

The Power of Language in the Classical Period of Kalām*

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Abstract: When examining classical-era *kalām* books, we may be at first surprised by the great importance given to language in their theological discussions and the recognition of linguists (*ahl al-lughā*) as authorities. Whenever Muslim theologians (*mutakallimūn*) deal with any issue, they first determine how the linguists would have made sense of the relevant terms and then explain it in a way that is appropriate for use in Arabic. This sensitivity to language is not only limited to defining the Islamic terms such as “belief” (*imān*), “unbelief” (*kufr*), “disobedience” (*ma’ṣiya*), and “justice” (*’adl*), but also includes defining the terms of physics and cosmology. In other words, when conceptualizing terms such as “universe” (*al-’ālam*), “body” (*jism*), “substance” (*jawhar*), “accident” (*’araḍ*), “motion” (*ḥaraka*), and “rest” (*sukūn*), these theologians mostly take into account how the speakers of language commonly use them. This article seeks to answer the question of why they regard language as an important discipline, alongside cosmological issues, in the context of the language-thought-existence relationship. Perhaps by making a thought system based on Arabic, which happened to emerge in their regions as a result of long-time interactions with the natural environment and consequently became conveyers of a particular worldview and way of thinking, they sought to resist the impact of the Greek worldview and logic that poured into the Islamic world from all lands via translations. In other words, the primary reason why the theologians considered language as the authority in theological and cosmological discussions was because they saw it, along with its structure and concepts, as a carrier of their traditional worldviews and way of thinking.

Keywords: Kalām, Language, logic, thought, existence.

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I. Introduction

What kind of discipline is the science of *kalām*? This question has been the subject of various discussions today, given its significant contributions to the establishment of a belief system based on monotheism (*tawhīd*) in Islamic thought. In this regard, whereas some scholars emphasize *kalām*'s revelation-based (*wahy*) aspects, others prioritize its rational aspect and even associate it with disciplines such as theoretical philosophy, cosmology, and metaphysics. However, when the surviving *kalām* books are closely examined, we see that such approaches do not fully reflect *kalām*'s classical position. While *kalām* has a revelation-based aspect and the classical *mutakallimūn* were intensely engaged in epistemology and cosmology, they also adopted an approach according to which language is used as a basis to determine the meaning of the key terms related to physics/metaphysics and the religious sciences, such as "belief" (*īmān*), "unbelief" (*kufṛ*), "substance" (*jawhar*), and "accident" (*ʿarāḍ*). Even so, some of them claimed that revelation or reason cannot give a word a new meaning beyond the boundaries of the existing language.

Although language played a significant and determinative role during the classical period, this issue has received insufficient attention in current academic studies. Studies that link language with *kalām* use the language as a secondary tool to solve other major issues, as is the case with interpreting (*taʿwīl*) God's transmitted attributes (*al-ṣifāt al-khabariyyah*). Those that deal directly with the extensive interaction between *kalām* and Arabic and its integrated structure are very limited.¹ Thus, *kalām*'s language-based character has been overlooked. In addition, Arabic, a carrier of a distinctive way of thinking and worldview, has been seen as a means of communication only. Such an approach shadows its influence on the Islamic sciences and particularly on *kalām*.

This essay, which seeks to show that during the classical period of *kalām* (i.e., third-fifth/ninth-eleventh centuries) language has a great authority in shaping the general way of thinking and determining the meaning of key terms, consists

1 For some studies that point to the topic, see Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, *Arap-İslam Kültürünün Akl Yapısı*, trans. into Turkish by Ekrem Demirli, Burhan Köroğlu, and Hasan Hacak (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2000), 19-20; A. I. Sabra, "Kalām Atomism as an Alternative Philosophy to Hellenizing Falsafa," in *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy: From the Many to the One: Essays in Honor of Richard M. Frank*, ed. James Montgomery (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 208; Mehmet Bulgen, *Kelâm Atomculuğu ve Modern Kozmoloji* (Ankara: TDV, 2018), 163; Galip Türcan, "Kelâmın Dil Üzerine Kurduğu İstidlal Şekli: Bâküllânî'nin Yaklaşımı Bağlamında Bir Değerlendirme," *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 27 (2011/12): 127-38.

of four parts: (1) a theoretical context that posits that language is both a means of communication as well as the carrier of a distinctive way of thinking and worldview by taking into consideration modern linguistic and philosophical theories; (2) the defining of these *mutakallimūn*'s key concepts, including theological and cosmological issues, through selected classical texts on which their use in the daily language were based; (3) an analysis of the Arabic grammarians (*naḥwiyyūn*) and *mutakallimūn*'s critique of Greek logic. That the *mutakallimūn* were aware that Arabic amounts to a distinctive way of thinking and has a logic of its own will be shown by referring to their opposition to Greek logic; and (4) "The Reactions against *kalām*," which studies the criticisms of the *mutakallimūn*'s language-oriented method and their responses to those criticisms in the context of the language-thought-existence relationship.

Undoubtedly, one must correctly determine the relationship between *kalām* and language during the classical period to reveal the methodology the *mutakallimūn* followed in their way of thinking. In addition, the correct establishment of this relationship could contribute to the attempts being made to revive *kalām*, namely, "the new science of *kalām*" (*yeni ilm-i kelām*) that seeks to address the current problems of the Islamic world concerning existence and meaning. The developments made in the linguistic sciences and philosophy of language since the eighteenth century have enabled John Locke (1632-1704), Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Edward Sapir (1884-1939), and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941) to produce important works that argue that language is not only a means of communication, but also has the potential to affect how people think and perceive the world. Their works, which make sense of the *mutakallimūn*'s language-oriented approaches, also present certain perspectives that may help today's *mutakallimūn* understand the importance of language. Such an understanding has a great potential to solve the problems of knowledge, existence, thought, and meaning by taking advantage of their field's rich past.

II. Theoretical Background: The Language-Thought-Existence Relationship

What is language? Is it just a means of communication, or the carrier of a unique way of thinking and worldview?

This ability of humans to ask such questions is one of the main characteristics that distinguishes them from other living things. One can trace the effort to answer

such questions about the nature of language, thought, and its relationship with real things back to the beginning of philosophy. Rationalist philosophers such as Parmenides (501 BCE - 471 BCE), Plato (427 BCE - 347 BCE), and Aristotle (384 BCE - 322 BCE) claimed that there was a correspondence between thought and existence. According to them, because thought is the thought of something, it cannot be separated from its ontological background. On the other hand, since language also reflects thought, there must be a conformity between it and being.²

In modern times, Heidegger summarizes the relationship between language and existence by saying that “language is the home of existence.”³ This approach assumes that studying the essence and meaning of language would be the same as researching existence.⁴ This understanding, which allows one to comprehend existence and thought by looking at language, establishes conformity between language, thought, and being. In this approach, language organizes reality in accordance with its own structure by dividing and separating existing things and expresses the internal relations within and external relations between things in different ways.⁵ Hence, the vocabulary types in language express the categories of existent items. Predicates express motion and action, adjectives express properties, and names invoke objects.⁶ Therefore, there is a correspondence among language,

2 That the “human is a thinking creature” (*zoon logon Ekhon*) is attributed to Aristotle. As *logon* means both “speech” and “thought,” this term implies that both of them have an inseparable structure. On this topic, see Donald Stoll, *Philosophy and the Community of Speech* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), 26; Ömer Naci Soykan, *Türkiye’den Felsefe Manzaraları* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1993), 49; Ali Osman Gündoğan, “Dil ve Dil-Anlam İlişkisi,” <http://www.aliosmangundogan.com/PDF/Makale/Ali-Osman-Gundogan-Dil-ve-Anlam-Iliskisi.pdf> (20 March 2018).

3 In his “Letter on Humanism” Heidegger says: “Thinking accomplishes the relation of Being to the essence of man. It does not make or cause the relation. Thinking brings this relation to Being solely as something handed over to it from Being. Such offering consists in the fact that in thinking Being comes to language. Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of Being insofar as they bring the manifestation to language and maintain it in language through their speech.” Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992), 217.

4 Duane Williams, *Language and Being: Heidegger’s Linguistics* (New Delhi: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 78.

5 Fatih Özkan, “Dildeki Dünya Görüşü,” *İğdır Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 2 (2012): 109.

6 For more information on the relation between grammar and vocabulary, how people perceive the world, and on how language influences people’s thinking habits about what is going on in the universe, see Wilhelm von Humboldt, *On Language: The Diversity of Human Language-Structure and its Influence on the Mental Development of Human Species*, ed. Michael Losonsky, trans. Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 172; al-Jabrî, *Arap-İslam Kültürünün Akıl Yapısı*, 19-20; Yakup Harman, “Dil Varlığının Ontolojik Zeminini,” *FLSF Felsefe ve Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 18 (Güz, 2014): 77; Takiyettin Mengüşoğlu, *Felsefeye Giriş* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1983), 244; Ahmet İnam, “Dilin

thought, and the external world. Language demonstrates/articulates the existents reflected in thought.⁷

However, this assumed correspondence engenders some problems when interpreted with strict identity.⁸ Just like Parmenides of Elea, an attempt to establish an ontology merely on the basis of thought or logic may have consequences that reject the existence of phenomena, such as the multiplicity and change observed in the universe.⁹ This is why the *mutakallimūn* argued that possibility does not imply actuality, although they did establish a connection between thought and reality by considering, for example, that intellectual absurdities/impossibilities (*muḥālāt*) could not happen in the external world.¹⁰ In other words, they claim that there

Dillendirdiği,” *Türk Dili* 109, nos. 767-68 (Kasım-Aralık 2015): 22; Derya Sakin, “Dil ve Düşünce İlişkisi Sorunu” (MA Thesis, İstanbul Üniversitesi SBE, 2014), 4.

- 7 Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), one of the thinkers who concentrated on the language-thought-existence relationship, argues that the boundaries of human thought are determined by the limits of language based on the assumption that there is a harmony between language, thought, and being. According to him, human beings are trapped in language and can never get out of it. Language not only limits man's thought but also his world. The only reality that language recognizes is the reality to which it refers and corresponds. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Kegan Paul 1922), 74; Gordon Hunnings, *The World and Language in Wittgenstein's Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988), 57.
- 8 A good example of the controversy as to whether the mind's principles are also those of existence is the principle of identity. In order to understand things in the external world, the mind produces abstraction and concepts, and these concepts then adhere to the principle of identity, which is a principle of the mind. However, one cannot say that the physical universe, which exists in time and space and is subject to corruption and constant change, adheres to the principle of identity. Therefore, it is difficult to say that the principles of reason are also those of existence. On the other hand, one can say that human beings cannot experience or comprehend external reality independently of mental principles/categories, as Kant claims. For a discussion about whether the principles of the mind or logic can be applied to existence, see Necati Öner, “Mantığın Ana İlkeleri ve Bu İlkelerin Varlıkla Olan İlişkileri,” *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 17 (1969): 294ff.
- 9 His student Zenon of Elea (490-30 BCE), who shared the same views with Parmenides, tried to show, via his famous paradoxes (e.g., Dichotomy, Achilles, moving blocks, and the flying arrow), that there was no change in the abundance of, and no movement in, the universe. Aristotle criticizes all of Zenon's paradoxes in *Physics* VI. See Aristotle, *Physics*, 4, 239b10-240a15. For the references to Aristotle, see *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 1, (239b11, 239b30) and Naciye Atış, “Parmenides Felsefesinin Varlığı Temellendirme Tarzının Kendinden Sonraki Felsefeye Etkileri,” *FLSF Felsefe ve Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 7 (2009): 109-11.
- 10 For example, consider the following question: “Could God create another type of entity apart from the two types (that which does not need a substratum / “*jawhar*” (substance),” and “*araq*” (accident)?” Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) responds: This is a loaded question. The divine power only relates to all possibilities (*kullu mumkin*). What the question owner desires with his question is impossible, i.e. his request does not fall within the scope of divine power. al-Juwaynī, *al-Shāmil fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Alī Sāmī al-Nashshār (Alexandria: Munsha‘at al-Ma‘ārif, 1969), 140-41. Regarding his view that “only possibilities (*al-mumkināt*) fall under the scope of the divine power (*al-qudrat al-ilāhiyya*, *al-qudrat al-qadīma/al-azaliyya*)” also see al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, ed. Muḥammed Yūsuf Mūsā (Cairo: Maktaba al-Hanji, 1950), 59. The *mutakallimūn* divide rational judgments into three groups: necessary (*wājib*),

may be no conformity between thought and reality outside the mind.¹¹ They sought to investigate external reality, which includes the contingent and temporal universe, primarily via the senses as opposed to subjecting it to certain absolute or universally accepted mental categories.¹² Similarly, the fact that “knowledge” (*ilm*) is understood¹³ to include both the existent (*mawjūd*) and the non-existent (*ma’dūm*) does contradict the view that there is absolute identity between existence and thought. However, philosophers such as Parmenides, who claimed that existents cannot become non-existent and non-existents cannot become existent, argued that knowledge of the non-existent was impossible.¹⁴ On the other hand, the *mutakallimūn* accepted that knowledge about the non-existent was possible and therefore worked to create an epistemological background to their belief that existents can become non-existent and non-existents can become existent when the universe is concerned.¹⁵

The fact that one cannot verify or falsify every sentence that reflects thought is another proof that there is no strict identity among language, thought, and existence. We can point to mistaken expressions and even to mistaken thoughts. In addition, people can experience special situations in which they find it difficult to express their thoughts. Furthermore, in the face of the newly emerged physical theories,

impossible (*mumtani*), and possible (*mumkin*). In this regard, see Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, ed. Bekir Topaloğlu and Muhammed Aruçi (Ankara: İSAM, 2017), 280.

11 On this subject, see Mūsā b. Maymūn, *Dalālat al-ḥā’irīn*, ed. Hüseyin Atay (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1979), 206-07, and Bulğen, *Atomculuk Eleştirileri*, 62ff.

