicity.<sup>63</sup> In the eleventh proof, he argues that if God were located in space, it would be either possible for Him to move away from this space or impossible. Both are absurd. Rāzī's argument here is that motion and rest are the features of originated beings and in need of an originator, which is also *the* free agent (*fā'il mukhtār*). Since the Necessary Being is free from such physical characteristics, His establishment in a place is impossible. On the other hand, if we say that God is located in a place but cannot move away from it, it would mean that God was subject to disability.<sup>64</sup> In the twelfth proof, Rāzī makes the simplicity argument, which overlaps with the theory of *tanzīh*. In the rest of the rational arguments, Rāzī argues for the impossibility of God's being on the Throne as understood literally based on the fact that the earth is round. Based on this fact and some other scientific findings at his time, he makes similar arguments to the already mentioned ones from different perfectives.

In conclusion, the main concern of this study is not to explain Rāzī's method of *ta'wīl* in detail. Instead, it aims to demonstrate that Rāzī's account of certainty in theological knowledge should not be considered metaphysical agnosticism; that is, Rāzī did in fact believe that the intellect can

<sup>60</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/111.

<sup>61</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/111. Who are the opponents? Rāzī does not explicitly mention "the opponents" in the interpretation of verse 7:54. As one may easily guess, they are the Mushabbihah (anthropomorphists). In the interpretation of 20:5, he explicitly criticizes the Mushabbihah in ten respects. See Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 22/5-6.

<sup>62</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/111-112.

<sup>63</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/112-113.

<sup>64</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/113-114.

attain certainty in theological knowledge. As shown here, in a way very similar to his predecessors and even to the Mu'tazilā, he does not abandon intellectual truths in explaining his concept of God. Indeed, rationality is the test to which ambiguous terms are put. Those intellectual truths become metaphysical certainties in interpreting the Qur'anic descriptions of God. Accordingly, for Rāzī, it is necessary to practice *ta'wīl* in the interpretation of *istiwā'* by providing rational proofs. Interestingly, he gives rational arguments first and then turns to the transmitted sources. We now follow his lead to talk about the transmitted proofs.

## 2.2. The Transmitted Proofs

In this part, Rāzī interprets the Qur'an using the Qur'an itself (*Tafsīr al-Qur'an bi-al-Qur'an*). He emphasizes some major themes in the Qur'an as he proposed at the very beginning of the interpretation of this verse (7:54), namely God's unity, prophethood, metaphysics, and predetermination. Rāzī underlines the abundance of transmitted proofs and addresses some of them. Even though Rāzī calls them transmitted sources, he rationally interprets them.

The first verse he adduces is the first verse of chapter 112, in which God describes Himself as *āḥād*, the ultimate degree of one-ness.<sup>65</sup> In the explanation of this verse, he again appeals to the rational arguments he has already made. The second transmitted proof is verse 69:17. In this verse, God informs us about eight angels carrying the Throne. Rāzī argues that if God were to sit on the Throne, the angels carrying the Throne would carry Him, too. In this case, God would be both carried and carrier and protected and protected. This is absurd.<sup>66</sup> The third verse, whose theme is also repeated in other chapters of the Qur'an, is 47:38, in which God describes Himself as self-subsistent. This implies, argues Rāzī, that God is self-sufficient from space and direction.<sup>67</sup> In the fourth argument, Rāzī gives the dialogue between Pharaoh and Moses. Pharaoh asks Moses about God's essence (26:23), and Moses responds by talking about God's divine attribute of creation (44:7; 23:26-28). This, according to Rāzī, does not satisfy Pharaoh because he wants Moses to give a concept of God that is located in space. Rāzī goes further and argues that describing Allah in terms of space and direction follows the path of Pharaoh and other great sinners, not the religion of Mūsā and all other prophets.<sup>68</sup>

In the fifth proof, Rāzī returns to verse 7:54 and discusses the word *thumma* ("later" or "then" as in the verse "...then settled on the Throne"). He argues that *thumma* is used for a lapse of time (or subsequently). If *istiwā'* were to be interpreted literally, it would suggest that God is to move from one state to another after the creation of the heavens and the earth; in other words, He would be in motion at one time and at rest at another as other existents. This is absurd.<sup>69</sup> In the sixth Qur'anic proof, Rāzī discusses the Prophet Abraham's reasoning of God.<sup>70</sup> In the seventh proof, Rāzī reinterprets the part right before the *istiwā'* (7:54).<sup>71</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/118.

<sup>66</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/119.

<sup>67</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/119.

<sup>68</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/119.

<sup>69</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/119.

<sup>70</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/119-120.

<sup>71</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/120.

In the final argument, Rāzī examines the word *samā'* (sky), which, for him, is a noun indicating anything that rises and is high. He adduces another verse (8:11), in which God calls clouds *samā'*. For him, anything rising, towering up, and being high can be called sky (*samā'*). In this regard, if God were to sit on the Throne, His essence would be a sky for the things located on the Throne. On the other hand, the Qur'an underlines the fact that "He is the creator of all skies" in many verses, like verse 7:54. Again, if God were a sky above the Throne for things located on the Throne, He would be the creator of Himself. This is impossible.<sup>72</sup>

Rāzī adduces some verses from the Qur'an to show the impossibility of understanding *istiwā'* literally. In his rational arguments, the main themes are God's simplicity and unity, which are informed by rational truths. Even in explaining the transmitted indications, he appeals to rational arguments. All he wants to prove is the necessity of practicing *ta'wīl* in the *istiwā'*. On the other hand, he sometimes uses statements to show his adherence to his school of theology. One of his statements is as follows:

"If this is established, we say that His saying "[He is the one] who creates the skies and earth" is a precise verse (*muḥkam*) that demonstrates that His saying "then, He settled on the Throne" is one of the ambiguous verses and must be interpreted. This is a subtle point. Similarly to this, He, exalted, said at the beginning of the chapter *al-An'ām* that "And He is Allah in the skies." (6:3) Then He said soon after it that "To whom belongs whatever is in the skies and earth. Say, to Allah." (6:12) This last verse demonstrates that everything in the skies belongs to Allah. If He were in the skies, He would be the owner of Himself. This is absurd. The same applies here. It is established by these rational and transmitted proofs that it is impossible to interpret His saying "then, He settled on the Throne" as sitting, settling, and occupying a place and location [as understood literally]. At this point, according to the scholars who are firmly grounded, there exist two doctrines. The first doctrine is that we certainly know that Allah is exalted above place and direction. Then, we do not delve into an interpretation of the verse in detail. Rather, we entrust (or refer) its knowledge to Allah, which is what we have established in the interpretation of His saying "And no one knows its [true] interpretation except Allah." But those firms in knowledge say, "We believe in it. All [of it] is from our Lord." (3:7) This is the doctrine that we choose and support and depend on. The second doctrine is for us to delve into its interpretation in detail."<sup>73</sup>

Although Rāzī argues that the first doctrine is the one that his school of theology chooses, supports, and depends on, he has primarily chosen the second doctrine, delving into the interpretation, *ta'wīl*, of ambiguous verses. On the other hand, in the interpretation of verse 20:5, he gives the impression that the first group was said to be avoiding *ta'wīl* altogether. Here, he states that al-Ghazzālī and some friends of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal adopted the first attitude. According to Rāzī, if intellectual certainties conflict with the outward meaning of the phrase, they cannot simply state that the outward meaning should not be understood as it is, even though, he argues, what they do is a sort of interpretation. He further argues that leaving the phrase without interpreting it is not permissible. Therefore, it must be interpreted with the best possible Arabic correspondence.<sup>74</sup> As we have shown in the *ta'wīl* of *istiwā'*, he wants to highlight the problems that arise—both philosophical and theological—from the literal understanding of *istiwā'* in light

<sup>72</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/120

<sup>73</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 14/114-115.

<sup>74</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 22/6.

of rational certainties. His method of *ta'wīl* favors the intellect. In his *Asās al-taqdīs fī 'ilm al-kalām*, he goes further and argues that if a transmitted source conflicts with the intellect, the transmitted source needs to be reinterpreted with the evident conclusion of the intellect. In the interpretation of verse 2:7, based on the probability of transmitted sources, he argues for the necessity of *ta'wīl*:

“Transmitted proofs do not lead to certainty, whereas intellectual truths lead to [metaphysical] certainties. Thus, the probable [transmitted sources] cannot be inconsistent with the certain [intellectual truths]. The reason why the transmitted sources do not lead to certainty is based on principles, all of which are probable. That which is based on the probable is probable. We have mentioned that [transmitted sources] are based on probable principles because they are based on the transmission of (i) languages and (ii) grammar. The transmission of these things cannot be known [with certainty] in terms of whether their transmission reaches the level of authentic (*tawātur*). Thus, their transmission is probable. Also, the transmitted sources are probable because of (iii) homonymic words, (iv) figurative meanings, (v) specification, (vi) pronouns, (vii) preposition and postposition. All of these are probable. Also, (viii) it is not certain whether [a transmitted source] conflicts with an intellectual truth. If there were a conflict, they could not both be true, and one would be wrong. Transmission cannot be chosen over intellectual truth because *the intellect is the foundation of transmission*. Impeaching the intellect necessarily leads to the impeachment (*ṭa'n*) of both the intellect and transmission together. However, the absence of a conflict between the intellect [and transmission] is probable. What is [the principle] if there seems to be a conflict between intellectual truths and outward meanings of [transmitted sources]? It has been established that transmitted sources are [always] probable. So, there is no doubt that the probable [transmission] cannot conflict with the certain [the intellect].”<sup>75</sup>

As Ibn Taymiyya rightly states, Rāzī explicitly argues that “the intellect is the foundation of revelation.” (*al-'aql aṣl al-naql*).<sup>76</sup> As shown, the intellectual truths become metaphysical certainties in not only the concept of God but also the intellect becomes the yardstick for determining the best possible Arabic translation in the process of *ta'wīl*. Especially in the translation of *'istiwā'*, Rāzī appears to be more determined. The foregoing leads clearly to the fact that there is a great shift in the application of theory to practice regarding the role of reason in religious matters and the interpretation of religious textual sources. The Ash'arī scholars up to Rāzī had discussed the role and importance of reason in religion. In their application, they slightly appeal to the *bi-lā-kayf* argument showing their stance against the Mu'tazilī rationality. On the other hand, Rāzī provides a more rational theology and explanations in the interpretation of *istiwā'*. We may need to note again that Rāzī remains committed to the Ash'arī school of theology through his tolerant language. On the other hand, in his interpretation of *istiwā'*, he practices *ta'wīl*, which is, one may argue, more similar to the Mu'tazila, which no longer posed a political threat to Sunni theology.

## Conclusion

During the formative period of Islamic sciences, the problem of the role of reason in religion polarized schools of thought. As the Mu'tazila represent one extreme to the problem holding on to reason as the only source of knowledge, the people of ḥadīth represent the other arguing against the Mu'tazila and embracing transmitted sources as the only reliable source of knowledge

<sup>75</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 2/63.

<sup>76</sup> Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 22/7.

in religion. In the period that followed, moderate approaches to the problem emerged and soon became dominant. Two of the leading scholars of the moderate approaches are Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī and Abū Manṣūr al-Māturidī. In the paper, I have provided a brief historical context regarding reason and transmitted sources, as highlighting the roots of the main components and then presented Rāzī's approach to the problem based on his interpretation of an ambiguous phrase, *istiwā*, in his *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*. The main concern of this paper is to show his optimism and even firm stance on 'aqliyyāt regarding metaphysical issues.

The first premise of this paper is that there is a strong parallelism between the debate over the relationship between reason and transmitted knowledge and the formation of Kalām schools. The second premise is that the Mu'tazila played a key role in the formation of those schools. I have chosen the Ash'arī school of theology to better understand the epistemological shifts up to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and to examine the role of the Mu'tazila in the formation and development of Sunnī theology. My argument is simple and as follows: The Mu'tazila were the real obstacle to the rationality of Sunnī theology in its formative period. The Mu'tazilī model of rationality was rooted in political interests and become intolerant towards others, and the Sunnī schools of thought extended their position against the Mu'tazilī political aggression by also opposing the Mu'tazilī model of rationality. It was reactionary but ultimately temporary.

On the other hand, the development of rational theology in the mainstream was inaugurated with al-Māturidī and al-Ash'arī at the beginning of the fourth century. However, the methodological ambivalence in interpreting the textual sources of the religion remained for two more centuries until Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. The ambivalence was overcome by the "near-complete triumph of reason," and Sunnī theology reached its "most developed form"<sup>77</sup> in the work of Rāzī. The principle of interpretation in the pre-Rāzī Ash'arī school of theology slightly differs from that of the people of ḥadīth. The principle of interpretation (*qānūn al-ta'wīl*) was in favor of transmitted knowledge at the expense of rational arguments, even though it was quite ambivalent. With Rāzī, if the intellect appears to be in contradiction with transmitted knowledge, the intellect takes precedence over transmitted knowledge/revelation on the condition that the literal meaning of the text needs to be interpreted by a metaphorical reading in conformity with rational truths. As discussed in the paper, Rāzī successfully applies his account of 'aqliyyāt in the interpretation of the ambiguous term, *istiwā*' based on his account of metaphysical certainty.

In conclusion, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī marks a major turn in Sunnī theology with his reconciliation of reason and transmitted knowledge. Since he felt the need for a new method in understanding religious matters, he went on to reconcile 'ilm al-Kalām and philosophy without brushing aside the concerns of the people of ḥadīth. As discussed in the paper, Rāzī successfully applied his principle of *ta'wīl* to ambiguous phrases of the Qur'an such as *istiwā*'. In the example of *istiwā*', he offers explanations to the term in various Qur'anic verses (7:54; 10:3; 13:2; 20:5; 32:4; 57:4; 25:59). He makes his richest explanation in the interpretation of the verse 7:54. Here, he shows his openness to different ideas and decisively uses the intellect as the primary source in theological knowledge. Since he makes a shift to "a more liberal exchange of ideas, a 'synthesis' even, between Kalām and

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<sup>77</sup> Anjum, *Politics, Law and Community in Islamic Thought*, 149.

Falsafa,<sup>78</sup> his analyses of religious issues offer us a wider intellectual background about Kalām and philosophy. As we have shown in the explanation of *istiwā'*, he does not mind abandoning the explanations of classical Kalām, and attempts to provide a comprehensive and rational theology in which intellectual truths become metaphysical certainties

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<sup>78</sup> Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, 1.



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## An Analysis of Sırrı Pasha's Translation of Sharḥ al-‘Aqā'id with a Focus on the Issue of Free Will

Sırrı Paşa'nın Şerhu'l-Akāid Tercümesi'nin Cüz'î İrâde Meselesi Örneğinde Analizi

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## Abstract

This paper analyzes Giridi (the Cretan) Sirri Pasha's (1844-1895) translation of *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id al-Nasafiyya* by al-Taftāzāni (d.792/1390). The paper begins with contextualizing this translation by alluding to the background of Sirri Pasha and his other works. I particularly pay attention to the translator's prolegomenon which reflects his conception of *kalām*. Then the paper shows how a translation expands this classical Mātūrīdite *kalām* text for the nineteenth century Ottoman readers, by including all different opinions from other commentaries and glosses on *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id*. Collection of views in the translation enables us to compare all different positions. Sirri Pasha did not only translate the text and quoted other interpretations but put forward his own comments. Thus, I call it "commentarial translation". This study also analyzes the views on the concept of human free will, which was regarded as the main conflict between Mātūrīdī and Ash'arī schools. Sirri and his sources hold fast to the Mātūrīdī position in their discussion of the particular free will (*al-irāda al-juz'iyya*).

**Keywords:** Kalām, Mātūrīdī kalam, Sirri Pasha, *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id*, Translation, Free will.

