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THE NON-EXISTENT AND THE POSSIBLE IN CLASSICAL ASH'ARITE TEACHING

by

Richard M. FRANK

That the topic of the non-existent and non-actual and of the possible as such embraces a number of by no means trivial philosophical issues and questions would seem obvious enough. In studies of Ash'arite theology, however, it has been mentioned, if at all, only in passing, and even then as if it were something that merits but little consideration as a locus of metaphysical or theological thought. One reason for which the matter has received so little attention has been that the great majority of the published texts are rather elementary manuals that have but little to say concerning the non-existent as such and in many cases not much either on the subject of the possibles. The present study of what the Ash'arites of the classical period had to say on the topic may contribute to a better appreciation of several aspects of their teaching.

According to the Ash'arites, "the existent is an entity that has actuality in being" (*al-mawjūd 'indānā shay'un thābit: Sham* (69), p. 610, 3); "it has actuality in being and is neither non-actual nor non-existent" (*al-thābitu l-kā'īnu l-ladhī laysa bi-muntafin wa-lā ma'dūm: Muj*, p. 27, 16). "Non-existence is an unqualified negative; the non-existent is non-actual in every respect"¹. Accordingly, Ibn Fūrak says, "The

1. *Al-'adamu nafyun maḥḍun wal-ma'dūmu muntafin min kulli wajh: Sham* (69), p. 609, 19f.; cp. *ibid.* (81), p. 22, 9. 'Al-'adam' occurs occasionally in its common lexical sense of being missing, not present, lost, (cf. Ibn Sida and al-Jawharī, *s.v.*) as in the phrase "li-'adami l-ikhtiṣāsi fihī" in *Gh*, fol. 65v, 5f. (cited below, n. 13) or when he speaks of 'adamu l-quḍūm in *Sh.Ir*, fol. 71v, 17; and so also "adamu wuqū'i l-shay'" occurs twice in *Ikht*, fol. 92r. So too, where *Gh*, fol. 67r, 5 reads *intifā'u l-nihāya*, *Sh.Ir* (fol. 73r, 4) reads 'adamu l-nihāya. In their most proper use 'al-'adam' is the contrary of 'al-mawjūd' while 'al-intifā'' is the contrary of 'al-thubūt' and are not synonymous, as 'thābit' may

definition of being/entity is that which exists; the definition of non-existent is that which is not a being”². But what exactly does it mean to say that the non-existent is not a being (*laysa bi-shay*)?

[Al-Ash‘arī] held that the non-existent which was once existent and that which has never existed have in common that they can be known and that they can be spoken of, made the subject of a predication and referred to, and they are potential objects of God’s power (*yaṣīḥḥu ‘an yu‘lamā wa-‘an yudhkarā wa-yukhbāra ‘anhumā wa-tadulla l-dalālatu ‘alayhimā wa-tata‘allaqu bihimā qudratu l-qadīm*). One says, thus, that [the non-existent] is known, is spoken of, is the subject of a predication, is referred to, and is a potential object of [God’s] power. He refused, however, to allow that it be described by other names and descriptions, particularly when they are nouns that imply the assertion of the actual existence of entities (*‘asmā’un tufidu ‘ithbāta l-dhawāt*), i.e., such as ‘being’ (*shay*), for this is the most universal of positive nouns, just as ‘nothing’ (*lā shay*) is the most universal of negative nouns³.

Following the common doctrine of the school, al-Juwaynī says, “Non-existence (*al-‘adam*) is an unqualified negation and does not embrace any of the positive attributes [of existent entities]” (*naḥyūn maḥḍun ghayru mushtamilin ‘alā ṣifatin min ṣifāti l-‘ithbāt*)⁴. Since it is nothing at all, it has no essential attribute by which it can be described (*laysa bi-mawṣūfin fī naḥsihi*: *Sham* (69), p. 610, 3). Al-Ash‘arī held thus that a non-existent may be described neither as an atom nor as an accident belonging to a particular class⁵, for atoms and accidents are the primal classes into which are

be said of the actuality (and conversely ‘*intifā’*’ of the non-actuality) of something that is not an entity, e.g., a state of affairs or, in al-Juwaynī’s usage, of an ontologically distinct feature (*ḥāl*) of a being, while ‘*mawjūd*’ is employed only of what are considered entities in the formal sense.

2. *Haddu l-shay’i huwa l-mawjūdu; ḥaddu l-ma’dūmi huwa l-ladhī laysa bi-shay’*: *Hudūd*, p. 20, #13f. Al-Juwaynī says (*Sham* (69), p. 124) that “the true meaning of ‘being’ (*shay*) is existent; every being is existent and every existent is a being; what is not described as being a being is not described as existent.” The Ash‘arites’ formal use of ‘*mawjūd*,’ ‘*shay*,’ ‘*dhāt*,’ and ‘*thābit*’ is discussed at length in our “The Ash‘arite Ontology I,” pp. 164 ff.
3. *Muj*, p. 252, 6ff. (where the editor’s change of *kāna* to *kānat* in line 9 is unnecessary); cf. also *ibid*, p. 255, 4ff. and the discussion of the thesis, by some falsely attributed to al-Isfarā‘īnī, according to which the non-existent is not really known, *Sham* (69), pp. 137f. (where, as in *Muj*, p. 252, the phrase ‘*tadulla l-dalālatu ‘alayhi*’ is plainly employed in the sense of referring/signifying, not of demonstrating). The non-existent’s being *maqdūr*, thus, is different from its being known, even though both God’s knowledge and his power are eternal. Involved here are a complex set of distinctions that will be detailed below.
4. *Shām* (69), p. 259, 7f. (reading *mushtamil* with T against the *mustamirr* of the published text; T adds *mutaḍammīn* here following *lam yakun* in line 6 and contains the *qāla* deleted by the editor in line 9). Attributes here are essential attributes.
5. *Muj*, p. 246, 8: *kāna yaqūlu lā yaṣīḥḥu ‘an yūṣafa l-ma’dūmu bi-‘annahu lawnun wa-lā bi-‘annahu jawhar*. The ‘neither... nor’ form of this sentence may seem curious. The sense is that there are two basic classes of contingent beings, independent entities and entities which must exist in a subject, and

divided all contingent beings and what is not existent is not a being. A thing is *li-nafsih/dhātih* an atom or an accident belonging to a particular class and its *nafs/dhāt* is its existence, which includes its being what it is (*ḥaqīqatu l-dhāti l-wujūd: Sham* (69), p. 129). "When a non-existent, then, is said to be known and referred to this is not an assertion of its existence (*'ithbāt*), but on the contrary is the assertion of the actual existence of the knowledge of the one who knows it and the statement of the one who speaks of it" (*Muj*, pp. 254f.).

But what does it mean in this context to say that the non-existent is actually known or may be known and that it can be referred to and that it is *maqḍūr 'alayhi*? A non-existent that is known is not a being or an entity (*laysa bi-shay'in wa-lā dhāt*) and the meaning of its being an object of a knowing is that the knowing has its non-existence as object (*ma'nā ta'alluqi l-'ilmi bihi ta'alluquhu bi-ntifā'ih*): *Gh*, fol. 12r, 8; cp. *Sham* (69), p. 124, 4f., and *Sh.Ir*, fol. 43r, 7ff.). Since one cannot speak of non-existence as such and by itself save in abstraction, the non-existent is spoken of only in terms of something thought or conceived in imagination. So al-Anṣārī says (*Sh.Ir*, fol. 174v, 17ff.) that cognition has the non-existent as its object (*yata'allaqu l-'ilmu bihi*) only through the positing of an existent being followed by the judgement that it does not exist (*al-qadā'u bi-ntifā'ih*); this is altogether different from seeing something, for example, where the existence of the object is in fact observed (*taḥqīqan*, not *taqdīran*). Elsewhere he cites his master where he says,

An unqualified negation is not knowable as anything in particular (*al-nafyu l-muṭlaqu lā yu'lamu 'alā l-ta'yīn*) so long as it is not ascribed to and joined with something that is actual, as in the non-existence of an atom and the non-existence of a man. One posits thus an atom or a man and then negates [the proposition] and knows its not being actual (*intifā'uhu*). For this reason Abū Ishāq [al-Isfarā'īnī] and others say that the non-existent is known only through positing an actual being (*'alā taqdīri shay'in thābit*). Non-existents are spoken of under several categories (*'aqsām*): (1) the non-actuality in being (*intifā'*) of what was and is passed is known; (2) the non-actuality in being of what shall be is known as one posits the actuality of an entity and then knows that it does not exist; and (3) the non-actuality in being of what will not be of those beings whose existence is possible, how it would be were it to be (*mā lā yakūnu mim mā jāza 'an yakūna 'an law kāna kayfā kāna yakūn*); and (4) the non-actuality in being of those things whose existence is impossible (*mā yastahīlu kawnuhu*) is known⁶.

that neither can be affirmed of the non-existent, color standing for accidents in general. It is because 'non-existent' is properly said only with reference to particulars (a single atom or the single instance of a given class of accidents) that he speaks of atoms and colors.

6. *Gh*, fol. 13v, 8ff. (reading *shay'in thābit* for *say'in wa-thābit* in line 10); cf. also *Sh.Ir*, fol 73r, 6ff., translated below, *Sham* (69), p. 138, 7f., and *Muj*, p. 252, 16ff. Al-Juwaynī, *op.cit.*, p. 138, 2ff. (where with T read *fi* following *tanqasim* in line 3, *yu'lam* for *flm* in line 4, and *intifā'a* for *'ntfj* in line 6) cites al-Isfarā'īnī as holding that the knowledge of non-existence necessarily has as its object the pos-

By itself, *'al-ma'dūm*' is meaningless; it refers to nothing whether past, possible, or impossible. We have, therefore, to give it a referent, to "join it to something" of which we know instances to exist, as in 'the non-existence of an atom.' The 'joining it to' the particular subject (*yudāfu 'ilayhi*) explicitly refers to the use of 'of' to join 'non-existence' and 'an atom'. 'The non-existence of x' implies 'x does not exist.' Knowledge of non-existence is always the actuality of a proposition presented in a sentence whose subject term refers to the particular non-existent, a proposition, that is, which presents a non-actual state of affairs as such. Al-Juwaynī explains this by an analogy:

When an individual knows that he doesn't have a coat with him (*'annahu laysa ma'ahu thawbun*) his knowing is a fact which there is no way to reject, whence this knowledge must have an object (*ma'lūm*) and it is impossible that the object of his knowledge be the actual presence of the coat (*yastahīlu 'an yakūna ma'lūmu 'ilmihī thubūtu l-thawb*)...; therefore the cognition has as its object the fact of his not having a coat with him, for one distinguishes between his knowing that he has a coat with him and his knowing that he does not have a coat with him. This shows that as its object the cognition is correlated to the non-actuality of his having a coat with him⁸.

The basic thesis here involves the formal conception of predications. "Predicational sentences (*al-khabar*) are of two kinds, one of which is called an affirmation and the other of which is called a negation. An affirmation is any predicational sentence that implies the actual reality (*thubūt*) of what is presented (*mukhbbaruhu*) when it is true and a fact (*ṣidqan ḥaqqan*); a negation is any predicational sentence that implies the non-actuality of what is presented when it is true and a fact"⁹.

iting of a being and in the following discussion omits the fourth of the categories listed in *Gh*, fol. 13v. The expression *'kayfa kāna yakūn*' is common in Ash'arite authors for 'how it would be' (e.g. *Tā'wīl*, fol. 124v, 15ff. and *Laṭā'if* 3, p. 32, 9 and 5, p. 301, 7f.).

7. With this contrast the statement (*Gh*, 43f, 22f.) that the phrases 'the existence of the atom' and 'the Being of the accident' simply join a being to its Self/existence (*qawlu l-qā'ili wujūdu l-jawhari wa-dhātu l-'arādi 'idāfatu l-shay'i 'ilā nafsihi*). In the case of 'adamu l-jawhar,' however, there is no Self/existence named or referred to; the *mudāf 'ilayhi* signifies but a posited object.
8. *Sham* (69), p. 138, 12ff., adding *man* in line 12 following *'alā* with K and T; also add *'alā* following *ladalla* in line 15 with T. When he says "his knowing is a fact (*'ilmuhu thābit*) what is formally meant is that the act of knowing is an actually existent accident the truth of whose content cannot be questioned since it is grounded in the perception of a present state of affairs.
9. *Sham* (69), p. 138, 20ff., adding with T *thubūt* after *yataḍammanu* in line 21 (Klopper here inserts *'iḥbāt*, which makes no sense) and *wa-ḥaqqan* after *ṣidqan* in line 22.; cp. *Ikht*, fol. 70v, 15f. In the usage of the grammarians '*al-khabar*' is ambivalent as it is commonly employed to mean the predicate of a simple predicational sentence (sc., a sentence of the form *mubtada' -khabar* or *ism — ḥadīth*). As a category of sentences, however, it means a statement, i.e., any sentence that in the given context can be said to be true or false (cf., e.g., *al-Muqtaḍab* 3, p. 89 and *al-Ṣāḥibī*, pp. 179f.) and this is followed by the Ash'arites (e.g., *Tam*, p. 379, 5f.). What is meant by '*al-khabar*' in the

With al-Juwaynī's analogy of the coat the basic sense of "positing" (*taqdīr*) is clear enough. The analysis here follows that of the grammarians according to which a negative statement is formed by adding the negative particle to an already given positive statement (cf. Ibn al-Sarrāj, *Uṣūl* I, pp. 60f.). Accordingly, we have here the basic sentence (a) that is an affirmation (*'ithbāt*) of the existence of a coat that the individual has with him, whether on his back or on the adjacent seat in the car, and the negative is then added to yield (b) '*laysa ma'ī thawbun*,' which we may take either with '*thawbun*' as the subject of '*laysa*' and so "a coat is not in my immediate possession" or with '*laysa*' having an implicit *ḍamīru l-sha'n*: "it is not the case that I have a coat with me" and the latter may be recast as '*lā thawba ma'ī*': "there exists no coat of which it is true that I have it with me."

To summarize, al-Juwaynī's example, the individual knows that he doesn't have a coat with him. This is to be taken, then, as something of which he is cognitively aware and that he may then say to himself whether inwardly or aloud. Underlying the sentence he says to himself is the proposition which comes to expression in the sentence, already present as his immediate awareness of the fact, and the proposition itself originates as a positing of a coat-with-me and its immediate negation. In his awareness of the fact, the non-existent coat is known (i.e., its non-existence) and in the formulated sentence is explicitly referred to by the subject term. What is involved here is an actual state of affairs involving a particular set of entities. The presence of the posited coat, were it to exist — i.e., had the individual a coat with him — would be an element in a hypothetically conceivable alternative to the actual state of affairs, one whose actuality would involve a series (or several convergent series) of events that circumstantially could have occurred rather than those which did in fact occur. The non-existence of these events (accidents) would be presented in his saying, for example, "I forgot to bring my coat." Each event in the hypothetical series that would have led to the existence of the coat-with-me could, in al-Juwaynī's terminology, have occurred '*alā l-ṣiḥḥati wal-badal* with respect to the ones in the series that did occur.