12 According to the *mutakallimūn*, although human reason can access what is necessary (*wājib*) and impossible (*mumtani*), it cannot know exactly what actually the universe is, for the latter is a possible (*mumkin*) field of existence. In the same way, human reason cannot determine a priori what accidents an object will have, for the *mutakallimūn* contend that it is equally possible that objects have one of two opposite accidents and senses are needed in order to know it. Therefore, Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944) claims that “The world will be known by observation (*baṣar*), not by [rational] evidences (*dalā’il*)” (see al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 94). ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) reported from al-Ash’arī that the knowledge obtained through the senses (*al-’ulūm al-ḥissiyya*) is prior and righteous (*fāḍil*) to the knowledge obtained through reason (*al-’ulūm al-naẓariyyah*) because al-Ash’arī defends that the senses are essential (*aṣl*). See ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn* (Istanbul: Dârülfünun İlahiyat Fakültesi, 1928), 10.

13 What is known in *kalām* is related to what exists (*mawjūd*) and what does not exist (*ma’dūm*). See Abū Bakr al-Bāqillāni, *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*, ed. Richard Joseph McCarthy (Beirut: Maktaba al-Sharḥiyya, 1957), 15; Ibn Mattawayh, *al-Tadhkirah fī aḥkām al-jawāhir wa al-’rāḍ*, ed. Daniel Gimaret (Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 2009), 1, 1 and Bulğen, *Kelām Atomculuğu*, 159ff.

14 Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science* (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 2000), 30.

15 Alnoor Dhanani, *The Physical Theory of Kalām: Atoms, Space and Void in Basrian Mu’tazili Cosmology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 15ff.

the current structure of language and method of thinking based on common sense and standard logic may be unable to fully express and understand what is going on. As pointed out by Niels Bohr (1885-1962), a pioneer of quantum physics, the daily language and logic that allow us to understand and explain the experience of reality are more regulated by macroreality and therefore insufficient to describe and understand the internal functioning of the newly discovered subatomic world.¹⁶

Another argument for the view that there may be a difference between thought and the entities in the external world is that sensation and what is sensed are not identical. In other words, the data concerning the external world are reflected in the human mind through the filter of senses. In addition, the mind is extremely active in forming humans' perception of the external world and processes the unsorted data transmitted through the senses in a unique way. During this process of "abstraction," the mind classifies the information about external reality that comes in the form of a stack of various and complex data and makes some generalizations about it. Although entities in the external world are particulars, the fact that the concepts that correspond to them are generally in the form of universals is the result of actions carried out by the mind.¹⁷ Therefore, like Aristotle, some philosophers claim that the genus and essences that exist in external objects may be nothing more than some generalizations produced by the mind for its own needs.¹⁸

16 Lisa Randall, *Warped Passages: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Universe's Hidden Dimensions* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), 118-19.

17 In this respect, for Locke's views on the relationship among the external world, the mind, and words in a language, see John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: T. Tegg and Son, 1836), especially chap. 3.

18 The fact that a person has a constructive role in knowing the external world implies that there is a difference between the external world and how we conceive it. Although our knowledge of the world initially relies on sense data, it may be a model constructed by the mind. The claim that senses and the mind play an active role in forming human knowledge about the outside world gave rise to some questions as to whether an objective external reality exists. This situation has led empiricist philosophers such as John Locke (1632-1704) to claim that sensible secondary qualities like the mind, color, sound, taste, temperature, cold, and so on are the product of the mind. George Berkeley (1685-1753) further claims that there is no objective external world independent of the mind, including primary qualities such as volume, shape, rigidity, and motion. On this subject, see John Locke, *An Essay Concerning*, 2, 76; George Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge and Three Dialogues* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 27, 56; Hamdi Bravo, "Locke ve Berkeley'de Birincil ve İkincil Nitelikler Sorunu," *FLSF Felsefe ve Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 5 (2008): 59-79. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), who sought a compromise between rationalism and empiricism, argued that even though it is assumed that there are things in themselves (noumena), it is impossible for men to know how the world appears (phenomena) without some inborn categories of the mind (transcendental idealism). See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 351, 426 (A256/B312, A/369).

Although one cannot establish absolutely whether there is a complete mismatch or identity between thought and external reality, it is hard to distinguish between them when it comes to the relationship between thought and language, for studies have shown that language is a means of sharing thoughts with others as well as an active player in the mind's internal thought processes.¹⁹ According to this, thoughts and concepts in the mind gain form through association with words in the language and thus become recognized by others and also by person's own self-consciousness.²⁰ It seems that one cannot make a concept or thought known to the consciousness by abstracting it from the words that express it. In the form of human internal speech, humans bring words together and then associate them with different meanings. Thus, concepts or thoughts acquire new ideas/meanings instantaneously and people make them permanent and tangible by associating them with the words in the language. Although people do not need words for visual thinking, they do need a language to carry out advanced conceptual thinking based on compound/complex ideas and universal concepts. Therefore, although thought seems to come before language, human beings cannot use their innate potential to think and to separate themselves from other living creatures by creating complex sets of concepts without acquiring a certain language.²¹ This shows that words have more functions than just serving as a means of communication and an external transmitter of thought.²²

Another striking aspect of the relationship between language and thought is that the structure of word-meaning in languages is largely arbitrary and voluntary.

19 Taylan Altuğ, *Dile Gelen Felsefe* (Istanbul: YKY 2008), 9-15; Fikri Gül and Birol Soysal, "Dil ve Düşünce İlişkisi Üzerine," *SBArD* 13 (March 2009): 68.

20 Regarding the view that "language is necessary for constructing and conserving concepts." see Martin L. Manchester, *The Philosophical Foundations of Humboldt's Linguistic Doctrines* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamin's Pub. Co., 1985), 37-38; Hamdi Bravo, "J. Locke ve G. Berkeley'de Dil, Zihin ve Gerçeklik Arasındaki İlişkiler," *Mantık, Matematik ve Felsefe: 9. Ulusal Sempozyumu: Düşüncenin İletişim Aracı Olarak, Edebiyat Bilim, Sanat ve Felsefe Alanlarında Dil* (6 - 9 Eylül 2011), ed. Arzu Yemişçi and Berna Atak (Istanbul: İKÜ, 2011), 651.

21 Manchester, *The Philosophical Foundations*, 40.

22 Al-Juwayni, an Ash'arite scholar, mentions an objection to the claim that man cannot comprehend (*idrāk*) truth without a language as follows: "If the reasoning person runs this process properly, he will obtain the truth of the knowledge. Then if he finds the right phrase, he defines it. If he does not find a suitable sign for it, then he can only understand the truth. If the phrase does not fit correctly, it will not be a problem, because anyone who understands the truth of something does not have to have a proper expression that expresses its definition. Even if it is assumed that the language is completely abandoned and the expressions are completely erased, the mind can comprehend things that are subject to mental comprehension. For example, this situation can be explained as follows: A wise person grasps the odor of musk (*misk*) but may not be able to express it when he wants to make a statement about it. See al-Juwayni, *al-Burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīm Dib (Qatar, 1399), 120-21. This example shows that the *mutakallimūn* debated whether people could comprehend something without a language.

The use of words ranging from language to language and the differences that arise in conceptualizing the existents in the external world indicate that human beings do not perceive and express external reality objectively. In this regard, one should note that words do not signify the beings in the external world, but rather the concepts acquired after carrying out the mental processes.²³ In addition, these words are not only related to the concepts that purport to refer to beings in the external world, but also to a number of specific concepts acquired after the collective gains of a society in various historical processes. Different environments and societies can also develop their own specific sets of word-concept structures related to their lifestyles, interests, production styles, and levels of sophistication in grasping reality. Words that cannot be translated from one language to another reveal this fact.²⁴

The socio-cultural context both establishes a vocabulary and gives speakers of a certain language a unique ontological perspective of the outside world.²⁵ Accordingly, languages are not only separated from each other by sounds, words, syntaxes and grammatical structures, but are also differentiated by the ways of perceiving, interpreting, and transferring reality in connection with the culture of the people who speak that particular language.²⁶ This shows that the ways and habits of thinking may depend on the language spoken, and that societies with different languages can perceive the world differently.²⁷ In contemporary linguistics and philosophy, this view is known as “linguistic determinism” (i.e., the language people use affects their perception of the world) and “linguistic relativity” (i.e., different languages provide different forms of perception for the same world), both of which have been subjected to experimental research.²⁸ In this context, studies have revealed that mother languages

23 Doğan Aksan, *Her Yönüyle Dil Ana Çizgileriyle Dil Bilim* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları 1995), 72. See also Mehmet Gürlek, “Dil ve Düşünce,” *Türk Dili I*, ed. Hayati Develi (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Açık ve Uzaktan Eğitim Fakültesi, [t.y.]), 76.

24 See, Altun, *Dile Gelen Felsefe*, 49, 50.

25 Humboldt, *On Language*, 48; Edward Sapir, “The Status of Linguistics as a Science,” *Language* 5, no. 4 (1929): 209-10; Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought and Reality* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1956), 212-14.

26 Nalan Büyükkantarcıoğlu, *Toplumsal Gerçeklik ve Dil* (Istanbul: Multilingual Yabancı Dil Yayınları, 2006), 27.

27 Lera Boroditsky, “Does Language Shape Thought?: Mandarin and English Speakers’ Conception of Time,” *Cognitive Psychology* 43 (2001): 1-22; Sean O’Neill, *Cultural Contact and Linguistic Relativity among the Indians of Northwestern California* (USA: University of Oklahoma Press), 59; Guy Deutscher, *Through the Language Glass: Why the World Looks Different in Other Languages* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010), 6.

28 Maya Hickmann, “Linguistic Relativity and Linguistic Determinism: Some New Directions,” *Linguistics* 38, no. 2 (2000): 409-34; Caleb Everett, *Linguistic Relativity: Evidence across Languages and Cognitive Domains* (Göttingen: Walter de Gruyter, 2013). On this subject, also see Nermin Uygur, *Dilin Gücü*

can influence the limits of people's thoughts and how they perceive memory, time, events, colors, numbers, and locations.²⁹ All of this shows that language is more than a means of communication for human beings.³⁰

Finally, we should point out that the approach of arguing that languages are formed by mental and socio-cultural processes objects to the universality of language and thought. For the vision obtained by societies and civilizations through experiencing and interpreting reality under various historical and geographical conditions leads to the differentiation of languages. Thus, there appear various language and thought structures that are specific to certain geographies and cultural environments and have specific concepts and rules. The fact that language has a particular way of thinking around a tradition and a bearer of a unique worldview suggests that it is a local phenomenon. This contradicts the view that all languages are based on a same natural structure or a universal language. An ideal language, one free from the accumulation of cultures, worldviews, metaphysical points of view, and ideologies, does not really seem possible.

III. Language as an Authority in Classical Kalām

When we examine the classical *kalām* books, one first notices a surprising feature: Language is viewed as an authority in theological and cosmological discussions. When dealing with any subject, the *mutakallimūn* first determined how the linguists

(Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1997), 86; İnam, "Dilin Dillendirdiği," 21; Ali Osman Gündoğan, "Dil-Düşünce ve Varlık İlişkisi," <http://www.aliosmangundogan.com/PDF/Makale/Ali-Osman-Gundogan-Dil-Dusunce-ve-Varlik-Iliskisi.pdf> (20 March 2018).

- 29 See E. Ünal and A. Papafragou, "Relations between Language and Cognition: Evidentiality and the Sources of Knowledge," *Topics in Cognitive Science: Special Issue on Lexical Learning* (2018) <https://doi.org/10.1111/tops.12355>; Emre Özgen and Ian R. L. Davies, "Acquisition of Categorical Color Perception: A Perceptual Learning Approach to the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 131 (2002): 477-93; Paul Kay and Willett Kempton, "What is the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis?" *American Anthropologist* 86 (1984): 65-79; M. Bowerman, "Learning How to Structure Space for Language: A Crosslinguistic Perspective," *Language and Space*, ed. P. Bloom, M. A. Peterson, L. Nadel, and M. F. Garrett (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 385-436.
- 30 Although a considerable amount of literature and research has been accumulated in the areas of linguistic relativity and determinism today, it has still not become clear how language affects human thinking and perception of the world. For example, the famous linguist Noam Chomsky criticizes the notion of linguistic relativity, also known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, and argues that language has a universal and natural background. For more detailed information on this topic, see Noam Chomsky, *On Nature and Language*, ed. Adriana Belletti and Luigi Rizzi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Noam Chomsky, *Language and Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1ff.

would have understood the relevant terms and then explain the issue in a manner consistent with its lexical meaning in Arabic. This sensitivity is not only about the interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of the allegorical/ambiguous Qur'anic verses, but also about the explanations of physical and metaphysical terms.

To explain the subject through concrete examples, the *mutakallimūn*'s use of language as an authority dates back to the early periods of *kalām* (second-ninth century). Imām Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935-36), the founder of the Ash'arite school of *kalām* in his *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, relates that some of the *mutakallimūn* tried to explain why a single atom does not have the accidents of composition/aggregation (*ta'līf*) by focusing on language:

[Some said:] Being tied to language (*lugha*), we do not attribute an atom (*al-juz' alladhī lā yatajazza'*) the name “aggregation” (*ta'līf*), because the speakers of the language (*ahl al-lugha*) do not allow the possibility of touching (*mumāssa*) when there is nothing [to touch].³¹

He also states that some *mutakallimūn* referred to language when they rejected the view that at least 6, 8, or 36 atoms are needed to form the smallest thing:

“Some said that anything named as ‘body’ by the speakers of the language (*ahl al-lugha*) is what has long, broad, and deep. They did not specify a number limit for the parts [as being this many in it], even though there is a certain number for the parts of the body.”³²

Another example this same work is the Mu'tazilite scholar Muhammad b. Shabīb's (d. 319/931) explanation of such concepts as “motion” (*ḥaraka*) and “rest” (*sukūn*) based on their uses in the language:

Muhammad b. Shabīb established [the reality of] motion and rest and claimed that the two are “spatial occurrences” (*akwān*). Some of these are in motion, and some of them are at rest. When man moves to the second place, his impetus/endeavor (*i'timād*) in the first place is what necessitates the occurrence in the latter. [However,] when an object [completely] translocates to the second place, what happens in the first place is locomotion (*intiḳāl*) and annihilation/departing (*zawāl*), **for the speakers of the language (*ahl al-lugha*) do not name the object as annihilating/departing (*zāilan*), translocating (*muntaḳilan*), and moving (*mutaḥarrikan*) in the**

31 Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa ikhtilāf al-muṣallīn*, ed. Muḥammed Muḥy al-Dīn 'Abd al-Hamid (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍat al-Miṣriyya, 1369/1950), 2, 4.