## Öz

Bu makalede Giritli Sırrı Paşa'nın (1844-1895) *Şerhu'l-Akâid Tercümesi* analiz edilmektedir. Makalede öncelikle Sırrı Paşa'nın entelektüel arka planı ve diğer eserlerine değinilerek tercüme tarihsel bağlamına yerleştirmeye çalışıldı. Özellikle mütercim kelâm tasavvurunu yansıtan mukaddime kısmına dikkat çekildi. Mâtürîdî kelâmına dair klasik bir metnin on dokuzuncu yüzyıl Osmanlı okuyucusu için *Şerhu'l-Akâid*'in diğer şerh ve haşiyelerindeki farklı yorumları içerecek şekilde tercümenin nasıl genişlediği gösterildi. Tercümede farklı görüşlerin bir araya toplanması, aynı mesele karşısında farklı yaklaşımların birbirleriyle karşılaştırılabilmesini sağlamaktadır. Sırrı Paşa sadece metni tercüme edip diğer yorumları nakletmekle kalmamış, kendi yorumlarını da ortaya koymuştur. Bu nedenle bu tercüme "yorumlu tercüme" olarak adlandırılmaktadır. Örnek olarak bu çalışma Mâtürîdî ve Eş'arî ekolleri arasındaki temel ihtilaflardan biri olarak görülen *irâde-i cüz'iyye* kavramı üzerine odaklanmaktadır. Sırrı Paşa ve faydalandığı kaynaklardan Cevdet Paşa bu meselede Mâtürîdî görüşü benimsemişlerdir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kelâm, Mâtürîdî kelâmı, Sırrı Paşa, *Şerhu'l-Akâid*, Tercüme, Cüz'î irâde.

## Introduction\*

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries after Tanzimat period there was an intensive translation activity. Many scientific and philosophical texts were translated from French and Arabic into Ottoman Turkish. This paper looks at the translation of a *kalām* text in nineteenth century. However, before getting into the topic, let me note some important studies on Ottoman Turkish translations. A number of scholars including Saliha Paker, Zehra Toska, Berrin Aksoy, Cemal Demircioğlu and Sadık Yazar have made important contributions to the field of Ottoman translation studies.<sup>1</sup> They have pointed out that the boundary between translation and original is not clear in the Ottoman period translations. They have also shown that there were different forms of translation practices. Hence, some of them such as Paker and Demircioğlu dealt with the concept of *terceme* (translation) as a one way of producing original work (*te'lif eser*). Since

\* A previous version of this paper was presented on 29 October 2017 in Jordan at a conference entitled "Understanding Maturidi Kalam – Legacy, Present & Future Challenges". I would like to thank the editor and the reviewers for their suggestions which were very useful for revising the paper.

<sup>1</sup> Saliha Paker, "Telif, Tercüme ve Özgünlük Meselesi", *Metnin Halleri: Osmanlı'da Telif, Tercüme ve Şerh Eski Türk Edebiyatı Çalışmaları IX*, ed. Hatice Aynur et al. (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2014), 36-71; Sadık Yazar, "Bakir Bir Araştırma Sahası Olarak Osmanlı Tercüme Geleneği", *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi* 60/1 (2020), 153-178; Berrin Aksoy, "Translation Activities in the Ottoman Empire", *Meta: Journal des traducteurs/Meta: Translators' Journal* 50/3 (2005), 949-956.

translating had a meaning of interpreting in the Ottoman translations.<sup>2</sup> That is because, transferring (*naql*) textual products occurs through translations, adaptations, additions, or omissions. According to Toska, we should not evaluate the original text and its translation as opposed to each other.<sup>3</sup> Their studies are mostly on the literary translations, however there is a gap in theological translations. Following their perspective, in this study I look at a case of a theological translation activity during the late Ottoman Empire.

There is an increase in translation of theological works in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Earlier translations were usually brief creedal texts beginning from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Larger theological texts were being translated into Turkish during 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. These are the translations of *Sharḥ al-‘Aqā’id al-Nasafiyya* by Sa‘d al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-‘Aqā’id al-‘Adudiyya* by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī, *al-Fiḥ al-akbar* by Abū Ḥanīfa, *Tawālī‘ al-Anwār* by Qādī al-Baydāwī, *‘Aqā’id* of al-Tahāwī, *Qasīdat Bad’ al-Amālī* by Sirāj al-Dīn al-Ūshī and *al-Qasīda al-Nūniyya* by Hızır Bey.<sup>4</sup> As a case study, I look at the translation of *Sharḥ al-‘Aqā’id al-Nasafiyya* (The Commentary on the Creed of al-Nasafī), which is one of the most important source texts of Māturīdism. I chose the translation of Sirrī Pasha, as it is representative of a combining kind of translating.

The creed was written by Najm al-Dīn Omar al-Nasafī al-Samarqandī (d. 537/1142), a twelfth century Māturīdī theologian and a Hanafī jurist. al-Nasafī’s *Aqā’id* was so essential that it was also translated by the Orientalists in the eighteenth century. In 1788 its translation to French was published, in 1792 to German, in 1903 to English. Nasafī’s text was among the Ottoman madrasa curricula and it was very suitable for memorization. It was titled as *al-‘Aqā’id*, which means the creed of Islam. It was studied and taught in advanced level madrasas with its most prevalent commentary, *Sharḥ al-‘Aqā’id*, was authored by al-Taftāzānī (d.793/1390), who was an Ash‘arī scholar. This commentary was one of the highly esteemed books among the Ottoman ulama. Throughout centuries many glosses were written upon it until modern times.

The Ottoman Turkish translation of the *Sharḥ al-‘Aqā’id* is made by Selim Sirrī Pasha Girīdī (the Cretan) (1844-1895). Sirrī Pasha consulted the major glosses of this commentary including that of glosses of al-Khayālī (d. 875/1470[?]), Isām al-Dīn Isfarāyīnī (d. 945/1538), Ramazan Efendi (d. 979/1571), Siyālkūtī (d. 1067/1657) and Kefevī (d. 1168/1754). Sirrī Pasha also benefited from contemporary writings such as Ahmed Cevdet Pasha’s (d. 1895) translation of Ibn Khaldun’s *Muqaddima*.<sup>5</sup> It appears that during the nineteenth century there was an increasing interest

<sup>2</sup> Cemal Demircioğlu, “Osmanlı Çeviri Tarihi Araştırmaları Açısından ‘Terceme’ ve ‘Çeviri’ Kavramlarını Yeniden Düşünmek”, *Journal of Turkish Studies (Türklük Bilgisi Araştırmaları)* 33/1 (2009), 159-177; Saliha Paker, “On the poetic practices of ‘a singularly uninventive people’ and the anxiety of imitation”, *Tradition, Tension and Translation in Turkey*, ed. Ş. Tahir Gürçağlar et al. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2015), 27-52.

<sup>3</sup> Zehra Toska, “Evaluative Approaches to Translated Ottoman Turkish Literature in Future Research”, *Translations: (Re)shaping of Literature and Culture*, ed. Saliha Paker (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2002), 58-76.

<sup>4</sup> See Serbestzade Ahmed Hamdi, *İlm-i Kelamdan Akāid-i Adudiyye Şerhi Celal Tercümesi* (Trabzon: Serasi Matbaası, 1311 [1893]); Müstakimzâde Süleyman Sâdeddin, *Fıkh-ı Ekber Tercümesi* (İstanbul: İkdam Matbaası, 1314 [1896]); Hafız Refi, *Kaside-i Emālī Tercümesi* (İstanbul: Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1302 [1884]); İsmâil Müfîd Efendi, *Kaside-i Nûniyye Şerh ve Tercüme-i Manzûmesi* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, H. Hüsnü Paşa, 892.7); Üsküp Kadısı Mustafa Sıdkı, *Tavālī‘ Tercümesi* (İstanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Giresun, 160).

<sup>5</sup> Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tercüme-i Mukaddime-i İbn Haldûn* (İstanbul: Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2015).

toward these kinds of translations outside madrasa circles, as the number of educated people was rising thanks to the newly established schools and colleges.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed many changes when this commentary was translated. Many scholars such as Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905) in Egypt attempted to revitalize *kalām* thought. It seems that Sirrî Pasha did not aim to change the traditional views, but he intervenes and stresses on certain problems, which illustrate how an Ottoman scholar received and transmitted the classical *kalām* thought in this reform period. There was an emphasis on Hanafî-Māturîdî tradition in the late Ottoman history. Māturîdî thought, especially the idea of human free will and power to act, drew interest from the larger Sunnî tradition in the modern *kalām* thought. Also, Sirrî Pasha's writing may have been influenced by his political environment where the non-Muslim groups began challenging or rising against Ottoman rule as they were receiving protection and support from European nationalism. Subsequently, this led to many religious conflicts and wars in Ottoman territory. Thus, all these intellectual, social, and political changes were making their way into Sirrî Pasha's writings in general and his comments in this translation in particular.

### 1. Sirrî Pasha: An Ottoman Scholar-Bureaucrat

Selim Sirrî Pasha was an Ottoman bureaucrat, a poet, and also a scholar of *tafsîr* and *kalām*. He was born in the town of Heraklion (Kandiye) in the island of Crete in 1844. We should recall that the Cretan Revolt took place in between 1866-69 against Ottoman rule. Therefore, it is likely that Sirrî himself grew amidst tensions between Muslims and Christians living on the island. After completing his primary education in Crete, Sirrî served as a clerk (*kâtip*) in various Ottoman provinces. In 1872 he was appointed to the chief secretary (*mektupçu*) of Tuna province. He was a successful statesman. At the end of his career, he became the governor of Bağhdād and Diyarbakir. Sirrî Pasha died in 1895 in Istanbul where he was receiving treatment for a heart disease.<sup>6</sup>

Since Sirrî Pasha had a good grasp of Arabic and Persian, he translated from both languages into Turkish. Firstly, he composed commentarial translation of *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id* of al-Taftāzānî and then published its summary entitled *Naḳdū'l-kelām fî 'aḳā'idî'l-İslām* in 1884. In this field he also wrote on the views about seeing God in paradise, titled *Rü'yetü'l-Bârî hakkında risâle* (Treatise on the Beatific Vision of Creator). His book *'Ārāu'l-Milel* (Views of the Nations) is a compilation about the history of theological sects. Also, in his treatise titled *Rûh Risâlesi*, Sirrî describes the ideas of the Muslim thinkers on the spirit. Another book he penned is entitled *Nûru'l-Hüdâ li-men İstehdâ* (the light of guidance for the one who seeks the guidance), which was published in Diyarbakir. It is about the falsifying Christian belief in trinity and proving alteration (*tahrîf*) of the Bible. Besides, Sirrî wrote an exegesis of several chapters of the Quran and his main source was Fakr al-Din al-Râzî's *Tafsîr al-Kabîr*. The most important tafsir book he authored was *Aḥsenü'l-Ḳaṣaṣ* (The Best of

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<sup>6</sup> Cemal Kurnaz, "Sirrî Paşa", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2009), 37/127-128.

Tales), an exegesis of the surah Yūsuf.<sup>7</sup> In his tafsīr works he uses mostly method of rational interpretation (*dirāya*) rather than transmitting traditions (*riwāya*).<sup>8</sup>

Ottoman ulama usually studied and composed texts in the commentary/gloss (*sharḥ /hāshiya*) style. Among the commentaries that were highly esteemed in the Ottoman Empire we can mention the *Sharḥ al-‘Aqā’id* of al-Taftāzānī, which was written in 1367. It was taught in the madrasas and glossed upon by many scholars until modern times.<sup>9</sup> The glosses also were received well. Among them the gloss of Ahmed b. Musa (d. 1481), known as Khayālī, gained notoriety and became a madrasa textbook in its own right. Sırrī Pasha undertook translation of *Sharḥ al-‘Aqā’id* while working in the Vilayet of the Danube (Tuna). Initial parts of the translation were published in 1875 (1292 AH) in Ruse (Ruşçuk), the capital of Danube. The last part was published in Trabzon in 1884, because the printing press was closed in Ruse. This translation of Sırrī Pasha includes glosses from Khayālī and other prominent glossators of *Sharḥ al-‘Aqā’id*. Collection of views in the translation enables us to compare all different positions on various theological issues. For such an example, we will look at the section on free will. However, first we will provide an overview of Sırrī’s reason for translation and his method and then look at the prolegomenon which is his own composition.

## 2. Sırrī’s Reason for Translation and His Method

Ottoman translators usually added an introduction and a conclusion to the source text. In these additional sections, we can find the reason for composing (*sebeb-i te’lif*) a text. Sırrī Pasha adds his purpose of translation in his foreword (*temhîd*) by stating that the Arabic text is difficult for the majority to benefit from. Besides, it is worth to translate a recognized work rather than floundering to write an original work.<sup>10</sup> However, it seems that he did something more than translating, he compiled from many sources and constructed a new text. His lengthy introduction is his own composition, and four volumes of translation is around 800 pages. Thus, his main reason for translating a theological text is the audience who are the new intellectual elite and not necessarily proficient in Arabic.

Sırrī states his method of translation in the beginning. He wanted to translate the text word-by-word, but he was obliged to summarize some discussions. As is well-known, there are two main methods of translation: word for word and sense for sense. Sırrī summarizes some discussions marking them in the headlines of the subject that it is a summary (*telhîş*). Sırrī also notes other sources he used in order to discern them from the main text under translation.<sup>11</sup> This act of summarizing is also a rewriting of the text. It is actually a kind of commenting and glossing. In fact, his writing style is similar to other glosses. Sırrī adds his own views under the title headings such as 'for the translator' (*li'l-mütercim*), additional note (*lâhiqa*), benefit (*fâ’ide*), answer (*cevâb*).

<sup>7</sup> Kurnaz, "Sırrı Paşa", 37/128; Bursalı Mehmed Tahir, *Osmanlı Müellifleri*, ed. Fikri Yavuz - İsmail Özen (İstanbul: Meral Yayınevi, 1972), 2/368-369.

<sup>8</sup> Ekrem Gülşen, "19. Yüzyılda Bir Osmanlı Valisi: Giritli Sırrı Paşa ve Tefsir Anlayışı", *Sakarya Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 12/22 (2010), 186.

<sup>9</sup> Sırrı Paşa, "Mukaddime", *Şerh-i Akâid Tercümesi* (Ruscuk: Tuna Vilayet-i Celilesi Matbaası, 1875), 4.

<sup>10</sup> Sırrı, "Mukaddime", 3.

<sup>11</sup> Sırrı, "Mukaddime", 4-5.



He also puts down a compact conclusion (*netīce*) after bringing together different interpretations. He sometimes expresses his views in the footnotes, where at other times he gives definitions of basic concepts related to the topic under discussion.

In some footnotes Sirri Pasha poses a presumed question (*suâl-i muḳadder*) to the author. For example, according to Taftāzānī's commentary, Nasafī reminds that it is suitable to begin the book with the topic of knowledge, which is an introductory subject of kalām books. Sirri points out that this comment was an answer to a presumed question which was raised as to why the author did not start the text with the most important aim of kalam, i.e., the existence of Creator and His unity, but rather preferred beginning with the problem of created beings (*muḥdathāt*), i.e., the world (*kā'ināt*) and its states [substances (*a'yān*) and accidents (*a'rāz*)]. Reminding these issues leads to knowing the essence and attributes of the Creator. Here Sirri Pasha adds that philosophers discuss natural body in physics since it is a part of the world too. But their vision is different from theologians because they study natural body regarding whether it is moved or unmoved. However, theologians study it in so far it indicates existence and attributes of the Creator.<sup>12</sup>

Sirri occasionally explains the topic in a dialogue style. For example, in the subject of universals and particulars, he writes a dialogue between a philosopher and a pupil (*shākird*) discussing if Allah knows the particulars (*juz'iyāt*)<sup>13</sup> and then another dialogue between a virtuous person (*fāzil*) and a theologian on the same topic.<sup>14</sup> This method of dialogue makes it easier to learn and understand the theological problems. From these translation strategies, it can be said that Sirri Pasha did not only translate the text and quoted other interpretations but put forward his own comments which makes it a mix of literal and free translation. This shows how the translator intervenes in the text and it can also be seen as an interpretation activity. Thus, I call it "commentarial translation".

### 3. The Sources of Sirri's Prolegomenon (*Muḳaddime*)

Sirri composed a lengthy introduction for the translation. Although this is Sirri's own composition, it does quote many passages from other classical books such as *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* of Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjānī (d. 1413), *Muḳaddima* of Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), and *Kashf al-Zunūn* of Kātib Chelebi (d. 1657). Relying on these sources, the introduction provides, in a way, a history of thought. It begins with the emergence of the divergences (*ikhtilāfāt*), after the Prophet Muhammad died, between his companions. This section is mostly based on the appendix of *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* of al-Jurjānī, which is another famous book taught in the madrasas. Sirri instead introduces his translation with this exposition of kalām's historical background.