One aspect of the Ash'arite conception of the non-existent is thus clear. As such, the non-existent is known (*ma'lūm*) as the posited referent of a term in a proposition that is presented as a negative predicational sentence. It is the subject of a predication (*mukhbharun 'anhu*) and so is referred to (*madlūlun 'alayhi*) in such a sentence. The predication and the referring are both elements of the proposition. This is true of the

present context is a predicational sentence that is clear and unequivocal. Note that in the present case, the author speaks not of *al-mukhbharu 'anhu* (the referent of the subject term), but of what is presented as the fact or state of affairs.

logically impossible (*al-mustaḥīl*) as well as of contingent entities that once existed and those that have never existed. The latter, moreover, are potential objects of God's creative power (*maqḍūrāt*). Anything that is known is known in and by virtue of an actually existent cognition and whatever is an object (or correlate), potential or actual, of God's creative power is such by virtue of that power. 'Maqḍūr' is equivocal in that it is said both of a possible object of God's power and of an actual object. In a strict sense, however, there is no actual correlation between God's power and its object save at the moment the object comes to exist (*al-quḍratu ṣifatun lahā muta'alliqun wa-huwa maqḍūruhā ḥāla ḥudūthihi: Ikht.*, fol 174r, 14f.)¹⁰. The correlation of [God's] power to an object means simply the existence of the object through it (*lā ma'nā li-ta'alluqi l-quḍrati bil-maqḍūri 'akthara min wujūdi l-maqḍūri bihā: Sham* (69), p. 694, 9f.). What is *maqḍūr* as a possible entity, on the other hand, is no more than a posited object of God's power¹¹.

It is clear in all this that of the predicates that may validly be said of the non-existent 'known' is primary. And it is also clear that, although al-Juwaynī's example of the non-existent views the question from the perspective of our human knowledge, the most important question for the theologian is that of God's knowledge. But in what way does one speak, with reference to God's knowledge, of the non-existent's being "the subject of a predicate" or of its being "referred to"? And how too of His *positing* something as existent. Our cognitions, in contrast to God's knowledge, are contingent beings (accidents) that succeed one another in time, each one being thus finite as such and in itself (*mutanāfin fī nafsihi*) and so also in its content (*fa-limā tanahā fī nafsihi tanāhā fī ta'alluqihī bi-khilāfi l-'ilmi l-qadīm*)¹². The most characteristic feature of our cognitions is, moreover, that each has but a single, particular object¹³.

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10. Thus *ḥālu l-ḥudūthi ḥālu ta'alluqi l-quḍra: Sh.Ir.*, fol. 126r f.
11. 'Ta'alluq' is an ambivalent expression. In the case of existent objects one speaks of an actual correlation between the knower's knowing and the object that is known. In the case of the knowledge of the non-existent, on the other hand, the *ta'alluq* is the knowing itself (*Sh.Ir.*, fol. 43r, 7ff., where read *wal-ma'lūm* for *wal-ma'dūm* in line 9). "ʿarāda l-mutaḥaqqiqūna bil-ta'alluqi ʿanna l-ʿālīma yaʿlamu ma'lūman..." (*Ikht.*, fol. 70v, 3ff).
12. *Sh.Ir.*, fol. 65r, 13ff., citing al-Ashʿarī and Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāʾīnī.
13. 'Akhaṣṣu ʿilmīnā ta'alluquhu bi-ma'lūmin wāḥidin muʿayyanin li-khtīṣāsihi bihī fa-lā yastaqīmu dhālika fī l-'ilmi l-qadīmi li-ʿadami l-ikhtīṣāsi fī haqqihī: *ibid.*, fol. 65v, 5f., citing al-Ashʿarī. The "single object" (*ma'lūm*) here is obviously what is presented in a single true proposition, which may concern but a single subject or many (a whole class or set of classes) or a complex state of affairs, etc. The proposition's being *muʿayyan* is thus different from the non-existent's being *muʿayyan*. The meaning of the phrase 'li-khtīṣāsihi bihī' here is simply that it has (its existence is to have) this and only this object or proposition, be it a particular, general, or universal.

God's knowledge is not specifically determined to one object rather than another (cf., e.g., *Sham* (69), p. 523, iff. and *Sh.Ir, loc. cit.*). Because His knowledge in itself and as such is not determined solely to any single object, He knows everything that can be known (*ibid.*, foll. 65v, 5 and 72v, 4f.)¹⁴. There is no was or will be in God or in His essential attributes. Though He knows every detail of the comings to be and ceasings to be of contingent entities and of their interrelationships, God's eternal knowing is not subject to any change or alteration¹⁵. Eternal existence is not related to time (*al-wujūdu l-'azaliyyu... lā yunāsibu l-'azmina: Sh.Ir, fol. 71r, 19*), for "there is no relationship (*nisba*) between the Eternal and the contingent, either temporal or local, for a finitude of the relata is the condition of the valid assertion of relations" (*Gh, fol. 19v, 23f.*; v. also *ibid.*, fol. 32v, 14, cited below, n. 21). "Nothing that is infinite in its essential Being is related to what is finite" (*mā lā nihāyata li-dhātibi lā yunāsibu l-mutanābī: ibid.*, fol. 20r, 3). It is for this reason that it is impossible that God's knowledge alter in accord with the temporal changes in contingent beings and events¹⁶.

Time (*al-waqt*) is defined by Ibn Sīda (*s.v.*) as "the measure of universal time (*al-miqdāru mina l-dahr*) and is generally used of the past, though also of the future." Ibn Fāris defines '*waqt*' (*Maqāyīs, s.v.*) as "a time which is known" (*al-zamānu l-ma'lūm*) and '*zamān*' (*s.v.*) as "a period of time, small or large" (*huwa l-hīnu qaliluhu wa-kathīruhu*)¹⁷. Al-Qushayrī says (*Risāla 2, pp. 21f.*)

14. Thus al-Bāqillānī is cited (*Gh, fol. 27r, 19f.*) as saying "*'akhaṣṣu waṣfi 'ilmi l-qadīmi 'annahu 'alā ṣifatin tūjību lahu l-'ihāyata bi-jamī'i l-ma'lūmāt*"; cf. also *ibid.*, ff. and fol. 56v, 14ff. Note that the phrase '*alā ṣifa*' here may reflect al-Bāqillānī's recognition of ontologically distinct "states" (*'ahwāl*) that qualify the being of existent entities. This need not concern us here. Al-Fūrakī (fol. 22v, 1f.) remarks that God's knowledge is at the absolute term of perfection in the sense that its having any limit is negated (*fī ghāyati l-kamāli bi-nafyi l-nihayāti 'anhu*).

15. *Al-ma'lumātu bil-'idāfatī 'ilā l-'ilmi l-qadīmi kal-ma'lūmi l-wāḥid... lā yatajaddadu lahu ḥālun wa-lā ta'alluqun bi-idāfatibi 'ilā l-ma'lūmāt: Gh, fol. 64r, 5f.*, citing al-Bāqillānī; cf. also *Sh.Ir, fol. 45r, ult.* and cp. al-Harāsī, fol. 127r f. The expression that God knows all beings exactly as they are (*'alā mā hiya 'alayhi/bihi*) is often used in the sense that He knows all the temporal relations of their being and not being; cf., e.g., *Sham* (69), p. 520, 8ff.

16. Cf. *Gh, fol. 56v, 3ff.* and al-Mutawallī, p. 25, 6ff. and see generally *Irsh, pp. 96ff.*, *Sh.Ir, fol. 70r ff.*, and *Gh, foll. 66r ff.* The attempt to explain this in *Sh.Ir, fol. 71v, 15ff.* (cp. *Irsh, p. 99, iff.*) by contrasting knowing and making true statements of fact which are not time dependent on sense perception is interesting and altogether valid as such, but nonetheless fails to solve the basic difficulty. Though not strictly speaking a technical term, '*idāfa*' is used for relation (the relation of the objects of God's knowledge to His knowledge) in *Gh, fol. 64r, 5f.*, cited in the previous note, because in the context '*nasab/nisba*' would be altogether inappropriate and '*ta'alluq*' is excluded primarily because of its use in the second sentence, where no other expression would be correct.

17. Sibawayh, in discussing the transitivity of verbs that govern a single object (I, p. 16, 4ff.), uses '*waqt*' of place: *yata'addā 'ilā mā kāna waqtan mina l-'amākin.* (This is cited by Ibn Sīda when he defines '*waqt.*') Al-Sirāfī, in his *Commentary (ad. loc.)*, remarks that Sibawayh "calls it a *waqt* because the

What time really is (*ḥaḳīqatu l-waqt*), according to the experts, is a posited event (*ḥādīthun mutawahham*)¹⁸, whose coming to be is linked (*ʿullīqa*) to a known event (*ḥādīthun mutaḥaḳīq*) and the known event is the time of the posited event; one says ‘I shall come to you on the first of the month’ and the first of the month is the [appointed] time of his coming (*waqtu l-ʿityān*).... People often mean by ‘*waqt*’ the time one is actually in (*mā huwa fihi mina l-zamān*). And there are those who say ‘*waqt* is what is between two times (*mā bayna zamānayn*),’ sc., the past and the future.

Al-Qushayrī’s “time” in the first definition he gives (that of the *muḥaṣṣilūn*) is in terms of an event, sc., the rising of the new moon, of whose occurrence one is certain, while the second is merely posited, since he cannot be wholly certain that something which prevents his coming at the appointed time will not occur. The Ash‘arites thus define time formally as the coincidence of two events. Al-Juwaynī, for example, says (*Sham* (69), p. 620, 5) that “the experts hold that a being’s occurrence at a particular time (*wuḳū‘u l-shay‘i fi waqt*) has no meaning beyond its coinciding with some [other] being that comes to be” (*muḳāranatuhu li-ba‘dī l-ḥawādīth*).

Times (*al-waqt*) are not a real class of beings that of themselves have an essential nature (*jinsun maujūdun labu ḥaḳīqatun fi nafsihi*) like existent entities, as one says ‘the essential nature of the atom is such-and-such’.... ‘Time’ is merely an expression for the coincidence of the occurrence of one being with that of another and of the coming to be of one contingent entity with that of another contingent entity (*iqtirānu mutajaddidin bi-mutajaddidin wa-ḥādīthin bi-ḥādīth*: al-Harāsī, fol. 211r, 5ff.; cf. also *ibid.*, fol. 178r, 8ff. and *Gh*, foll. 25v f. and 38r, 11f.)

Since atoms, once created, continue to exist, the “occurrence of a being” and its “coming to be” are, in the present context, the coming to be (the creation: *ḥudūth = ʾihdāth*) of accidents, and accordingly time may be defined as *taqdīru mutajaddid* (*Gh*, fol. 25v, 15)¹⁹. That is to say it is the determinaton (*taqdīr*), the specification of

Arabs use ‘*tawqīt*’ (to assign, determine a *waqt*) in the sense of ‘*taqdīr*’ (to determine, assign a measure) even when it is not a time.” It is interesting to note in connection with this the use of ‘*ḥayyiz*’ where he says (*Idāh*, p. 87) of a verb (or nominal form of a verb) when it is used in subordination to the main verb of the sentence or clause as a circumstantial element (*ḥāl*), that it is what takes place (*al-mutakawwin*) at the time intended by the main verb “when it has not passed over to the realm/region (*ḥayyiz*) of the past and to having been terminated (*ʾilā ḥayyizi l-mādī wal-inqitāʾ*), nor is it in the realm of what is expected and whose time (*waqt*) has not yet come.” With this, cp. the same extended use of ‘*ḥayyiz*’ by al-Juwaynī in his discussion of God’s knowledge of the non-existent that will never come to exist, translated below.

18. ‘*Tawahhum*’ is employed as an equivalent of ‘*taqdīr*’ in *Muj*, p. 112, 2f., though of ‘*takhayyul*,’ *ibid.*, p. 86, 15f. For the use of ‘*wahm*’ and ‘*tawahhum*’ in the sense of imagining in the sense of picturing or positing in thought or reflection, cf., e.g., al-Isfarāʾīnī, pp. 137, 19 and 22 and 140, 12ff. and the citation n. 59 below.

19. One speaks thus of the continuance of the existence of atoms as opposed to *tajaddudu l-ʿarad* (*Sham* (69), 181, 18ff.); and so *al-jawharu bāqin gayru mutajaddid* (*ibid.*, p. 160, 3f.). Thus, for example, the

the exact temporal location of the occurrence of a coming to be (cf. *Ikht*, fol. 237r, 22ff.), *sc.*, the coming to be of a complex set of accidents which constitute the event. It is possible, thus, that either of two simultaneous events be taken as the time (*waqt*) of the other (*Muj*, p. 276, 19f., where read *lahumā* for *lahā* in line 20). It should be kept in mind, however, that like the single atom the single instant of time (*waqt*, *ḥāl*, *etc.*) — the coming to be and ceasing to be of a single accident — is not perceptible as such (*al-ḥālu l-wāḥidatu lā tudrikuhā fī ṭṭirādi l-'āda*)²⁰.

God's being is not temporally related to the course of time (*lā yunāsibuhu*: al-Harāsī, fol. 22IV, 15ff.), because, as we have seen, "what entails relationships (*al-muqtaḍi lil-'ansābi*) are finite limits (*al-nihāyāt*) and that which has no finite limit in its Being and its existence is not related (*lā yunāsib*) to that which has local and temporal finite limits and that which has no locus (*ḥayth*) is not related to that which has locus."²¹ "It is impossible to talk of temporality in regard to the existence of the Eternal...; for this reason one may not say that the existence of the Eternal is measured by time (*lā yaṣibḥu l-tawqītu bil-qadīmi... fa-li-dhālika lam yajuz 'an yaqūla qā'ilun 'inna wujūda l-qadīmi muwaqqat*: *Muj*, p. 276, 13ff.; cf. also al-Mutawallī, p. 12, 10ff.). Of necessity God transcends all times (*wajaba ta'ālīhi 'ani l-'azmina*: *Gh*, fol. 29r, 20f.). To put it another way, "in the essential characteristic of His Being His relation to all times is a single relationship (*nisbatuhu fī khāṣṣiyati l-wujūdi 'ilā kāffāti l-'awqāti nisbatun wāḥida*: *ibid.*, fol. 23r, 15). This, as we shall see, is very important for

cognitions of human beings do not continue to exist but come to exist instant upon instant (*al-'ilmu l-ḥādīthu lā yabqā bal yatajaddadu ḥālan 'alā ḥāl*: *Gh*, fol. 68v, 15f.). Our impression that the blackness of a body continues is due to the successive coming to be of identical accidents in the subject (*li-tajaddudi 'amhālihi*: *Muj*, p. 242, 8ff.).