32 Al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, 2, 6.

first place unless it translocates to the second place. When the object is in the first place, the meaning/attribute of (motion) occurs in the second place. **Since the language permits, the object is characterized by the meaning of annihilation/ departing (*zawāl*) if and only if it is in the state of occurrence in the second place. We narrate the people’s words in the way they speak.**³³

Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015) states/reports that when al-Ash‘ari describes such terms as “motion” and “rest,” he maintains that one must rely directly on their linguistic uses instead of reasoning:

[al-Ash‘ari] was not stipulating any condition for ‘rest’ (*sukūn*) other than the settling (*ḥulūl*) of the substance (*jawhar*) into a place (*makān*) without [resting] two or three times. He said: Limiting this to two and three moments does not comply with the proof of the linguists (*al-lughawiyyin*) or speakers of the Arabic language (*ahl al-‘arabiyya*), rather this is the analogical inference (*qiyās*) of the competent thinkers (*al-nazzārīn*), and it is false (*bāṭil*). For there is no way to use reasoning (*naẓar*) to name (*tasmiya*) something. Therefore, limiting [the rest] with moments should not mean anything. They [the language speakers] said “he resided (*sakana*) in a place and settled in there”, in the same way they said “he moved from there and departed”. Accordingly, they only regarded translocation in movement and occurrence (*kawn*) in a place in rest.”³⁴

It is surprising that al-Ash‘ari argues that the meanings of phenomena related to physics, such as motion and rest, cannot be determined through inference (*naẓar*) and should be understood only as they are used and named in Arabic.³⁵ This indicates his belief that reason can neither ascribe a new meaning to a word nor give it a terminological meaning that is not in the lexicon. Again, in this respect, he opposes the view that the body is mobile during its initial creation, a view that al-Kindī (d. 252/866 [?]) defends,³⁶ on the grounds that this is impossible in terms of language, although it is possible in terms of reasoning:

[al-Ash‘ari] said that the body cannot be moving (*muḥarrrik*) at the moment of its first creation (*ḥudūth*). The denomination of the body as moving [at this first moment] is impossible not in terms of intellects (*al-‘uqūl*), but in terms of language (*al-lughā*).

33 Ibid., 2, 41.

34 Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Shaykh Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘ari*, ed. Daniel Gimert (Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 1987), 245, 212.

35 See Abū al-Mu‘in al-Nasafi, *Tabṣirat al-Adilla fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*, ed. Hüseyin Atay (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları 1993), I, 16. Al-Nasafi claims that knowledge of language can only be reached through news/reports, not through one’s senses or intellect.

36 See al-Kindī, “İlk Felsefe Üzerine (*fī al-Falsafat al-Ülā*),” *Felsefî Risâleler* ed. and transl. Mahmut Kaya (Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2013), 140.

[This is so] because the linguists (*ahl al-lughā*) have named the body as moving only if it is occurrent in a place and then moves into a second place. However, at the moment when the body comes into being the first time, it is not that it had occurred in a place previous [to this moment] and then moved into this place. This is the reason why the occurrence (*kawn*) that is present in the body cannot be called “movement” at the moment of its first creation.³⁷

Considering Ibn Fūrak’s report from al-Ash‘arī, the latter uses this method in many other language-related matters. For example, instead of defining “man” as the logicians do (i.e., as a “thinking/speaking living being”), he follows the authority of linguists. At the beginning of the chapter “Explanation of the view of al-Ash‘arī regarding the meaning and definition of Man,” Ibn Fūrak narrates from him:

Know that he [al-Ash‘arī] said: “The competent authority (*marji*) on this topic is that when we ask linguists ‘What is man?’ it is what they describe with the word “man” and what they point out. When we answer this question, we find them pointing to this apparent body, composite (*murakkab*) with a special structure (*al-bunyat al-makhšūša*). This implies that linguists apply this naming (*tasmiya*) to this entire composite (*jumla*). Similarly, if they were asked “What is the palm tree?” they [would] point to those trees with a distinctive appearance from the others.”³⁸

As we can see, al-Ash‘arī defines “man” in terms of lexical meaning without appealing to any rational judgment. Moreover, when describing the concept of the soul (*rūḥ*), which causes controversy in Islamic thought, he again takes the linguists as authorities and explains this term as follows:

According to [al-Ash‘arī], the soul (*rūḥ*) is wind/air (*rīḥ*), a subtle (*laṭīf*) object, and travels through the spaces inside the human organs. But man is alive with life, not with spirit. In other words, when man is alive, he becomes the place of the soul, or he is not alive with the soul. Can’t you see that *ḥayy* is derived from life (*ḥayāt*), and spiritual (*rūḥānī*) is derived from spirit (*rūḥ*). Al-Ash‘arī brought evidence with the phrase “the spirit came out” to the truth of his view [that the spirit was air/wind].” Exiting/coming out is one of the attributes of body and substance (*jawhar*), because going out means moving from one place to another. (...) [al-Ash‘arī’s] judgment of the soul was like his judgment of the wind/air (*rīḥ*), and even the soul (*rūḥ*) itself (*bi-‘aynihā*) meant wind/air.³⁹

It is quite remarkable that al-Ash‘arī relates the spirit to “air” with reference to language, given how some post-classical *mutakallimūn*, under the influence of Greek-

37 Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, 211.

38 Ibid., 211.

39 Ibid., 46, 48.

Arabic philosophy, explained this concept. According to them, the spirit is an entity that comprehends both the whole and the part; accompanies and runs the body; and does not spread and develop and is not fed.⁴⁰ On the other hand, Ibn Fūrak said that al-Ash'arī argues that the continuation of man's existence with the soul (i.e., air) is customary (*āda*). According to al-Ash'arī, this is in the same way that the body sustains its existence through food and drink. It is not possible for the body to live without soul as it is not possible for it to live without nourishment. For the living being is in need of air and nourishment to survive. The prerequisite of the life is, then, the existence of soul (air) and nourishment according to the custom (*āda*).⁴¹

The key important terms in al-Ash'arī's thought system reveal that they are explained by considering their lexical meanings and that he argues, remarkably, that a word's meaning cannot be known via reflection and inference.

After al-Ash'arī, his followers went further and improved his language-oriented approach. For example, Qāḍī Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), one of the sect's leading *mutakallimūn*, refers to language while explaining the meaning of "*qadīm*" (old) and "*ḥādīth*" (new), terms that were at the center of *kalām* during the classical era. According to him, *qadīm* is defined as "the one that precedes the other in terms of existence" because linguists refer to the old building as "the one that existed before the other (*ḥādīth*)." According to him, *muḥdath* is "the one comes out of nothing (*an 'adam*)." Accordingly, when a person dies the linguists or the speakers of the language say "there occurred (*ḥadatha ḥādīthun*) a disease, a headache, or something like that to someone," and when a person makes something out of nothing, they say "such and such a person built (*aḥdatha*) a building in this land."⁴²

40 Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī, *Ṣaḥā'if al-ilāhiyya*, ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-. Sharif (Kuwait: Maktabat al-Falāḥ, 1405/1985), 282.

41 Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, 46. Al-Ash'arī's teacher Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'i also adopted a similar approach to the soul. In *Maqālāt*, al-Ash'arī transmitted the following information: "Al-Jubbā'i claimed that the soul was a body (*jism*), that it is something apart from the life, and that life was an accident (*'araḍ*). He brought evidence with the linguists' saying, 'the spirit of man exited.'" Al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt*, 2, 28.

42 Al-Bāqillānī, *al-Tamhīd*, 36. Al-Bāqillānī uses this language-based method to explain many issues. For example, he describes the concepts of "body" (*jism*) and "accident" (*'araḍ*) with an approach that regards language as an axis. According to him, the body is what is composite, because linguists do not mean exaggeration with *jasīm* and *ajsām*, but rather the added parts and the composition. In the same way, they do not use *ajsām* for that which can increase in perfection attributes such as knowledge, competencies, other dispositions, and qualities but for entities that can increase in volume by aggregation. Again, according to al-Bāqillānī, the proof that the *'araḍ* (accident) cannot persist is that the linguists say the phrase "something like inflammatory disease (fever) or madness inflicted to someone" if and only if this state does not continue. Al-Bāqillānī, *al-Tamhīd*, 36, 38; Al-Bāqillānī, *al-Inṣāf fīmā yajibū al-i'tiqādu wa-lā yajūzu al-jahlu bihi*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid b. al-Ḥasan al-Kawtharī (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya lil-Turāth, 2000), 16.

Another of al-Bāqillānī's striking features is his clear statement that the determination made by the linguists is a legitimate way of arguing in *kalām*. In this context, he divides the evidence into three parts: rational (*naẓar* and *istidlāl*), *sharī'a* (the Qur'an, *Sunnah*, *ijmā'* [consensus]), *qiyās* (analogical deduction), and *lughawiyya* (linguistic). Accordingly, the linguistic evidence indicates that a word's meaning, as well as the signification of names, adjectives, and other utterances, is based on the people's consensus/common agreement (*muwāḍa'a*).⁴³ For example, when someone says "fire," it is immediately understood that it is "warm and burning," and when someone says "man" it is known that it is something with the familiar structure of a human being. According to al-Bāqillānī, the names determined by the speakers of Arabic in this way are fundamental, and thus one cannot use the words interchangeably or in different senses than the ones initially imposed.⁴⁴

Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) who made significant contributions to the Ash'arite *kalām* school's institutional and intellectual development also adopted this method, which regards language as a means of argument. He rejects the claim of Abū al-Qāsim al-Nasībī (ca. fourth/tenth century), a member of Baṣra's Mu'tazilites, that "the non-existent" (*ma' dūm*) is called "thing" (*shay'*) in terms of language and expression:

First of all, we say to him "You can't go beyond these two options to prove the name "thing" (*shay'*). You can either rely on the intellect's judgment or on the fact that hearing [the word] is established in this manner. In this regard, it is impossible to rely on the intellect's judgment, for the names do not belong to the named entities or referents [what are called *asmā'*] by reason. Languages are established only by convention (*iṣṭilāḥ*) or Allah's prior determination (*tawkiḥ*).⁴⁵

He then evaluates al-Nasībī's claim that the reference of "the non-existent" (*ma' dūm*) as a "thing" (*shay'*) is fixed by language via oral tradition. According to al-Juwaynī, such a thing can happen either literally (*ḥaqīqa*) or figuratively (*majāz*). If one claims that "*ma' dūm*" is literally called "thing," one will be asked for a proof. However, one cannot prove this because the characteristics of the literal meaning of the language are explicit, widespread, and well known. However, since that

43 Al-Bāqillānī, *al-Inṣāf*, 15; al-Bāqillānī, *al-Tamhīd*, 32.

44 Al-Bāqillānī, *al-Tamhīd*, 32-33. For detailed information, see Türcan, "Kelâmın Dil Üzerine Kurduđu İstidlal Şekli," 131-32.

45 Al-Juwaynī, *al-Shāmil*, 134.

which *ma'dūm* is called “thing” literally (*ḥaqīqa*) is not common in the conversation circles (*fī majāri-l-kalām*), this claim appears to be absurd. If one claims that it is called “thing” figuratively, one will be close to reconciliation (*wifāq*) because one can, in some cases, use figurative meanings.⁴⁶

Al-Juwaynī then gives linguistic explanations for why *ma'dūm* cannot be called “thing”: “A thing whose existence is possible cannot be a thing (*shay'*) in the literal sense as the Mu'tazilites claim, for Arabs use ‘thing’ as a negative term for the objects of knowledge. Linguists divide the quality of ‘thing’ into parts in speech (*fī-l-kalām*) and sometimes say ‘It is a thing’ and sometimes ‘It is not [a thing].”⁴⁷ In addition, according to al-Juwaynī, Arabs do not consider anything that is neither eternal (*qadīm*) nor originated (*ḥādith*) to be definite or fixed (*thābit*). If it is requested from them to declare it is definite, they refuse to do so. If it is said to them that every ‘thing’ (*shay'*) is either eternal or originated, then they don't refuse it. However, the opponent [i.e., al-Nasibī] considers that which is neither eternal nor originated in time to be definite as well, for according to the opponent nonexistent (*ma'dūm*) is neither originated nor eternal but definite (*thābit*). On the other hand, considering something that is neither originated or eternal to be definite has not been observed within the linguistic usage and thus it is false.