In the appendix of *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, al-Jurjānī reports from al-Āmidī saying that when the Prophet died all Muslims were in one creed and one way except hypocrites. He mentions divergence among the Muslims in five issues: first, whether the Prophet was conscious in deathbed when he wanted a paper; second, whether Usama should be the commander of an army as the Prophet ordered; third, whether the Prophet was really dead or still alive; fourth, where to bury him, and

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<sup>12</sup> Sirri, *Şerh-i Akāid Tercümesi* (Ruscuk: Tuna Vilayet-i Celilesi Matbaası, 1875), 1/9.

<sup>13</sup> Sirri, *Şerh-i Akāid Tercümesi*, 1/310-314.

<sup>14</sup> Sirri, *Şerh-i Akāid Tercümesi*, 1/314-316.

finally who would be the caliph.<sup>15</sup> Then, the misguided seven big sects are elaborately explained with their subgroups. The main sects are respectively Mu'tazila, Shi'a, Khawārij, Murji'ah, Najjāriyya, Jabriyya, and Mushabbiha. The eighth group is the one which will be saved (*Nājiyya*) in the hereafter. The main source for this section is *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif, Muqaddima* of Ibn Khaldun together with its translation by Cevdet Pasha (d. 1895) and occasionally Gelenbevî's (d. 1791) gloss on *Jalāl*. Besides classical books, Sırrî quotes from a contemporary Ottoman scholar Nüzhet Efendi's (d. 1889) treatise called *Kırmızı Bayrak* (Red Flag) while he is explaining where the name of Qarmatians derived from and the origins of Hasan Sabbah.<sup>16</sup>

After Islamic sects Sırrî goes on to enumerate philosophical groups (*mezāhib-i felāsife*) and other religions. This topic is lacking in *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*. Therefore, Sırrî uses other trustworthy sources. These are mostly taken from Cevdet Pasha's translation of the *Muqaddima*'s sixth chapter, Molla Lutfi's *Gloss*, Nev'î Efendi's (d. 1599) *Netāyicü'l-Fünūn*,<sup>17</sup> a book on the classification of sciences, Kâtib Chelebi's two books, i.e., *Kashf al-Zunūn* and *Jihan-numa (Cihānnumâ)*, Ali Suāvî's *Târih-i Efkâr*, which is a series of articles that Suāvî wrote in his newspaper *Ulūm Gazetesi* (1869-1870), and *Shamsiyya*, a logic handbook by al-Qazwîni al-Kâtibî (d. 1276), and its commentaries.

Sırrî's discussion of various religions includes Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity. He gives a relatively longer space to Christianity by summarizing *Tuḥfetü'l-erîb fî'r-red 'alâ ehli's-şalîb* of Abdullah al-Tarjumān (d. 1429) who was a convert from Spain. Sırrî introduces four gospels namely Matta, Luka, Markos, and Yuhanna, and talks about twelve apostles of Jesus.<sup>18</sup> Quoting Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddima* at length, Sırrî elucidates the history of Christianity further by focusing on the Nestorians.<sup>19</sup> At the end, Sırrî Pasha directs the reader who wants to learn details of Christianity by referring to *Izhār al-ḥaqq* written in 1861 by Raḥmat Allāh al-Hindî al-Kayrānawî (d. 1891), an Indian scholar. It is a refutation of trinity. He points out that "studying this book is a necessity for Muslims" (*ehl-i İslām için mütâlaası vâcib*).<sup>20</sup> It is unusual to encounter so much information about Christianity in a *kalām* book. However, as I have suggested, this could be related to the environment in which Sırrî Pasha grew and served as an Ottoman statesman, i.e., Crete and Balkans, which were witnessing rise of nationalism that was tied to religious difference. In a way, Sırrî's translation embodies the impact of nationalist movements on a theology book.

Sırrî Pasha was not merely translating the main text and quoting others to explicate the text. He intervenes where he does not agree with the author. For instance, he criticizes Cevdet Pasha's account of the ancient Greek philosophy. Sırrî asserts that Cevdet seems to merge the philosophies of Anaxagoras and Anaximenes under the name of Anaxagoras.<sup>21</sup> Another example is about the meaning of sophist, which Sırrî defines as owner of the wisdom, but then notes that it accrued a negative meaning later on. However, in *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* sophist (*sūfastâ*) is explained

<sup>15</sup> Sırrî, "Mukaddime", 5-10.

<sup>16</sup> Sırrî, "Mukaddime", 26, 31.

<sup>17</sup> Sırrî, "Mukaddime", 59. He mistakenly writes Nev'îzâde.

<sup>18</sup> Sırrî, "Mukaddime", 69.

<sup>19</sup> Sırrî, "Mukaddime", 80-86.

<sup>20</sup> Sırrî, "Mukaddime", 86.

<sup>21</sup> Sırrî, "Mukaddime", 58.

with two terms, i.e., *sūfa* means knowledge and *sata* means error. Sirri Pasha considers this definition to be wrong.<sup>22</sup>

There are even more sources that are consulted in the main part of the book which is a translation of *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id*. Sirri resorts almost to all the glosses (*hāshiya*) on this book such as those of Khayālī, Ramazan Efendi, Isam, Siyālkūtī, Kefevī, Mufti of Vidin (Mustafa Hamdi Efendi), and *Taliqāt* of Sheikh Khālīd (d.1255/1839). Sirri Pasha also refers to *al-Mutawwal* of al-Taftazānī, and a gloss known as *Torun* by grandson of al-Taftazānī (d. 906/1500), *Rumūzul-Hikem* (1871) by Abdurrahman Sami Pasha (d. 1881) and *Miftah al-Funūn* by Pasquale Gallupi (d. 1846), a logic book which was translated to Turkish in 1861.<sup>23</sup> He uses *Tefsīr-i Mevākib*, a Qur'an exegesis translated from Persian to Turkish by İsmâil Ferruh Efendi (d. 1840). All in all, Sirri's translation is a very rich text that has some striking aspects such as changing the structure of a *kalām* book and introducing new subjects. He also uses texts that were just published at the time, showing that Sirri was an avid reader and paid attention to contemporary publications in explaining a centuries old text. The translation reflects influence of contemporary politics and religious conflicts.

#### 4. Cevdet Pasha's Criticism of Sirri's Prolegomenon

In the foreword of his translation Sirri Pasha requests to be excused for any mistakes in his translation because he was busy with official duties while he was translating and commenting on *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id*. Sirri believes that his text is not completely devoid of mistakes (*mündericâtının sehv ü hatadan beraetine itimadım yok*), thus, he says that he is open to corrections and improvements of the master scholars.<sup>24</sup> Of course this is a traditional utterance that shows his modesty rather than being pompous about his work. After composing his prolegomena, Sirri Pasha sends it to Ahmed Cevdet Pasha, one of the leading scholars and statesman of his time, for whom Sirri has so much respect. He is from Lovech (*Lofça*), a town in the province of Tuna in 1822. He was serving as the Minister of Education in 1875, when he got Sirri's prolegomenon.<sup>25</sup>

Ahmed Cevdet Pasha thoroughly reads the prolegomenon and writes a brief review in which he makes some revisions. Sirri reproduces this letter at the end of introductory (*mukaddime*) volume of the book. In the letter Cevdet Pasha warns Sirri about structure and style of his writing. Cevdet criticizes that Sirri listed the Ash'ariyya under the Jabriyya as a moderate compulsionism (*cebriyye mütevassıta*) which is a version of fatalism in page 45. Since the Jabriyya was mentioned as the opposite side of the saved sect (*firaḳ-ı nâciye*), so in this classification Ash'ariyya would fall within the heretic groups (*firaḳ-ı dâlle*). The Jabrites believe that all actions are determined by God and they deny the free will. However, in page 47, the Ash'ariyya was included in the saved sect. Thus, according to Cevdet this amounts to a contradiction. Then Cevdet suggests that Sirri should have adequately explained only the Jabriyya among the heretic groups, so that one would not assume the Ash'arites to be among them.<sup>26</sup> Although, Cevdet proposes some other corrections in the text,

<sup>22</sup> Sirri, "Mukaddime", 67-68.

<sup>23</sup> Sirri, *Şerh-i Akâid Tercümesi*, 1/109.

<sup>24</sup> Sirri, "Mukaddime", 5. Çerkeşizâde Mehmed Tevfik (d. 1901) wrote a treatise as a critique of Sirri Pasha's translation in order to show his errors and flaws.

<sup>25</sup> Yusuf Halaçoğlu - Mehmet Âkif Aydın, "Cevdet Paşa", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Erişim 21 Aralık 2022).

<sup>26</sup> Sirri, "Mukaddime", 321.

looking at his articulation of the free will shows how he saw the position of Ash'arites among different groups. Cevdet elucidates his ideas in the following way:

If it were desired to explain the two-fold division of Jabriyya, it would be suitable to explain within the issue of debates between the Māturīdism and the Ash'arism. Hence the topic of free will and destiny is a very large and hazardous field. On one side of this is the Jabriyya, and on the other side the Mu'tazila, they sometimes got out of the way and went astray. The saved sect, which is Followers of the Sunni tradition (*Ehl-i Sünnnet ve'l-Cemâat*), became moderate between these two sides by demonstrating the particular (human) free will (*irâde-i cüz'îyye*) and thus saved from being in danger. But they also differ (among themselves) in interpreting this human free will and are divided into two: The Ash'arism and the Māturīdism. The Ash'arism were objected to because their inference and style of explanation eventually [concerning human free will] leads to compulsion, and from this perspective the position of the Māturīdism was seen more suitable to the reasoning. Yet among them the Hanafites who at most incline and rely on the side of reason, of course in this topic inclined to the Māturīdī position. However, the difference between the Ash'arism and the Māturīdism does not reach to the level of accusing each other with heresy; and both of them essentially hold the same position, thus, the saved sect consists of them.<sup>27</sup>

Here Cevdet emphasizes the rationality of Māturīdism in addition to its commonality with Ash'arism against heretical groups. The pages, where Cevdet accuses Sirrī of being contradictory, are in fact, Sirrī's summarized translations mostly from *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, which in turn quoted al-Āmidī. On page 45 of Sirrī's prolegomenon, the compulsion (*cebr*) is described as attributing the human actions to Allah. Then the Jabrites (*Cebriyye*), which is among the heretic groups, is divided into two: the first is the moderate (*mütevassıta*) and the second is the pure (*hālisa*) Jabrites. The moderate one is between compulsion and submission (*tevfiz*), and attributes an effective acquisition (*kesb*) to the human. These are Ash'arites (*Eş'ariyye*), Najjārites (*Neccāriyye*), and Dīrārites (*Dirāriyye*). The pure Jabrites are the Jahmites (*Cehmiyye*), which belongs to Jahm b. Safwān and his companions. They do not give any power, whether acquisitive or effective, to the human. The human is like an inanimate body whose all actions are necessary.<sup>28</sup>

On page 47 Sirrī discusses the saved sect. The idea of saved sect is based on the seventy-three-sect hadith.<sup>29</sup> The prophet said that "the saved sect is the one to which I and my companions belong". The scholars understood this hadith in different ways. Sirrī continues quoting from *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* of al-Jurjānī and writes that the Ash'arites, the predecessors of Atharīs (*selef-i muḥaddisîn*) and other Sunnis (*ehl-i Sünnnet ve'l-Cemaat*) all are the saved sect. Māturīdites were not mentioned here.<sup>30</sup> Then, Sirrī quotes Ahmed Cevdet's translation of *Muqaddima* in classifying the saved sect into two groups: the Ash'arism and the Māturīdism. Even though they have differences in minor issues (*mesâil*) of theology, they agree upon the method of creed.<sup>31</sup>

Sirrī Pasha did take Cevdet Pasha's criticism seriously as evidenced by his later work that paid attention to the letter. In his *Ārâü'l-Milel*, which was published in 1886, Sirrī narrates the same

<sup>27</sup> Sirrī, "Mukaddime", 321.

<sup>28</sup> Sirrī, "Mukaddime", 45-46; cf. Seyyid Şerif Cürçânî, *Şerhu'l-Mevâkıf*, trans. Ömer Türker (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2015), 806.

<sup>29</sup> "My community will divide into seventy-three sects." Sirrī, "Mukaddime", 47.

<sup>30</sup> Sirrī, "Mukaddime", 47; cf. Cürçânî, *Şerhu'l-Mevâkıf*, 3/810.

<sup>31</sup> Sirrī, "Mukaddime", 49; cf. Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Mukaddime Osmanlı Tercümesi* (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2008), 3/71.

information, except that this time he follows Cevdet Pasha's suggestion. Amongst the heretic sects, he mentions only the pure Jabriyya excluding the moderate Jabriyya altogether.<sup>32</sup> As for the saved sect, he quotes only the two division of Ahl al-Sunnah (*ehl-i Sünnet*) from Cevdet Pasha.<sup>33</sup> In other words, he excludes the Atharism, instead names Māturīdism (*Māturīdiyya*).

### 5. Ash'arī and Māturīdī Divergence on the Free Will

Following the classification of Ahl al-Sunnah, Sirri Pasha gives an account of the birth of these two groups and again quotes from Cevdet Pasha about the relationship between Ash'arism and Māturīdism. Cevdet's approach is remarkable to illustrate how Ottoman translators adjusted the theological texts to their own Māturīdī context: "When Ash'arism is mentioned in the opposite of Māturīdism, by this the followers of Imam Ash'arī are intended, but sometimes, if it is mentioned in the opposite of heretics (*ehl-i bid'at*), then Ash'arism refers to Sunnis (*ehl-i Sünnet*) in general. In this way, Ash'arism encompasses Māturīdism. Therefore, Māturīdism becomes a sub-group under Ash'arism."<sup>34</sup> Even though they agree on the basic beliefs of Islam, they have a few diverging views on some questions of *kalām*. Nevertheless, it is possible to reconcile them.<sup>35</sup>

According to Cevdet Pasha the main controversy is the problem of human's particular free will (*irāde-i cüz'iyye*). There are two extreme sides regarding this problem. While the Jabrites absolutely deny the human free will and believe that all movements of humans are determined by God, the Mutazilites claim that humans are free in all their actions because they are responsible for what they do in this world, and gain rewards in the hereafter. They state that human is the creator of his actions, so the creator becomes multiple. On the other hand, according to the Jabrites, the divine duties are in vain. Also, it is apparent that there is a difference between climbing up the stairs and falling from them. Ahl al-Sunnah takes a middle position between these two extremities. They believe that the Necessary Existence (*Vâcibü'l-Vücûd*) is the Creator of all things, but humans have a particular free will in their voluntary actions.<sup>36</sup>

The major debated issue is that whether the free will is created or not. The particular free will means to choose the action or abandon it. The Ash'arites say that it is created, but the Māturīdites say that it is not created. In this sense, according to the Ash'arites everything happens since Allah already knows them. As for the Māturīdites, the knowledge follows what is known (*'ilim ma'lûma tâbi'dir*), therefore God eternally knows the future since it is going to happen.<sup>37</sup> It means that God has pre-eternal knowledge, but this does not restrain humans' free actions. In the chapter on the attributes of God, quoting Siyalkûtî who presents a division of knowledge: (1) active knowledge

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<sup>32</sup> Sirri-i Giridî, *Ârâü'l-milel* (İstanbul: Şirket-i Mürettibiye Matbaası, 1886), 187-188.

<sup>33</sup> Sirri, *Ârâü'l-milel*, 192-193.

<sup>34</sup> Sirri, "Mukaddime", 50. For the differing positions between two schools on the doctrine of acquisition and free choice see Yahya Raad Haidar, *The Debates Between Ash'arism and Māturīdism in Ottoman Religious Scholarship: A Historical and Bibliographical Study* (Canberra: The Australian National University, PhD Thesis, 2016), 76.

<sup>35</sup> For an extensive account of controversial topics between Ash'arism and Māturīdism see Mehmet Kalaycı, "Mātūrīdī-Hanefī Aidiyetin Osmanlı'daki İzdeşimleri", *Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi* 20/2 (2016), 9-72.