20. *Sh.Ir*, fol. 1r, 11f. That is to say, that a human being perceive and distinguish the single instant as such, would be a miracle. Al-Juwaynī uses the expression '*ittirādu l-'āda*' rather frequently (e.g., *Sham* (69), pp. 111, 6f., 118f., 217, 6, *et alibi pass.*), as an equivalent of '*istimrāru l-'āda*,' '*muṣtaqirru l-'āda*,' '*jaryu l-'āda*,' etc., which are rather more common in the writings of his predecessors. Whatever the expression, what is meant is the normally invariant way that God chooses to order events in the world, altered only in the case of miracles and wonders.
21. *Gh*, fol. 32v, 14f.; cf. also *ibid.*, fol. 29r, 20ff. and cp. *ibid.*, fol. 19v, 23 (where, instead of *al-muqtaḍi* one has *al-muṣaḥḥib*) and *Sham* (69), p. 493, 11ff. (where with T read *bil-nasab* for *kal-nasab* in line 11), citing al-Isfarā'īnī. Cp. *Nizāmīyya*, p. 29, 13f., where '*ḥayyiz*' instead of '*ḥayth*'; the *al-ladhī* following *al-'azālī* in Saqā's edition (p. 41, 9) is to be deleted. It is important to keep in mind that, albeit we may employ the same English word for both, the relationships referred to and intended by '*nasab*' and '*munāsaba*' are altogether different from those referred to and intended by '*ta'alluq*.' The former are, as is clear enough from the texts just cited, essentially extrinsic to the things that are judged to be related (*mutanāsib*), while the actuality of the latter generally follows immediately from the existence of a being that is formally termed the ground ('*illa*) of that feature or description of the particular *muta'alliq* which is its *ma'lūl*. The word, as is to be expected, is not always used in this formal sense (e.g., in *Muj*, pp. 28f., translated above), but it is never employed in the weak sense of '*nasab/munāsaba*.'

understanding God's knowledge of the non-existent. His knowledge is a single, time-less knowing of an infinity of particulars which He knows as such and in their every detail: *'ilmun wāhidun yata'allaqu bi-mā lā yatanāhā fa-'inna l-rabba ta'ālā ya'lamu mā lā yatanāhā 'alā l-tafṣīl* (*Sham* (81), pp. 31f.; cf. also *Irsh*, p. 98, iff. and *Sh.Ir*, fol. 74r, 14ff.).

The texts we have examined thus far concerning the non-existent's being known are on the whole somewhat superficial. Viewed from one perspective the disputes between the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilite school of al-Jubbā'ī concerning the non-existent was, in large part, a polemic laden quarrel over terminology. The two schools were in agreement that God's knowledge is absolutely unlimited, that He knows all that was or is and all that is to be and everything that was or is possible. There was little call, therefore, for the Ash'arites to take up the specific question of God's knowledge of the non-existent for its own sake in the common elementary hand-books. The matter is, however, raised explicitly in *Gh* and also in *Sh.Ir* where it forms a part of the general discussion of the thesis of Jahm b. Ṣafwān according to which God has particular knowings that take place in time (*'ulūmu l-lāhi ḥādīthah*), that is, according to al-Juwaynī's interpretation, they are temporally correlated to their created objects²². Both works (*Gh*, fol. 67r and *Sh.Ir*, fol. 73r) present an analysis of the question by al-Juwaynī which is of particular interest for our present inquiry. In *Gh* (fol. 67r, iff.) the section begins by asserting that "the Muslims are agreed that the objects of the Lord's knowledge are infinite (*ma'lūmātu l-rabbi lā tatanāhā*) and so also each of His attributes that is related to correlated objects has an infinite number of objects (*kullu ṣifatin qadīmatin lahā ta'alluqun bi-muta'allaqin lā nihāyata -muta'alliqāti tilka l-ṣifa*) though this is said of Hearing and Seeing in a somewhat extended sense; our fellows have moreover asserted the position that there is an infinity of things that God (the Exalted) knows about every object of His knowledge (*ma'lūmātu l-lāhi ta'ālā fi kulli ma'lūmin lā tatanāhā*) and so point to the fact that an infinity of positings is possible with respect to the reality of every object be it an atom or an accident."²³ This is illustrated by the fact that for every atom there is no conceivable moment of all time and no imaginable place (*quṭr*) in which its occurrence cannot be posited alternatively or successively in one or in another (*'alā l-*

22. *Irsh*, pp. 96ff. The phrase '*ulūmun ḥādītha*' is used in describing Jahm's concept of God's knowledge by al-Mutawallī (p. 24, 12ff.). What exactly he held is difficult to ascertain from the sources; see the references in *Th.u.G.* 5, pp. 215f. and on Jahm generally *v. ibid.*, 2, pp. 493ff.

23. Cp. al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl*, p. 122, 5ff., where he says that God's names are of two kinds (*naw'ān*), those which are intransitive (*lāzimun lā yata'addā*) and pertain to His Self, e.g., 'being' and 'living,' and those which are transitive, such as 'knows'..., having objects, what is known..." (omitting the suffixed *-hu* on *yata'addā* in line 6).

badal) and similarly no accident whose actual occurrence cannot be posited in any atom given the absence of its contrary or of another of the same class as itself. To this, an objection, explicitly attributed to no particular school or individual, is then raised as to how each one of an infinity of discrete objects (*ma'lūmāt*) can be known as a particular individual (*mufaṣṣalun mu'ayyan*):

If someone says, 'What is the meaning of your thesis that the things God knows (*ma'lūmātu l-lāh*) are infinite and whatever be the things God knows they are distinguished separately and as particulars (*fa-huwa mufaṣṣalun mu'ayyanun*)?' To join the identification of particulars and the denial of finite limits (*al-taḥṣīlu wa-ntifā'u l-nihāya*) is a joining of two contradictories since the denial of a finite limit (*fa'inna nafya l-nihāya*) implies a denial of any limitation and term (*nafyu l-ḥaṣri wal-dabt*), while whatever is subject to a limit is finite (*mā taṭarraqa 'ilayhi l-ḥaṣru fa-huwa mutanāh*)²⁴. The Master, the Imam [al-Juwaynī] said in explaining this²⁵:

A Those beings which [have come to] exist are individually distinguished and finite in number (*al-kā'inātu mufaṣṣalatun munḥaṣira*).

B Those whose [eventual] existence is given in [God's] knowledge are grouped together with those that [have come to] exist (*mulḥaqun bil-kā'ināt*).

C Those which God knows do not [come to] exist and whose existence is logically impossible are not distinguishable as individuals (*lā yanfaṣil*); their existence is not conceivable²⁶. The knowledge is a knowledge of their impossibility.

24. *Sh.Ir*, fol. 73r, 3ff. = *Gh*, fol. 67r, 3f.; there are minor differences in the way several clauses are cast, though the sense is everywhere equivalent; immediately before the *fa'inna nafya l-nihāya* *Sh.Ir* has the clause *fa'inna mā lā yatanāhā lā yanfaṣil*, which is most likely a gloss. It is clear from this passage that *faṣṣala*, *yufaṣṣilu* and *'ayyana*, *yu'ayyinu* are used as equivalents and so that 'mufaṣṣal' = 'munfaṣil' = 'mu'ayyan' as synonymous in the context. Similarly, *faṣṣala*, *yufaṣṣilu* is used interchangeably with *farrāqa*, *yufarrīqu* in *Sham* (81), p. 45, 8f. The objection here expresses the thought of Abū l-Hudhayl (see below) but it is quite likely, as we shall see, that in presenting the objection and al-Juwaynī's response al-Anṣārī has in mind as well a contemporary dispute. Concerning the formal sense of 'ḥaṣr' (and of 'maḥṣūr,' 'munḥaṣir,' etc.) and of 'dabt' in these contexts, cf., e.g., *Luma* (J), p. 127, 3: *mā lā yaḥṣuruhu 'adadun wa-lā yaḍḍibūhu 'amadun...*

25. The texts here are a bit untidy to say the least. The two MSS present exactly the same passage, albeit there are some variants between them including several blatant copyist's errors in *Sh.Ir* (see n. 27 below) even though it is the more complete of the two, since *Gh* has dropped two significant portions of the original. The first of these is a kind of homoioteleuton, as the omission begins after *ya'nī qawlunā* (*Sh. Ir* has *mā'nā qawlinā*) and the text takes up again immediately following the subsequent *ma'nā qawlinā*. The second is analogous (v. n. 31 below). Material not included in *Gh* I have indicated by placing it in angle brackets>. The words in square brackets in "which [have come to] exist," etc., will be explained in the analysis below.

26. *Gh* here reads *yutaṣawwar* while *Sh.Ir* reads *yataqaddaru*. It is likely that the latter is a copyist's error for the former, though in this context the two verbs are essentially equivalent as the latter is to be heard as "not positable."

D It is those of which it is given in God's knowledge that they do not [come to] exist but whose existence is possible (*yajūz*) that are infinite. It is these we mean in saying that they are 'the potential objects of God's power' and are 'the logically possibles' (*al-maqdūrātu wal-mumkināt*). What we mean in saying that they are among the possibles²⁷ (*al-jā'izāt*) is that the actual occurrence of the particular individuals is not as such precluded (*lā yamtani*'), under the proper circumstances and in succession, i.e., either as logically impossible or because of a conjunction of contraries or the like. Nothing that is such as this lies beyond God's power (*al-qudratu lā tataqā'adu 'anhu*), since it lies within the realm of logical possibility. This is what we mean in saying <they are 'among the possibles.' This set (*qabīl*) [of non-existent possibles] are, as posited, to be taken together with those things that [come to] exist (*mutabiqun bil-kā'ināt*): they are known and individually distinguished (*ma'lūmun mufaṣṣal*). Things that belong to this set²⁸ belong in one respect together with those that are logically impossible and in another respect with those that are logically possible.> This is what we mean in saying that God's eternal knowledge²⁹ is an attribute that is capable of apprehending completely whatever is displayed to it (*mutahayyi'atun li-daraki mā yu'raḍu 'alayhā*)³⁰; being displayed means in its logical possibility and the identification of the particulars as they might follow one another successively (*jihatun l-'imkāni wa-ta'yīni l-'āḥādī 'alā l-badal*). <There is no potential object of [God's] power save that its occurrence is logically possible in this way (*alā ḥādhā l-wajh*).

He would frequently express this same meaning by 'without limitation' (*bil-istirsāl*) and by 'without limitation' asserted that in His knowledge [God] apprehends every-

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27. *Sh.Ir* here reads *'ihām* for *'annahā min*, evidently having taken a badly written *min* for a *mīm*.
28. Here reading *mā huwa min* for the *mā 'adā*, which makes no sense and would seem to originate in an attempt to decipher an illegible hand (cp. the *mīm* that is written for *min* where the MS reads *'ihām* for *'annahā min* in line 10).
29. *Gh* here adds the phrase *wa-kadhālika l-qudratu l-qadīmatu wa-ghayrhumā min al-ṣifāti l-'azaliyya* which is not found in *Sh.Ir* (which reads simply *ḥādhā ma'nā qawli l-'imāmi ḥaythu qāla l-'ilmu ṣifātun mutahayyi'atun...*). The reading of *Gh* reflects a sentence that stands at fol. 67v, 1f. (translated above) and would seem to have been introduced by a copyist, most likely as a pious marginal notation that was later transposed into the text, since it is basically irrelevant to the immediate context. The inclusion of God's other "correlated attributes" is, in any case, not wholly without importance within the broader context.
30. Regarding the expression "*ṣifātun mutahayyi'atun li-daraki mā yu'raḍu 'alayhā*," al-Ash'arī and others sometimes defined knowledge as the apprehension or grasp of the known as it really is (*'idrāku l-ma'lūmi 'alā mā huwa bihi*); cf., e.g., *Sham* (81), p. 75, 6f., *Ikht*, fol. 87v, 20, and al-Fūrakī, fol. 20v, *ult*. For the use of *'darak*' here, v. also *Sh.Ir*, foll. 159v f., cited below. An essentially equivalent definition, *sc.*, *tabayyunu l-ma'lūmi 'alā mā huwa bihi*, is also given, e.g., in *Muj*, 89, 2; al-Juwaynī gives this latter in his list of definitions of knowledge (*Sham* (81), p. 75) but rejects it (*ibid.*, p. 77 and in *Burhān*, p. 115, 6ff.) on the grounds that *'tabayyun*' implies that something becomes clear after it wasn't; he subsequently employs it himself, however, (*Sham* (69), p. 102, 4f., where with T omit the *'ilm* inserted by the editor and read *tabayyun* against the *bi-tabayyun* of Nashshār's edition and the *bi-tabayyin* of Klopfer's edition. Concerning the sense of *'yu'raḍu 'alayhā*' here cf., e.g., *Hidāya*, fol. 126v, 4, *Sham* (81), p. 54, 10ff., and *Sh.Ir*, fol. 54v, 1ff., where *'ta'arruḍ*' means the achievement or present grasp/knowledge of something; cp. n. 55 below.

thing that is displayed to it³¹>; and by 'what is displayed to it' we mean that the knowledge of that which passes from the realm of logical impossibility (*ḥayyizu l-istihāla*³²) to the realm of logical possibility is a knowledge of its being logically possible, whereas the knowledge of what is logically impossible (*muḥāl*) is a knowledge of its being impossible. One does not say that the logically impossible is known as logically possible and the logically possible as logically impossible. Whatever is not divisible into particular individuals is not known as particular individuals; knowledge conforms to its object as it really is (*yatba'u l-ma'lūma 'alā mā huwa bihi*)³³. The things that actually come to exist are not related to the infinite by a real relationship and as being parts, for an infinity has no parts³⁴. It follows from all this that [God] (be He praised) knows the possible as possible and the impossible as impossible.