After this, al-Juwaynī deals with the Mu'tazilites' claim that the truth of a thing (*ḥaqīqa al-shay'*) is its being known (*ma'lūm*). According to him, such a claim does not comply with the truth of the language, for the known is among the attached names (*muta'alliq*). Therefore, using “known” requires both the availability of knowledge (*'ilm*) that attaches itself to it beforehand and the availability of a knower (*'ālim*) who knows it beforehand. However, a thing (*shay'*) is not such a name, for Arabs establish [the name “thing”] even though they consider something to be unknown and never imply that being a “thing” is equivalent to being “known.” If the name “thing” is predicated upon that which can be known and it is asserted that this is how it appears in the language, this would be a daring claim. This is so because if Arabs are asked “According to you, is not a ‘thing’ that which is known or even possible to be known?” they deny that their language contains such a thing. Rather, they realize this only after reasoning (*naẓar*). Therefore, al-Juwaynī opines that it is impossible to claim the truth of language about something that the Arabs will reject if and when it is presented to them.⁴⁸

46 Ibid., 135.

47 Al-Bāqillānī, *al-Tamhīd*, 36.

48 Al-Juwaynī, *al-Shāmil*, 135. Another remarkable example of the fact that al-Juwaynī makes references

All of these references from such *mutakallimūn* al-Ash‘arī, al-Bāqillānī, and al-Juwaynī reveal that the classical Ash‘arītes focused on language when examining the nature of things and occurrences. This situation shows that language is not only a means of communication for them, but also a bearer of a unique worldview.

The use of language as an authority or *kalām* subjects is also frequently encountered in the Māturīdīte school of *kalām*. Abū al-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1155) explains “accident” (*‘araḍ*), a key term of *kalām*’s *ḥudūth* argument and their concept of the universe, as follows, based on its lexical meaning.

We researched the issue of accidents, and then thought and concluded that accident deserves this name because its existence is not perpetual. As a matter of fact, “*‘ariḍ*” is something that does not continue. It is said that “something happened (*‘ariḍ*) to someone,” which indicates a non-lasting meaning. Likewise, it is said “this situation is not essential in that person; rather, it is accidental,” which means that it is a discontinuous situation. Accordingly, as we have explained, the cloud is named accidental (*‘ariḍ*). Then we saw things that had no continuity and named them “accident” (*‘araḍ*). Therefore, in the tradition of the theologians, accident is that whose persistence is impossible. **The reason why they are called accidents (*‘araḍ*) is because of the lexical indications/connotations.**⁴⁹

Al-Nasafī argues against some of the Mu‘tazilites and members of the Najjāriyyah sect who define “accident” as “that which cannot subsist by itself” by stating that this does not correspond to the language.

Both sects are invalid. Surely, in the visible realm/world, accident (*‘araḍ*) is called as such because its perpetuity (*baqā’*) is impossible, for this is the meaning that refers to its lexical meaning and not the impossibility of its being self-subsistent. **As a matter of fact, the language contains no indication regarding the denotation of “that which cannot subsist by itself” as accident (*‘araḍ*).**⁵⁰

to daily language while determining the meanings of the key *kalām* terms is about “spatial occurrences” (*akwān*). He does not agree with the claims that “with the occurrence (*kawn*), origination (*ḥudūth*) is meant and every originated thing (*ḥawādith*) falls under the scope of the concept of occurrence.” According to him, occurrences such as motion, rest, composition (*ijtimā’*), and separation (*infiṣāl*) are what require the substance to be in a place (*makān*) or designation of a place for it. al-Juwaynī answer the question “Is naming these kinds of accidents as ‘spatial occurrences’ your denomination or a term (*iṣṭilāḥ*) that you suggest, or do you claim that this name is linguistically valid?” as follows: This naming is not among the terms, but rather it is included in the things that are present in the pure language itself. For example, when Zayd is at home, Arabs say “Zayd is at home” and with that, they only mean Zayd’s presence in relation to his self (*dhāt*). Similarly, when they say “Zayd was with you.” they indicate Zayd’s presence in relation to his surroundings. They do not aim to negate the *dhāt* of Zayd completely when they negate Zayd’s presence at home. Rather, they only want to negate his presence at home. For Zayd’s presence and the absence of his *dhāt* cannot coexist simultaneously. Therefore, according to al-Juwaynī, it is revealed that the meaning of ‘occurrence’ (*kawn*) as “to be in relation to places and directions” is available in the Arabic language. See al-Juwaynī, *al-Shāmil*, 427-428.

49 Al-Nasafī, *Tabṣira*, 1, 145.

50 Ibid., 1, 146.

When defining *jawhar*, another key term of *kalām* cosmology, he places its linguistic usage at the center. He states that in an Islamic society, some adherents of the Karrāmiyya describe *jawhar* as “that which subsists by itself,” as do the Christians, and that God may therefore be called “substance” (*jawhar*). However, he asserts that this definition of *jawhar* is wrong because *jawhar* does not imply anything about being subsistent by itself, but rather refers only to being root/fundamental/elementary unit (*aṣl*):

Our proof is that *jawhar* refers only to “root/fundamental/elementary unit” (*aṣl*) in the lexicon. The famous ones/people are, due to their beneficence among the notables and the children of nobles, called “honorable in beneficence, thorough, and glorious, and as acting proper to his pure lineage. If a dress is made beautiful and the fabric is good, it is called “*jawhari*” (a fundamentally well-founded) dress. **Accordingly, [the speakers of the language] called things that cannot be separated from the body’s particles *jawhar*,** as the particulars of which the composition consist are the fundamentals of that body.⁵¹

These statements show that al-Nasafi rejects the definition of *jawhar* used by many contemporaneous religious and philosophical groups on the grounds that it did not correspond to the word’s lexical meaning. Instead, he contends that the fact that a meaningful name is designated for that which contains this meaning in itself is done only because it contains that meaning. Therefore, one cannot claim that this name was used for that thing due to analogy, reasoning, or some means other than the meaning itself. Given this, one cannot relate “*jawhar*” to “being subsistent by itself”; rather, one must relate it to “being a fundamental or elementary unit” (*aṣl*) based on the indication of its lexical meaning.⁵²

When describing the classical era’s key terms used in physics and cosmology, neither the Ash‘arite nor the Māturīdite *mutakallimūn* employed the specific approach of accentuating these terms’ lexical meanings. But some of the Mu‘tazilites also frequently used this language-based method. For example, the famous Mu‘tazilite *mutakallim* Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025) explains what “body” (*jism*) means by referring to the linguists and the usage of this word in Arabic:

51 Ibid., 1 150.

52 Ibid., 1, 151.

Know that “body” (*jism*) is that which has width, height and depth. (...) This is the truth of “body” in the dictionary. The indicator of this is as follows: When linguists saw two objects, one of which had a privilege over/peculiarity from the other, in length, width, and depth, they said, “This is bigger/bulkier (*jasīm*) than the other.” The verses of al-Farazdaq also refer to this: “His people are bigger/bulkier (*jasīm*) than the people of ‘Ād. If they were to be counted, their numbers (would be) more than the soil.”⁵³

As we can see, he argues that “body” means “a [three-dimensional] thing with width, height, and depth” by basing his claim on how it is used in the language. Notably, he also tries to prove this by offering an example from Arabic poetry.

This approach, which places language at the center, was also followed by his student Ibn Mattawayh (d. c. the mid-fifth/eleventh century). This scholar contends that people first failed to agree on the number of parts needed to form the smallest body, and then refers to the different views of such *mutakallimūn* as Abū al-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf (d. 235/849-50), Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī/al-Ka‘bī (d. 319/931), and al-Ash‘arī on this problem. Ibn Mattawayh describes the view, which he also supports, that at least eight parts are required in this regard, based on the authority of the language:

[The definition of the body] we choose is that [it is] that which has three directions (*jihāt*) in terms of length, width, and depth, for we realize that linguists use “*ajsām*” when it [the body] increases in length, width, and depth. Therefore, the root (*aşl*) of denotation must be returned to that to which we are referring. The linguists named what they saw “body,” and that is how it [the definition of “body”] came out.⁵⁴

Importantly, he remarks that the Mu‘tazilite *mutakallimūn*, including himself, define the object as three-dimensional with reference to the speakers of the language or linguists.⁵⁵ Later on, he states that such *mutakallimūn* as Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā‘ī (d.) 321/933), Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Başrī (d. 369/979-80), and Qāḍī ‘Abd

53 Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uşul al-khamsa* ed. and trans. İlyas Çelebi (Istanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2013), 1, 350.

54 Ibn Mattawayh, *al-Tadhkirah fi aḥkām al-jawāhir wa-al-a‘rāq*, 1, 9-10.

55 Here, one needs to focus on why Ibn Mattawayh based the description of the body (*jism*) on the linguists. According to him, they claimed that a body is enlarged and accordingly becomes larger (*ajsām*) based on their observations in the visible realm. In this case, that the addition of a non-dimensional particle to the body does not entail the state of being more *ajsām* cannot be defended in terms of language, as the theologians of the Ahl al-Sunna, such as al-Ash‘arī, claimed. This is because the linguists did not support the claim that bodies were *ajsām* by making observations at the atomic level, but expressed these claims by considering the attachment of bodies with dimensions to bodies with dimensions in the visible world. In this case, being *ajsām* for the body is due to that body’s increase in terms of width and depth, not due to the addition of a non-dimensional object to a dimensional body. See Ibn Mattawayh, *al-Tadhkira*, 1, 9-10.

al-Jabbār treated the subject in a similar manner and explained it on basis of the linguists' authority.⁵⁶

The *mutakallimūn*'s language-based approaches are not limited to cosmological terms such as "body," "substance," or "accident," however, for they also include religious terminologies like "belief," "unbelief," "rebellion," "justice," "cruelty," or "offer." An outstanding example of this may be given from the Ash'arites and Maturidites' endeavor to solve the problem of the relationship between faith and deeds in the axis of the authority of language.⁵⁷ For instance, Imam al-Ash'arī answers the question "What does belief in Allah mean?" in the following way: "Belief (*imān*) means to affirm (*taṣḍīq*) Allah. The experts of the language (*ahl al-lughā*) in which the Qur'an was revealed agreed on this meaning of faith."⁵⁸

Similarly al-Juwaynī, another important Ash'arite scholar, explicates his sect's view after referring to the definitions of faith provided by the Karrāmiyyas, the Mu'tazilites, and the Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth (the Adherents of the Ḥadīth):

To us, the truth of "belief" (*imān*) is to affirm Allah. He who believes in Allah is the one who confirms Him. Affirmation (*taṣḍīq*) indicates the unuttered speech (*al-kalām al-naḥsī*) in reality. But it only comes out with knowledge. **The essence of Arabic and the openness of the language is proof of the fact that "faith" only means "affirmation." This is so undeniable that there is no need to prove it.**⁵⁹

56 Ibn Mattawayh, *al-Tadhkirah*, 1, 10.

57 See Muammer Esen, "İman Kavramı Üzerine," *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 49 (2008): 80; Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Faith as Tasdiq," *Islamic Philosophical Theology*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (Albany, NY: SUNY Press 1979), 114.

58 Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-radd 'alā ahl al-zaygh wa-l-bida'*, ed. Hammūdah Ghurābah (Cairo: al-Hay'at al-'Ammah li-Shu'ūn al-Maṭābi' al-Amiriyya, 1975), 123. Al-Bāqillānī, another Ash'arite *mutakallim*, approaches the subject of belief (*imān*) in a language-centered way as does al-Ash'arī himself. In this context, for the question of "What is the evidence of faith being confirmation?" he responds: "The evidence of it is that linguists had reached consensus that before the Qur'an was revealed and before the Prophet was sent, faith meant affirmation (*taṣḍīq*) in the lexicon, and there is no other meaning known other than this." According to him, as for the verses in the Qur'an, "Although it is true what we say, you will not believe us," and the phrase used in daily language, "Someone believes *shafā'a* (intercession)" and "someone does not believe in grave punishment" reveal that the meaning of *imān* known in the *Sharī'ah*/Qur'an is the same as the meaning found in the dictionary. According to al-Bāqillānī, it is important that the Qur'an itself emphasizes that it is revealed in Arabic, for this necessitates that one take the lexical meaning of "linguistic" (*lughawī*) as fundamental when the verses are interpreted. Therefore, if the *mutakallimūn* describe faith as "affirmation," it would be incorrect to assign a meaning [to it] other than this [one]. See al-Bāqillānī, *al-Tamhīd*, 389.

59 Al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, ed. Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsā and 'Alī 'Abd al-Mun'im 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1950), 397. For similar approaches see al-Bāqillānī, *al-Tamhīd*, 389; al-Bāqillānī, *al-Inṣāf*, 52; 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 247, 248; Ibn Fūrak, *Kitāb al-Ḥudūd fī-ll-Uṣūl*, ed. Muḥammad Sulaymānī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1999), 108; Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, 149.

The Māturīdites' view is similar to that of the Ash'arites. The Māturīdite *mutakallim* Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafi maintains that belief is separate from deeds and thus cannot be achieved by doing deeds but by following the true belief. He justifies this on the grounds that:

According to the linguists, the fact that “faith” is equivalent to “affirmation” attests to this [thesis]. Those who regard faith in a sense other than confirmation will have the name attributed to a connotation apart from its meaning in the language. If it were permissible to do so, it would be permissible in all linguistic names. This would [both] invalidate and hinder the language. [Therefore,] this case is impossible.⁶⁰

Nūr al-Dīn al-Sābūnī (d. 580/1184), another Māturīdite theologian, also explains the conflicts that arise in relation to the faith-deed relationship and the solution:

The scholars of Ḥadīth say that faith is made up of confession with the tongue, confirmation with the heart, and performing deeds with the organs. (...) Those adhering to the correct position (*muḥaqqiqūn*) have explained the matter as follows: Belief (*īmān*) is confirmation with the heart, and confession with tongue is, on the other hand, only necessary for the realization of the law of Islam in the world. Abū Ḥanīfa mentioned this judgment in his *al-Ālim wa-l-Muta'allim*. Imām Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī and Ḥusayn b. Faḍl al-Bajalī's preferences are in this way. Moreover, the accurate one of the two accounts from al-Ash'arī supports this. **For belief only means affirmation (*taṣḍīq*) in the language (*luḡha*).**⁶¹

One can further expand the examples concerning the reliance on those lexical meanings established by linguistics when determining the meanings of cosmological and theological concepts in *kalām*.⁶² Moreover, all of these examples show how, during the classical era, language was accepted as an indubitable authority for *kalām*. Additionally, the *mutakallimūn*'s claim that reason or revelation can neither ascribe new meanings to the language's words nor change an existing meaning reveals the fact that they carry out their thought activities within language-determined boundaries.⁶³

60 Al-Nasafi, *Tabṣira*, 2, 406.

61 Al-Sābūnī, *al-Bidāyah*, 170.

62 For more examples of the *mutakallimūn*'s use of language as an authority, see Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, 211, 212, 238; al-Juwaynī, *al-Shāmil*, 401; al-Bāqillānī, *al-Tamhīd*, 18; al-Bāqillānī, *al-Inṣāf*, 15-16; 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 34; al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtisād fī al-'Itiqād* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1983), 38. For an evaluation and examples on this topic, see Sabra, “Kalām Atomism,” 208.