<sup>36</sup> Sirri, "Mukaddime", 50.

<sup>37</sup> Sirri, "Mukaddime", 51.

(*fiilî*) which comes before what is known (*malûm*) and (2) passive (*infiâlî*) knowledge which comes after what is known.<sup>38</sup>

Cevdet Pasha states that the truest view is that of the Mâturîdites. The discussion is put as follows:

If particular free will (*irâde-i cüz'îyye*) is created, then humans are obligated in using their powers, so this leads to determinism (*cebr*), which makes the divine orders futile (*abes*). However, it is possible to compromise between two views by saying “the stimulation (*şevk*) and desire (*arzu*), which are the causes (*esbâb*) of *irâde-i cüz'îyye*, are created”. If the Ash'arites contest it by saying that if the *irâde-i cüz'îyye* were not created by Allah, then the human would create it, so it leads to the Mu'tazilite view. Also, if the human is not a creator, and it is impossible to have the created without a creator, so it requires that Allah is not the creator of everything as Mu'tazila argue. It is answered as follows: The Creator of everything is Allah, but the particular free will (*irâde-i cüz'îyye*) is not a thing (*şey*). Since a thing means an existent matter (*emr-i mevcûd*), but particular will is not temporal and rather is a state (*hâl*) that emerges in a human suddenly in one moment, it is like conceptual entities (*umûr-i i'tibârîyye*), hence it is not an existent which needs a creator and directed at active creation. If one were to say that it is unlikely to accept particular free will as a conceptual entity regarding that it is the source of voluntary actions and focal point of happiness in two worlds, it would be responded that there are two meanings of conceptual entity (*emr-i i'tibârî*): the first is not existing in itself but being mere imagination, the second is existing in itself, but not being qualified with the existence in a time in the outside world. Here what we say is that the human free will is a conceptual entity and has a meaning in the latter sense not in the former sense.<sup>39</sup>

In this passage, Cevdet Pasha, as a follower of al-Mâturîdî, argues that human's limited free will is a conceptual entity (“*irâde-i cüz'îyye emr-i i'tibârîdir*”) noting that it is not a mere imaginative thing rather it is the kind of perspectival state that exists in itself but not in the external temporal world. Considering that Sirrî extensively quoted Cevdet's discussion of particular will without any objections, we may surmise that he endorses his position.

## 6. Creation of Actions

Sirrî's translation of the chapter on the human actions is noteworthy both for showcasing his style of translation and his position on the issue of particular will. Typically, Sirrî translates passages from the main text and the commentary and intersperses the commentary with additional material from other glosses on the *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id*. He also uses footnotes to either explain an issue further or again quote relevant passages from other theological or religious books. In the section on creation of actions and the following related topics, besides the original text, Sirrî consults works of Ramazan Efendi, Akkirmânî (d. 1760), Ibn Abî Sharîf (d. 1500), Khayālî, Siyalkûtî, 'Isâm, and *Tefsîr-i Mevâkib*. This *tafsîr* is particularly referenced to provide exegesis of the quoted verses from the Qur'an.

With regard to human actions, in the text of Nasafî it is stated that God creates all human actions pertaining to belief and disbelief, obedience and disobedience. Taftâzânî provides some arguments for this position such as that creating actions would require their detailed knowledge

<sup>38</sup> Sirrî, *Şerh-i Akâid Tercümesi*, 2/65.

<sup>39</sup> Sirrî, "Mukaddime", 51. cf. Sirrî, *Ârâü'l-mîlel*, 195; Ahmed Cevdet Pasa, *Mukaddime*, 3/72.

which humans lack, and that the Qur'an includes verses that show God as the creator of every thing. Although the discussion does not directly mention the differences between Ash'arīs and Maturidīs in this part, there are allusions to the Maturidite position as Sirrī combines the commentary with Akkirmânî's explanation in a few instances, in one of which Akkirmânî's statement that knowledge follows upon the known is inserted into the commentary.<sup>40</sup> Sirrī also quotes from Akkirmânî's treatise on the free will at times.<sup>41</sup>

Mehmed Akkirmânî's treatise on the particular will was one of several treatises written during the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire.<sup>42</sup> In this treatise eight different positions are counted on this subject. According to Akkirmânî, al-Mâturidî held the most consistent view. Al-Mâturidî argues that Allah creates everything, however he rejects the view that human free will is created, since it does not have an external existence, and is a relative thing. According to him, particular free will is a state (*hāl*), hence, it is neither an existent nor it is created. The human action happens with Allah's power from the aspect of creating and with the human's power from the aspect of acquisition. Akkirmânî states that there are four stages before an action: conception (*taşavvur*), stimulation (*şevk*), volition/will (*irāde*), and movement of bodily organs (*tahrîk-i āza*). In the fifth stage God creates (*halk*) the action per His custom. Even if all the four come together, Allah does not have to create the action. Akkirmânî notes that the will (*irāde*) and the stimulation (*şevk*) are different concepts. Allah creates the stimulation, but not the will.<sup>43</sup> Based on this idea, Cevdet Pasha, in his above discussed views tried to mediate the two sides and solve the conflict by asserting that just before the will phase, the stimulation can be created, as it is the cause of the will.

Another indication of Sirrī's allusion to the Maturidî view is in the first footnote to this topic. In that footnote, Sirrī explains that the topic is not limited to human actions but rather applicable to all kind of creatures. He notes that even though the evidence on this issue is brought up in regard to the actions of responsible adults (*mukallaḥ*), once they are established it is possible for the intellect to judge others based on them. After this general note, he proceeds to explain the issue noting that this topic contains *Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī's* (d. 418/1027) views, despite the fact that he asserted that both powers, that is God and human's power (*kudret*) are together efficient in bringing about adults' (*mukallaḥīn*) actions he did not fear from stating that two wills are efficient on one action. However, he does not say that humans are creators of their actions because the word 'creation' has the meaning of determining, God the sublime gives existence (*icād*), and through his power, without being diminished, determines as well. However, humans

<sup>40</sup> Sirrī, *Şerh-i Akāid Tercümesi*, 2/191.

<sup>41</sup> Sirrī, *Şerh-i Akāid Tercümesi*, 2/192.

<sup>42</sup> For a few other treatises and their analysis see Philip Dorroll, "Mâturidî Theology in the Ottoman Empire: Debating Human Choice and Divine Power", *Osmanlı'da İlm-i Kelâm: Âlimler, Eserler, Meseleler*, ed. O. Demir et al. (İstanbul: İSAR Yayınları, 2016), 219-238; Murat Karacan, "XVIII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Âlimi Hâdimî'nin İnsan Fiillerine Dair Bir Risalesi - Tercüme ve Tahlil-", *Osmanlı'da İlm-i Kelâm: Âlimler, Eserler, Meseleler*, ed. O. Demir et al. (İstanbul: İSAR Yayınları, 2016), 239-265. For an overview of the topic see Hatice K. Arpağuş, "Mâtürîdîlik ve Osmanlı'da İrāde-i Cüz'iyeye Yorumu," *Osmanlı Düşüncesi: Kaynakları ve Tartışma Konuları*, ed. Fuat Aydın et al. (İstanbul: Mahya Yayıncılık, 2019), 243-262.

<sup>43</sup> Şamil Öcal, "Osmanlı Kelamcıları Eş'arî miydi? -Muhammed Akkirmânî'nin İnsan Hürriyeti Anlayışı-." *Dini Araştırmalar* 2/5 (1999), 246-247.

cannot determine the action as it is.<sup>44</sup> The point being made here is that even though al-Isfarāyīnī held on to the view that both humans and God have a role in the occurrence of an action, this did not necessitate asserting that humans are creators of their actions. Instead, he still was considered among those who say that God is the sole creator of actions. Perhaps Sirrī is suggesting that the Maturidī position does not lead to plurality of creators even though they defend that partial free will is not created.

## Conclusion

Sirrī Pasha's translation of *Sharḥ al-‘Aqā'id* of Taftāzānī is not a literal (word-for-word) translation. As we have seen on the issue of partial free will, it engages contemporary as well as traditional Māturidī views. By bringing together previous glosses on the distinguished commentary of Taftāzānī on one of the most prominent creed texts in Islam, Sirrī was able to compare previous authors' views and discuss their opinions in an inter-textual and dialogical vein. Furthermore, being translated in a time of fast reforms, Sirrī's translation provided us with an understanding of Maturidī thought in the Ottoman modernization period. Through translation Sirrī transferred a classical madrasa book in field of kalam to the 19<sup>th</sup> century literate audience. We do not know its influence on the readers and how they received it, but it is clear that there was a need for translating this kalam text.

From the analysis of his prolegomenon, we can see that Sirrī follows the traditional expositions by heavily relying on such sources. For instance, we have seen that Sirrī adapted a topic that was treated at the end of *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* of Jurjānī and put it in the introduction of his translation. Sirrī also engages with some contemporary Ottoman scholars such as Cevdet Pasha, whose translation of the last chapter of Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddima* was quoted a few times. Apparently, he cared enough about Cevdet's views on his prolegomenon and thus published a letter from him at the end of that part. The main issue that concerns both of these late Ottoman scholars is the place of Māturidī thought in the Sunni community. They not only point out that Māturidīs together with Ash'ari's are the two mainstream Sunni theological schools. However, they also prefer Māturidī views over some Ash'ari positions such as in the case of free will.

<sup>44</sup> Sirrī, *Şerh-i Akāid Tercümesi*, 2/182-183, 62-64.



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

Gayr Kavramının Dilsel ve İstilahî 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-Ka'bī of the Mu'tazili school; (2) the *Maqālāt* of al-Ash'arī, (3) the *Kitāb al-Tawhīd* and (4) the *Ta'wīlāt* 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, Ash'arī, Māturīdī, Ka'bī, 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 imkânsızlığı 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 ayırır" 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 istisnâ 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) Māturīdî'nin *Kitābu't-Tevhīd* ve (4) *Te'wīlāt*. Bazı yazarların Māturīdî'nin üçüncü halin imkânsızlığı yasasının inkârını imâ eden özgün bir duruşa sahip olduğunu iddia etmeleri nedeniyle, sonuncusu üzerinde daha fazla duruldu. Böylesi bir ilkenin mantık yasalarının inkârını imâ 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:** Kalam, Eş'arî, Māturīdî, Ka'bî, ilâhî 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.’<sup>1</sup> 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).<sup>2</sup> 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).<sup>3</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Hamza Yusuf, *The Creed of Imam al-Ṭahāwī*, (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.<sup>4</sup>

## 1. On the Linguistic Meaning of Ghayr

The importance of the Arabic linguistic sciences in kalām has been dully noted by recent scholarship.<sup>5</sup> 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 *ghayr* is a genitive noun (*ism idāfa*) 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 غير واحد، ‘Many said’; ضربت غير واحد، ‘I struck many’; and مررت بغير واحد، ‘I passed by many’. Its primary function is that of an adjective.<sup>6</sup> 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 Sibawayh, it is *always* indefinite, it does not accept the definite article, and it can never made into a plural.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> This is corroborated by the mutakallimūn as well. Ibn Fūrak records:

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<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> For example, M. Bulgen, “The Power of Language in the Classical Period of Kalām,” in *Nazariyat* 5/1 (May 2019): 37–82.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Sibawayh, *al-Kitāb*, ed. Harun, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1988), 2/343; Ibn Hishām, *Mughnī al-Labīb*, ed. M. Abdulhamid, (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣriyya, 2007) 1/179–180; al-Jawharī, *al-Sihāh*, (Beirut: Dār al-‘ilm lil-malāyīn, 1979), 776–777; Ibn Mālik, *Sharḥ al-Tashīl*, (Giza: Hajar, 1990), 3/226.

<sup>7</sup> Sibawayh, *al-Kitāb*, 2/343; 3/479. This already indicates that the pluralization of the word came about in scientific contexts.

<sup>8</sup> 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-Farrā’s commentary on the expression of ‘*ghayr al-maghdūb*’ in *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* in his *Ma‘ānī al-Qur’an*.<sup>8</sup> Al-Farrā<sup>3</sup> 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 (*na’t* or *ṣifa*) does not imply that

[T1] [al-Ash‘arī] 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.<sup>9</sup>

In other words, *ghayr* cannot properly be said of the non-existent because for al-Ash‘arī (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.<sup>10</sup> 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-ma‘ānī’*), 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-Farrā’ 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-‘Arab*, (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, n.d.) 5/3324-3325; and Al-Azharī (d.370), *Tahdhīb al-lughā*, (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣriyya lil-ta’līf wa’l-tarjama, 1976), 8/188-190; Cf. Sibawayh, *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 fi ḥurūf al-ma‘ānī*, 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 fi sharḥ ḥurūf al-ma‘ānī*, (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 Sibawayh, Ibn Hishām, and their commentators such as al-Sirāfi 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-‘arūs*, (Kuwait: Wizārat al-Irshād wa’l-Anbā’, 1965), 13/284-289; al-Jawharī, 776-777.

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

<sup>10</sup> As I have argued previously, the meaning of *ghayriyya* according to the Ash‘arī 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 Maṣṣūr al-Baghdādī, *al-Asma wa-l-ṣifāt*, ed. al-Sharafawi, (Damascus: Dār al-Taḥqāq, 2020), 1/277-287; al-Juwaynī, *al-Shāmīl*, ed. Nashshār, (Alexandria: Mansh’at al-Ma‘ārif, 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-Mu‘īn 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?

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.<sup>11</sup>

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 Muṭtazila, 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.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, even the Muṭtazila 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.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Al-Nasafī, *Tabṣira*, ed. Salameh, (Damascus: Institut Francais de Damas, 1990), 1/244.

<sup>12</sup> Bukhārī, 3191.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> 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 than the later shortened formula which comprises only two – roughly corresponds to the three categories of (1) subject (*huwa*), (2) property (*ghayruh*), and (3) part (*ba‘duh*), 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-Ka‘bī (d.319 AH)

al-Māturīdī spends more time refuting al-Ka‘bī than anyone else by name in *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*. He is an important member of the Baghdad school of Mu‘tazilism. In his *Kitāb al-Maqālāt*, he collects a great deal of opinions on various questions in kalām, similar in nature to al-Ash‘arī’s *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* (which uses Ka‘bī 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., *ma‘īyya*, 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-Ash‘arī and al-Māturīdī engaged with, it is a good place for us to begin. Al-Ka‘bī writes:

[T1] The Mur‘azila, the Khawārij, the Murji‘a, 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.<sup>15</sup>

al-Ka‘bī’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-Ka‘bī 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-Ka‘bī 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 Ka‘bī, 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.<sup>16</sup> 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 Mur‘azila (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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<sup>15</sup> Al-Ka‘bī, *Kitāb al-Maqālāt*, ed. Hansu, (Istanbul: Kuramer, 2018), 249.

<sup>16</sup> Ash‘arī and Māturīdī authors will take him to task for this on the basis that *other* is a genitive or relative noun i.e., *ism idāfa*, 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-Ka‘bī holds that God has no parts (but others may disagree). Ash‘arī 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 Ash‘arīs did not deny LEM, perhaps Hishām did, and therefore, Harvey may assert without any evidence that al-Māturīdī also followed him in this. Al-Ka‘bī 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.*<sup>17</sup>

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

<sup>17</sup> Al-Ka‘bī, *Maqālāt*, 251.

Arabic grammar assume the laws of logic, it has even more restrictions on what is possible which classical logic would permit.<sup>18</sup>

Al-Ka‘bī 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.<sup>19</sup> 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-Ash‘arī and al-Māturīdī authors later on. al-Ka‘bī 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*).<sup>20</sup>

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-Ash‘arī’s *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*

al-Ash‘arī’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-Ash‘arī 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.<sup>21</sup>

This is the same statement we saw above in al-Ka‘bī. 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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<sup>18</sup> 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 Sibawayh, Ash‘arī 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.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Ka‘bī, *Maqālāt*, 253.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Ka‘bī, *Maqālāt*, 253-254.