The order of the four sets of non-existents here differs from that presented in *Gh*, fol. 13v (translated above), and may at first seem odd. It is, however, altogether appropriate in the present context, as (A) and (B) consist of the real, of what has been and what is and of what is to be. The set of non-existents presented in (A) is thus viewed in the now of the discussion and so as what has already come to be. Of these God knows each and every individual as such (*mufaṣṣala*) and in every detail of its being. Given that the world was initially created at a time finitely removed from the present, this set of beings taken together are finite in number (*munḥasira*)³⁵. They are

31. That what is here placed between angle brackets ("since there is no... displayed to it") has been inadvertently dropped in *Gh* is clear, since what follows immediately, sc., *na'nī bil-ma'rūd*, takes up the *kullu ma'rūd* which ends the previous sentence. The sense of 'istirsāl' is explained in *Sh.Ir*, fol. 73v, 7f., as *ta'yīnu 'āḥādihā bil-wuqū'i marratan wa-bi-taqdīri l-wuqū'i marratan*. Concerning *al-istirsāl* see also the discussion of the passage of al-Juwaynī's *K. al-Burhān* below.
32. For *al-istihāla* here *Sh.Ir* reads *al-muḥāl*, which seems to fit quite well, but both read *ḥayyiz al-'imkān* in the following phrase as well as earlier in the same paragraph.
33. A little later (*Sh.Ir*, 73v, 3f. = *Gh*, 76r, 16) he says by way of explaining the sense of *al-'ard*, "*qad yakūnu l-'arḍu wuqū'an 'idhā 'ūlima wuqū'uhu wa-qad yakūnu taqdīran 'idhā 'ūlima 'annahu lā yaqa'*" The phrase *tabī'a l-ma'lūma 'alā mā huwa bihi* occurs, e.g., in *Hidāya*, fol. 56v, 8f. Where in this and in the preceding sentence I have rendered 'is known,' *Gh* has no diacriticals while *Sh.Ir* has two, thus *y/nl'm* in the first place and *y/n'lmh* in the second. It would seem apparent that the diacritical for *nūn* in the first instance is an erroneous reading of a *ḍamma* that was written to indicate the passive; the second is just a simple blunder. Concerning what is not divisible into individual units, see below.
34. *Al-kā'inātu lā tuḍāfu 'ilā mā lā yatanāhā bil-nisbati wal-juz-'iyyati fa'inna mā lā yatanāhā lā juz'a lahu*. *Sh.Ir* here reads *tnḍ'f* for *yd'f* and *lā ḥadda* for *lā juz'a*. The *bil-juz-'iyya* in the preceding line of both the sources confirms the correct reading.
35. 'Munḥasir' and 'maḥṣūr' are synonymous with 'mutanāhī.' Thus *wa-qāla mu'zamu l-mu'tazilati wa-kathīrun min 'a'immatinā al-'ajnasu maḥṣūratun wa-mutanahiyatun wal-'āḥādu ghayru mutanāhiya... wa-qāla ba'ḍu l-aṣḥābi 'inna 'ajnasā l-'a'rāḍi lā yanḥasiru kamā lā yanḥasiru l-'āḥād* (*Ikt*, fol. 205v 3-13 talking about possibles). Since what is intended is generally clear enough from the context where infinity in number is intended, a noun for number is only occasionally added, as in "*mā lā yatanāhā fi l-ma'dūdāt*" (*Gh*, fol. 24r, 12) and where he asserts God's power to create bodies "*ma'a nafyi l-nihāyati 'an 'a'dādihā*" (*ibid.*, fol. 122v, 23). Concerning God's power, *Gh*, fol. 24r, 12 reads *lahu*

not described as objects of God's power (*maqḍūra*), since they have already been created. (God has the power to create any of them anew if He so wills, but so considered they fall within the class of what is to be or is possible but will not be, not within the compass of what has been.) Finally, there is no question here of their being posited, since, in God's timeless knowledge, they are known as individuals that [have come to] exist and so are termed "existents" (*kā'ināt*).

In (B), concerning those beings that with respect to our now are future contingents that are, by God's will and action, to come to exist at determined moments of time to come, al-Juwaynī says neither that God knows them as particular individuals, nor does he say that they are potential objects of His power. Their status is made perfectly clear in the introductory description of the set as *mā waqa'a fi l-mā'lūmi kawnhu*³⁶. In God's knowledge, which is one and timeless, each future contingent is known individually, not as posited (*muqaddaran*) but in the actuality of its existence (*muḥaqqaqan*). That is to say, a non-existent possible — an entity, event or state of affairs that God might create — is for us, in our talk or speculation, something posited (*muqaddar*), as we saw earlier in al-Qushayrī's definition of time, and as posited is represented by a term in an (implicitly or explicitly) negative proposition. In God's knowledge, however, the in our time presently non-existent that is to come to be is present, not as something whose existence is posited, but as something whose actuality is eternally present. In God's knowledge, the for us future contingents thus fall together with the *kā'ināt* of (A)³⁷. And it is within this perspective that he does not here speak of future contingents as potential objects of God's power (*maqḍūrāt*).

qudratun muta'alliqatun bi-mā lā yatanābī mina l-mā'dūdāt, but even though the reading *mā'dūdāt* is altogether clear in the MS, it is most probably to be emended to read *maqḍūrāt*. 'Nihāya' is used in an absolute sense, i.e., of limitation or finitude of any kind in al-Isfarā'īnī, p. 137, 18. On the question of unlimited classes in *Ikht*, fol. 205v, see below.

36. The 'mā' of 'mā waqa'a...' here is general, "whatever."

37. Al-Juwaynī's conception and construction of the question here is opposed to that of "Abū Ishāq [al-Isfarā'īnī] and others" (*Gh*, fol. 13v, 9ff.) who hold that the non-existent is known "only through positing an actually existent being." In *Sham* (69), p. 138, 2ff., al-Juwaynī gives essentially the same report and, in further describing al-Isfarā'īnī's doctrine, speaks of "the knowing of posited past being" (*al-'ilmu bil-kawni l-māḍi l-muqaddar*) and goes on to cite him as joining past and future contingents; and it is clear that al-Isfarā'īnī held this to be true of God's knowledge of the non-existent. As we have already seen (n. 6 above) the text of the latter passage seems to be corrupt in part; in line 2 T has, in place of *min darūratin*, something that is quite illegible, though plainly different; *tariqa* would fit, but is doubtful, to say the least. The *ta'alluqu l-'ilmi bi-taqḍīri shay'in*, in any case, is clear in both and the same assertion is stated in different words in what follows. The "others" (*ghayruhu*) mentioned in *Gh*, *loc. cit.* are not identified; it would seem probable that none of the more prominent masters of the school is to be included, save perhaps for al-Juwaynī's master, Abū l-Qāsim al-Isfarā'īnī.

Since the passage we are considering, sc., the unit formed by (A) and (B), presents our attempt (that of al-Juwaynī and ours as we attempt to follow what he said) to understand God's knowledge of the non-existent, the account of the for us once but no longer existent is separate from that of the not yet existent. Albeit he casts the passage thus in terms of our temporal perspective, al-Juwaynī's primary focus is on God's knowledge, and for this reason there arises an unavoidable problem of expression because of the difference between the temporality of our being and speaking on the one hand and the transcendent timelessness of God's being and knowledge on the other. Al-Juwaynī was fully aware of the difficulty and the way he expresses himself in dealing simultaneously with the two distinct perspectives is remarkably subtle. He has chosen to employ the participle, *'al-kā'ināt'* rather than a finite form of the verb such as *'mā qad kān'* in (A) and at the beginning of (B) says "*mā waqa'a fi l-ma'lūmi kawnuhu*" using the *maṣḍar*, *'kawn'* rather than *'mā waqa'a fi l-ma'lūmi 'annahu yakūn* or *sayakūn'* (those of which it is given in God's knowledge that they will come to be/exist)³⁸. The reason for this is that Arabic participles and verbal nouns are not marked for time and, being thus atemporal, may be understood as past, present, or future as required by the context³⁹. It is in order to reflect something of the ambivalence of these terms that in translating I have bracketed the temporal qualifiers in "[have come to] exist" and "[eventual] existence" in (A) and (B) and "do not [come to] exist" in (C) and (D). That is to say, when one considers God's knowledge as such in its eternity, the *maṣḍar*, *'kawnuhu'* and the participles, *'al-kā'ināt'* are heard as timeless or, better, as timelessly present in the transcendent eternity of God's Being and knowing. In (D), where the negative is required, there was no choice but to use the finite form in "*mā waqa'a mina l-ma'lūmi 'annahu lā yakūn,*" though even here one notes that the verb may be heard as either present or future (are not and will not be)⁴⁰. In short, where, following the implicitly temporal divisions of the text, we

38. The common use of *'waqa'a'* is the sense of come to exist is clear enough from its occurrences in earlier citations.

39. Thus, for example, al-Ash'arī in speaking of human actions draws a formal distinction (*Muj*, p. 122, 15ff.) between *'kā'in'* in the sense of 'is coming to be/taking place' and *'kā'in'* in the sense of 'has come to be/taken place' and so says, "*'innamā huwa kā'inun yakūnu wa-laysa bi-kā'inin qad kān.*" Note that in this passage the clause that should present the first of two alternative theses (sc., that of al-Ash'arī) has been dropped by homoioteleuton of *bayna qawli l-qā'ili* in line 14; the *bi'anna* in line 15 begins al-Ash'arī's explanation of the distinction. One should perhaps read *minhu* for *fibi* following *kāna* in line 18, i.e.; the latter reading will refer to "the past" (*al-māḍī*, in the previous line) and the former will mean "on the part of [the human agent]" since what is under discussion is temporal relationships to the act as it takes place.

40. Thus too, given the equivocity of *kāna*, *yakūnu*, one may hear both to be and to come to be — in either case to be created. He might, of course, have said *'annahu ghayru kā'in,* but most likely wanted here the unambiguously implicit *'will not [ever] be'* of the finite form.

hear distinctions between what was and is (what has come to be) in (A), what is [to come to be] in (B), and what could be but is not to be in (D), al-Juwaynī clearly asserts with reference to God's knowledge only two divisions, both present, namely what is in fact existent and what as potential objects of God's power could be but are forever non-existent. Though this much is clear and wholly coherent within the larger theological context, there nevertheless remain several problems that must be considered.

In (A) al-Juwaynī said of the beings God has created from the beginning up to our present now, that they are finite in number. Given, then, that the blessed are to enjoy the benefits or blessings (*al-ni'am*) and pleasures (*al-ladhbhāt*) of the Garden perpetually, the reader may find it somewhat surprising that in (B) he does not say that future contingents are infinite in number. It might perhaps be suggested that in (B) he intends only those beings that shall come to be in this world, which God will eventually bring to an end. This, however, is altogether implausible, since if it were this al-Juwaynī had in mind, then (B) would concern but a wee small part of the future contingents whose eventual coming to be God knows. Moreover, he distinguishes without qualification between those beings included in (A) and (B), which he terms *al-kā'ināt* and those of (D), sc., possible contingents (*maqḍūrāt*) that will not come to be, and says of the latter that "it is *they* that are infinite in number" (*dhālika huwa l-ladhī lā yatanāhā*). Despite the fact that he says regarding God's power (*Sham* (81), p. 36, 13ff.) that by it He creates throughout eternity to come (*fīmā lā yazāl*) and in speaking of His will (*Nizāmiyya*, p. 17, 14f.), that "from eternity the Creator wills in His eternity what shall exist in eternity to come,"⁴¹ al-Juwaynī nevertheless holds that the *kā'ināt* of (B) are finite. We shall return to this shortly.

Curiously, the Ash'arites of the classical period devote little effort at all to a thorough and systematic analysis of the questions involved in the perpetuity of the joys and pains of the next life. Al-Ash'arī held (*Muj*, p. 163, 16ff.) that the pleasures of the inhabitants of the Garden and the pains of those in the Fire are perpetual (*alā l-ta'bīd*) and that this is known only by revelation (*bil-sam'*); and so too al-Bāqillānī says (*Inṣāf*, p. 53, 19f.) concerning the perpetuity of the delights of the Garden that the proof of this (*al-dalīlu 'alā takhlīdi l-na'im*) is Q 89,8, "residing there for ever" (*khālidīna fīhā 'abadan*). In the resurrection, the bodies of the blessed will be re-created the way they were, reconstituted of the same atoms according to al-Juwaynī (*Irsh*, p. 374), though in response to the question of whether the atoms cease to exist

41. *Al-ṣāni'u lam yazal muridan fī 'azalibi li-mā sayakūnu fīmā lā yazāl: Nizāmiyya*. Saqā's edition (p. 25, 5) reads *fīmā yazāl* without the *lā*, but the verb may not be used without the negative; for al-Juwaynī's use of the expression in this context, v., e.g., *Sham* (81), p. 36 and elsewhere.

and are created anew in the resurrection or whether they continue to exist without their erstwhile normal accidents and are subsequently restored and assembled in their previous structure (*binya*), he says that either is possible as the revelation gives no information on which to draw one or the other conclusion. In either case, the identity of the individual consists in his being composed of the same atoms as in the first life and in the same configuration⁴². Included in the reconstitution or re-creation of the living human body is that of the pneuma (*Ikht*, fol. 264v, 19) and it is in the atoms that make up the pneuma that the accidents which constitute the individual's consciousness of his own identity, his thoughts, volitions, desires, etc., are created.

The blessings bestowed on men by God (on all living creatures, for that matter) consist in "the perception of pleasures and the healthy state of the senses (*'idrāku l-ladhdhāti wa-salāmatu l-ḥawāss*) in the obtaining of those beneficial desires to which they are naturally inclined and by which their bodies prosper."⁴³ Even if one consider only the accidents that will come to be in the individual residents of the Garden and/or those of the fire (and there will be others that, existing in non-human elements of the Garden, are extrinsic to them), the number is without end. There was some disagreement as to whether or not accidents can be created anew (i.e., the self same accident re-created rather than its being replaced by an identically similar accident: cf. *Ikht*, foll. 263v f. and *Gh*, foll. 213v f.). To my knowledge, none of the Ash'arite masters of the classical period suggested that the pleasures of the blessed or the pains of the damned consisted, for any given pleasure or pain, in the repeated re-creation of the same individual accidents in each individual; but even if this were accepted, there would yet have to be an endless series of creation events that occur in each individual, all of which are known to God, for

the possibility that accidents be re-created (*jawāzu 'i'ādati l-'a'rāḍ*) entails neither their being described as continuing to exist nor the possibility of their continuing to exist, since a re-creation [of a being] after a creation is an initial creation from a non-existence (*li'anna l-'i'ādata ba'da l-ibtidā'i btidā'un 'an 'adam*)⁴⁴.