63 The *mutakallimūn* seem to have apprehended language's role as an authority from the early period. According to Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, this situation has caused some of them to pay more attention to literature than to philosophy. In relation to the contribution of Mu'tazilite *mutakallimūn* to the

But one should not conclude that these attitudes imply fanaticism in thought or blind devotion to the linguists or confine revelation and reason to the limits of language. For, as we saw in the first section – on the language-thought-existence relationship – each language originated in a certain geography and its words attained their meanings through the particular region’s people interacting with each other and with nature over a long period of time. Given this, the language that emerged should not be perceived as a mere means of communication, but also as containing the acquired thought codes or concepts specific to that region’s people. As a result, it becomes the bearer of a traditional viewpoint of life and the universe. This potential, moreover, makes it a legitimate source of reference in debates on thought and existence.

Building a thought system based on the authority of language enabled the *mutakallimūn* to both highlight the semantic world on which the divine revelation descended and to protect its traditional thought against the inflow of Greek philosophy and logic that began with the translation movement. As we saw in the examples of al-Ash‘arī and al-Nasafī, the *mutakallimūn* reject the attribution of any additional and new meanings to key terms such as *jawhar*, ‘*araḍ*, *ma‘dūm*, and *shay’*. In practical terms, this means that incorporating any notion of spirit (*rūḥ*) that refers to an “immaterial substance” (*al-jawhar al-mujarrad*), which the philosophers (*falāsifa*) generally defend, into Islamic thought would break the language “barrier,” for the *mutakallimūn* maintained that “*rūḥ*,” an Arabic word, can only have that connotation that the linguists or the speakers of the language have given to it. If such an incorporation were allowed, the relevant Qur’anic verses would be given a meaning that is not indicated by the revelation’s original recipients. In other words, if not in utterance, a manipulation in meaning will ensue, for the Qur’an’s words happen to be understood by later reconstructions of philosophical meanings that were not foreseen by the experts of that language.

Finally, this classical language-based thought system would require the *mutakallimūn* to adopt a protectionist attitude toward the meaning of words and to oppose Greek logic, which is regarded as defining the universal rules of thought, in the name of Arabic logic, for the language-thought-existence relationship discussed above carries not only bears a specific concept of the universe, but also has also a unique way of thinking and reasoning (i.e., logic).

development and enrichment of Arab literature with their studies in the field of language, see al-Jabri, *Arap-İslām Kültürünün Akıl Yapısı*, 40. W. Montgomery Watt also states that the *mutakallimūn* found the relationship between words more appealing than the causal relation between objects and that they therefore show more interest in linguistics than the natural sciences. W. Montgomery Watt, *Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam* (London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1948), 88.

IV. The Linguists and the *Mutakallimūn*'s Criticism of Logic

When it comes to criticisms of the science of logic in Islamic thought, scholars who belonged to the Salafiyya and the Adherents of Ḥadīth, such as Ibn Taymiyya⁶⁴ (d. 728/1328) and al-Suyūṭī⁶⁵ (d. 911/1505), often come to mind.⁶⁶ But these criticisms, which arose after the science of logic had been justified and added to the religious sciences by scholars like Ibn Ḥazm⁶⁷ and al-Ghazālī,⁶⁸ belong to a relatively late period. Moreover, the classical era's *naḥwiyyūn* (scholars of Arabic grammar/syntax) and *mutakallimūn* had already condemned that science long ago.⁶⁹ The significance of these criticisms, in terms of our discussion, is that they corroborate the idea that Arabic has a distinctive way of thinking and mode of reasoning (i.e., logic). Therefore, as we indicated in the context of the language-thought-existence relationship, it is incompatible with Greek logic.

A closer look at the discussions between the *mutakallimūn/naḥwiyyūn* and the logicians reveals that the most famous one is the debate between Abū Sa'īd al-Sīrāfi (d. 368/979), a Mu'tazilite linguist, and Abū Bishr Mattā b. Yūnus (d. 328/940), a Christian philosopher.⁷⁰ Al-Sīrāfi argues that logic has a linguistic function

64 Taqī al-Dīn ibn Taymiyyah wrote "*al-Radd 'ala-l-mantiqiyyīn* (Refutation of Greek Logicians) and *Naqḍ al-mantiq*" (The Criticism of Logic) for the rejection of Greek logic. For more information about this topic, see Ibn Taymiyya *against the Greek Logicians*, trans. Wael b. Hallaq (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). Nazım Hasırcı, "İbn Teymiyye'nin Mantık Eleştirisi," *Uluslararası 13. Yüzyılda Felsefe Sempozyumu Bildirileri*, 132-19. Süleyman Uludağ, "İbn Teymiyye'de Mantık Meselesi," *İslâmî Araştırmalar* 1, no. 4 (1987): 40-51.

65 Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī wrote *Tahrīm al-ishtigāl bi al-mantiq* on the impermissibility (*ḥarām*) of being engaged in logic. Another of his works, *Şawn al-mantiq wa-l-kalām 'an fann al-mantiq wa-l-kalām* (Preserving speech and discourse from the science of logic and theology), criticizes logic.

66 Ömer Aydın, "Kelām-Mantık İlişkisi," *Istanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 7 (2003): 8.

67 Ibn Ḥazm tried to reconcile Aristotle's logic with Islamic sciences in his "*al-Taqrīb li-ḥadd al-mantiq wa-al-madkhal ilayhi bi-l-alfāz al-'āmmiyya wa al-amthila al-fiḥhiyya*" (Facilitating the Understanding of the Rules of Logic and Introduction Thereto, with Common Expressions and Juristic Examples) See İbrahim Çapak, "İbn Hazm'ın Mantık Anlayışı," *Usûl İslâm Araştırmaları* 8 (2007): 23-46.

68 Al-Ghazālī played an important role in getting Aristotle's logic included in the Islamic sciences with his works, such as *Mi'yār al-'ilm fi fann al-mantiq* (Criterion of Knowledge in the Art of Logic) and *Mihakk al-nazar fi al-mantiq* (The Touchstone of Reasoning in Logic). He claims that there is a neutral knowledge that can be completely removed from logic's alleged metaphysical and philosophical connotations and that it can even be used positively to prove religious truths. See al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, ed. and trans. Abdürrezzak Tek (Bursa, 2017), 19-20. Also see al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaşfā min 'İlm al-Uşul: İslam Hukuk Metodolojisi*, trans. Yunus Apaydın (Kayseri: Rey Yayınları, 1994), 1, 11.

69 For example, regarding the discussion between Mu'tazilite *mutakallim* Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'i and the logician/philosopher Mattā b. Yūnus, see Josef van Ess, "İslâm Kelâmının Mantıksal Yapısı," 487; John Walbridge, "Logic in the Islamic Intellectual Tradition: The Recent Centuries," *Islamic Studies* 39, no. 1 (2000): 58.

70 For this discussion, see Abū Hayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-imtā' wa-l-mu'ānasa*, ed. Aḥmad Amin and

and a local nature, whereas Mattā b. Yūnus claims that it is a universal system of evaluation in terms of separating truth from falsity. According to al-Sirāfi, Greek logic is only meaningful within a structure suitable for the Greek language from which it emerged and thus cannot meet the specific characteristics of Arabic. Therefore, there cannot be such thing as logic principles that all languages have in common, for given that people speak different languages, they have as many tools to determine truth and falsity as the number of languages they speak. Logic, the linguistics of the Greeks, is just one of these tools.⁷¹

This particular debate supports the thesis that languages are the bearers of particular ways of thinking and reasoning. At this point, it is necessary to elucidate further why Greek logic is incompatible with Arabic. If we look closely at these discussions, the issue of “categories” (*al-maqūlāt*) comes first among the objection points raised by the *naḥwiyyūn* and *mutakallimūn*.

“Categories,” the name of the first part of Aristotle’s logic collection *Organon*, refers to the most universal conceptions that the mind reaches by generalizing the particulars in the world, as mentioned in the first section.⁷² Aristotle organized the individuals that exist in the external world in ten categories: substance, quantity, quality, relativity, place, space, time, situation, possessive/having, and acting (verb) and being acted upon.⁷³ However, according to him, these categories are

Aḥmad al-Zayn (Cairo: Dār al-Maktab al-Hay’at, 1944), I, 109-129; Osman Bilen, “Ebu Bişr Matta ile Ebu Said es-Sirafi Arasında Mantık ve Gramer Üzerine Bir Tartışma,” *İslamiyat Dergisi* 7, no. 2 (2004): 163-65. The discussion between al-Sirāfi and Mattā b. Yūnus was followed by al-Fārābi later on. See, al-Fārābi, “al-Tawti’at fi al-mantiq,” ed. and transl. Mübahat Türker-Küyel, *Farabi’nin Bazı Mantık Eserleri* (Ankara, 1990), 19; al-Fārābi, *Iḥşā’ al-Ulūm*, ed. Osman Emin (Egypt, 1949), 53; Mehmet Şirin Çıkar, *Nahivciler ile Mantıkçılar Arasındaki Tartışmalar* (Ankara: İSAM Yayınları, 2017), 89.

71 See Abū Hayyān al-Tawhidī, *Kitāb al-imtā’ wa-l-mu’ānasa*, 1, 109-29. Also see Oliver Leaman, *An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11-12; Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, *The Formation of Arab Reason: Text, Tradition and the Construction of Modernity, in the Arab World* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2011), 103; Gerhard Endress, “Klasik İslam Düşüncesinde Yunan Mantığı Savunucuları ile Arap Nahivcileri Arasındaki Tartışmalar,” transl. Mehmet Şirin Çıkar, *EKEV Akademi Dergisi* 6, no. 11 (2002): 205-16. The beginning of systematic discussions regarding such issues as language-logic and the language-existence relationship in classical Islamic thought can be dated to when the language schools of Basra and Kufa were established in the second/eighth and the third/ninth centuries, respectively. Besides al-Sirāfi, al-Ḥalil b. Aḥmad (d. 175/791), Sibawayhi (d. 180/796), and Kisāḥ (d. 189/804) are among those who dealt with the philosophy of language. See Hülya Altunkaya, “Fārābi’de Dil Felsefesi” (MA Thesis, SDÜ Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2003), 19-23, 42; İbrahim Emiroğlu, “Mantık,” *DİA*, 28, 21-22.

72 See, Mahmut Kaya, “Makūlāt,” *DİA* 27, 990.

73 Aristoteles, *Categories*, 1b25–2a4. After stating that Aristotle listed ten categories (*abwāb*) in his *Logic* and mentioning their names one by one, Imām al-Māturidī criticizes him: “According to him, no one can talk about the existence of anything outside this group.” See al-Māturidī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 231.

not merely generated by the mind, but also comprise the species and essences of these existents. His realist way of understanding them agrees with his thesis that a harmony exists among language, thought, and existence. If there is a harmony between thought and existence, then it is only to be expected that the categories of logic will correspond to the types of existents in the external world.⁷⁴

On the other hand, whether his categories refer to a classification of existence, mind, or language remains a matter of some controversy.⁷⁵ While the Stoics, who limited the number of categories to four, held that they are linguistic or mental,⁷⁶ the Platonists argued that they belong to the metaphysical realm as ideas/forms.⁷⁷ In the Islamic world, however, logicians generally followed Aristotle and stated that the categories pertain to the physical realm. For instance, al-Fārābī (d. 339/951) included them within the subjects of logic in the same way as Aristotle did and regarded them as the species of the present beings in the external world. On the other hand, Ibn Sinā (d. 428/1037) saw them as related to metaphysics and employed them as auxiliary tools to define concepts.⁷⁸

The issue of categories has also been discussed in the modern period. For example, Kant divided them into twelve parts, all of which fall under four main groups, and claimed that these are the *a priori* forms that exist innately in the mind.⁷⁹ Ali Sedād (1857-1900), a late Ottoman philosopher, contended that these categories concern the realm of metaphysics, rather than logic, and that those

74 See, I. F. Whitridge, *A Treatise on Logic or An Introduction to Science* (Carlisle: Whitridge, 1849), 43-45.

75 See Marco Sgarbi, *Kant and Aristotle: Epistemology, Logic, and Method* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2016): 136; Amie Thomasson, "Categories," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/categories/>; Hülya Altunya and Mustafa Yeşil, "Aristoteles'in Kategoriler Kuramının Ele Alınış Biçimleri," *Beytulhikme An International Journal of Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (Aralık, 2016): 80. Also see Önder, "Mantığın Ana İlkeleri," 103.

76 Michael J. Griffin, *Aristotle's Categories in the Early Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 129 et al. On the similarities between how the *mutakallimūn* and the Stoics understood logic, Josef van Ess discusses whether the theologians' understanding is based on a Stoic basis. See Josef van Ess, "İslām Kelâmının Mantıksal Yapısı," trans. H. Nebi Güdekli, *Din Felsefesi Açısından Mutezile Gelen Ek-i Klasik ve Çağdaş Metinler Seçkisi*, ed. Recep Alpyağıl (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2014), 488.