<sup>21</sup> al-Ash‘arī, *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-Ash‘arī’s description of Ibn Kullāb, described by some mired in the orientalist mindset as a ‘proto-Sunni’ precursor to al-Al-Ash‘arī and al-Māturīdī’s view. al-Al-Ash‘arī 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 تتعاضد), 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.<sup>22</sup>

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*).<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup>

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 Mu‘tazila held that the names and the attributes all reduce to statements. As such, they treated the otherness of the names differently. al-Al-Ash‘arī 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

<sup>22</sup> al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, 169.12-170.3

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Baghdādī, *al-Asmā’ wa-l-ṣifāt*, 1/148-152.

<sup>24</sup> 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-Ash‘arī, *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 Murʿazila, the Khawārij, many of the Murjiʿa, and many of the Zaydis.<sup>25</sup>

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.<sup>26</sup>

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.<sup>27</sup>

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-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,<sup>28</sup> which means that he does not stipulate that those attributes subsist at all, let alone in the subject of attribution.<sup>29</sup> 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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<sup>25</sup> al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 172.4-11.

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

<sup>27</sup> al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 546.

<sup>28</sup> That is, not *mā qāma bi-l-mawṣūf*, but *mā kāna lil-mawṣūf*.

<sup>29</sup> 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 eternity, then afterwards, the dispute resolves into whether one applies the expression, while negating any dispute on meaning.<sup>30</sup>

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 Mu'tazilī side.

As for the views of al-Al-Ash'arī and his school, they are unequivocal that it is about metaphysical separability.<sup>31</sup> al-Al-Ash'arī 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 eternity of God and His knowledge, it is impossible that they be described as being other to one another.<sup>32</sup>

al-Al-Ash'arī 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.'<sup>33</sup> There is nothing mysterious about this; it simply means that the parts of a human being

<sup>30</sup> Juwaynī, *al-Shāmil*, 337.

<sup>31</sup> 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).

<sup>32</sup> al-Ash'arī, *al-Luma'*, 90.

<sup>33</sup> Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, 268; cf. Nasafī, *Tabṣira*, 1/240-248; Baghdādī, *al-Asma wa-l-ṣifāt*, 1/282-283; cf. also, Abu'l-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, *Tabṣira*, 1/ 241. Baghdādī cites seven opinions on the meaning of *ghayrayn* in Mu'tazilī 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.<sup>34</sup> Here are more examples of this perfectly ordinary application of *ghayr* to contingent entities:

[T15] People differed over the properties (*al-ma‘ānī*) subsisting in bodies, such as motions, rest, and the like: are they accidents (*a‘rād*) 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.<sup>35</sup>

[T16] Some said: The abstaining (*tark*) of man from an action is a property that is neither man, nor other than him. ‘Abbād 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.<sup>36</sup>

[T17] People differed over [human] cognitions and knowledges (*al-ma‘ārif wa-l-‘ulum*), 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.<sup>37</sup>

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, Ash‘arī 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, ‘Abbād 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.

<sup>34</sup> 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.

<sup>35</sup> al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, 369. A parallel discussion will be found in al-Māturīdī below.

<sup>36</sup> al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, 379.

<sup>37</sup> al-Ash‘arī, *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 Murtazila, 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-Ash‘arī 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 Murtazila, 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-Ash‘arī 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 *Ta’wīlāt Ahl al-Sunna*, al-Māturīdī writes:

**M1** Two factions have strayed from the path in understanding this verse<sup>38</sup>: the *Ḥashwiyya* and the Mu’tazila. As for the *Ḥashwiyya*, they say: the Qur’an 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 Qur’an *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 Qur’an] *itself* to be in the written copies, or in the Earth, or in the hearts.<sup>39</sup>

The verse alluded to in M1 is one in which one could understand that the Qur’an 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 Qur’an is the speech of God, and it is His attribute which He has eternally possessed, and that it cannot be

<sup>38</sup> al-Isrā’ 17/86-87.

<sup>39</sup> al-Māturīdī, *Ta’wīlāt Ahl al-Sunna*, ed. Topaloğlu, (Istanbul: Mizan Yayinevi, 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-'aynihi*) 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.<sup>40</sup>

**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.<sup>41</sup>

**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 eternity 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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<sup>40</sup> al-Māturīdī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 2/152.

<sup>41</sup> al-Māturīdī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 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*.<sup>42</sup>

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-Ash'arī, 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-iḥālāti iḥtimālihi al-aghyār*), and though

<sup>42</sup> al-Māturīdī, *Ta'wīlāt*, 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.<sup>43</sup>

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.<sup>44</sup>

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 '*Qadari*' 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.<sup>45</sup>

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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<sup>43</sup> al-Māturīdī, *Kitab al-Tawhīd*, ed. Topaloğlu, (Beirut: Dar Sader, 2010), 300.

<sup>44</sup> al-Māturīdī, *Tawhīd*, 365-366.

<sup>45</sup> al-Māturīdī, *Tawhīd*, 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-Ash‘arī 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.<sup>46</sup>

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-Ka‘bī on the divine attributes.

**M9** Then [al-Ka‘bī] 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 Maṣṣūr [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

<sup>46</sup> al-Māturīdī, *Tawḥīd*, 366.

are Him; therefore, [Ka‘bī] 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 [Ka‘bī] 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.<sup>47</sup>

Ka‘bī 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 Ka‘bī, all attributes are spoken or written statements, and as such, they are necessarily *other* to whatever they describe.<sup>48</sup> 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 Ka‘bī 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 Ka‘bī’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 Ka‘bī’s statement implies two things: (1) the attributes are not identical to God; and (2) there are no *ghayrs* 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 Ka‘bī 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-Ka‘bī, 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 Ka‘bī 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 Ka‘bī 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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<sup>47</sup> al-Māturīdī, *Tawhīd*, 118-119.

<sup>48</sup> 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.<sup>49</sup>

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-Ash'arī 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 label*, *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

<sup>49</sup> al-Māturīdī, *Tawhīd*, 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.<sup>50</sup>

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.<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup>

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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<sup>50</sup> al-Māturīdī, *Tawhid*, 129-130.

<sup>51</sup> 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.

<sup>52</sup> al-Māturīdī, *Tawhid*, 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-Ash'arī 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 yahullān*).<sup>53</sup>

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.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> al-Māturīdī, *Tawhīd*, 82; compare with text M7 above.

<sup>54</sup> 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-Ka'bi] 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 Maṣṣūr [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*.<sup>55</sup>

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 *others* – 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?<sup>56</sup>

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 Murtazila 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.<sup>57</sup> 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.

<sup>55</sup> al-Māturīdī, *Tawhīd*, 207.

<sup>56</sup> al-Māturīdī, *Tawhīd*, 80.

<sup>57</sup> 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 Ka'bi's statement: 'Once established that it is not a body, then it must be an accident (*'araḍ*).'<sup>58</sup>

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 (*a'ṛāḍ*). 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-Ka'bi's attempt to *infer* or *argue* rationally for what it should be called, is rejected.<sup>59</sup> 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 Ash'arī 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. Mur'tazilī 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 *'ayn* (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>.

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

<sup>59</sup> 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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## Al-Ījī's Arguments against the Mu'tazilite Ethical Realism

Mu'tezile'nin Ahlâkî Realizmine Karşı Īcî'nin Argümanları

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## Abstract

Al-Ījī presents the final stage of Ash'arism, and his arguments reflect the traditional and philosophical approaches in the school. This paper presents the main arguments that al-Ījī deployed to refute the Mu'tazilites' ethical realism. Its aim is to present the exact form of al-Ījī's arguments, explain them, discuss the objections, and then evaluate their strengths. The paper's aim is to explain the Mu'tazilites' arguments; nevertheless, it gives some clarifications when it is needed to understand al-Ījī's arguments in a better way. In the beginning, the paper draws a distinct line between the Ash'arites' and the Mu'tazilite ethical understandings. It defines the focus of the controversy and prepares the groundwork for theological arguments. Al-Ījī's arguments are divided into three categories. In the first one, we present al-Ījī's general argument, which is a polemic argument whereby al-Ījī tries to negate the freedom of human choice in order to cast doubt on the Mu'tazilite ethical foundations. We discuss its critique, and then reveal al-Ījī's real position on human power and freedom of choice. The second category contains three arguments against the intrinsic ethical value: two of the arguments were adopted by al-Ījī and the third was attributed to other Ash'arites in a general way. The first two arguments deal with the intrinsic ethical values of lying and truth-telling, while the third one is based on the Ash'arite famous assertion: 'an accident cannot subsist on another accident.' The final category is dedicated to discussing al-Ījī's argument against the Mu'tazilite theory of ethical aspects. A sufficient account of the theory and its partisans is provided before discussing al-Ījī's argument. Moreover, a brief introduction of Al-Ījī's and the Mu'tazilites' conception of divine ethics is discussed in the folds of the argument. Some divine qualities, such as justice and wisdom, are defined from the Ash'arites' and the Mu'tazilites' perspectives. As a result, the paper gives a clear account of al-Ījī's arguments against the Mu'tazilites' ethical realism; it presents and evaluates the objections and defines the strengths and the defects in the arguments. Finally, it proposes a better way to understand the Ash'arites' ethical arguments in their right context.

**Keywords:** Ethical values, Ḥusn and Qubh, Value Judgement, Ethical realism, Divine power.

## Öz

Eş'arîliğin son aşamasını temsil eden İcî'nin argümanları, ekoldeki geleneksel ve felsefî yaklaşımları yansıtmaktadır. Bu makale İcî'nin Mu'tezile'nin ahlâkî realizmine karşı kullandığı temel argümanlarını sunmaktadır. Çalışmanın amacı İcî'nin argümanlarını değiştirmeden sağlam bir şekilde sunmak, açıklamak, itirazları tartışmak ve sonunda güçlü ve zayıf yönlerini değerlendirmektir. Makalenin amacı Mu'tezile'nin argümanlarını açıklamak değildir; yine de İcî'nin argümanlarını daha net anlamak için bazı açıklamalar yapmaktadır. Makalenin ilk kısmında Eş'arîler ile Mu'tezile'nin ahlâk anlayışları arasında belirgin bir çizgi çizmektedir. Tartışma noktasını belirtip kelâmî argümanlar için zemin hazırlamaktadır. İcî'nin argümanları üç kısma ayrılmıştır. Birinci kısımda İcî'nin Mu'tezile'nin ahlâkî temellerine şüphe düşürmek için insanın seçme özgürlüğünü ortadan kaldırmak için polemik argümanını sunmaktayız. Argümana karşı eleştirileri tartıştıktan sonra İcî'nin insanın gücü ve seçme özgürlüğü konusundaki gerçek görüşünü ortaya koyuyoruz. İkinci kısım, intrinsik değerler görüşüne karşı üç argüman ihtiva etmektedir. İlk iki argüman İcî tarafından benimsenmiş, üçüncüsü ise genel bir şekilde diğer Eş'arîlere atfetmiştir. Bu iki argüman yalanı ve doğruyu söylemenin intrinsik etik değerleriyle ilgilenmektedir, üçüncüsü ise Eş'arîlerin meşhur: "Bir araz başka bir araz üzerinde konamaz" deyişine dayanmaktadır. Makalenin son kısmı, İcî'nin Mu'tezile'nin ahlâkî vecihler teorisine karşı argümanını tartışmaya ayrılmıştır. İcî'nin argümanını tartışmadan önce teori ve taraftarları hakkında yeterli bir açıklama yapılmıştır. Ayrıca İcî'nin ve Mu'tezile'nin ilâhî ahlâk anlayışına dair kısa bir giriş, argümanın içinde tartışılmaktadır. Adalet ve hikmet gibi bazı ilahî nitelikler Eş'arî ve Mu'tezile'nin bakış açılarından ele alınmaktadır. Sonuç olarak makale, İcî'nin Mu'tezile'nin ahlâkî realizmine karşı argümanlarını açık ve net bir şekilde ortaya koymakta, itirazları sunup değerlendirmekte ve argümanların güçlü ve zayıf yönlerini göstermektedir. Son olarak, Eş'arîlerin Mu'tezile'ye karşı ahlâkî argümanlarını daha etkili bir şekilde anlamak için bir çözüm önermektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Etik değerler, Ḥüsni ve Kubh, Değer yargısı, Ahlâkî realizm, ilâhî kudret.



## Introduction

The Ash‘arites’ debate with the Mu‘tazilites about the ethical value presents the most polemic part in the history of Kalām. The debate revolves around the theological argument of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* and extends to more than thirteen theological arguments that discuss the value judgement of human and divine actions. However, refuting the argument of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* not only disproves the ethical theory of the school of Mu‘tazila, but also challenges many of their theological foundations. Aḍḍ al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355)<sup>1</sup> is a prominent late Ash‘arite scholar who dedicated a significant part of his writings to the refutation of the Mu‘tazilites’ doctrines in general and their ethical theory in particular. The Mu‘tazilites maintain that ethical values are either intrinsic properties or necessary aspects that entail the value judgements of human and divine actions. They argue that since ethical values are real properties, human reason is not completely dependent on the revelation to discern the ethical realities of some actions. The Ash‘arites, on the other hand, argue that the contingency of the world and the Omnipotence of God who has absolute free will leave us entirely dependent on God to know the ethical values of actions. In other words, the Ash‘arites reject the Mu‘tazilites’ claim that actions in themselves have real ethical properties —or what is called ethical realism— and maintain that divine injunctions are the only granter of our ethical values.

There are a few classical and contemporary works that investigated the ethical arguments in theology, but most of them focused on presenting the Mu‘tazilite arguments and gave less importance to the arguments of the Ash‘arites.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, we are dealing with al-Ījī’s arguments because his works and the commentaries on his works present the last significant link in Ash‘arism. His book *al-Mawāqif fi ‘ilm al-kalām* (The stations in the discipline of *kalām*) contains a rich collection of Ash‘arite arguments. The book was initially the focus of many prominent students of al-Ījī, such as Al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/ 1413), Shams al-Dīn al-Karmānī (d. 786/1384), and Sayf al-Dīn al-Abharī (d. 800/1397) who enriched the content of the book with their sophisticated commentaries, and later on the book with its commentaries became the main Kalām textbook in the traditional Islamic schools (*madrasa*) for many centuries until our modern time.

Our aim in this paper is to present al-Ījī’s arguments against the Mu‘tazilite ethical realism. We try to convey al-Ījī’s exact arguments, and then explain, discuss the objections, and define the strengths and weakness of the arguments. We prepare the groundwork for al-Ījī’s argument by giving a sufficient account of the argument of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ*. Al-Ījī’s arguments will be classified into three parts: in the first part, we deal with al-Ījī’s polemic argument that threatens the freedom of human choice and attacks the ethical foundations of all the Mu‘tazilites. The second

<sup>1</sup> For a complete biography of al-Ījī see Tāj al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Wahab b. ‘Alī al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘īa al-kubrā* (Cairo: Hajar Publication, 1992), 10/42; Khair al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-A‘lām* (Beirut: Dār al-‘ilm li-al-malāyīn, 2002) 3/295.

<sup>2</sup> Majid Fakhry and George Hourani gave more attention to the Mu‘tazilite ethical theory and present the Ash‘arites’ argument inadequately. See Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1991); George F. Hourani, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Ayman Shihadeh did a good service in presenting al-Rāzī’s ethical position, but he never dealt with al-Ījī’s arguments. I follow Ayman Shihadeh in calling the Mu‘tazilite ethical theory as ‘ethical realism’ instead of ‘ethical rationalism.’ I think the word ‘realism’ presents their theory more accurately. See Ayman Shihadeh, “Psychology and Ethical Epistemology: An Ash‘arī Debate with Mu‘tazili Ethical Realism, 11th-12th C.”, *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 21 (2021), 81-102.

part will be dedicated to discussing al-Ījī's arguments against the early Mu'tazilites who maintain that actions have intrinsic ethical qualities. In the final part, we present al-Ījī's argument against the Mu'tazilite theory of ethical aspects.