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42. Man is defined (*Muj*, p. 215, 7ff.) as this manifest body assembled in this given way and structured in this particular kind of structure: *hādihā l-jasadu l-zāhiru l-murakkabu bi-hādihā l-tarkībi l-mabni bi-hādihā l-ḍarbi mina l-binyati l-makḥṣūsa*. In *Ikht* (fol. 265r, 7ff.) he says that it is possible that God create additional atoms for the bodies of the blessed in order to enhance their perfection.
43. *Inṣāf*, p. 19, 3ff. The Garden is not mentioned here explicitly, but is obviously to be included given the reference to the contrasting state of the "people of the Fire" in line 6. In discussing the basic nature of pleasure (*al-ladhdha*), al-Anṣārī says (*Gh*, fol. 168v, 22ff.) that al-Ash'arī and those who have it correctly (*al-muḥaqqiqūn*, amongst whom al-Qushayrī is to be included; cf. *Laṭā'if* 1, pp. 95f.) hold that true pleasure is that which has no detrimental effect (*al-khāliṣatu min mashā'ibi l-ḍarar*).
44. *Muj*, p. 242, 12ff. He goes on to say (*ibid.*, II. 17ff.) that "re-creation is a second initial creation which is the Self of what is re-created (*'ammā l-'i'ādatu fu'innahā btidā'un thānin wa-huwa nafsu*

The objection, that the constituents of an infinity of beings cannot be known individually, though not here attributed to any particular school or master, reflects the doctrine of Abū l-Hudhayl al-'Allāf, according to whom

There is an All, an ultimate limit and a totality of the objects of God's power and of His knowledge, both those that will be and those that will not be, just as there is an All and a totality of those things that have been (... *kullan wa-ghāyatan wa-jamī'an kamā 'anna li-mā kāna kulla wa-jamī'an*). The movements of the inhabitants of the Garden will come to an end (*yanqati'*) and they will remain motionless in a perpetual state of rest. He also said that the eating, drinking, and copulating would come to an end⁴⁵.

Given the principle that any being or set of individuals of which 'all' (*kull*) or 'totality' is predicable must be finite, he based his theory on the Koranic assertions that God "has power over every being" (*alā kulli shay'in qadīr*), "knows every being" (*bi-kulli shay'in 'alīm*), "comprehends every being" (*bi-kulli shay'in muḥīṭ*), and (Q 72, 28) "has counted every being numerically" (*'aḥsā kulla shay'in 'adadan*)⁴⁶. The Ash'arites, however, draw a very different conclusion regarding the '*kullu shay*' of these verses.

l-mu'ād)...; the meaning of 're-creation' and 're-created' refers to a coming to be after a coming to be between the two of which a non-existence intervenes (*ḥudūthun ba'da ḥudūthin takhallalahumā 'adam*); cf. also *Sham* (69), p. 176, 9ff. (where, with T add *mu'ādun li-mā 'nan wa-bā'ulā'i manā'ū 'i'ādātā l-'arāḍi min ḥaythu* following *al-mu'ādu* in line 11 and read *ubtudi'a* for 'body in the same line and *fā-lā* for *lā* before *iqtiḍā'* in line 12 and with T and K read *mā'ādan* for *muqādan* in line 13). In fact, since human actions are accidents (movements of the body, thinking, etc.), al-Ash'arī held that God can re-create the identical act as such, because "He has the power to give us the power to do anew those accidents which previously came to be from us" (*'inna l-bāri'a qādirun 'alā 'an yuqdiranā 'alā 'i'ādātā mā kāna minnā mina l-'arāḍ: Muj*, p. 122, 21). That is to say, He can re-create the event in us while at the same time re-creating the same correlated power of voluntary action (*istiṭā'a/quadra muḥḍathā*). Re-creation so conceived would necessarily apply, not merely to the most commonly listed delights of the Garden (e.g., eating, drinking, copulation, etc.), but also to those accidents (sc. *'akwān*) whose actuality (determined instant after instant by God: *bi-takḥṣīṣihi l-khāliq*) results in the structured assembly of atoms that constitute the particular body as such. And so also, since al-Ash'arī and his followers deny that accidents can endure for more than an instant, even an individual's perpetual contemplation of God will require either the endless creation of similar cognitive (or perceptive) accidents or the re-creation of the same accident(s). Abū l-Hudhayl's "perpetual rest/absence of motion" is not an option for the Ash'arites of the classical period.

45. *Maq*, p. 485, 11ff.; cf. also *Intiṣār*, p. 17, 2ff.

46. See the analysis of van Ess in *Th.u.G.* 3, pp. 256ff. Even though 'knows' would have been easier, not to say more accurate in the immediate context, I have here chosen to render '*muḥīṭ*' by 'comprehends' in order to bring out the association of the base meaning of '*ahāta*, *yubḥī*' (surround, encompass) with that of '*ḥasara*, *yaḥsuru* and so the use of '*maḥṣūr*,' and '*munḥasir*' in the sense of limited/finite. Ibn Fūrak uses the word with reference to God's power (*Bayān*, p. 64, 17). The Ash'arites often use it in the sense of knowing (e.g., *Sham* (81), pp. 32f., *Irsh*, p. 90, 6f. *Gh*, fol. 14v, 14f.) and al-Anṣārī reports (*ibid.*, fol. 11v, 6) that al-Ash'arī did not distinguish between '*al-iḥāṭa*' and '*al-ilm*.'

As we noted, (C) and (D) belong together as together they embrace things that will never come to be. They cannot, however, be joined as are (A) and (B), since even though 'impossible' may be said of both, it is obviously not said in the same sense.

(C) presents that whose actual existence is impossible in itself and as such, what God knows can never come to be and which, therefore, cannot lie within His infinite power to create. Though one may speak of different sorts of things whose actual existence is logically impossible in an unqualified sense, no actual instance of any of them can be posited: there can, for example, be no instances of square circles⁴⁷. Of such things God knows simply that they are impossible. This is one aspect of what al-Juwaynī means where, at the end of (D) he says that knowledge, *sc.*, God's, conforms to its object as it really is.

The discussion in (D) concerning beings whose coming to be is conceivable but which God knows shall never in fact come to be is more detailed and more nuanced than that of the previous sections, in part at least, because some disagreements within the school are involved. Al-Juwaynī wishes, on the one hand, to oppose the claim that the existence of whatever God knows will not occur is logically impossible in every respect and at the same time to nuance the more common view (that of "our fellows") that "the knowledge that such will not occur does not remove them from the class of possibles nor does it place them amongst the impossibles" (*lā yukbrijuhu min qabīli l-mumkināti wa-lā yulḥiquhu bil-mustaḥīlāt*)⁴⁸.

It might be well at this point to look briefly at some of the terminology of al-Juwaynī's discussion. *Istihāla*, *yastahīlu* is used commonly and most strictly of the logically impossible or logically inconsistent. '*Muḥāl*' is commonly employed as a synonym of '*mustaḥīl*', as, for example, the two occur alternately in al-Isfarā'inī, Fr. 59. Contrariwise, *'amkana*, *yumkinu* is most commonly and strictly employed in the sense of logical possibility and in Ash'arite usage *ṣiḥḥa*, *yaṣiḥḥu* is often used in the same sense. Al-Bāqillānī, for instance, is quoted by al-Juwaynī (*Ikht*, fol. 205v, 7ff.) as saying with regard to a certain problem that "the meaning of '*ṣiḥḥa*' is the contrary of the meaning of '*istihāla*'." *Jāza*, *yajūzu*, by contrast, is normally employed of what is circumstantially possible as opposed to what is logically possible, as al-Bāqillānī speaks (*Hidāya*, fol. 13v, 10f.) of the logical possibility of the resurrection and its factual possibility (*ṣiḥḥatu l-ba'ithi wa-jawāzuhu*). Accordingly "*ṭhabata 'anna l-jā'iza*

47. The various kinds of impossibles can be classified and ordered: *wujūhu l-istihālāti maḍbūṭa* (*Gh*, fol. 113r, 3); *jihātu l-istihālāti maḍbūṭatun wa-lā wajha li-taqḍīri mazīdīn 'alahyā* (*ibid.*, ll. 22f.).

48. This is also discussed in *Gh*, foll. 144v f. and by al-Harāsī, foll. 192v ff., where he takes the same position as his master.

'innamā yatamayyazu 'ani l-mustahīli bi-taṣawwuri wuqū'ihī wa-ṣiḥḥati wujūdihī" (*Sh.Ir*, fol. 25v, 11f.)⁴⁹.

To return to our analysis of (D), beings that are possible in principle (*al-jā'izāt*), i.e., those that, since they are not in themselves impossible and therefore do not fall under the category described in (C), are potential objects of God's power. They are possible in themselves under certain conditions. This is what he means by the expression '*alā l-badal*' which I have translated 'in succession' or 'successively.' That is, for any two entities whose simultaneous existence is precluded (e.g., two or more like or contrary accidents in one atom at the same time), one can validly posit the one (*ṣaḥḥa taqdīruhu*) as coming to be subsequent to and in place of (as a replacement of) the other (*Gh*, foll. 145r f. and 149v, 5f.). This is most obvious in the case of accidents, as God knows an infinity of accidents whose creation in any given body or atom may be posited as possible under the condition that likes and contraries come to be '*alā l-badal*' (cf. *Gh*, fol. 122v, 22ff. and cp. *Muj*, pp. 119f.). The same condition will obtain analogously in the case of atoms (no two can occupy the same space at the same time) and is introduced in the discussion of the end of this world and its replacement by the next (cf., e.g., *Ikht*, fol. 166r, 17ff.). The existence of contingent entities God knows will never be is not precluded absolutely. Al-Juwaynī says (*Ikht*, fol. 165v, 14f.) concerning what God knows will not come to be that "one does not say concerning what is different from what He knows [will be] that its occurrence is not possible, but rather that it is certain that it is theoretically possible" (*lā yuqālu fihī lā yajūzu wuqū'uhu lākin yuqā'u bi-'annahū yaṣiḥḥ*). In saying that God knows the possibles that will never exist as particular individuals that might [come to] exist as alternatives to those which do come to exist (*jihatu l-'imkāni wa-ta'yīni l-'āḥād 'alā l-badal*), he asserts, in effect that He knows as such the essential nature that characterises each member of every class of potentially existent entities and that He knows as well each possible instance of every class of possible existents, including the specific conditions of its actually coming to exist within the context of the immediately prior and simultaneous existence of all other actual or potential entities. Al-Juwaynī insists on God's knowing every particular as such (stating it first by '*ma'lūmun mufaṣṣal*' and then by '*ta'yīnu l-'āḥād*') in order to exclude the suggestion that God's knowledge of the infinity of possibles that will in fact never come to be is merely a general or abstract knowledge of logically possible classes or, in the language of the falāsifa, of "forms" or "essences" and not of their particulars as individually possible. At the same

49. The verb is also used in the sense of doubt, uncertainty (*al-jawāzu bi-ma'nā l-shakk*: *Sh.Ir*, fol. 159v, 1); on this see below. Al-Juwaynī says in *Kāfiya* (p. 42, 14) that '*jawāz*' is employed by the mutakallimūn "as the opposite of *muḥāl*:" it is so used, e.g., in *Hidāya*, fol. 57r, 15ff., but the fact remains that they employ it equivocally in formal contexts.

time, he means to contrast God's knowledge with the finite cognitions of men to whom full knowledge even of the classes of possible existents is not given. In the case of the possibles God knows each individual of a set the number of whose members infinitely exceeds that of the actual existents (*al-kā'ināi*), for He has the power to create an infinite number of bodies and in each one of them an infinite number of accidents (*Gh*, fol. 122v, 22ff.) and has the power to create other earths and heavens like the the earth and the heaven of the world in which we live (*Sh.Ir*, foll. 172r, 14 and 174r, 8).

It may seem strange that al-Juwaynī makes here no mention at all of God's will, especially in view of the common usage of the school according to which He wills that what does not come to be not come to be: "one does not say 'He did not will that it come to be... since to place the negative before 'willed' or 'knows' may seem to imply the negation of willing and knowing...; ['does not will' in] the sentence 'what God does not will does not come to be' is employed in an extended sense" (*Muj*, p. 71, 5ff.). In almost all formal discussions of the relation of God's will to His knowledge, however, the latter is consistently presented as the primary of the two. For example, al-Ash'arī held that "He wills that beings come to be in accord with his foreknowledge (*'alā ḥasabi mā ṣabaqa bihi l-'ilmu*)...; He wills the coming to be of what He knows will come to be and the non-being of what He knows will not come to be (*yurīdu kawna l-ma'lūmi 'an yakūna wa-faqda l-ma'lūmi 'an lā yakūn*)⁵⁰. The question of God's will, then, we need not go into here, even though it does involve some very interesting questions.

Al-Juwaynī begins (D) by stating the problem that arises when one speaks of possible existents which God knows will never actually exist: the coming to be of anything that God knows will never come to be is impossible in so far as the coming to be of what He knows will not come to be would be contrary to what He knows (*diddu ma'lūmihī*) and were such to happen, His knowledge would have then to be other than eternally it is. It is impossible (*mustahīl*) that a being come to be within the realm of His creation without His knowing it and willing it before it comes to be (cf. *Muj*, p. 74, 14ff.). On the other hand, the non-existents here under consideration must, from a purely logical perspective, be potential objects of God's power insofar as

50. *Muj*, p. 74, 12ff.; cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 71, 14f., 45, 12ff., and 69, 21ff. (where one should perhaps read *wa-'an lā* for *'aw-lā* in line 22), *Tam*, p. 333, 7ff., *Latā'if* 2, 225, 1ff., and *Sham* (69), p. 271, 11ff., where with T add *fa-'ani l-'ilzāmi jawābāni 'ahaduhumā 'an yaqūla 'innamā yataḥaqqaqu l-'adamu fīmā lā yazāl* following *lā yazāl* in l. 11, *bil-qasḍ* at the beginning of l. 12 and read *fa-wujida* for *yūjad* following *waqt* in the same line. The number of things individually willed by God is thus the sum of (A) + (B) and (D). Each of God's "correlated attributes" (*ṣifatur lahā ta'alluq*) has an infinite number of objects (*Sh.Ir*, fol. 67r, 1ff., translated above). God knows the impossibles as impossible and they cannot be objects of His will (*al-'irādatur lā tata'alluqu bil-mustahīlāt*: *Gh*, 71r, 2ff.).

they are known to Him individually as possibles which, were they to exist, would belong to classes (*'ajnās*) members of which have actually come to exist or, perhaps, to classes no instances of which have ever existed but whose actual existence is conceivable. Considered in themselves, therefore, they are possible in principle (*jā'iza*) even though to posit their actually coming to be is logically inconsistent. So it is that they are impossible in one respect and possible in another. One notes that though the Ash'arites commonly speak of the non-existent's being known as in its being posited as an actual existent, *it is only in (D) that al-Juwaynī speaks of God's knowing something as posited*. In his eternal knowing God knows as real beings (*kā'ināt*) what has been and what is to be; by contrast, He knows the possible that was not and is never to be as eternally posited, for it is not and never will be a being (*shay*)⁵¹. As posited individuals, the latter are not to be grouped with what God knows to be impossible in itself, the only knowledge of which is that of its intrinsic impossibility. Since no instances of the absolutely impossible can be conceived, none can be posited. In the case of the non-existents discussed in (D), however, since their existence is conceivable and therefore theoretically possible, God, whose knowledge is infinite, necessarily knows each of the posited individuals as such, and they are for this reason more appropriately associated with the contingent beings of (B) (*mutahiqun bil-kā'inati taqdīran*), than with the impossibles of (C). This is what he means in saying that God's knowledge is "without restriction" (*bil-istisāl*) in its positing the merely possibles as such: it goes beyond both the simply impossible (what God knows will never come to be: *ḍiddu ma'lūmihī*) and the actually possible (what God knows is, with respect to a given time, later to come to be). It is "the knowledge of what passes from the realm of the impossible to the realm of the possible" and so "is a knowledge of its being possible." It is perhaps for this reason that al-Juwaynī (*Ikht*, fol. 164r f.) says that Abū Ishāq al-Isfarā'īnī often used the expression 'logically impossible' (*mustahīl*) in speaking of the occurrence of what God knows will not occur, even though he consistently asserted that it lies in God's power to create what He knows will not come to be. And it is because of the the union of possible and impossible here that, in describing God's power relative to this set of "possibles" a few lines earlier in (D), al-Juwaynī used the phrase *lā tataqā'adu 'anhu* rather than *lā tata'allāqu bihī* as in *Sham* (69), p. 694, 9f, cited above.