77 Richard Sorabji, "Universals Transformed: The First Thousand Years after Plato," *Universals, Concepts and Qualities: New Essays on the Meaning of Predicates*, ed. P. F. Strawson and Arindam Chakrabarti (UK: Ashgate, 2006), 105-08.

78 See, İbrahim Çapak, "Klasik Mantıkta Kategoriler Teorisi," *Felsefe Dünyası* 40 (2004/2): 108-28.

79 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A80/B106. Also see Jill Vance Buroker, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006), 103 et al.

who criticize logic in classical Islamic thought targeted this part of logic.⁸⁰ Finally, Ernest von Aster (1880-1948), who criticized both Aristotle and Kant, states that these categories are not those of existence or the mind, but of grammar, namely, that they are a part of the language.⁸¹

All of these debates make it easier to understand why the classical *naḥwiyyūn* and *mutakallimūn* opposed incorporating Greek logic into Islamic thought. Besides being logical and linguistic, Aristotle's categories include a certain ontological and metaphysical perspective.⁸² This is also true of Arabic, for it cannot be isolated from its ontological and metaphysical background as a bearer of specific rules of thought and reasoning.⁸³

A comparison between Aristotle's categories and the Arabic grammarians' derived (*mushtaqq*) word groups provides a more explicit observation of this incompatibility⁸⁴:

- 80 According to Ali Sedad, the fact that theologians considered categories merely as mental things that were not applicable to the outside world caused later logicians to remove them from the books on logic. See Ali Sedad, *Mizān al-'uqūl fī al-mantiq wa-al-uşūl* (Istanbul, 1307), 4-5. As for the Asha'rites' disregard of the categories within the Organon Complex, see İbrahim Çapak, "Eş'arî Gelenekte Mantık," *Uluslararası İmam Eş'arî ve Eş'arîlik Sempozyumu Bildirileri* (21-23 Eylül 2014, 2015), 2, 413; İbrahim Emiroğlu, *Klasik Mantığa Giriş* (Istanbul: Elis Yayınları 2009), 74-75; Necati Öner, "Mantık Felsefesi Nedir?," *Diyanet İlmî Dergi* 10, nos. 106-07 (1971): 101.
- 81 According to Ernest von Aster, the categories that Aristotle considered "active" and "passive" are not actually categories, because all objects are not active and passive. In fact, activity and passivity are both language forms and spiritual states. These are not related to logic, but rather to the forms of grammar and the spiritual state of certain groups of beings, respectively. Çapak, "Klasik Mantıkta Kategoriler Teorisi," 108-28.
- 82 Regarding this issue, see Oliver Leaman, "Klasik İslâm Düşüncesinde Mantık Düşmanlığı," *Selçuk Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 31 (2011): 254; Öner, "Mantık Felsefesi Nedir?," 101. Regarding this subject, see "Klasik İslâm Düşüncesinde Mantık Düşmanlığı," *Selçuk Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 31 (2011): 254; Öner, "Mantık Felsefesi Nedir?," 101.
- 83 al-Jabri, *The Formation of Arab Reason*, 101-104; The fact that Aristotle's logic is arranged according to language and has a metaphysical background is also an accentuated matter in the modern period. Modern rationalists, who want to make logic more objective and universal, tried to free it from daily language and its metaphysical background by inventing symbolic logic or mathematicizing it. See Emiroğlu, *Klasik Mantığa Giriş*, 52; Necati Öner, "Tanzimattan Sonra Türkiye'de İlim ve Mantık Anlayışı," *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 7 (1958-59): 146.
- 84 For a detailed comparison, see the comparison table. Al-Jabri, *Arap-İslâm Kültürünün Akıl Yapısı*, 65-66; Altunkaya, "Fârâbî'de Dil Felsefesi," 42, 43.

Aristotele's Categories	Derived (<i>Mushtaqq</i>) Word Groups in Arabic Syntax
Substance	Verb
Quality	An instance of doing something (<i>Ism al-marra</i>), hyperbolic participle
Quantity	Resembling participle (al- <i>şifat al-mushabbaha</i>), comparative and superlative (<i>Ism al-tafđil</i>), the noun of manner (<i>ism al-hay'a</i>)
Relativity	?
Place	Place noun (<i>Ism al-makān</i>)
Time	Time noun (<i>Ism al-zaman</i>)
Situation	?
Property / Having	?
Verb / Acting	Subject noun (<i>Ism al-fā'il</i>)
Being acted upon	Object noun (<i>Ism al-maf'ul</i>)
?	<i>Infinitive / verbal noun (Maşdar)</i>
?	Tool noun (<i>Ism al-āla</i>)

The chart above reveals that there is no complete overlap of the grammarians' word groups and Aristotle's categories. The blank spaces indicate that the understanding of existence based on Aristotelian logic and the one set forth by Arabic are not fully compatible with each other. Aristotle's categories start with substance (*jawhar*) and predicate other categories to it, whereas the Arab grammarians start with the verb or infinitive/verbal noun (*maşdar*) and, through them, derive the meaning of all other terms.

Another controversial issue between the *mutakallimūn* and the logicians is related to the universals, which are included in the "conceptions" (*taşawwurāt*) section of the books on logic. As seen above, while examining the language-thought-existence relationship, the universal concepts, which are created by detecting the common characteristics found in the particular things in the external world, allow the entities to be gathered under a specific genus and species in the mind.⁸⁵ Thus, while the mind avoids inventing a concept and words in the language

85 In the Islamic literature on logic, Aristotle is the first one to treat species (*naw'*), genus (*jins*), differentia (*faşl*), particular accident (*al-'arađ al-khāşş*), and common accident (*al-'arađ al-'āmm*) as the five universal

as an indicator of this concept regarding many particular objects in the outside world, it also finds the ability to share its thoughts through these generalizations at a level on which others can understand them.

However, we should immediately state that, as with categories, whether universals are only linguistic and mental or are also present in the objects in the external world remains controversial. Aristotle, who has a realist attitude in this regard, argues that these exist both in mind and in external reality. However, most of the classical *mutakallimūn*, who held that only individual things have real existence (i.e., nominalism), claim that universals have no reality in the extramental realm, which is also true of the categories.⁸⁶ Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) presents the objections of the *mutakallimūn* al-Ash‘ari, al-Bāqillānī, and Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 406/1016) to this part of logic:

Now, if one considers logic, one will find that it all revolves around intellectual combination and the affirmation of the outside existence of a natural universal to which the mental universal that is divided into the five universals, namely, genus, species, difference, property, and general accident, must correspond. This is wrong in the opinion of the *mutakallimūn*, for to them the universal and essential is merely a mental concept having no correspondence outside (the mind), or – to those who believe in the theory of “states” – (it is merely) a “state.” Thus, the five universals, the definitions based upon them, and the ten categories are wrong, and the essential attribute is a wrong (concept and does not exist). This implies that the essential and necessary propositions on which argumentation is predicated are wrong and that the rational cause is a wrong (concept and does not exist). Thus, the *Apodeictica* is wrong, and the “places” (*topoi*), which are the central part of the *Topics*, are a wrong (concept). They were the things from which one derives the middle term that brings the two ends together in analogical reasoning. The only thing that remains is formal analogical reasoning (i.e., the syllogism). The only remaining definition is the one that is equally true for all details of the thing defined and cannot be more general, because then other matters would enter it. Nor can it be more restricted, because then part of those details would be left out. That is what the grammarians express by *jam’* and *man’*, and the *mutakallimūn* by *ṭard* and *‘aks* (complete identity of the definition and the thing defined, and reversibility of the definition). Thus, all the pillars of logic are destroyed.⁸⁷

concepts. However, it was studied systematically in Porphyry’s *Isagoge*, written as an introduction to Aristotle’s first books on logic: *Categories*. Also see Ömer Mahir Alper, “Küllü,” *DİA*, 26, 539-40.

86 For an evaluation of this topic, see Ömer Türker, “Kelâm İlminin Metafizikleşme Süreci,” *Divân Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi* 12, no. 23 (2007/2): 77-78.

87 Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), 3, 145.

He then summarizes what would happen if the *mutakallimūn* accepted logic:

(On the other hand,) if we affirm their existence, as is done in logic, we (thereby) declare wrong many of the *mutakallimūn*'s premises. This, then, leads to considering wrong their arguments for the articles of faith, as has been mentioned before. This is why the early theologians vehemently disapproved of the study of logic and considered it innovation or unbelief, depending on the particular argument declared wrong (by the use of logic).⁸⁸

Ibn Khaldūn's findings concerning Greek logic coincide with our previous findings regarding the relationship between language-thought-existence and the *mutakallimūn*'s language-oriented opposition to Greek logic in this context. His account reveals that Aristotle's logic not only claims to determine the universal rules for thought/thinking, but also maintains that it has a distinctive structure that is in harmony with the Greek language and worldview. In fact, Ibn Khaldūn's drawing attention to the difference between the theory of definition in Aristotle's logic and the theory of definition by the *mutakallimūn* supports this revelation. As we remember, the *mutakallimūn* defined the concepts concerning both theology and cosmology, such as "faith," "human," "substance," and "accident" on the basis of their lexical meanings. In Aristotle's logic, however, the definition is based on the quiddity (*māhiyya*) or the essential attributes that are believed to actually belong to entities.

The fact that the definition is based on the qualities of a continuous nature does not coincide with the *mutakallimūn*'s understanding of the universe, which they established based on language. In their cosmology, since the indivisible parts of the composite bodies are equivalent to each other (*tamāthul al-ajsām*), bodies have no quiddity or essential attributes that conform to the definition theory of logic. Accordingly, in their opinion, all bodies substantially belong to the same genus (*tajānus al-ajsām*), and the qualities and differences upon which the definition of these bodies are based result from secondary properties or accidents (*a'raḍ*), all of which are impermanent.⁸⁹ At this point, the meaning of "that is impossible to

88 Ibid., 648. Also see Ahmet Arslan, "İbn Haldun ve Mantık," *Yazko Felsefe Yazıları* 3 (1982): 16-17.

89 The *mutakallimūn* also opposed such categories as "essential universal" and "accidental universal", which logicians used to classify the universals. For example, while Muslim philosophers and logicians saw "life" as essential universal, the *mutakallimūn* saw it as non-perpetual individual accident (*al-'araḍ al-fard*) which subsists in the substances/atoms of composite body. According to them, the bodies in the universe are the same genus (as in their essence) in terms of their constituting substances that have no essential attributes other than spatial occupation (*taḥayyuz*). Therefore, during the classical period, the thinking and life of one who is considered a living person who speaks/thinks in logic are not considered to be his/her primary attributes; rather, they are only some of the non-continuous accident (*araḍ*) of his/her body. On this subject, see Bulgen, *Kelam Atomculuğu*, 202.

persist” given to *‘araḍ* is due to linguistic indication, as al-Bāqillānī and al-Nasafī had also stated.⁹⁰

Finally, it should be noted that the problems that *kalām* had with Aristotelian logic are not limited to conception and definition, for those *mutakallimūn* who adopt the notion of creation from nothing (*ḥudūth*) and reject necessary causality will also have problems applying the principles of logic, such as the law of identity and the principle of sufficient reason, to existence. As we can see in the example of al-Bāqillānī, even though the *mutakallimūn* could easily explain creation from nothing based on the lexical meaning of eternal (*qadīm*) and originated (*ḥādīth*), these concepts cannot be expected to correspond to the principle of non-contradiction in Aristotle’s logic and the idea of the universe’s eternity, which is related to this principle. Moreover, it is also controversial to what extent such principles and methods as *in ‘ikās al-adilla* [i.e., if the proof (*al-dalīl*) is unsound, then it is necessary that the proven truth (*al-madlūl*) relying upon it become invalid] and *qiyās al-ghā’ib ‘ala-l-shāhid* [i.e., an analogy between the unseen (*al-ghā’ib*) and the visible (*al-shāhid*)], both of which are widely accepted by the *mutakallimūn*, are compatible with Aristotle’s logic.⁹¹

All of these discussions reveal that one of the main reasons for the *mutakallimūn* and *naḥwiyyūn* criticism of Greek logic is its incompatibility with Arabic. Clearly, an understanding that regards language as no more than a means of communication will find it difficult to expound these discussions. However, considering the role of language that we put forward in the first section in terms of thought and worldview, there is nothing odd about the fact that the *mutakallimūn* established a language-based theory of definitions and way of reasoning, for any language formed by the active participation of the human mind and the influence of socio-cultural factors brings with it a certain way of reasoning/logic as well as a distinctive worldview.