## 1. The Argument of *Ḥusn* and *Qubḥ*

The Arabic words of "*ḥusn*" and "*qubḥ*" can be used in ordinary language to describe both esthetic and ethical values alike. Esthetically speaking, the attributive words of them serve to describe the beauty and the ugliness of things, while in the ethical field, they are used to mean good and bad or right and wrong.<sup>3</sup> In theology, the argument is restricted to the ethical values of actions, whether the actions are good or bad because of their inherent nature, real properties or because God commanded or prohibited them. The Ash'arites excluded the first two options and maintained the last one, and thus they affirmed that the human intellect cannot know the ethical values of actions before the advent of religious law.<sup>4</sup>

Al-Ījī's definition of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* is more sophisticated than the one of the early Ash'arites.<sup>5</sup> He said that humans can call something good or bad based on three perspectives.<sup>6</sup> The first one is when we call something good because its existence is perfection (*kamāl*), and its absence is imperfection (*naqs*). The second perspective is related to the individual's end (*gharad*), i.e., something is good when it serves the individual's end and bad when it impedes his end. The ethical judgements about these two perspectives can be known by human intellect independently of the religious law.<sup>7</sup> The third perspective is based on the divine injunctions: good actions are praised in this world and rewarded in the hereafter, and bad ones are condemned in this world and punished in the hereafter. For al-Ījī and other Ash'arites, this is the real ethical value, and it is only known by the religious law. Al-Juwaynī (d. 478/ 1085) gives us an important clarification related to this real ethical value by saying that religious law does not point to already existing ethical values, but it establishes the ethical values of our actions from scratch. In other words,

<sup>3</sup> For more elaboration on the linguistic meanings, see these dictionaries: Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿarūs* (Kuwait: Dār al-Hidāya, 2009), 34/418; Aḥmad b. Fāris, *Maqāyīs al-luḡa* (Damascus: Dār al-Fīkr, 1979), 2/57. In our argument, I will use the Arabic words of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* and their English equivalents, good and bad, interchangeably.

<sup>4</sup> Aḍḍ al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Rukn al-Dīn al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif fī ʿilm al-kalām* (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1999), 323; ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAbdullāh al-Juwaynī, *al-Ṭrshād ilā qawāʿid al-adilla fī uṣūl al-ʿitiqād* (Cairo: al-Khanijī Publication, 1950), 258; Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ismaʿīl al-Ashʿarī, *Risāla ilā Ahal al-Thughr* (KSA: Library of Science and Wisdom, 2002), 243.

<sup>5</sup> The early Ash'arites, such as al-Imām al-Ashʿarī, negated the ethical value before the advent of the religious law and did not give any possibility for ethical judgement independent of revelation. This should not be understood as if they negated any possibility, but they only kept their argument concise and to the controversial point. See al-Ashʿarī, *Risāla ilā Ahal al-Thughr*, 242-243.

<sup>6</sup> The first one who divided *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* into these three categories is Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and al-Ījī followed him using the same division. Other Ash'arites, such as al-Juwaynī and al-Ghazālī came up with slightly different divisions. See Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn al-Rāzī, *al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Khaīl, 2004), 237; ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAbdullāh al-Juwaynī, *al-Talkhīṣ fī uṣūl al-fiqh* (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʿir, 2000), 1/159; Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtisād fī al-ʿitiqād* (Beirut: Dār al-Minhāj, 2016), 304.

<sup>7</sup> al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 323-324; ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub, 1998), 8/202. *Ḥusn* and *qubḥ* in the first perspective are more related to the characteristics than actions. Knowledge, for example, is a characteristic of perfection, i.e., it adds perfection to the one who is attributed with it. The second perspective is relative to the agent and changeable according to time and place. Killing Zayd, for example is good to his enemies and bad for his friends. For more elaboration on these two perspectives, see al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/202-203.

what God states as good becomes good and what He states as bad becomes bad.<sup>8</sup> The Mu‘tazilites do not accept this Ash‘arite position and maintain that there are already ethical values of actions, and religious law must come to approve the good ones and disapprove the bad ones.<sup>9</sup>

To clarify the focus of controversy between the Ash‘arites and the Mu‘tazilites more accurately, we need to elaborate more on al-Ījī’s definition of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ*. He defines *ḥusn* as what deserves praise in this world and reward in the hereafter, and *qubḥ* as what deserves blame in this world and punishment in the hereafter. This definition with this order does not present the disputing point precisely because praise and blame can exist in this world and in the hereafter as well. Similarly, reward and punishment are not restricted to the hereafter, but they can be precipitated by God in this world. This clarification is provided by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1285) who pinned down the focus of controversy in this argument to legal accountability, i.e., the actions that God takes into accountability.<sup>10</sup> For al-Ījī, God holds people accountable based on the ethical values that He defined in the revelation, not based on what our reason defines as good or bad. God praises and rewards the actions He defined as *ḥusn* and blames and punishes the actions that He defined as *qubḥ*, and thus we understand what is good and what is bad based on the divine injunctions. On the other hand, the Mu‘tazilites maintain that God praises and rewards or blames and punishes based on the real ethical properties of actions.

## 2. Al-Ījī’s polemic Argument

With this argument, al-Ījī does not intend to refute a specific group of Mu‘tazilites. However, he intends to attack the whole Mu‘tazilite ethical foundation by negating human free will.<sup>11</sup> He repeats Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s (d. 606/1209) argument on the compelling motive (*al-dā‘ī al-mujbir*) to prove that human actions are either compelled or arbitrary and, in both cases, they cannot have ethical values in themselves. Al-Ījī argues:

If the servant is unable to omit [the action], then he is compelled, and if he was able to omit his action without depending on a preponderating factor, i.e., [the action] comes forth from him sometimes and does not come forth at other times, then [the action] is arbitrary. However, if [the action] was depended on a preponderating factor, it [the preponderating factor] cannot be from the servant himself because that would lead to an infinite regress. Therefore, [the action] is necessary as far as the determining factor is concerned. Otherwise [if the factor does not necessitate the action] performing and omitting the action would be possible, and there will be a need for another preponderating factor [if it does not necessitate the action as well], and it will go ad infinitum. Therefore, [the action] will be necessary [as it comes to exist along with the

<sup>8</sup> al-Juwaynī, *al-Irshād*, 259.

<sup>9</sup> Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Karmānī, *al-Kawāshif fī Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* (Istanbul: Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hüseyin Paşa, 317), 348b.

<sup>10</sup> Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Abī al-‘Alā al-Qarāfī, *Nafā’is al-uṣūl fī Sharḥ al-Maḥsūl* (Cairo: al-Bāz Publication, 1995), 1/351.

<sup>11</sup> It is unanimous by the Mu‘tazilites that the compelled (*majbur*) action cannot hold any ethical value, see al-Qāḍī Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad, *al-Mughnī* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1953), 6/5-9. Therefore, al-Ījī’s attempt to prove that human actions are compelled is enough to refute ethical rationalism.

determining factor]. In all cases [the action being arbitrary or necessary], the servant has no choice in his actions, and thus he will be compelled.<sup>12</sup>

Put it simply, deciding to perform or omit a certain action is dependent on a compelling motive that is created by God, and thus the agent is compelled to choose according to the motive that God creates in his heart. Al-Ījī argues that if preponderating one side of the action, (i.e., performance over omittance or omittance over performance) happens without a compelling motive, then the action is arbitrary, and arbitrary actions are not subject to value judgements. On the other hand, affirming the existence of a compelling motive will not save the human freewill because that motive cannot be generated from the agent's contingent will, and thus it must be related to the divine will. In other words, al-Ījī makes a distinction between two faculties of will, the divine and the human. The former cannot be the source of any final/efficient motive or will because human will is contingent, and generating a final motive requires another motive and each motive needs another one ad infinitum. The divine will, on the other hand, is an eternal and necessary attribute, and thus it can be the source of the final motive.

There are a few potential objections that al-Ījī tries to respond in this argument, but we are going only to discuss the most important objection and then reveal al-Ījī's real position about this argument. The objection affirms that the knowledge about the existence of our power and choice<sup>13</sup> is a necessary knowledge, and what is necessary cannot be denied by a speculative<sup>14</sup> argument. Al-Ījī responded to this objection succinctly by saying that the necessary knowledge is related to the existence of power and choice, not to their efficacy.<sup>15</sup> It means that we know intuitively that we have power and choice, but we do not know in the same way about their source and efficacy. To understand al-Ījī's response clearly, we need to shed some light on his position on the efficacy of the contingent power and human choice. The contingent power and its efficacy are the core of the theory of acquisition (*kasb*) that al-Ījī and other Ash'arites maintain. Nevertheless, explaining the theory of acquisition is beyond the limited scope of this paper; we can simply say that the theory is about the creation of human actions by divine power, and man's role in this case is using his choice and his contingent power, which does not have efficacy.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, human power, according to al-Ījī, is an accident that God creates for living beings when they choose to act, and that power does not play any role in bringing the action into existence; nevertheless, the existence of the power is required although God is the one who creates the action.<sup>17</sup> In a nutshell, the theory of acquisition does not negate the existence of power. It only negates its efficacy. This

<sup>12</sup> al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 324. Cf. Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Rāzī, *al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn* (Cairo: al-Kulliyāt al-Azharīya, 1986) 319.

<sup>13</sup> al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 324; al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/206.

<sup>14</sup> For more elaboration on intuitive and speculative knowledge, see Mehmet Bulgen, "Tanrı'nın Varlığını Kantlamannın (İsbat-ı Vacib) Kelam Bilgi Teorisindeki Yeri: Kādi Abdulcebbar Örneği [Proving God's Existence in Terms of Kalām's Theory of Knowledge: The Case of Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār]", *Marifetname* 9/1 (Haziran 2022), 13-53.

<sup>15</sup> al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 325; al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/207.

<sup>16</sup> For more discussion about the theory of acquisition, see Majid Fakhry, *Islamic Occasionalism: and its Critique by Averroes and Aquinas* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalām* (London: Harvard University Press, 1970), 671.

<sup>17</sup> al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 6/86.

explanation of human power helps us to understand half of the response that al-Ījī gave to the objection.

To understand the other half, we need to elaborate on the faculty of choice. The majority of Ash‘arites acknowledge the existence of human free choice, but they all negate the efficacy of human contingent power because it contradicts their understanding of the all-inclusive (*shāmila*) divine power. Nevertheless, they did not highlight the freedom of choice in their arguments. Ibn al-Wazīr (d. 840/1436) points this opinion out by saying, “Regarding the obvious side—which they [the Ash‘arites] did not discuss it because of its clarity—that our actions are based on our intentions, motives and choices.”<sup>18</sup> We can say that al-Ījī follows the same position of the majority of the Ash‘arites by maintaining the freedom of will.<sup>19</sup> Although he used the argument of the compelling motive, he does not maintain that humans necessarily need a motive to act, but on the contrary, he affirms that human will can preponderate one side of the action by its nature and does not necessarily need an external preponderating factor. He states that, “preponderating by the virtue of choice alone is possible according to us. Such action [without an external preponderating factor] is still considered voluntary.”<sup>20</sup> Another piece of evidence about al-Ījī position on human free choice is found in his elaboration on the contingent (*al-mumkin*). He said that al-Rāzī requires a motive for preponderating one side of the action, and we do not concede this position. He said that for us, the Ash‘arites, preponderating without any cause (*sabab*) is impossible but preponderating without an external motive is possible.<sup>21</sup> The cause that preponderates one side of the action is the human choice, and this choice is from the man himself. Affirming that the choice is not created directly by God does not contradict the all-inclusiveness of divine power because the human choice is a mental entity (*amr i‘tibārī*) that does not have external existence. Thus, we see that al-Ījī does not adopt al-Rāzī’s argument of the compelling motive; he is only using it polemically to cast doubt on the Mu‘tazilite ethical foundation.

### 3. The Intrinsic Ethical Values

At the outset of the argument, al-Ījī stated in a general way that the early Mu‘tazilites believed that actions have intrinsic ethical values, and then he introduced a series of arguments to refute this position. Nevertheless, he did not define who are the early Mu‘tazilites who adopted this position. Therefore, we need to scrutinize the Mu‘tazilites’ books to find out about their early ancestors. However, before doing so, it is necessary to note that there is a paucity of information about the early Mu‘tazilite scholars, and this little information about them is either mentioned by other late Mu‘tazilites or by their Ash‘arite opponents. However, the books of al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025) could help us define the source of this position. Al-Qāḍī attributed this position to the head of the Mu‘tazilite school of Bagdad, Abū al-Qāsim al-Ka‘bī (d. 319/931) by saying, “According to Abū al-Qasīm, the *qabīḥ* [act] is *qabīḥ* because of its intrinsic attribute and because

<sup>18</sup> Muhammed b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Wazīr, *Ithār al-ḥaqq ‘alā al-khalq fī radd al-khilāfāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘ilmiya, 1987), 282.

<sup>19</sup> al-Rāzī was the first Ash‘arite who implemented the argument of the compelling motive to negate the freedom of human choice. See Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī, *al-Inṣāf* (Cairo: al-Azhariya, 2000), 44.

<sup>20</sup> al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 325.

<sup>21</sup> al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 71.

of itself."<sup>22</sup> Some contemporary authors attributed this position to different Mu'tazilite scholars, such as Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. 235/850), al-Nazzām (d. 221/836) and Abū Jaʿfar al-Iskāfi (d. 220/854).<sup>23</sup> It is clear that all of those Mu'tazilites belong to the Mu'tazilite school of Bagdad, except Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf who is from the school of Basra. Therefore, we can say that the position of the intrinsic ethical value that al-Ījī argues against is mainly the position of the Mu'tazilite school of Bagdad. Al-Ījī deployed several arguments to refute this position, but he only adopted two of them and claimed their coherency. We will present three arguments, the two that al-Ījī adopted and another famous argument from the ones he deployed.

### 3.1. The Changeable Ethical Value cannot be Intrinsic

The first argument that al-Ījī adopted is simply assuming an action that is claimed to be always good or bad, and then providing an example of the same action with a different value judgement. The examples that al-Ījī used in these arguments are mainly related to the intrinsic value of lying (*kidhb*) and truth-telling (*ṣidq*). He argues, "if the *qubḥ* of lying were intrinsic because of itself (*bi-al-dhāt*) or [because of] an essential property, its [*qubḥ*] would not be conceived separated from it. Since what is essential for something cannot be separate from it, and thus the consequence is false."<sup>24</sup> If an action is essentially bad or good, it cannot be conceived at any assumed moment or place differently, i.e., it must always have the same ethical value regardless of the different circumstances. Al-Ījī argues that if lying has an inherent property of *qubḥ*, it cannot be conceived good in any imagined case. Furthermore, lying in order to save the life of a prophet is an obligation that the Mu'tazilites cannot deny according to al-Ījī, and obligatory actions must always be good according to the Mu'tazilites.<sup>25</sup> To put it logically, we can form the argument in two premises,

- Lying is always bad (p. I)
- Lying in the case of sparing a prophet's life is good (p. II)

In order not to fall into contradiction, the Mu'tazilites need to concede that (p. I) is wrong because truth-telling in this case means helping the aggressor to kill an innocent person,<sup>26</sup> which is in itself an intrinsically bad action. The Mu'tazilites might still insist that lying is categorically bad, and in this case, the obligatory or the good thing is to save the life of the prophet by other means, such as using innuendo<sup>27</sup> (*taʿrīḍ*). Thus, the intrinsic value of lying would be saved from being changed.<sup>28</sup> Al-Jurjānī summarizes the Mu'tazilites' objection and responds to them succinctly by saying that al-Ījī's argument is assumed when the questioner makes his question very precise, and then the

<sup>22</sup> al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa* (Cairo: Wahba Publication, 1996), 309-310. This book is a commentary on al-Qāḍī's five principles, however, the attribution of the book to al-Qāḍī is quite controversial, and more likely it is written by one of his students who is Qawām al-Dīn Mankdīm (d. 425/1033).

<sup>23</sup> Ali Bardakoğlu, "Hüsün ve Kubh Konusunda Aklın Rolü ve İmam Maturidî", *Erciyes Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 5 (1987), 59-75.

<sup>24</sup> al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 325.

<sup>25</sup> Aḍud al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. Rukn al-Dīn al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub, 2004), 2/36.

<sup>26</sup> The prophet is always conceived innocent because infallibility is essential to prophecy according to both schools, the Mu'tazilite and the Ash'arite.

<sup>27</sup> The Mu'tazilites base their objection on the famous dictum: "innuendo is a means to escape from lying."