The sentence at the end where al-Anṣārī speaks of what has no parts and goes on to say that an infinity has no parts sits somewhat uncomfortably with what al-

51. Thus, in reply to an objection concerning the phrase "*ṣifātun mutahayyi'atun li-daraki mā yu'radu 'alayhā*," al-Anṣārī says that what is presented is an actual occurrence when He knows its occurrence and is a positing when He knows that it will not occur (*Sh.Ir*, fol. 73v, iff.).

Juwaynī is quoted as saying in the passage that precedes, *sc.*, that the possibles are infinite in number and that as posited they are “known and individually distinguished” by God. It does, however, conform with what al-Juwaynī says in his *K. al-Burhān*, a juridical work, where he brings up the question of whether there can be an infinity of possible classes. The Ash'arites were divided on the issue of whether or not there are possible classes instances of which God will never create. In his *kalām* works, al-Juwaynī took the position that “this is one of those matters that the human mind has no way of knowing” (*bādhā mim mā lā yataṭarraqu l-'aqlu 'ilā darakihī*)⁵². Some, including al-Baghdādī, held that there are an infinite number of possible classes (*Uṣūl*, p. 41, 9ff.; cf. also *Sh.Ir*, foll. 159v f.), while others deny this (*ibid.*, *Ikht*, 205v, and *Gh*, fol. 106r).

In *al-Burhān*⁵³ al-Juwaynī expressed a view concerning the possibles and God's knowledge of what He does/will not create that is, in part at least, significantly contrary to what he says in *Sham* and *Irsh* and in the passage quoted by al-Anṣārī that we have just examined. Here we read

The distinction between possibility (*al-jawāz*) as a known fact and possibility in the sense of uncertainty and doubt is clear enough. The mind judges a body to be movable and in the mind's judgement the possibility is a fact (*thabata bi-ḥukmi l-'aql*), i.e., the

52. *Sh.Ir*, foll. 159r f.; cf. also *Ikht*, fol. 205v, 17ff., cited above. Note that in speaking of rational understanding (*'aql*) here, he means that we have no evidence on which to arrive at a conclusive inference. God could have revealed it (as He gave revealed knowledge of the afterlife), but did not. He says elsewhere (*Ikht*, fol. 129r, 22ff.) that the correct view regarding the possibility of other classes of accidents is to distinguish accidents the classes of which are necessarily limited to those which we know (e.g., the *'akwān*) from those that are not, e.g., colors, tastes, *et al.*, concerning which there is no proof as to whether or not there may be others of which we have no knowledge; and later (*ibid.*, fol. 128v, 4ff.) he says that since there is no definitive proof (*dalīlun qaṭ'ī*) that the classes of colors, tastes, and odors are limited one is obliged to withhold judgement on the matter. Al-Ash'arī may have held the same view as al-Juwaynī, as he is cited as holding that *it may be the case* that among the possible objects of God's power (*jā'izun 'an yakūna fī maqdūri l-lāhi...*) there are sub-classes of color and of taste that differ from any of which we have knowledge (*Muj*, p. 246, 12ff.). One notes in this regard that al-Isfārā'īnī is cited in *Gh*, fol. 89r, 3f., as saying that the *ahlu l-ḥaqq* are agreed that God created in Moses an accident of some sort by which he perceived and understood God's speaking (*ma'nān mina l-ma'ānī 'adrika bihi kalāmahu*). This, however, is, if it represents a unique class of accident, an existent instance of a class.

53. Pp. 145f. (§59). The passage is cited in full by al-Subkī (5, pp. 195f.). The text in Subkī has a number of copyist's (or editor's) errors, but the correct readings are found in the glossing explication that follows. We may note that in *Ikht*, fol. 57 r f. there is a section concerning the thesis that it is possible that a single knowing be correlated to an infinite number of objects in a general way, as a whole, but not individually as distinct particulars (*yajūzu ta'alluqu l-'ilmi l-wāḥidi bi-ma'lūmātin ghayri mutanāhiyatīn 'alā l-jumlati dūna t-taṣīl*). The thesis is asserted, however, only of human cognitions, as we read (fol. 57v, 17f.) “the Lord (be He exalted) knows both the general and particular” and the writer, speaking for himself, goes on to restate the proposition saying this is the position of “our master”, *sc.*, “*anna r-rabba 'ālimun bil-jumlati wat-taṣīl*.”

opposite of impossibility (*istiḥāla*). Possibility as uncertain, on the other hand, is of numerous kinds. A single example will here suffice. The *mutakallimūn* hold various views with regard to whether the classes [of contingent entities] — colors, for example — are finite (*fī nḥiṣāri l-ʿajnāsi kal-ʿalwān*). Those who take a decisive view on the matter hold without reservation (*qaṭaʿa*) that as possibles they are infinite (*ʿannahā ghayru mutanāhiyatin fī l-ʿimkān*) as are the individual instances of each class (*kullu jins*) or hold the view that they are finite (*ʿannahā munḥaṣira*)⁵⁴ Those who take a middle view, not having based their position on decisive reasoning and verification, say, “We do not know whether they are finite or not.”

It is my decided opinion (*ʿarāhu qaṭʿan*) that they are finite, for were they infinite, then knowledge would be of an infinity of distinct individuals⁵⁵ as such and that is impossible. If the ignorant refuse to see this and arrogantly assert that God knows the particular detail of an infinity (*ʿālimun bi-mā lā yatanāhā ʿalā l-taḥṣīl*), we declare them to be simpletons and state that it is logically impossible to affirm a thing of this sort regarding God’s attributes.

To put it succinctly: (1) When God’s knowledge has as its object an infinity of atoms what is basically meant by its having them as its objects is that it knows them completely (*istirsāluhu ʿalayhā*) without the individuals’ being distinguished⁵⁶ given their infinity, since what makes it impossible that an infinity [of beings] come into existence (*mā yuḥīlu dukhūla mā lā yatanāhā fī l-wujūd*) makes it impossible that there occur an infinity of positings in [God’s] knowledge. That [God’s] knowledge have them individually as objects despite their infinity is impossible. (2) It is impossible that there be an unrestricted knowledge of the various classes under discussion, for they are distinct one from another by their essential natures and that they be known in their particular instances despite their infinity is impossible. Since the facts are clear, let the fools say what they will.

The question of there being an infinite number of existent beings is raised by several earlier authorities. Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥalīmī (d. 403/1012) is quoted as saying in his *K. al-Minhāj* (“known as *Shuʿab al-ʿimān*”) that the motions of the people of the Garden and of the Fire have no end (*mablagħ*) “so that it is impossible that [God] be described as knowing their end.”⁵⁷ On the same topic al-Mutawallī says,

What is impossible is that an infinity of beings actually come to exist (*ḥuṣūlu mā lā yatanāhā fī l-wujūd*). In our view, the blessings of the inhabitants of the Garden and

54. Reading *ʿaw-zaʿama* for *wa-zaʿama*, though this may not really be necessary.

55. Reading *bi-ʿāḥād* for *bi-ʿajnās* with the variant and Subkī; the *ʿāḥād* better suits the immediate context, even though the *ʿajnās* does anticipate the concluding argument.

56. *Min ghayri fardī taḥṣīli l-ʿāḥād*; Subkī’s text reads *min ghayri taʿarruḍi li-taḥṣīli l-ʿāḥād*. The sense of the two is basically the same.

57. Al-Subkī (5, p. 200). The last phrase reads “*ʿan yūṣafu bi-ʿan yaʿlama mablagħahu*,” within the context it would seem more natural to read the passive, “*yuʿlama mablagħahu*” rather than the active, though the sense would be essentially the same in either case.

the punishments of the inhabitants of the Fire that exist have a known beginning and an end at each moment. What is infinite and is not countable (*lā yuhṣā*) are the blessings and punishments that lie within God's power to create. God (the Exalted) will go on creating (*yujaddid*) blessings for the inhabitants of the Garden and punishments for the inhabitants of the Fire. The potential objects of His power (*maqdūrātuhu*) are infinite. What we assert to be infinite has not come to exist (*mā nuthbituhu ghayra mutanāhin lam yūjad*)⁵⁸.

And the same thesis is asserted by al-Juwaynī in *Luma'* (J), p. 127, using the revolutions of the celestial spheres as the example.

In his proof for the creation of the world al-Isfarā'īnī argues that the successive conjunctions and disjunctions of atoms cannot extend infinitely into the past, since there would then be no "last" and goes on to say that what is infinite cannot conceivably be counted from a last to a first and so not from a first to a last either⁵⁹. And al-Juwaynī, in dealing with an objection concerning his proof for the contingency of the world, says (*Irsh*, p. 26, 8ff.)

What is impossible is that an infinity of individual beings come to exist one after another. To project existence into the future does not implicitly assert the existence of an infinity. It is impossible that objects of God's power come to exist without numerical restriction and terminal limit. This is confirmed by the fact that the essential nature of contingent beings is to have a first and to assert the existence of contingent beings while negating any first is self contradictory. It does not, however, belong to the essential nature of contingent beings that there must be a last of them (*laysa min haqīqati l-ḥādithi 'an yakūna labu 'ākhir*).

That is to say, contingent Being of itself and as such (*li-nafsihī/dhātihī*) is what not having been comes to be and, by their very nature, therefore, there must be an absolute first of contingent beings, but it does not follow from this that, given a first, contingent beings cannot follow one after another indefinitely. This is consistent with al-Ḥalīmī's statement that God cannot know the last of the motions of the people of the Garden and the Fire. There is no last to know. Again, this would appear to be consistent as well with the assertion in *Ikht* (fol. 129r, 11ff.) that those who hold that the possible classes of contingent beings are finite in number mean when they say

58. Al-Mutawallī, p. 8, 1ff., reading *mā nuthbituhu* for *fīmā yuthbituhu* in line 4. *Tajaddada, yatajaddadu* is commonly employed in the sense to come into existence at a moment in time (e.g., *Tam*, pp. 43, 8 and 61, 5 and *Sham* (69), pp. 160, 3, 181, 18ff., *et alibi pass.*) and *jaddada, yujadditu* thus is to initiate the existence of a being (e.g., *Bayān*, pp. 233, *ult.* and 235, 6). I have rendered it here as to go on creating, since this is manifestly the sense in the present context.

59. *Aqīda*, p. 137, 3ff. (where with the MS read *min* for *'ilā* in line 8). The formulation here employs *'wahn*' (e.g., *istiḥālatu tanāḥī l-wahn fi 'adādihi*) as also a few lines later in the same work (v. n. 18 above). The basic form of al-Isfarā'īnī's argument for creation here (pp. 136f.) would seem to derive from the longer version of al-Ash'arī's *Luma'*; cf. al-Isfarā'īnī, Fr. #14, p. 146.

that the number of their possible instances is infinite is “that [God’s] power does not stop at any limit or number” (*lā taqīfu ‘inda ḥaddin wa-lā ‘adad*). And this is in accord with his assertion in *Sham* that God creates throughout eternity to come. Albeit al-Ḥalīmī said that events (*sc.*, God’s creation of new accidents in every atom in each succeeding instant) have no final term or limit (*lā mablagha lahā*), none of the leading authorities of the school — none, at least, to my knowledge — was willing to say that they are infinite (*lā nihāyata lahā*). It would seem likely, therefore, that where in (B) of the passage quoted by al-Anṣārī, al-Juwaynī says neither that future contingents are finite nor that they are infinite, he means simply that there is no last. It is in contrast to this that in (D), where he treats the merely possibles that have not and will never come to exist, he asserts that it is they that are infinite. The remarks that al-Anṣārī appends to (D) would seem intended to take account of what al-Juwaynī says in *al-Burhān*, but in such a way as to avoid any explicit mention of his master’s assertion that God cannot know an infinity of particulars, since this contradicts the common doctrine of the school⁶⁰.

The premise that it is impossible that an infinity of entities come to exist is given. What is radically new in the argument set forth in *Burhān* is the thesis that God cannot know each member of an infinity of distinct particulars, for this contradicts not only his own prior teaching (e.g., *Sham* (81) pp, 31f, and *Irsh*, p. 98) but that of the common teaching of the school as well (cf. *Gh*, fol. 67r, 1f.). The position presented in (D) of the passage discussed above is thus radically altered as a significant element of it is in fact rejected. Al-Juwaynī’s reasoning here would seem to be based on the thesis that what is infinite cannot be counted and has no parts, for parts are related to that of which they are parts in that, taken together, they make up a whole; but whatever is infinite is not related to what is finite, since the finitude of the relata is the condition of there being a relationship (*nisba*) between them (cf., *Gh*, fol. 19v, 23f., translated above, and fol. 32v, cited in n. 21 above). God cannot know the individual constituents of an infinity, therefore, because as an infinity it can have no “parts” to know. This will imply, moreover, that what eternally God wills not to create (the particular alternatives to the atoms and accidents he wills to create) are neither infinite nor to be considered as belonging to — as *parts of* — an infinity of contingent possibles that will never exist. He knows the possible as possible and the impossible as impossible.