V. Some Criticisms of the Mutakallimūn’s Language-based Methodology

We have argued that the classical *mutakallimūn* built a thought system based on the authority of language. However, we did not arrive at this thesis by observing the traces of some theories put forward in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by the modern linguistic researchers on those works that have come down to us. In

90 Al-Nasafī, *Tabṣira*, I, 145.

91 See Hilmi Demir, “Kelâm Düşünce Tarihinde Yaygın Bir Hatanın Tashihi (*İn’ikās-ı Edille*) ve Mütakaddimîn Kelâmı ile Mantık İlişkisi Üzerine Bir Eleştiri,” *Dini Araştırmalar* 10, no. 29 (2007): 79-114.

fact, the *mutakallimūn*'s opponents noted their reliance on language and criticized it. The first one to do so Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), also known as al-Andalusī al-Zāhirī, who criticizes the Ash'arites and Ḥanafis for restricting the meaning of "faith" (*īmān*) to "affirmation" (*taṣdīq*) by relying on its lexical meaning and, consequently, excluding the element of deeds (*a'māl*) from the scope of its definition. According to him, each word has two meanings: the one commonly understood by the language's native speakers and the one determined by Allah and the Prophet, through whom the religion was revealed. Even though Arabs regard faith merely as an affirmation, determining the scope of a religious concept such as belief should not only be based on the lexical meaning, but also designated by the Lawgiver (*Shāri'*). In addition to the confirmation accepted in the language when determining the definition of faith, Allah has also added deeds, which means the fulfillment of religious orders. Thus, faith has attained a new framework of meaning in the form of affirmation and deeds. Ibn Hazm cites the obligatory prayer to support this view. Although *ṣalāt* is equivalent to "invocation" (*du'ā'*) in Arabic, the *Shāri'* also assigns to it the meaning of prayer, which is a deed performed in a certain way.⁹² Therefore, he opines, the Ash'arites and Ḥanafis cannot restrict the word's terminological meaning to its lexical meaning by ignoring the Book of Allah and the Prophet.⁹³

However, the *mutakallimūn* seem to be aware of this criticism. Abū Bakr ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015), an early Ash'arite *mutakallim*, said that a group in Islamic society divided the names into two classes: linguistic (*lughawī*) and religious (*Shar'i*). Accordingly, its members accepted that faith referred to affirmation before the Shari'ah, but argued that the Shari'ah changed these names' meaning and rendered them in a way that was previously unknown in the language. He objected to this by stating that the religious meaning cannot differ from the lexical meaning.

92 Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Faṣl fi-l-Milal wa-l-Ahwā wa-l-Niḥal* (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, 1986), 3, 188-92. For detailed info, see Çağfer Karadaş, "İbn Hazm ve Eşarilik Eleştirisi," *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 18, no. 1 (2009): 91-92. Also see Ferit Uslu, "İbn Teymiyye'nin Kelâmcıların Geleneksel İman Tanımına Eleştirisi," *Dinbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 4, no. 3 (2004): 17-29.

93 Ibn Ḥazm, who criticizes the Ash'arites for developing a language-oriented approach, tries to invalidate it by using their own methodology regarding their denial of natures (*ṭabā'i'*). He narrates that he met some of them who said "there is no heat in the fire, no cold in the snow, no natures in the world" and replied by saying "the *lughat* (language) in which the Qur'an has been revealed nullifies you, for words such as nature (*ṭab'*), temperament (*mizāj*), disposition (*khūy*), genius (*sajiyya*) and creation (*khilqa*) were present in ancient Arabic. A knowledgeable person knows that these words were used during the period of ignorance (*jāhiliyya*) and that the Prophet did not reject them, even though he heard of them. Neither the Prophet's Companions nor anyone who came after them denied the meaning of such words. Therefore, according to Ibn Ḥazm, the Ash'arites' denial of the natures (*ṭabā'i'*) is an erroneous approach in terms of language." See Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Faṣl*, 5, 115.

Our view in this matter is that all names are linguistic, that the Shari‘ah does not add anything to it and does not change it. Our evidence is these verses of the Qur’an: “We sent every Messenger only in the language of his people”⁹⁴ and they say “This Qur’an is plain Arabic.”⁹⁵ Here [in those verses], He [Allah] says that He addressed to them in Arabic language. Therefore, it is imperative that the all the addressing in the Shari‘ah should be based on the provision of the lexicon.⁹⁶

According to him, if the Shari‘ah had introduced an additional meaning for an already known word, the Arabs would have been confronted by a meaning that they did not know at that time and thus could not have understood it properly, because during the period of ignorance (*jāhiliyya*) faith had meant “affirmation”. Hence, the Shari‘ah only lays down the law, for it neither determines nor adds additional meanings to the definition of words that already exist. Thus the Shari‘ah does not alter the lexical meaning of words having to do with prayer (*ṣalāt*), fasting (*ṣawm*), pilgrimage (hajj), and almsgiving (*zakāt*). The Shari‘ah both determines their qualities, forms, and conditions and obligates its addressees to perform them. “There is no other authority than language in determining the meaning of the existing names.”⁹⁷

If we consider what Ibn Fūrak reports, Imām al-Ash‘arī also argued that it would be impossible for the Shari‘ah to establish anything regarding the names and qualities of the language. According to him, if it is agreed that the Arabs, including the religion’s opponents, had assigned the meaning of affirmation to faith even before the coming of the Shari‘ah and that the Qur’an is revealed in their language, it then follows that the definition of faith must be determined according to their language. As such, it is out of question for the Shari‘ah to prove anything about the names and qualities of Arabic or to introduce additional meanings that are not already in the dictionary.⁹⁸ Ibn Fūrak relates al-Ash‘arī’s views as follows:

Know that [al-Ash‘arī] based [his claim] on the view that language is an authority on the names and qualities of the originated beings and [some connotations] that are added to the originated beings with reference to their own acts and that are derived from the meaning existing in themselves even though they do not have acts. In addition, he said that although the origin of language was revealed and explained by Allah necessarily in the beginning, religious terminologies were the linguistic names themselves, for Allah has addressed the Arabs with their own language and the dialect they speak among

94 Qur’an 14:4.

95 Qur’an 103:3.

96 Ibn Fūrak, *al-Ḥudūd fī al-Uṣūl*, 108-09 (quoted from *Sharḥ al-‘Ālim wa-l-muta‘allim*)

97 Ibn Fūrak, *al-Ḥudūd fī al-Uṣūl*, 109.

98 Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad* 149-150; compare al-Ash‘arī, *Kitāb al-Luma‘*, 123.

themselves in the context of these languages. Religion/Shari‘ah has not transformed any language into other than what it is, nor has it originated a name out of nothing. On the contrary, it has come to address the people who speak that language. Many verses related to this have been revealed. For example, Allah said: “We sent every messenger only in the tongue of his people,”⁹⁹ “He revealed it in Arabic,”¹⁰⁰ “We have revealed it as an Arabic Qur’an so that you may understand.”¹⁰¹

Al-Ash‘arī subsequently states that a significant indicator of this point is the fact that even those who opposed Islam agreed that faith denoted affirmation before the Shari‘ah came and that the Qur’an was revealed in Arabic.¹⁰² According to him, there is neither a transferal of the names and qualities from the lexicon nor is there a name that the Shari‘ah added to it in the event that that particular name was not found therein. If that had been, it would have been disclosed to the worshippers in the first place that such and such names had been originated for the first time or that the meanings thereof had been changed. In this way, they could understand Allah when He spoke to them in their own language, and the issues discussed (in the form in which they are discussed) could be communicated in an understandable manner. Otherwise, they would have been addressed in another language. Furthermore, if such a practice had been taken place, this would have been widely known and transmitted. But since there is no account about such a practice, their claim appears to be invalid. Therefore, “the status of the names, which comes us through Shari‘ah, is the same as their meanings in the language; there is neither an external nor an internal alteration [in it].”¹⁰³

According to both al-Bāqillānī and al-Ash‘arī, Allah has neither changed nor transformed the Arabic language. If He had done so, the ummah would not have hidden this; rather, it would have been evident in a clear manner.¹⁰⁴

Indeed, the verse “He has revealed [it] in Arabic”¹⁰⁵ shows that Allah has revealed the Qur’an in the Arabs’ language and named the words in the same way that they had already done. Moreover, the Qur’an explicitly proclaims that people’s

99 Qur’an, 14:4.

100 Qur’an 26:195.

101 Qur’an 12:2. Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad* 150.

102 Ibid.; cf. al-Ash‘arī, *Kitāb al-Luma’*, 123.

103 Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, 150.

104 Al-Bāqillānī, *al-Tamhid*, 389.

105 Qur’an 26:195.

languages are distinct and that a prophet is sent to each nation in its own language.¹⁰⁶ It is therefore mistaken to claim that the Shari‘ah can change the meanings of Arabic words, because these verses’ literal meaning cannot be interpreted without relying on any evidence.¹⁰⁷

Although he is one of the later *mutakallimūn*, the Ash‘arite scholar al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153) informs us/reports to us, via examples from the poems of the *jāhiliyya* era, that practices such as prayers, fasting, and pilgrimage were known and performed before the emergence of Islam.¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, his account attests to the claim that the Shari‘ah imparts no new meanings to such words such as prayer and fasting. Qur’an 2:183 – “Fasting is obligatory for you as it is obligatory for those before you” – and reports from such Companions as Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī and ‘Ā’ishah regarding the fact that fasting and praying pre-dated Islam confirm his observations.¹⁰⁹

At this point we need to turn our attention to Mu‘tazilites, who explain cosmological terms based both on the authority of language and include deeds in the definition of faith.¹¹⁰ It is apparent that they could not assign such a meaning to the definition of faith without relinquishing, at least to some extent, their dependence on the lexical meaning. The fact that al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, one of the sect’s most important figures, instead of the Ash‘arites, divided the names into three parts – religious (*shar‘ī*), customary (*‘urfī*), and lexical (*lughawī*) – supports this point. He states that the Shari‘ah has an authority to determine the meaning of the words and that some words are transferred from the dictionary to the Shari‘ah:

The evidence of the fact that the transmission of names is permissible is this: It is possible that the people of the Shari‘ah may think of the meanings that the linguists (people of language) did not think of and did not establish for themselves. It is also possible that the people of the Shari‘ah may attain names from the linguists for what they know according to religion. It is clear that this is permissible (*jā‘iz*), because *ṣalāt* basically means prayer. It is now the name of a worship that contains special rituals thanks to the Shari‘ah. Fasting (*ṣawm*) is primarily *imsāk* (holding). At this moment, with the Shari‘ah it has acquired the meaning of keeping oneself from certain things at certain times. In the same way,

106 Qur’an 30:22; Qur’an 14:4.

107 Al-Bāqillānī, *al-Tamhīd*, 389, 390; see also al-Bāqillānī, *al-Inṣāf*, 22.

108 See al-Shahrastānī, *al-Mīlāl wa-l-niḥāl* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah 1993/1414), 2, 590 ff.

109 For detailed information, see Galip Türcan, “Ehl-i Sünnet’in İman Tanımı Hakkında İbn Hazm’in Eleştirilerinin Değerlendirilmesi,” *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 26 (2011/1): 76-77.

110 Regarding the Mu‘tazilite’s inclusion of the majority of deeds/obediences in the definition of faith, see al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, I, 303; al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, 2, 628-30.

almsgiving (*zakāt*) essentially refers to increase and growth. It has now become a name for taking out a piece of certain goods with the Shari‘ah. When it is established that words gain various special meanings in the Shari‘ah, it is understood that our word “believer” has been transferred to the Shari‘ah from the language and that it has become a name for the person who gains the right for praise and honor in the Shari‘ah.¹¹¹

‘Abd al-Jabbār maintains this view while discussing the theory of acquisition (*kasb*) and asserts that when there is (or when it comes to) a meaning that is not presently found in the dictionary, the Shari‘ah is a legitimate way of defining its terminological meaning. However, he argues that this terminological meaning is not completely detached from the lexical meaning and that there must be some kind of similarity (*shabah*) between them.¹¹²

As we have seen, the Mu‘tazilite scholar ‘Abd al-Jabbār, who is considered to be a rationalist, argues that the Shari‘ah could designate additional meanings to a word, whereas the Ash‘arites, who are assumed to be strong adherents of the revelation, claim that it could neither change a word’s lexical meaning nor add further meanings to the language. They also argue that language must be regarded as the authority for determining the meaning of all religious terminology, as is the case with the fact that faith only refers to confirmation.

These attitudes toward language have also raised questions about whether the words of a language and their assigned meanings were first established primordially by Allah (*tawqīf*) or via common conventions and agreements (*muwāḍa‘a*) over time. In general, Basra’s Mu‘tazilites appear to be closer to the view that language’s origin (*aşl al-lughā*) is determined by agreement, while the Baghdad school’s Mu‘tazilites, as well as the Ash‘arites and Māturīdites, accept that language was first established by Allah but nevertheless remains open to specific alterations, especially in terms of grammar.¹¹³ Ibn Fūrak, under the title of “Declaring the Method of [al-Ash‘arī] on Names and Adjectives by Using Lexical Principles,” recounts al-Ash‘arī’s views as follows:

111 Al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uşūl al-khamsa*, 2, 625; ‘Abd al-Jabbār supports similar views about acquisition (*kasb*). After explaining its lexical meaning, he mentions that, concerning its terminological meaning, “it is impossible to establish a terminology upon something that is unreasonable (unknown), because the meaning of something is known first. If it then has no value/indicator in a lexicon, it is made into a term. If the meaning is not yet present and reasonable, the it does not need to be made into a term. On the other hand, there must be an affinity (*shabah*) between the term (*iştilāh*) and the lexical meaning.” See *Sharḥ al-uşūl al-khamsa*, 2, 106.

112 Ibid.

113 See Mustafa Shah, “Classical Islamic Discourse on the Origins of Language: Cultural Memory and the Defense of Orthodoxy”, *Numen* 58 (2011): 322; Türcan, “Kelamın Dil Üzerine Kurduğu İstidlal Şekli,” 129.