<sup>28</sup> al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/209.

questioned person cannot find a way to resort to innuendo or to any other means.<sup>29</sup> Al-Ījī does not restrict his examples to only ‘lying to save a prophet’ but he also includes other similar acts that could be conceived as good or bad in different circumstances. This argument that al-Ījī adopted is a common argument that other Ash‘arites used, such as Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), al-Juwaynī, and al-Rāzī, as Ibn al-Qayyīm al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) affirmed.<sup>30</sup> Thus, we can say that al-Ījī is not the one who came up with this argument, but he is the one presenting an authentic argument that other Ash‘arites had deployed. Nevertheless, the argument does not seem to eliminate the possibility of an intrinsic ethical value completely because saying that lying must be done in certain cases does not logically entail its goodness; it only entails that it must be done despite its badness.

### 3.2. Liar Paradox

Al-Ījī’s second argument is a type of a liar paradox<sup>31</sup> that shows that the position of intrinsic value would lead to a contradiction. Let us first put the argument in al-Ījī’s words and then try to elaborate on it. He states:

If intrinsic value were true, it would lead to two contradictory [values] both are true together. The consequence is false [the consequence: having two contradictory [values] that are both true]. The clarification of the implication is if someone said: ‘I will lie tomorrow’ then this report cannot be devoid of truth and falsity, and in all cases, two contradictory values will be together [truth and falsity]. The truth of his report entails lying at the end [fulfilling his first statement], and thus both essential attributes, *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* would be true together, and they are contradictory [values]. On the other hand, the falsity of his [first] report entails the negation of not lying [telling-truth tomorrow], and thus the same impossibility will be implied.<sup>32</sup>

Put it simply, the man who said ‘I will lie tomorrow’ cannot escape from having two contradictory values together, whether he lies or tells the truth the next day. In case he tells the truth on the second day, he would be lying in his first statement (I will lie tomorrow) and thus, both values of truth and falsity will be attributed to his act. By the same token, if he lies the next day, he will be telling the truth, i.e., he will be fulfilling his first statement: ‘I will lie tomorrow.’ Al-Ījī wants to show by this paradox that telling the truth is not intrinsically good, and the same, lying is not always bad.

If the values of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* were intrinsic in man’s action—which in this case is lying or telling the truth— then it must be categorically described with one of these two values, but since his action on the day after will always entail the opposite value; therefore, the action, whether it is lying or telling the truth, cannot have an intrinsic value of *ḥusn* or *qubḥ*. However, al-Ījī adopted this argument in his commentary on *al-Mukhtaṣar*, while in *al-Mawāqif*, he ascribed this argument

<sup>29</sup> al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/209.

<sup>30</sup> Ibn Qayyīm al-Jawziyya Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr, *Miftāḥ dār al-sa‘āda* (Mecca: Dār al-Fawāid, 2010), 2/926.

<sup>31</sup> The paradox is defined by Martin Pleitz as, “an argument that appears to be valid from premises that appear to be true to a conclusion that appears to be unacceptable” see, Martin Pleitz, *Logic, Language, and the Liar Paradox* (Münster: Mentis, 2018), 18.

<sup>32</sup> al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/36.

to his Ash'arite colleagues in a general way. Therefore, we can say that al-Ījī is not the first one who coined this argument. Furthermore, al-Fanārī<sup>33</sup> (d. 886/1481) commented on this argument by saying that those who adopt the position of intrinsic values do not deem it impossible to have both the value of goodness and badness together in one action because it is possible to have two intrinsic qualities in the same action.<sup>34</sup> Al-Fanārī, in his objection to al-Ījī's argument, argues that even though *qubḥ* entails blame and *ḥusn* does not entail it, it is still possible to have both *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* attributed to one action from two different perspectives.<sup>35</sup> I think that al-Fanārī's objection does not really challenge al-Ījī's argument because the partisans of the intrinsic ethical value do not say that the ethical value can be conceived differently from different perspectives. Al-Jurjānī on his commentary on a similar argument affirmed that this type of argument is tenable against the partisans of intrinsic value, not against al-Jubbā'īya who allow the possibility of value judgement based on different aspects.<sup>36</sup> Finally, we say that this argument seems logically more coherent than the first one; nevertheless, it does not seem free of objections.

### 3.3. Arguing from the Accidental Nature of the Ethical Value

The third argument that al-Ījī deployed is based on the statement: 'An accident (*'araḍ*) cannot subsist on another accident,' which is a very common and multifunctional statement in the Ash'arite literature. Al-Ījī argues that the ethical values of good and bad are accidents or meanings,<sup>37</sup> and thus they cannot subsist on human actions, which are also accidents themselves. There are a few premises that al-Ījī needs to prove before coming to his conclusion. We will write all the premises in the argument and try to provide al-Ījī's argument about their validity.

- The ethical value of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* are additional to the nature of actions (p. I)
- This additional value (*ḥusn* or *qubḥ*) has an ontological existence (p. II)
- This additional existential meaning belongs to the category of accidents (p. III)
- Human actions are accidents (p. IV)
- Accidents cannot subsist on other accidents (p. V)
- *Ḥusn* and *qubḥ* cannot subsist on actions (p. VI)
- *Ḥusn* and *qubḥ* are additional, not intrinsic (conclusion).

For the first promise, al-Ījī argues that recognizing an action is different from recognizing its ethical value; therefore, they are not identical in nature, but one of them is added to the other, i.e., the ethical value of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* is additional to the essence of the action. The second promise is about the nature of the ethical value itself, whether it is existential (*wujūdi*) or non-existential (*'adami*). Al-Ījī argues that the ethical value of *ḥusn* must have an existential nature

<sup>33</sup> al-Fanārī here is Ḥasan al-Harawī al-Fanārī is different from the famous logician Muḥammad b. Ḥamza al-Fanārī (d. 835/1431). See the introduction of al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 1/7.

<sup>34</sup> al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/44-45.

<sup>35</sup> al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/44-45.

<sup>36</sup> al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/210. The argument against al-Jubbā'īya will be explained and discussed in the final part of this paper.

<sup>37</sup> Accidents and meanings are used as synonyms in this context. For more elaboration on the meaning of accidents see, Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf iṣṭilāḥāt al-funūn wa-al-'ulūm* (Beirut: Nāshrūn Publication, 1996), 2/1175.



because its contrary<sup>38</sup> is *non-ḥusn*, which can only be attributed to non-existence (*‘adam*). Therefore, the property of non-existence must be non-existential as well, and thus the contrary of non-existential property must be existential, i.e., the ethical value of *ḥusn* is existential, and the same applies to the ethical value of *qubḥ*. Proving the truth of premise (I) and (II) entails the truth of premise (III) since what is existential must be either substance (*jawhar*) or accident (*‘araḍ*). Ethical values are not substances; therefore, they are accidents. The rest of the premises do not require proofs, and thus al-Ījī moved to the conclusion that the ethical values are additional to human actions and not intrinsic.<sup>39</sup>

Although al-Ījī dedicated a lengthy argument to prove that an accident cannot subsist on another accident, he ended up casting doubt on the whole argument and pointing out its defect. He says, “the critique [of this argument] could happen by applying the same proof to the affirmed (*thābit*) contingency of the action, which would entail that contingency is not inherent to the action, and thus the action will not be contingent by itself.”<sup>40</sup> Al-Jurjānī supported this potential critique and affirmed that the impossibility of an accident subsisting on another accident had not been proven yet.<sup>41</sup> As we said before, al-Ījī attributed this argument to his fellow Ash‘arites in a general way; however, we can say—based on the extent of our research—that the argument belongs to Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233).<sup>42</sup> Al-Āmidī ardently presented this argument as a solid argument to refute the Mu‘tazilites’ ethical theory. He differentiates between contingency and ethical values. The former belongs to the category of considerations (*‘itibārāt*), while the latter belongs to the category of accidents. Furthermore, al-Āmidī argues that if the opponent conceded that the ethical values belong to the category of considerations (*‘itibārāt*), it would be enough to refute the intrinsic claim of the ethical values.<sup>43</sup> Finally, we say that al-Āmidī’s argument, despite the objections, could be a solid argument if and only if an accident cannot subsist on another accident, which has not been completely substantiated, as al-Jurjānī said.

#### 4. The Theory of the Ethical Aspects

Al-Ījī calls the second position of the Mu‘tazilites that he attempts to refute as al-Jubbā’īya, which means the follower of Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī (d. 303/915) and his son Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā’ī (d. 321/933). However, since we do not have the two Jubbā’ī’s books,<sup>44</sup> we need to explore the books of their followers and try to find a reliable representative of their ethical theory. Abū Hashim al-Jubbā’ī maintained the theological ideas of his father, except for a few arguments, and later on his ideas became the main representative of the Mu‘tazilite school of Basra. Al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025) studied with two prominent students of Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā’ī, who are Abū Ishāq b.

<sup>38</sup> For logicians, there is a difference between the contrary (*naqid*) and the opposite (*did*); the latter is existential, while the former is non-existential. See ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ḥabanaka, *Ḍawabit al-Ma‘rifa* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1975), 51.

<sup>39</sup> al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/50.

<sup>40</sup> al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/50-51; al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 326; al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/211.

<sup>41</sup> al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/212.

<sup>42</sup> Sayf al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Abī ‘Alī al-Āmidī, *al-Iḥkām fi uṣūl al-aḥkām* (Beirut: Islamic Office for Publication, 1982), 1/84.

<sup>43</sup> al-Āmidī, *al-Iḥkām fi uṣūl al-aḥkām*, 1/84.

<sup>44</sup> We have one book available that is attributed to Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī, *Kitāb al-Maqālāt*, but nothing mentioned about his ethical theory in it. See Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahab, *al-Maqālāt* (Istanbul: Endülüs Yayınları, 2019).

‘Aīāsh (d. 386/996) and Abū ‘Abdullāh al-Baṣrī (d. 369/979). Moreover, al-Shahrastānī stated that late Mu'tazilites, such as al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār are the extension of the school of Abū Hāshīm al-Jubbā’ī.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, we can say that al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār is a reliable representative of al-Jubbā’īya and the Mu'tazilite school of Basra.

Al-Ījī stated that according to al-Jubbā’īya, *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* are not inherent qualities in actions, but they are necessary aspects (*wujūh*) that are responsible for the ethical values.<sup>46</sup> Al-Ījī's statement is not enough to have a good grasp of al-Jubbā’īya's ethical theory; therefore, it would be salutary to our purpose to elaborate more on this position before plunging into al-Ījī's arguments.

Al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār maintained that actions in themselves do not have inherent ethical qualities, but they become good or bad based on the ethical aspects that are attached to them. Therefore, we cannot judge a specific action without knowing all of its ethical aspects. For example, slapping a child could be bad if it is done to torture him and good to correct his behavior.<sup>47</sup> The ethical aspects that al-Qāḍī is talking about are a set of extrinsic qualities that are responsible for qualifying actions with goodness or badness. For example, the aspects or qualities that are responsible for making an action injustice or *qabīḥ* are three qualities: being pure harm that does not have benefit, not leading to avoid greater harm, and not being deserved. Al-Qāḍī adds a fourth aspect, which is the certainty of the existence of the first two aspects, i.e., the uncertainty of the first two aspects is enough to negate the ethical value of *qubḥ*.<sup>48</sup> Knowing the ethical aspects of all actions by virtue of reason is beyond human capacity; therefore, after knowing the ethical aspects of certain actions, we judge other actions accordingly. Al-Qāḍī explains this as follows, “when we know the cause that made injustice and lying *qabīḥ*, then we can similarly judge every *qabīḥ* because of the same cause that they have.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, knowing the aspects that make certain actions good or bad is enough for us to do an analogy to other actions. However, al-Ījī did not use several arguments against this position because some of the arguments that he used to refute the intrinsic value are valid against this group as well. We will present and discuss one argument that seems more tenable than the rest.

#### 4.1. Al-Ījī's Argument

Al-Ījī argues that the claim that the ethical aspects necessarily entail the value judgements of actions would lead to two absurdities: compromising the divine freedom of choice or ascribing committing bad actions to God. The Mu'tazilites do not concede any of these consequences, and thus they need to renounce their theory of ethical aspects according to al-Ījī. He states,

[In this case] actions in themselves will not be equal regarding the [divine] rulings. If one side of the action [performing or omission] is preponderated [by these ethical aspects], then to have the ruling according to the other side is rationally unacceptable, namely, it would be *qabīḥ* and inconceivable in respect to God. Therefore, ruling according to the

<sup>45</sup> ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Abī Bakr al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-niḥal*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub, 1992), 1/72.

<sup>46</sup> al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/36; al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 324; al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/218.

<sup>47</sup> al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 565.

<sup>48</sup> al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 351.

<sup>49</sup> al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad, *al-Majmu’ al-muḥīṭ bi-al-taklīf* (Cairo: al-Dār al-Masriya, 1965), 1/235.

preponderated side of the action would be necessary, and thus it negates the [divine] choice.<sup>50</sup>

Al-Ījī argues that if the ethical aspects were responsible for determining the ethical value of *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* in actions, then divine commands would have no choice but to follow the already determined ethical value. In other words, if the ethical value of actions is already determined by the ethical aspects, God will not have a choice but to command the actions that their ethical value of *ḥusn* has been already preponderated and prohibit the actions that their value of *qubḥ* has been already preponderated. Both al-Ījī and the Mu‘tazilites agree that God does not commit *qabīḥ*.<sup>51</sup> According to al-Ījī’s argument, if the Mu‘tazilites maintain the theory of ethical aspects, they need to renounce the divine freedom of choice or concede that God commits *qabīḥ*.

It is important to note that the conception of divine ethics differs between al-Ījī and the Mu‘tazilites. For al-Ījī, God is the omnipotent absolute ruler who creates everything in existence, including human actions: the ones we call good, and the ones we call bad. Nevertheless, the concept of badness is not applicable to God because He is the absolute owner of everything, and everything He does is good, just, and wise.<sup>52</sup> Justice is doing what you have the right to do, and God has the absolute right to whatever He wants with what He owns, while wisdom, according to al-Ījī and the rest of the Ash‘arites, is related to divine Omnipotence and Omniscience, i.e., it is a quality based on eternal unchangeable attributes. Simply, we can say that the Ash‘arites’ conception of divine ethics is based on al-Ash‘arī’s declaration. He says, “*whatever He [God] does, He has the right to do: He is the Almighty king who is not owned (mamlūk) and above Him there is no permissive, commander, preventer, and forbiddor.*”<sup>53</sup> This paragraph summarizes al-Ījī’s conception of divine ethics. The Mu‘tazilites, on the other hand, believe in a necessary ethical value, i.e., the concepts of goodness and badness are the same in respect to us and in respect to God. The ethical aspects necessitate the same ethical judgement for both human and divine actions.<sup>54</sup> Justice and wisdom are related to acting according to the ethical values of actions. Al-Qāḍī defines these divine qualities as follow, “*when we describe the Eternal [God] as just and wise, we mean that He neither commits qabīḥ nor chooses it, and He does not neglect what is necessary on Him, and all His actions are good.*”<sup>55</sup> Al-Qāḍī here affirms that God does not choose *qabīḥ* because of His wisdom and justice, namely, God has the power to do *qabīḥ* actions,<sup>56</sup> but He does not choose to do so. This will take us back to understanding al-Ījī’s argument in a better way. When he said that ruling against the preponderated side will be rationally unacceptable, it means that the act will be contrary to the

<sup>50</sup> al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, 2/71.

<sup>51</sup> al-Ījī affirms that all Muslims are unanimous in affirming that God does not commit *qabīḥ*. See al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 328.

<sup>52</sup> al-Ījī, *al-Mawāqif*, 328; al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/216; al-Karmānī, *al-Kawāshif fi Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* (Hüseyin Paşa, 317), 355b.

<sup>53</sup> Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Isma‘īl al-Ash‘arī, *al-Luma‘ fi al-radd ‘alā ahl al-zaygh wa al-bida‘* (Cairo: The Egyptian Press, 1955), 117.

<sup>54</sup> al-Qāḍī Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 318.

<sup>55</sup> al-Qāḍī Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 301.