Al-Juwaynī chooses atoms here as his example of an infinity of contingents that God knows, most probably because this brings out the main point of his argument

60. One notes in this regard that here al-Anṣārī employs ‘*istirsāl*,’ which occurs in a number of contexts in *Burhān*, but is not found in al-Juwaynī’s kalām works.

in the simplest possible way, since atoms constitute a single, undifferentiated class. More significant, however, is the fact that while most Ash'arites held that atoms continue to exist by God's ever repeated creation in them of successive instants of the accident "continuance" (*baqā*), al-Juwaynī held, along with a few others, that an atom's continuing in existence is simply that it goes on existing (*istimrāru wujūdihi*) unless or until God annihilates it⁶¹. Either the atom exists or there is no atom at all. He thus avoids altogether the complexities involved in the endless succession of a variety of classes and subclasses of accidents in every existent atom for eternity to come. The focus is on the atom alone and the fact that it cannot exist without having a certain set of accidents is irrelevant. This need not, however, imply that it does not lie within God's power to create more atoms than He has created or will ever actually create — and so too, more accidents — but rather this can only be (as in the case of the ever continuing creation of accidents in the next world) a finite number of contingents added to the already given finite number. The question of God's knowing an infinity of atoms is altogether different. In this case, according to al-Juwaynī's assumption in *Burhān*, God knows that an infinity of existents is impossible and, therefore, in knowing an infinity of atoms knows it as an impossible, analogous to the other impossibles that fall under (C) in the earlier text. The existence of an infinity is impossible and cannot therefore be posited. God's knowledge of the infinity of possible atoms (the correlate of His infinite power) is thus complete and unrestricted (*'alā l-istirsāl*) without identifying its individual units because there are none: "an infinity has no parts." The conclusion concerning an infinity of possible classes then follows easily enough: in contrast to an infinity of atoms, all of whose members belong by definition to a single, undifferentiated class and so share in one and the same essential nature (*khāṣṣiyya*), each individual member of an infinite set of possible classes would have to be essentially distinct from every other, wherefore, if God's knowledge of them were to be *'alā l-tafsil* He would have to know of each one in its proper uniqueness; but this is impossible.

Even allowing that al-Juwaynī may have been carried away by the logic of his reasoning here, it remains surprising that he would here draw such a conclusion concerning God's knowledge. The thesis was not only repugnant but an embarrassment to the school and it is doubtless for this reason that it is not mentioned either by his students, al-Anṣārī and al-Harāsī or, so far as I know, by later Ash'arites. The problem

61. Cf. *Irsh*, pp. 138f. and *Ikht*, fol. 196v, 14ff. God's annihilation (*'ifnā'*) of an atom is not here understood, as it is by Abū l-Hudhayl, to be an action of God's, *sc.*, His saying "cease to be," which is an event that occurs in no place; cf. *Th.u.G* 3, pp. 229f.). The Ash'arites' treatment of the question of the continuance of what continues to exist is discussed at some length in our "The Ash'arite Ontology I," p. 197 ff.

is clear enough: while all were agreed that at any given moment in endless time to come the totality of past and present contingents must always be finite (and so “He has numbered every being numerically” is forever true, though the number continually grows), the question remains: if God’s knowledge is utterly timeless and He will create accidents throughout eternity to come, how can it be that eternally He knows and wills what He will create *fī mā lā yazāl* if He cannot know an infinite number of particulars?

In concluding we may note that although what al-Juwaynī says here in *al-Burhān* may not be altogether out of place, since the passage occurs in a section (pp. 137ff.) proper to *kalām*, namely one on the kinds and ways of knowing (*madārik al-‘ulūm*), it nevertheless seems odd that in a work on the fundamentals of jurisprudence he would choose so plainly controversial an example to illustrate the distinction between the two senses of ‘*jawāz.*’ It may well be, however, that he chose to insert the issue here — and with such rhetorical vehemence — in a work that he could be reasonably certain would gain wide circulation because of the opposition he had encountered in one or more disputations on the matter, particularly on the part of the Hanbalites, who polemically distorted his position to their own partisan ends (cf., e.g., *Muntazam* 9, pp. 19f.).

* * *

We have, finally, to consider the common Ash‘arite teaching that not only ‘known’ but also ‘mentioned’ (*madhkūr*), ‘referred to’ (*madtūlun ‘alayhi*), and ‘the subject of a predication’ (*mukhbarun ‘anhu*) are valid descriptions of the non-existent. These latter expressions are used ordinarily and most commonly not in speaking of cognitions as such but with reference to articulated sentences. Furthermore, it is plain from what we have already seen that save with respect to that whose existence is logically impossible ‘non-existent’ is said of particulars, real and posited; and for this reason it would seem apparent that, as in the case of the knowledge of the non-existent, what is involved here must primarily concern God’s speaking rather than that of creatures.

According to the Ash‘arites, speaking (*al-kalām*) is an internal act. “It is, in the strict and proper sense, the intention that exists in the self [of the speaker].”⁶² For

62. *Al-kalāmu l-ḥaqīqīyyu huwa l-mā’nā l-mawjūdu fī l-nafs: Inṣāf*, p. 106, 18; cf. also, e.g., al-Isfarā’īnī, p. 156, 11f. (Fr. #52) and al-Mutawallī, p. 25, 21f. It is worth noting that in the usage of the grammarians a *kalām* is a complete sentence (cf., e.g., Ibn Jinnī 1, p. 17 and *Lisān al-‘Arab*, s.v., and cp., e.g., *al-Ṣāḥībī*, pp. 81f.). ‘*Ma’nā*’ in the citations of *Inṣāf* and al-Mutawallī here I have taken taken as meaning/intention, which, in the context, seems clearly to be the most plausible interpretation, though in this particular sentence one could take it to mean an entitative attribute, i.e., the accident

this reason, speaking in the formal sense is commonly termed '*al-kalāmu l-nafsī*,' '*kalāmu l-nafs*,' and '*ḥadīthū l-nafs*.' Occasionally other expressions are employed, '*qawl*,' for example, is used by al-Juwaynī in *Irsh*, p. 104, where he defines '*kalām*' as '*al-qawlu l-qā'imū bil-nafs*, and '*naṭq*,' where al-Isfarā'inī is cited as saying "*huwa l-naṭqu l-qā'imū fī l-nafsi l-ladhī tadullu 'alayhi l-'ibārātu wa-mā 'adāhu mina l-'amārāt*."⁶³ The word '*nafs*' in this context does not mean soul. The expression doubtless originates in ordinary language as one speaks of what some one says within himself. Its use in this sense is, furthermore, authorized by the Koran (3,154). Likewise the equivalent use of '*qalb*' is common in ordinary language and is also authorized by the Koran (3,167)⁶⁴. In the strictest sense, however, '*nafs*' here designates the Self of the speaker, the being in which the speaking resides. ('*Qalb*,' needless to say, cannot be employed with reference to God's speaking.)

Basically '*kalāmu l-nafs*' here means simply interior speaking, i.e., intention that is voiced by the speaker. In our usual experience the speaker is the individual — the organically composite body — whose words we hear or whose written word we read. Following an old and well established tradition the Ash'arites hold that the heart is the locus (*maḥall*) of mental or interior acts (e.g., *Bayān*, p. 23, 14 and 100, 9ff. and *Ikht*, fol. 61r f.), though strictly speaking it is only the single atom in which the accident speaking actually resides (*al-juz'u l-mutakallimu mina l-qalb*: *Gh*, fol. 155v, 15). This interior speaking the Ash'arites identify with mental activity. "It is the thought that stirs in the mind and that is sometimes signified by verbal expressions and at others by conventionally established signings and the like."⁶⁵ They do not, however,

that resides in the atom which, because of its presence, is qualified as speaking. That what is meant is meaning/intention will become clear from the citations which follow here. Gimaret, however, in *Doctrine* (p. 202), takes it that '*ma'nā*' in these contexts is normally to be understood in the sense of entitative attribute, even though several of the citations he gives would appear plainly to indicate the contrary.

63. *Ikht*, fol. 103v, 5f.; the same citation is found in *Sh.Ir*, fol. 91v, 14f., using '*qawl*' instead of '*naṭq*.' It is plain that '*qawl*' and '*naṭq*' are employed in these definitions since one cannot repeat '*al-kalām*,' which is the definiendum.
64. The heart is commonly spoken of in ordinary speech as the seat of the emotions, thought, etc., and was formally held to be so by a number of groups. The Stoics, e.g., held that the ἡγεμονικόν along with the emotions and the λογιστικόν (*SVF* II, §881) belong to the ψυχή, which is in the heart (cf. *ibid.* §§837f. and 881 and III, p. 122, 3f.). What they mean by ψυχή is a particular kind of material pneuma. So too the Ash'arites use '*nafs*' in one sense to mean the breath or pneuma (cf., e.g., *Bayān*, p. 151, 13ff. = al-Bayhaqī, *Asmā'*, p. 287, 4f.), which is sometimes associated with the emotions and the heart (e.g., *Hidāya*, foll. 116v, 2ff. and 138, 16f.). One finds the peripatetic notion of the soul and intellect formally rejected, e.g., in *Ikht* (fol. 206r) and *Gh*, (foll. 18v, 6ff. and 152r, 16ff.), both of which, one notes, were written at a time that the influence of the *falāsifa* was becoming ever more widespread.
65. *Huwa l-fikru l-ladhī yadūru fī l-khaladi wa-tadullu 'alayhi l-'ibārātu tārratan wa-mā yustalahū 'alayhi*

hold this interior speaking to consist in mentally formulated sentences. The same verbal expression or sentence can, in different contexts, express very different meanings (e.g., *Sh.Ir*, fol. 90v ff.). According to Ibn Fūrak it is “that which is understood and which, without any conventional form, furnishes the meanings of what is spoken” (*al-mafhūmu l-ladhī yufidu ma’āniya l-kalāmi min ghayri muwāda’a: ibid.*, fol. 92r, 12ff.). Similarly, al-Bāqillānī is cited (*ibid.*, foll. 91v f.) as saying “it is the speaking that is not characterized by any conventional form (*lā yatakhaṣṣaṣu bi-muwāda’a*).”⁶⁶ In explaining this al-Anṣārī gives the example of a command (*’amr*) and says that the interior speaking

is simply the immediate awareness of a decisive command and a definitive request (*’innamā huwa wijdānu ’amrin jāzimin wa-ṭalabin bāti*); then [the speaker] talks to himself and thinks about how to express it to the one who is to be commanded (*thumma yuḥaddithu nafahu wa-yufakkiru fi kayfiyyati ’ilāmi l-ma’mūr*). Any intelligent person will see that there is a distinction between the two speakings (*tafriqatan bayna l-ḥadīthayn*): *Sh.Ir*, fol. 89r, 12ff.; cp. al-Mutawalli, p. 26, 11f. and cf. generally *Ir* pp. 105ff. and *Sh.Ir*, foll. 88rff.

One may therefore speak of “the speaking of those who are incapable of articulate expression” (*kalāmu man lā yatamakkanu mina l-’ibāra: Gh*, fol. 75v, 17ff.).

Albeit one may be somewhat put off by the terminology, that is, by the Ash’arites’ equivocal use of *’kalām*’ and also *’ḥadīth*’ and *’qawl*’ not only in the usual sense of articulated utterances, but also (and most importantly) for the primary, unarticulated meanings and intentions that come (or may come) to articulate presentation and expression, the concept represented by the latter (“the distinction between the two speakings”) is sound enough, as is evident from al-Anṣārī’s example. When, we wish to express a given meaning and find one or more attempted formulations unsatisfactory because they do not express exactly what we have in mind, the meaning (*al-ma’nā*) is present to us — we are aware of it — before finally we manage to bring it to satisfactory articulate expression⁶⁷.

mina l-’ishārati wa-naḥwihā ’ukhrā: Irsh, p. 105, 4ff. Cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 107f. where he speaks of “*al-qawlu l-dā’iru fi l-khalad*”.

66. This report goes on to say that al-Bāqillānī speaks thus by way of avoiding any suggestion of a linguistic convention whatsoever, because if speaking is, following the conception of the Mu’tazila, defined as “ordered consonants and interrupted sounds” (*ḥurūfun manzūmatun wa-’aṣwātun muqatta’a: e.g., M 7*, pp. 6ff.), then without some conventional form of expression there would be no speaking at all. Contrary to the teaching of the Ash’arites, any act of speaking must, for the Basrian Mu’tazila, be in some particular mode of expression (spoken in a particular language, or presented in some kind of gesture or sign). For the Mu’tazilite arguments against the thesis of a primary internal “speaking” that is a thinking which is not articulated in language, cf., e.g., *M 7*, pp. 18f.

67. The Ash’arite concept of interior speaking and meaning/intention does not correspond to the Stoic

So also God's speaking "is an eternal attribute which has ever resided in His Self...; it is neither a vowel nor a consonant" (*ṣifatur qadīmatun lam tazal qā'iman bi-dhātibi... ʾinna dhālika laysa bi-ṣawtin wa-lā ḥarf*)⁶⁸. Speaking is, however, intimately related to knowing, so much so that al-Bāqillānī is cited by al-Harāsī (fol. 225r f.) as holding that the fact that God speaks (*lahu kalāmun*) may be inferred from the way knowing is associated with the "interior speaking" (*ḥadīthu l-naḥs*) in our own experience. For the grammarians, the primary mode of speaking is the declarative statement which, when true, may be identified with knowledge. Ibn Fāris (*al-Ṣāhibī*, p. 179) says that "according to the lexicographers a predicational sentence is a making known (*i'lāmun*)... and the predicational sentence is the knowledge (*al-khabaru huwa l-'ilm*)."⁶⁹ "Knowledge' signifies a true proposition" (*al-'ilmu yadullu 'alā l-khabari l-ṣidq*: *Sh.Ir*, fol. 123r, 19).

The analogy of God's eternal "statement" to his knowledge in regard to the non-existent is made altogether clear in Ibn Fūrak's report (*Muj*, p. 65, 3ff.) concerning al-Ash'arī, that

He used to say that the speaking of God (the Exalted) is a statement about every thing of which it is possible that a statement be made (*khabarun 'an kulli mā yaṣībhu 'an yukhbbara 'anhu*) in the way that it is possible that a statement be made concerning it as

λόγος ἐνδιάθετος, which is mentally articulated, but to what they term to; λεκτόν, something that is intelligible (νοούμενον πρᾶγμα) which may be signified (σημαίνόμενον) or presented (δηλούμενον) by spoken words and sentences; cf. *SVF* II, §§166f., 170m and 178. One notes that the Arab grammarians understand the meaning of sentences in the same way as do the Ash'arites and accordingly, while distinguishing various "meanings" (statements, questions, commands, &c.), do not identify them with the verbal forms in which they may be expressed; cf. our "Meanings are spoken of in many ways," pp. 267-71 and see also Ibn Kaysān, p. 108, *al-Ṣāhibī*, pp. 179ff. and *Ishṭiqāq*, pp. 294ff. It should be kept in mind that we are, in the present study, concerned only with the Ash'arite understanding of God's speaking as *khabar*.