Know that the method of [al-Ash'arī] is to argue that these expressions are due to linguistic differences. The fundamental thing (about) them is to assume/believe that they are in the manner which is announced by the Creator of the heavens. This is not because of a terminology (that has been used), a custom, or research. For if that were the case, it would have to be associated with the infinite. In fact, one can point to an expression as a term only with reference to another expression or an indicator. All of this becomes meaningful only by predicating one phrase onto another. This predication is stretched to forever, which is impossible. He said that the origins/roots of language were determined primordially by Allah (*tawqīf*). Therefore, the grammar of the language (*furū'*) should be derived from the origin/root through a process of analogy (*qiyās*) and applied endeavor (*ijtihād*). Do you not see what he says about the nature of inference (*istidlāl*), namely, "What a person whose method is based on the language should do is to keep back and leave the matter to the specialists [linguists]"?¹¹⁴

He continues to say that because al-Ash'arī adopted a language-centered method he avoided making a statement such as "fire should be hot in the unseen (*ghā'ib*) world because fire in the seen (*shāhid*) world is hot." Instead, he preferred to say:

What is in this structure, light and heat, is fire for us because of the imposition/determination (*tawqīf*) of the philologists, not because of the fact that the fire is hot in the visible world. If one person flicks toward the water (with a lighter stone) and finds fire as a result, we call it that way (as fire), not because of any other reason, but because of the *tawqīf* we mentioned above. Therefore, it became clear to you that what is essential is the *tawqīf*. Because of the equality in meaning, everything that has the same meaning is named with that name.¹¹⁵

The last sentence Ibn Fūrak quoted from al-Ash'arī is critical, for it enables us to make comparisons based on meaning while naming the created things and attribute some of the names, such as "eternal" (*qadīm*) and "originator/creator" (*muḥdith*), to Allah. According to al-Ash'arī, as long as the meaning does not change, various names with that meaning can be used interchangeably. One can also understand his approach to the interchangeability of names as an expression of the notion of flexibility in linguistic authority.¹¹⁶

114 Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, 42; Imām al-Māturīdī also stated that language was first taught to people through the prophets. *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 277.

115 Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, 43.

116 In fact al-Ash'arī's approach, which prioritizes the meaning over the expression/phrase, has been advanced by such *mutakallimūn* as al-Juwaynī. Al-Juwaynī responds to the objections regarding the definition of *jawhar* established by associating it with *accidents* (i.e., *jawhar* is that which accepts accidents) as follows: "We also say: The expressions/phrases (*'ibārāt*) are unreliable. The only thing required from them is the meaning. (...) The multiplicity of compositions and the words in them does not affect the definitions. On the contrary, the composition of the meaning affects it (definition)." *Al-Shāmil*, 142. Al-Juwaynī also claims that expressions (*'ibārāt*) on intellectual matters cannot be decisive/essential. See *al-Shāmil*, 156.

Finally, the question of whether language was such an authority for the post-classical period (*muta'akhhirūn*) after al-Ghazālī arises. Of course, its place and role during *kalām's* post-classical period is such a comprehensive issue that it requires a separate study of its own. However, if we look at this matter within the limits of the concept of "belief", al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413), a famous *muta'akhhir* Ash'arite *mutakallim*, interprets 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī's views (d. 756/1355) on the subject as follows:

Belief (*īmān*) must consist of confirmation (*taṣḍīq*), which requires knowledge (*ma'rifa*), for the Sharī'ah has addressed the Arabs in their own language so they can understand what it means. If the meaning of "belief" had been changed in the religion, it would have been revealed to the Muslim community as the change of the meaning of the words such as *ṣalāt* and *zakāt* by a divine order has been revealed, and it would be well-known as is the case with the other similar words. Even the word of belief is more worthy of this.¹¹⁷

This short passage contains essential clues about the standpoint of the *muta'akhhirūn* on the *kalām*-language relationship in the example of the Ash'arite school. Even though al-Jurjānī here seems to claim that belief is merely an affirmation by relying on the authority of language, as is the case with Ibn Ḥazm's criticism of the Ash'arites and al-Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār's approach to the point in question, he indeed argues that the Sharī'ah can assign new meanings to existing Arabic words using the examples of *ṣalāt* and *zakāt*. However, we should remember that such classical *mutakallimūn* as al-Ash'arī, Ibn Fūrak, al-Bāqillānī asserted that neither the reasoning nor the Sharī'ah adds a new meaning to the language and that the meaning of religious terminology should be determined absolutely on the basis of the lexicon.

As such, one can conclude from this passage that a major post-classical Ash'arite scholar accepted the possibility of words acquiring new meanings, even if this were to be accomplished through the process of transmission (*naql*).¹¹⁸ This shift was not restricted solely to determining the meaning of key terms, but also impacted the *mutakallimūn's* theological and cosmological thought. In this context, al-Ghazālī's inclusion of logic into *kalām* can be interpreted as a seminal moment

117 Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥ al-mawāqif fi 'ilm al-kalām*, ed. and transl. Ömer Türker (Istanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2015), 3, 618.

118 The dual distinction in the form of "religious meaning" and "lexical meaning," which the classical Ahl al-Sunnah *mutakallimūn* reject, seems to have been accepted by Ash'arite theologians of the late period, among them al-Jurjānī, as well as by theologians who are close to Māturidites, such as Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī (d. 702/1303). Al-Samarqandī goes on to explain the meanings of words such as *īmān*, *Islām*, and *kufr* as (lexical meaning) "the meaning of word" and (religious meaning) "the meaning of Sharī'ah" in the form of binary differentiation, *al-Sahā'if al-ilāhiyya*, 450-451.

in the development of the language-oriented approach within that science.¹¹⁹ As noted above, this happened because it had become necessary to pursue intellectual endeavors not through Arabic but through Greek logic, which was seen as universal.

In relation to this development, one must notice Ibn Khaldūn's emphasis on indicating that the embrace of logic by *mutakallimūn* such as al-Ghazālī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), and their consequent acceptance of the external reality of concepts such as intellectual combination, universals, and natural quiddities, made it impossible to justify some of the *mutakallimūn*'s theories, like indivisible substance, vacuum (*khalā*), and the non-persistence characteristics of accidents.¹²⁰

Another indicator of this paradigmatic change, in addition to the assimilation of Greek logic to *kalām*, is al-Ghazālī's focus on the mathematical counter-arguments propounded by those philosophers engaged in the debates on atomism.¹²¹ One consequence of this was that in the post-classical period, arguments regarding atomism, upon which *kalām*'s conception of the universe was based, came to be conducted more through geometrical arguments than semantic analyses.¹²² Paradoxically, as seen in this essay's second section, the *mutakallimūn* mostly defined concepts like "body" (*jism*), "substance" (*jawhar*), "accident" (*'araḍ*), "motion" (*ḥaraka*), and "rest" (*sukūn*) through linguistic approaches.

119 In fact, in *al-Iqtisād fi-l-i'tiqād*, which is regarded as al-Ghazālī's official *kalām* work, as well as where he explains why Allah cannot be called substance (*jawhar*), body (*jism*), and accident (*'araḍ*), he seems to adopt the attitude of the Ash'arites, who regard language as an authority in theological debates: "If it is asked: 'Why do you reject a person who says that He is a *jawhar*, but He does not occupy space?' We answer it as follows: 'The mind does not require to refrain from saying any word. In this case, it is avoided either in terms of *Sharī'ah* or language. If it is claimed that this is appropriate to the determination of language (*wad'*), this issue will be examined. The fact that a person claims that the name he assigned to a meaning is the true meaning in the language indicates that he lies against the language. (...) Reasoning (*nazar*) has nothing to do with mental/rational matters in this regard.'" Al-Ghazālī continues to discuss why God cannot be called a body (*jism*), saying that "if someone calls Allah a body and does not refer to this meaning, it is necessary to discuss with him, not in terms of reason, but in terms of language, because reason does not interfere with the utterance of the words and the determination of the terms. If it is rendered possible to indicate any other meaning than the real meaning of the word and the meaning to which it refers, then there remains no limit concerning the indicated meanings." As a result, he openly benefits from the authority of the language while arguing that Allah cannot be called body, substance, and accident. See al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtisād fi-l-i'tiqād*, ed. İbrahim Agah Çubukçu and Hüseyin Atay (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları 1962), 38-40.

120 Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 3, 146.

121 In his *The Incoherence of the Philosophers (Tahāfut al-Falāsifa)*, which al-Ghazālī wrote in order to criticize their views, when it comes to the individual substance (*al-jawhar al-fard*) he says that philosophers have strong mathematics-based evidence and does not enter into a discussion with them. For his acceptance of mathematics' authority, see al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa=Filozofların Tutarsızlığı*, text and trans. Mahmut Kaya and Hüseyin Sarıoğlu (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2005), 183.

122 For extensive information on this subject, see Bulğen, *Atomculuk Eleştirileri*, 288ff.

VI. Result

The science of *kalam*, a founding discipline of Islamic thought, has a very rich heritage and unique methodology. Although it seems to have an axis based on revelation, the fact that its practitioners sought to base and defend their beliefs on ways other than revelation caused them to become interested in fields such as epistemology, cosmology, anthropology, and psychology. They were particularly interested in language and thus tried to answer the following questions: “How did language originate?” “Did God institute it through the prophets or by a social consensus in the historical process?” “To what extent did reason and revelation contribute to the formation of the technical terminology?” “Do words in a language stand in a causal relationship with the corresponding meanings in the mind?” and “Do mental meanings have referents in the world external to the mind (extra-mental world)?” In discussing these issues, the *mutakallimūn* were in a close relationship with the sciences of language, including grammar and syntax (*naḥw*).

The main striking aspect of the relationship between *kalām* and language is that the *mutakallimūn* both discussed language theoretically and used it as the third kind of epistemic justification – reason and *Shari‘ah* are the other two – in solving the problems they faced. When dealing with anything, they first determined how the linguists understood the terms related to the subject-matter and then went on to explain the problem at hand according to how the word was used in Arabic and its meaning in the dictionary. Furthermore, they claimed that reason and revelation could neither change the meaning determined by the linguists (*tawqīf*) nor add a new terminological sense to the term beyond its lexical meaning.

The *mutakallimūn*’s thought system, based on the boundaries of the language, reveal that they saw Arabic as both a means of communication and as a carrier of a way of thinking and worldview. Although their attitudes are surprising at first, it is not difficult to understand why they accepted language as an authority when we recall the language-thought-existence relationship presented and examined in the first section. First of all, the human mind’s idea of the external world does not correspond to the things themselves, for it is only a conceptual modeling or design formed by the contribution of the mental and socio-cultural processes. The fact that the image of the external world does not correspond to the external world itself shows that language’s words do not signify to the existent things in the outside world, but rather to the ideas/concepts in the mind. However, language not only serves as a way to indicate the concepts in the mind, but also to put thoughts into forms, thereby separating and protecting them as well as making them recognized

by one's consciousness. In this way, a language's words do not correspond to the meanings in the mind on the basis of the nature of things, but do so both voluntarily and arbitrarily. The different structures of words/concepts in various languages (i.e., the differences arising after the mind abstracts and classifies the external reality) reveal that human beings do not conceptualize and express the external reality objectively.

Ever since their primitive periods, societies and civilizations have made sense of their relations with each other and nature by means of a unique (to them) experience and made their attained conceptual achievements tangible by expressing them in language. Later on, communities conveyed these language-concept relations and paths, which were acquired by a collective consciousness, to their newly born members through language. Although one cannot deny that individuals were born with the capacity to think and speak a language, they speak/think about the external world through the language/grammar structures, comprehension/expression styles, and word/concept structures presented to them by their society. People carry out their intellectual activities in accordance with these linguistic patterns. In this way language, which has been formed by the common experiences of the people of a certain region and by their relations with each other and nature over thousands of years, becomes the carrier of a traditional viewpoint for life and being as well as the bearer of a specific worldview. This feature, as in the classical era of *kalām*, makes language a legitimate and reliable basis for speaking about the structure and characteristics of existing entities.

The decisive place of language in classical *kalām* helped form a common way of thinking and understanding of being among the *mutakallimūn*. In addition, identifying and preserving critical terms, with the support of the language, limited the effects of Greek thought on Islamic thought, which arose with the ongoing translation activities. The *mutakallimūn* were instrumental in dealing with those Islamic philosophers (*falāsifa*) involved in physics and metaphysics and were able to create an original thought system by relying on the authority of the philologists as well. This language-based methodology prevented *kalām* from becoming merely a natural theology or metaphysics and enabled it to integrate itself into the Islamic sciences such as *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*, *fiqh*, and *uṣūl al-fiqh* under a common framework of language-meaning. In addition, this situation allowed the *mutakallimūn* to interpret the Qur'an, which they took as the axis on the subject of creed, without losing sight of the lexicon formed during the period of revelation (*nuzūl*).

Although they adopted a system of thought based on Arabic's authority in general, there were some internal disputes. The classical-era Ash'arites and Maturidites generally claim that reason or revelation could not add a new meaning to already existing terms, whereas the Mu'tazilites seem to have accepted this, in a limited sense, in relation to terminological meanings. It is not surprising that this approach of the *mutakallimūn*, which almost confined revelation and reason to the boundaries of language, was criticized by thinkers such as Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Taymiyyah, respectively known as Zāhiri and Salafi, as well as by the *falāsifa*.

On the other hand, the fact that the *mutakallimūn* adopted a system of thought based on the authority and power of language is largely specific to the classical period (*mutaqaddimūn*). As we can understand from the examples provided by al-Ghazālī and al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, one cannot say that this method was popular in the post-classical (*muta'akhhirūn*) period. If the *mutakallimūn* had continued their language-oriented protectionist attitude in explaining key terms and their opposition to Greek logic for the sake of Arabic's logic, during the post-classical period it would have been impossible to experience such conceptual and methodical changes in the way of practicing *kalām*. However, given the intense criticisms directed at the *mutakallimūn* and the dynamics of Islamic thought at that time, including the rise of Islamic philosophy, it is questionable whether they could have continued this language-oriented method for a long time anyway.

Finally, although language is seen as a specific way of thinking and worldview, it is a local phenomenon in which words can sometimes have multiple meanings that can change depending upon the surrounding circumstances. The *mutakallimūn*, who had to consider their counterparts outside the Islamic community, sought to demonstrate and defend the principles of faith in a more universal way, which must have led them to seek a more general language/measure in determining the criteria of thought and investigating the existing realities. In this context, al-Ghazālī's insertion of logic into *kalām* and the consideration of the philosophers' mathematical arguments against atomism can be regarded as key turning points in the language-oriented thinking in terms of *kalām*, for they showed that Aristotelean logic (in terms of determining the rules of thought) and mathematics (in terms of studying the universe) were considered more universal and definitive languages.

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