<sup>56</sup> ‘God has the power to do *qabīḥ*’ is the main position of the Mu‘tazilites, but still a small minority among them maintain that God’s power is only valid to perform *ḥusn*. Al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār restricted the partisans of this position to al-Nazzām (d. 221/836), al-Jāḥiz (d. 255/869) and Abū ‘Alī al-Aswārī (d. 240/854). See al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*, 314; al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, 6/128.

Mu'tazilites concept of divine justice and wisdom. The Mu'tazilites do not consider it rationally impossible for God to commit *qabīh*, but they only say that He does not choose it due to His justice and wisdom. Thus, they can maintain the freedom of divine choice along with their theory of ethical aspects. Finally, we see that al-Ījī's argument is tenable only and only if the Mu'tazilites have the same conception of divine ethics of the Ash'arites'. Al-Ījī needs to refute the Mu'tazilite conception of divine justice and wisdom, and then he can easily debunk their theory of ethical aspects.

## Conclusion

This paper presented three different types of Ash'arite arguments against the Mu'tazilites' ethical realism. The arguments were deployed by al-Ījī, whose work presents the final stage of Ash'arism. We saw that al-Ījī denied any form of ethical realism, whether it is inherent qualities in certain actions or necessary ethical aspects. He maintained that God, through revelation, grants ethical values to our actions. Al-Ījī's first argument was a repetition of al-Rāzī's argument of the compelling motive where al-Ījī's aim was casting doubt on the autonomy of human freewill that the Mu'tazilites ardently defended and built their ethical theory on. To refute the position of the intrinsic ethical value of the early Mu'tazilites, al-Ījī adopted two arguments and ascribed a few others to his fellow Ash'arites in a general way. We found out that none of these arguments was coined initially by al-Ījī himself. We think that the most tenable argument among them is the argument of the liar paradox. The final part of the paper dealt with al-Ījī's argument against the Mu'tazilite theory of ethical aspects. The theory was maintained by the majority of the Mu'tazilites. Al-Ījī's argument was not accurate enough in defining the Mu'tazilites's position of divine ethics; therefore, we briefly elaborated on the concept of divine ethics according to the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites and saw that al-Ījī had to refute first the Mu'tazilite conception of divine justice and wisdom, and then their theory of ethical aspects.

On a final note, al-Ījī's arguments against the Mu'tazilite ethical realism do not seem to be free from objections. However, if they were associated with an Ash'arite conception of God and human actions, they could be considered a serious challenge to the Mu'tazilite ethical theories.

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## PUBLISHING POLICY

- ◆ The text submitted for publication may not be previously published or accepted for publication by another publisher.
- ◆ Papers may not exceed 10.000 words, including appended material such as pictures, charts and maps etc. (and excluding keynotes, bibliographies, abstracts and summaries in English). Papers must be submitted with abstracts comprising the introduction, methodology, findings, discussions and conclusion sections briefly, both in Turkish and English (350-400 words, may not exceed 5000 characters including space) along with key words (5-7 words).
- ◆ The language of KADER is Turkish. However, each issue may include papers in English or in Arabic as long as the number of these do not exceed one-third of the total number of papers in the issue.
- ◆ The editorial board peruses the submitted paper with regard to both form and content before sending it on to referees. They may also consider the views of the advisory board. After the deliberation of the editorial board, the submitted paper is sent to two referees. If the paper is rejected by one of them, it is sent to third referee. In order for any paper to be published, at least two of the referees must approve it. The revision and improvement demanded by the referees must be implemented in order for a paper to be published. Authors are informed within the process about the decision regarding the publication of their papers.
- ◆ A paper cannot be withdrawn by its author after the completion of the evaluation process without a reasonable justification within the scope of publication ethics. In case of such a request, the paper is removed from the system by rejection.
- ◆ The authors have to take notice of referees' report. The authors assume the responsibility of the paper with regard to the style, content, scholarly value and legal aspects. The editorial board reserves the right to accept or reject the text. The texts submitted to the journal are not returned, even if they are not accepted for publication. The published texts of the authors could be removed from publication in accordance with the decision of the board. They could not be withdrawn from the journal without the decision of the board. The copyright fee is not paid for the texts.
- ◆ All texts published in KADER are copyrighted by the journal; they cannot be used without proper reference.
- ◆ According to publication standards of the journal, texts to be considered for publication must be uploaded in "word" file format without specifying name and surname, after being a member of KADER, by paper sent button.
- ◆ The texts submitted for publication should be written in A4 size with white space at the top, bottom, right 4 cm and 5 cm from the left side with at least 12nk line spacing, two sides, without line hyphenation and 10 points Isnad font (You can [download the font here](#)). However, the

submitted tables, figures, pictures, graphics and etc. should not exceed 12X17 cm in order that they will not go beyond the edges of the page and will be for easy usage. Therefore, smaller points and single space could be used in tables, figures, pictures, graphics and etc. [the ISNAD Citation Style](#) 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition is highly required in footnotes and references.

- ◆ Papers will be tested in that are subjected to plagiarism detection program, whether they contain plagiarism or not.

**The information below must be given:**

- ◆ The title of the paper (both in Turkish and English), the name and surname of the author, his/her title, institution, ROR ID of the institution (<https://ror.org/>) and ORCID ID number must be specified. Besides, information of the author (e-mail address) must be given completely.

**Processing Charges**

- ◆ KADER does not charge any article submission, processing charges, and printing charge from the authors.

## THE PERIODICAL RANGE AND TIME

June (30<sup>th</sup> June)

Submissions: 1<sup>st</sup> January – 15<sup>th</sup> April

December (31<sup>th</sup> December)

Submissions: 1<sup>st</sup> July – 15<sup>th</sup> October

## FOOTNOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY REFERENCING STYLE

KADER highly requires the authors to use [the ISNAD Citation Style](#) 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. For more information you can visit the website <http://www.isnadsistemi.org/en/guide/> and download the handbook and templates from <http://www.isnadsistemi.org/en/downloads/>.

## ETHICS POLICY

### Publication Ethics

The publication process at KADER is the basis of the improvement and dissemination of information objectively and respectfully. Therefore, the procedures in this process improve the quality of the studies. Peer-reviewed studies are the ones that support and materialize the scientific method. At this point, it is of utmost importance that all parties



included in the publication process (authors, readers and researchers, publisher, reviewers and editors) comply with the standards of ethical considerations. KADER expects all parties to hold the following ethical responsibilities.

The following ethical duties and responsibilities are written in the light of the guide and policies made by [Committee on Publication Ethics](#) (COPE).

The publication of an article in a peer-reviewed journal is an essential building block in the development of a coherent and respected network of knowledge. It is a direct reflection of the quality of the work of the authors and the institutions that support them. Peer-reviewed articles support and embody the scientific method. It is therefore important to agree upon standards of expected ethical behavior for all parties involved in the act of publishing: the author, the journal editor, the peer reviewer, and the publisher.

## 1. Ethical Responsibilities of Authors

The authors who submit their manuscripts to KADER are expected to comply with the following ethical responsibilities:

- There is no charge for the paper submitted to the journal.
- Author(s) must submit original studies to the journal.
- If author(s) utilize or use other studies, they must make the in-text and end-text references accurately and completely.
- People who have not contributed to the study at the intellectual level should not be indicated as author.
- If the manuscripts submitted to be published are subject of conflicting interests or relations, these must be explained.
- During the review process of their manuscripts, author(s) may be asked to supply raw data. In such a case, author(s) should be ready to submit such data and information to the editorial board.
- Author(s) should document that they have the participants' consent and the necessary permissions related with the sharing and research/analysis of the data that are used.
- Author(s) bears the responsibility to inform the editor of the journal or publisher if they happen to notice a mistake in their study which is in early release or publication process and to cooperate with the editors during the correction or withdrawal process.
- Authors cannot submit their studies to multiple journals simultaneously. Each submission can be made only after the previous one is completed. A study published in another journal cannot be submitted to KADER.
- Author responsibilities given in a study (e.g., adding an author, reordering of author names) cannot be changed if the review process has begun.

## 2. Ethical Responsibilities of Editors

The editors of KADER should hold the following ethical responsibilities that are based on the guides “[COPE Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors](#)” and “[COPE Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors](#)” published as open Access by [Committee on Publication Ethics \(COPE\)](#).

### General duties and responsibilities

Editors are responsible for each study published in KADER. In this respect, the editors have the following roles and responsibilities:

- Making efforts to meet the demand for knowledge from readers and authors,
- Ensuring the continuous development of the journal,
- Managing the procedures aimed to improve the quality of the studies published in the journal,
- Supporting intellectual freedom,
- Ensuring academic integrity,
- Following the procedures without making concessions on intellectual property rights and ethical standards,
- Being transparent and clear in issues that require correction or explanation.

### Relationships with Readers

Editors must make decisions taking into consideration the knowledge, skills and expectations of all readers, researchers and practitioners that they need. Editors must also ensure that the published studies should contribute to literature and be original. Moreover, they must take notice of the feedback received from readers, researchers and practitioners and provide explanatory and informative feedback.

### Relationships with Authors

Editors have the following duties and responsibilities in their relations with authors:

- Editors must make positive or negative decisions about the studies' importance, originality, validity, clarity in wording and suitability with the journal's aims and objectives.
- Editors must take the studies that are within the scope of publication into pre-review process unless there are serious problems with the study.
- Editors must not ignore positive suggestions made by reviewers unless there are serious problems with the study.
- New editors, unless there are serious issues, must not change the previous editor's decisions about the studies.

- “[Blind Review and Review Process](#)” must be published and editors must prevent possible diversions from the defined processes.
- Editors must publish an “[Author's Guide](#)” that is comprehensive enough in answering queries by authors. This guide must be updated regularly.
- Authors should be provided with explanatory and informative feedback.

### **Relationships with Reviewers**

Editors have the following duties and responsibilities in their relations with reviewers:

Editors must

- respect that their own papers are evaluated by appropriate independent referees from the editorial board.
- choose reviewers according to the subject of the study.
- provide the information and guidance reviewers may need during the review process.
- observe whether there are conflicting interests between reviewers and authors.
- keep the identities of reviewers confidential in blind review.
- encourage the reviewers to review the manuscript in an unbiased, scientific and objective tone.
- evaluate reviewers regularly based on criteria like performance and timing.
- develop practices and policies that increase the performance of reviewers.
- take necessary steps to update the reviewer pool dynamically.
- prevent unkind and unscientific reviews.
- make effort to ensure the reviewer pool has a wide range.

### **Relationships with the Editorial Board**

Editors must make sure that the members of the editorial board follow the procedures in accordance with the publication policies and guidelines, and must inform the members about the publication policies and developments. The editors must also train new members of the editorial board and provide the information they need.

Moreover, editors must

- ensure that the members of the editorial board review the manuscripts in an unbiased and independent manner.
- select the new members of the editorial board from those who can contribute to the journal and are qualified enough.
- send manuscripts for review based on the subject of expertise of the editorial board members.
- regularly communicate with the editorial board.

- arrange regular meetings with the editorial board for the development of publication policies and the journal.

### **Relationships with the Journal's Owner and Publisher**

The relationship between the editors and publisher is based on the principle of the independency of editors.

### **Editorial and Blind Review Processes**

Editors are obliged to comply with the policies of "Blind Review and Review Process" stated in the journal's publication policies. Therefore, the editors ensure that each manuscript is reviewed in an unbiased, fair and timely manner.

### **Quality Assurance**

Editors must make sure that articles in the journal are published in accordance with the publication policies of the journal and international standards.

### **Protection of Personal Information**

Editors are supposed to protect the personal information related with the subjects or visuals in the studies being reviewed, and to reject the study if there is no documentation of the subjects' consent. Furthermore, editors are supposed to protect the personal information of the authors, reviewers and readers.

### **Encouraging Ethical Rules and Protection of Human and Animal Rights**

Editors are supposed to protect human and animal rights in the studies being reviewed and must reject the experimental studies which do not have ethical and related committee's approval about the population given in such studies.

### **Precautions against possible Abuse and Malpractice**

Editors are supposed to take precautions against possible abuse and malpractice. They must conduct investigations meticulously and objectively in determining and evaluating complaints about such situations. They must also share the results of the investigation.

### **Ensuring Academic Integrity**

Editors must make sure that the mistakes, inconsistencies or misdirections in studies are corrected quickly.

### **Protection of Intellectual Property Rights**

Editors are responsible for protecting the intellectual property rights of all the articles published in the journal and the rights of the journal and author(s) in cases where these rights are violated. Also, editors must take the necessary precautions in order to prevent the content of all published articles from violating the intellectual property rights of other publications.

### **Constructiveness and Openness to Discussion**

Editors must

- pay attention to the convincing criticism about studies published in the journal and must have a constructive attitude towards such criticism.
- grant the right of reply to the author(s) of the criticized study.
- not ignore or exclude the study that include negative results.

### **Complaints**

Editors must examine the complaints from authors, reviewers or readers and respond to them in an explanatory and enlightening manner.

### **Political and Economic Apprehensions**

Neither the owner of the journal, publisher or any other political or economical factor can influence the independent decision taking of the editors.

### **Conflicting Interests**

Editors, acknowledging that there may be conflicting interests between reviewers and other editors, guarantee that the publication process of the manuscripts will be completed in an independent and unbiased manner.

## **3. Ethical Responsibilities of Reviewers**

The fact that all manuscripts are reviewed through “Blind Review” has a direct influence on the publication quality. This process ensures confidentiality by objective and independent review. The review process at KADER is carried out on the principle of double blind review. Reviewers do not contact the authors directly, and the reviews and comments are conveyed through the journal management system. In this process, the reviewer comments on the evaluation forms and full texts are assigned to the author(s) by the editor. After the blind review process is completed, the accepted papers will be tested in that are subjected to plagiarism detection program, whether they contain plagiarism or not, and they have been previously published or not. In this context, the

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reviewers doing review work for KADER are supposed to bear the following ethical responsibilities:

- Each paper submitted to the journal is evaluated by two referees at least.
- If one of the two referees rejects a paper while the other accepts it; the paper is sent to third referee or to the editor for making final decision.

Reviewers must

- agree to review only in their subject of expertise.
- review in an unbiased and confidential manner.
- inform the editor of the journal if they think that they encounter conflict of interests and decline to review the manuscript during the review process.
- dispose the manuscripts they have reviewed in accordance with the principle of confidentiality after the review process. Reviewers can use the final versions of the manuscripts they have reviewed only after publication.
- review the manuscript objectively and only in terms of its content and ensure that nationality, gender, religious and political beliefs, and economic apprehension do not influence the review.
- review the manuscript in a constructive and kind tone, avoid making personal comments including hostility, slander and insult.
- review the manuscript they have agreed to review on time and in accordance with the ethical rules stated above.

#### **4. Ethical Responsibilities of Publisher**

The Board of KADER is conscious of the fact that they must observe the ethical responsibilities below and act accordingly:

- KADER does not charge any article submission from authors.
- Editors are responsible for all the processes that the manuscripts submitted to KADER will go through. Within this framework, ignoring the economic or political interests, the decision-makers are the editors.
- The publisher undertakes to have an independent editorial decision made.
- However, the journal has left the database open on the internet.
- The publisher bears all the responsibility to take the precautions against scientific abuse, fraud and plagiarism.

#### **5. Unethical Behavior**

Should you encounter any unethical act or content in KADER apart from the ethical responsibilities listed above, please notify the journal by e-mail at [kaderdergi@gmail.com](mailto:kaderdergi@gmail.com).

## FOOTNOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY REFERENCING STYLE

Kader, uses [ISNAD Citation style](http://www.isnadsistemi.org/guide/) 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Articles that submitted to our journal should be written in accordance with this style. You can review ISNAD citation style at <http://www.isnadsistemi.org/guide/>.

### ABBREVIATIONS

abr.	abridged by
b.	born
ca.	about, approximately
cf.	compare
chap. /chaps	chapter/chapters
comp.	compiler/compiled by
d.	died
diss.	dissertation
ed.	edited by/edition/editor
eds.	editors
et al.	and others
fn.	footnote
n.d.	no date
no.	number/issue
n.p.	no place/no publisher
p./pp.	page/pages
par.	paragraph
pt.	part
rev. ed.	revised edition
sec.	section
trans.	translated by
vol.	volume