68. *Muj*, p. 59, 11f. In the last sentence, the words 'vowel' and 'consonant' (or 'sound' and 'syllable') are introduced instead of the more general 'ibāra' against the Mu'tazila. For the Ash'arites, the expressed vowels and consonants are *ibārāt*, formed so that the hearer may understand (e.g., *Muj*, p. 192, ff., Mutawallī, p. 29, 15f., and *Sh.Ir*, fol. 76r, 10f.). The Koran may thus be called "God's speaking" (*kalāmu l-lāh*) "in the sense that through it one has access to the understanding of the Speaking of God" (*bihā yutawaṣṣalu 'ilā fahami kalāmi l-lāh*: *Gh*, fol. 85r, 20).
69. While the grammarians in their discussions of the meanings of sentences (see the references in n. 67 above) consistently place statements first, the Ash'arites commonly put command first (e.g., *Muj*, p. 66, 9 and al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl*, pp. 106, 6 and 117, 17) and al-Juwaynī says (*Burhān*, p. 196, 9f.) that the order, "command, prohibition, statement, question" is that of the earliest authorities (*al-qudamā*). This common ordering may be because God's speaking is not described by '*khabar*' in the Koran but is described by 'command'; Q 16.40: *naqūlu lahu kun fa-yakūn*, and 7, 54: *'a-lā lahu l-khalqu wal-'amr* were employed in order to prove the eternity of God's speaking (e.g., *Luma'* (A), §§27f. and *Ibāna*, p. 19, 18ff.). It is interesting, however, that these verses are not normally employed as proof texts by later Ash'arites.

it really is; it is not possible that it be a statement that presents the subject in a way that is different from the way it really is. Its being a true speaking (*kaunuhu ṣidqan*) is one of its essential features (*min ṣifāti nafsihi*); it is not possible that it be a false statement in any way whatsoever.

The handful of texts we have examined make it clear enough how God's eternal Speaking is (or contextually may be) understood as being an all inclusive "statement" (*khabar*) — a single eternal statement that embraces all possible true statements about Himself and about contingent beings both real and possible⁷⁰. The presence, then, of any non-existent object of God's power, whether real or merely possible (*kā'in* or only potentially *maqḍūr*), is that of a meaning, a term in a true proposition that God knows and "speaks" and so is referred to and made the subject of a predication. Embraced within the eternal knowledge of God, that is to say, is an infinite number of individual meanings/intentions, at least according to the common doctrine of the school set forth in (D) above. For every (presently for us) non-existent He knows, if it was or is to be, *that* it is (*'annahu*), in being, what it is for it to be, its "truth" (*ḥaqquhu*), which is to say, its existence, which is its Self and true nature (*wujūdu l-shay' = nafsubu and ḥaqqiqatuhu*)⁷¹, and with this knows moreover the totality of its relations, real and possible, to every other being to which it is or might have been related (*munāsib* or *muta'alliq*) in any way. And it embraces the infinity of merely possibles that that are never to be, what truly each would be were it to be and all the possible relationships it might, under any set of possible circumstances, have to all the other beings that might exist with it whenever it might exist.

* * *

The Ash'arites held, as we have seen, that, although the non-existent possibles may be (and by God are) known and so referred to and spoken about prior to their coming to be, they are not beings (*'ashyā', dhawāt, 'ayān*); and, since the essential nature of any being is its existence, they are not and cannot, as such, be described as characterized by their essential attributes. God "creates the world's beings, makes its atoms and its accidents come to be and makes its different classes of beings be different."⁷²

70. The broader discussion of God's speaking as *khabar* presented in the texts is quite complex, involving a number of questions and problems that we need not go into here.

71. "Truth' (i.e., the true) is used in the sense of existent (*bi-ma'nā l-mawjūd : Latā'if* 4, 101; cp. *ibid.*, p. 38). Thus it is used "... in the sense of the actually existent (*al-mawjūdu l-kā'in*) that is not non-existent" (*Tahbīr*, fol. 96v, 6); it is defined as *al-mutahaqqiqu wujūduhu* in *Muj*, pp. 25, 16f. and al-Bayhaqī, *Asmā'*, p. 310, 22 (citing Tha'lab; cp. *Lisān al-'arab*, s.v.).

72. *Ikhṭarā'a 'a'yānahu wa-'ahdatha jawābirahu wa-'arādahu wa-khālafa bayna 'ajnāsīhi: Thaḡbr*, p. 93; the last phrase occurs also in *Tā'wīl*, fol. 108v, 7f.; see also *Muj*, p. 253, cited above.

The Mu'tazilites of Basra were strongly opposed to this. When said of something, 'shay' "implies only the possibility of the thing's being known and its being described."⁷³ The non-existent "is an object of cognition which does not have the attribute of existence at all" (*al-ma'lūmu l-ladhī laysat lahu ṣifatu l-wujūdi 'aşlan*)⁷⁴. A non-existent being is described as non-existent simply because it is not existent (e.g., *M* 6/2, p. 77, 2 and 8, p. 74, 12ff.). The non-existent, in short, is a definite something — a τὸδε τι — that can become actually existent; the non-existent atom is an atom in the full and proper sense of the term (cf., e.g., *Masā'il*, p. 34, 17ff.). Accordingly, the Mu'tazilites assert that on the Ash'arite assumption that classes come to be with their essential attributes by God's making them so (*bi-'an yaj'alahā l-lāhu ta'ālā ka-dhālika*), it follows "that it is possible that essential natures be made other than they are" (*tajwīzu qalbi l-ḥaqā'iq*)⁷⁵. Against this al-Ash'arī replies that God

makes contingent beings come to be beings and entities and makes them exist as atoms and accidents; did He not make them exist as beings and cause them to come to be entities, they would eternally be beings and eternally entities (*ahdatha l-'ashyā'a l-muḥdathata 'ashyā'a wa-'ayānan wa-'ahdathahā jawāhira wa-'arādan wa-law lam yūjidhā 'ashyā'a wa-lā 'ahdathahā 'ayānan la-kānat qadīmatan 'ashyā'a wa-qadīmatan 'ayānā: Muj*, p. 253, 18f.).

The dispute here may initially appear, on one level anyhow, to be scarcely more than a squabble over terminology — and, at that, chiefly over the word 'shay' — since the Ash'arites hold that God knows eternally (and therefore prior to the creation of the world) what is (or would be) the essential nature (*al-ḥaqīqa*, *al-hadd*) of every contingent possible or, if you wish, of every particular of every class of possibles

73. *Innamā yaqtadī ṣiḥhata l-'ilmi bihi wal-khabara 'anhu: Tād*, p. 377, 7f. (reading *yaqtadī* for *tqtdy*; the Ambrosian MS, fol. 67v, 10, has no diacriticals here). The Mu'tazila commonly defined *shay'* as *al-ma'lūmu l-mukhbar 'anhu* (cf., e.g., *Maq*, p. 519, 6f and *M* 5, 251, 3f.). The definition originates with the grammarians; see the references in our *Beings*, p. 31, n. 14.

74. *Tād*, pp. 70f. and fol. 172v, 6. The 'aşlan' at the end of the phrase is thus likely intended to indicate that the *ma'dūm* has no "state" whatsoever; see our "*Al-ma'dūm wal-maujūd*," pp. 205ff. (There is an exceptional number of errors — some even grammatical — in this article, chiefly because the proofs were read and "corrected" without my having a chance to see them.) What is meant here by "the attribute of existence" is a *ḥāl*, sc., its *being* existent.

75. *M* 6/2, p. 253, 4ff., citing Abū Ḥāshim. (One is reminded of the lines of a 14th century poem, "For he may turne kuyndes upsedoun / that alle kuyndes made of nouht"). Though he speaks here of classes (*ajnās*) what is meant is instances of classes (cf., e.g., *M* 6/1, pp. 9f., where read *bi-'an* for *wa-'an* and *taqūlūna* for *yaqūlūna* at p. 9, *ult.* and twice *tufidūna* for *yufidūna* at p. 10, 3f.). It is thus that one says that the non-existent atom is an atom. The statement (*M* 6/2, p. 77, 6f. that the Ash'arites hold that "God wills that [the accident] black be black and that error be ethically bad (*kawna l-sawādi sawādan wa-kawna l-jahla qabīhan*)" polemically (though in the immediate context not inappropriately) combines two distinct kinds of attributes, *s.c.*, essential and ethical.

whether real or simply posited. On closer examination, however, what is involved proves to be a bit more subtle.

The Mu'tazilite followers of Abū Hāshim hold that one cannot assert the possibility of the non-existent — that it is a possible instance of a given class of beings — save insofar as it is in fact possible that it come to be (*min ḥaythu jawāzi ḥudūthibi: M 4, p. 255, 17f.*), which is to say that non-existent beings cannot be said to have any being — any real possibility at all — apart from their actual correlation to an agent's having the power to cause them to exist (*lā ṭariqata li-'ithbāti l-ma'dūmi 'illā mā yata'allaqu bi-ḥāli l-qādir*)⁷⁶. Even so qualified, however, the non-existent is explicitly conceived as a being (*shay'*) that belongs to a given class of contingent entities and as such has an actual correlation to the agent's having the power to cause its existence (*kawnuhu qādiran*). Since, according to the Mu'tazila, the agent's having the power to cause the act to exist is prior to his doing it, the correlation of the act (as *maqḍūr*) is actual before the act and, in fact, even if he never does it. The Ash'arite analysis, by contrast, asserts that the non-existent possible, precisely because it does not exist, is in itself nothing, is no being at all (*laysa bi-shay'*). As we have seen, the non-existent is not an actual object of God's power but only a potential object that may or may not become an actual object unless and until he creates it. Properly speaking, in fact, one should not use the expression 'in itself' with reference to the non-existent, for there is no "self" (*nafs*). Since the non-existent is nothing real — it is not *mutaḥaqqiq* — so as to have an essential nature (*ḥaqīqa*), it is not possible that it be a member of any class of beings. Thus it is that, since the existence of any existent is its being created (*wujūduhu = 'ijāduhu*), God truly makes the contingent existent He creates be what essentially it is. That is, He makes the contingent existent He creates be what it is when He creates it and so at that moment to be a member of a particular class of entities. (One cannot say that He makes it *become* a member of a class because there was, before it existed, nothing of whose "becoming" one might speak.) He knows eternally what it *is* He creates when He creates, but since there is no being to have an essential nature before He creates it what it is, the Mu'tazilite charge that the Ash'arites' teaching concerning the possible implies that God can make a being of a given class become something else is essentially no more than polemic. The essential

76. *Muḥīṭ* 1, p. 110, 8f. (= p. 117, 11f.). So also in *M 8*, p. 72, 5f. we read *ṣiḥḥatu l-ḥudūthi tatba'ū ṣiḥḥata kawni l-qādiri qādiran 'alayhi* (reading *tatba'ū* for *ttb'h* which makes no sense as there is no preceding referent for the *-hu*); see generally our "*Al-Ma'dūm wal-Mawjūd*," *loc.cit.* Note that while one speaks here of "the state" of the agent in his being capable of acting if he wills, one cannot speak of the non-existent's having any "state" of being (*ḥāl*); see our *Beings*, p. 54 and the references there cited.

natures of existent entities cannot become other than they are (*lā yanqalib*: al-Harāsī, fol. 192v) and they are given as being essentially what they are in God's knowledge *ab aeterno*.

One sees here the conceptual consistency of the Asharites' usage of '*ḥaqīqa*' and several other expressions and how the equivocity of several of them is reflectively exploited. One cannot rightly speak of the "essence" or true nature (*ḥaqīqa*) of the non-existent, for non-existent there's nothing there to have an essential nature. The naming of what is posited — a possible object of God's power — is not to name an entity (*dhāt, shay'*) since the name is truly said only of the existent members of a given class that by virtue of their essential nature "deserve" to be called by a particular name (e.g., *Sham* (69), p. 634, 7f. and *Gh*, 62v, 12f.). The true meaning (*ḥaqīqa*) of the name (*al-tasmiya*) is its presenting and "revealing" (cf. *Kāfiya*, p. 4, 11) the essential nature of the being that is named (*ḥaqīqatu l-musammā*)⁷⁷. Universals (class names) are simply words (*'ibārāt*), wherefore the naming of a posited non-existent is not a true description (*wasf*) since it has no existent referent that has the implied attribute (*ṣifa*). Nothing is actually named — there is no *musammā* — where there is no Name (*ism*) for the naming (*tasmiya*) to present⁷⁸. As given in God's knowledge, what within a temporal framework was and what is to be fall together as beings (*al-kā'ināt = mā fi ma'lūmihi kawnuhu*) as distinct from the merely possible. The truth of the former, its reality (*ḥaqquhu = ḥaqqu kawnihi*), is eternally present in God's knowledge, while the latter has no truth, being merely posited (*muqaddar*), never "veri-fied" (*muḥaqqaq*). What is true of them is that in God's knowledge they are truly posited as possible objects of His power whose non-existence He wills eternally.

In conclusion, then, it would seem obvious that Miskawayh in criticising the formally restricted use of '*mawjūd*' by the mutakallimūn (*Hawāmil*, p. 343f.) was blissfully unaware of the fact that the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites, each school in its own way, had perhaps a more nuanced philosophical understanding than did he and the other devotees of *falsafa* of what he would have the mutakallimūn learn about the *ma'dūm*.

77. Cf., e.g., *Tam*, pp. 233f. and *Sham* (69), pp. 305f.

78. The Ash'arites make a formal distinction between the naming (*al-tasmiyah*, i.e., the noun that names the entity that is its referent) and the Name, sc., that which is named (*al-ismu huwa l-musammā*) analogous to that which they draw between the descriptive expression (*wasf*) and the attribute (*ṣifa*, in our context, the essential attribute) of the entity described; cf., e.g., *Tam*, §383, *Isfarā'ini*, Fr. 67, al-Mutawallī, pp. 31f. and *Sham* (81), p. 45, 8ff. This together with their equivocal use of '*ḥaqīqa*,' '*ḥadd*,' '*ma'nā*,' etc., and also their conception of classes and of universals are discussed at some length in our "The Ash'arite Ontology," pp. 178 ff.

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80. *Sharḥ al-Irshād* is earlier than *Ghunya*, where it is cited, fol. 125v.